

ANTISEMITISM IN SOUTH AFRICA, 2013 - followed by TRENDS AND RESPONSES TO ANTISEMITISM IN SOUTH AFRICA, 2012

ANTISEMITISM IN SOUTH AFRICA, 2013

1. Antisemitic Incidents

48 incidents deemed to constitute antisemitic acts against Jewish individuals, institutions or Jews as a collective were logged in 2013 by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the Community Security Organisation, the latter being the security arm of the Jewish community.

This figure is almost identical to that recorded in 2012 (51 incidents).

Broken down into categories, the total constituted the following:

Verbal abuse and/or threats (19)
Dissemination of antisemitic literature and media (20)
Hate mail (8)
Vandalism (1)

- The most serious case of verbal abuse and threats was the chanting of *dubula e juda* (“shoot the Jew”) by anti-Israel protestors at a performance by four Israeli jazz musicians at Johannesburg’s University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) on 28 August.
- Noteworthy cases of antisemitic verbal abuse and threats directed at individuals included those against Jewish students at Wits University during Israel Apartheid Week, including an Indian male repeatedly shouting “F*** you, you kike” at a Jewish student wearing a kippa and another Indian male shouting “F*** these Jews”, and “you Jews, they must know... we will get them”. When another Jewish student approached him to obtain his details, he shouted, “I’ll f*** you up, come at me, I’ll kill you”.
- The vandalism case refers to the damaging of tombstones in the Krugersdorp Jewish cemetery by four white teenagers. Although there was no accompanying antisemitic graffiti, the fact that only the Jewish cemetery was targeted is arguably sufficient evidence that the incident should be categorised as an antisemitic one.

2. Antisemitic Discourse

Under this category falls noteworthy instances where antisemitic sentiments were aired, whether verbally or in written form, in the public arena. The gravity of such statements varies according to the stature of the person and/or organisations making them.

In the course of the year Deputy Minister of International Relations Marius Fransman, who is also provincial leader of the ruling African National Congress in the Western Cape, made a number of offensive and inflammatory comments about the Jewish community and its leadership. On 26 February, in an interview with a Cape Town-based Muslim community radio station, he alleged that Jewish businessmen in the city were unfairly benefiting at the expense of the Muslim community because of the policies of the Democratic Alliance, the ruling party in the Western Cape province. On being taken to task for this by the SAJBD, Fransman responded by accusing the organization of being disloyal to South Africa and of undermining the national interest by furthering the agenda of the State of Israel. The SAJBD responded by lodging a complaint of hate speech with the SA Human Rights Commission. The latter eventually convened a conciliation meeting between the SAJBD and the Deputy Minister in order to try to resolve the issue without its having to go to adjudication. It transpired that just a few hours before the meeting took place, Fransman had made another comment implying that Jews in Cape Town were especially benefitting from the unequal distribution of wealth in the city. This was made in an address to the Cape Town Press Club, in which he claimed (incorrectly) that 98% of land and property owners were from the white, and particular from the Jewish community. The conciliation process was thus deemed to be a failure and the SAHRC will proceed in adjudicating the SAJBD's complaint.

In an interview on Radio 702 conducted by host Redi Tlabi on 18 June, Pan-African Youth Congress (PAYCO) spokesman Sello Tladi said, "Even General Adolf Hitler was much better than Nelson Mandela. He did something for the German side, purging the Jews". Further on, he said, "It is because of this Nelson Mandela that in South Africa the Jews and the white settlers don't even respect our human rights, they exploit our wealth and exploit our labour in this country."

Israel Apartheid Week on Wits University campus spawned much radical anti-Israel rhetoric that crossed the line into overt antisemitism. This largely emanated from the Student Representative Council, which for example issued a media release on 11 March inter alia stating, "We long to see the day where this University's judgment is freed from the tentacles of Zionist money". The Wits SRC were the ringleaders in the subsequent violent disruption of a concert being given on campus by Israeli-born classical pianist Yossi Reshef.

TRENDS AND RESPONSES TO ANTISEMITISM IN SOUTH AFRICA, 2012

A. GENERAL OVERVIEW

- Antisemitism levels in SA as measured by incidents recorded by the SAJBD and CSO rose by 15% in 2012, with 50 cases logged compared to 42 in 2011 and 66 in 2010.
- Whereas the previous year, antisemitic acts were all of a non-violent nature, in 2012 there were three cases of assault and one serious case of vandalism.
- Surprisingly, in view of previous experience, the upsurge of violence between Israel and Hamas in November did not lead to a spike in antisemitic behavior.
- Some 50% of incidents comprised either the one-on-one sending of hate mail to Jewish recipients (usually anonymously) or mass email postings of antisemitic literature (the majority of which were sent by serial offender Snowy Smith, against whom the SAJBD has since instituted court proceedings). The balance was made up of verbal abuse (20%), and a handful of cases of assault, vandalism, graffiti and offensive media.

B. NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS

January-October: An elderly lady in Johannesburg received eight extremely abusive, antisemitic and threatening letters in the course of the year, possibly from a disgruntled ex-employee. Abusive statements included: “May you suffer and die in your New Year, you Jewish bitch” and “Hitler should have used some gas on you to make the world a better place. I hope you die soon”. The CSO has assisted her in laying charges and taking additional security measures.

March: Bloemfontein’s historic Memoriam cemetery vandalised, with 78 tombstones toppled and obscene graffiti daubed on the walls of the adjoining Ohel. The graffiti included legend “F*** the Jews” and images of money bags and diamonds, as well as of Magen Davids. Other slogans read “Jews rulle” [sic] and “Jews have the power”.

June: A highly inflammatory statement issued by COSATU in response to a march for Israel held in Pretoria by mainly black Christian Zionists. Inter alia, the SAZF was described as having hands “dripping with blood”, Israel was said to be “a legalisation of Jewish supremacy to further dehumanise everyone outside their scope of Zionist purity” and Zionism itself was said to refer “to those that believe in a state exclusively for the ruling supremacists at the expense of the indigenous Palestinian people because they view themselves as ordained by God to do all it takes to defend their privileged position”.

Three cases of assault aggravated by antisemitism were reported:

- A Jewish woman in Cape Town had an altercation with her neighbour after asking the latter’s gardener not to pull out her plants. According to the complainant, she was called “a [expletive] Jew” and pushed into a cactus.

- A Jewish client was attacked with a pair of scissors by an irate Algerian/Moroccan barber, who also made antisemitic remarks, during an argument over the former's refusal to pay the original price asked for his haircut. The client, who also had made threatening gestures prior to being confronted with the scissors, managed to escape unscathed.
- A Lyndhurst Jewish resident had his passenger window shattered by a pellet fired by his neighbour as he was pulling out into the street. This followed a heated argument, in which he had twice been called a [expletive] Jew. The neighbour was arrested and charged soon afterwards at the Sandringham police station.

C. ACTIONS TAKEN BY SAJBD

1. Court Action

Legal proceedings were instituted in the Equality Court against serial distributor of antisemitic literature Snowy Smith. The papers were drawn up by the Board's Cape Town legal team, headed up by Mervyn Smith. The complaint was forwarded by the Equality Court to Smith, who had until 7 December to reply. Smith's only response has been to send out a flurry of further offensive emails. The matter is being pursued.

From 11-14 December, Broadcasting Complaints and Compliance Committee of ICASA convened a full hearing into the SAJBD's complaint of antisemitic hate speech by Radio 786, a Muslim community radio station in Cape Town. The SAJBD's lead witnesses were Dr David Hirsh (Goldsmiths College, London), Rabbi Yossi Goldman, Professor Milton Shain and Holocaust survivor Eva Schloss. Radio 786 has now conceded that the things said on the programme were untrue and sometimes antisemitic but still claims it fell within the parameters of freedom of expression. The tribunal recessed on 14/12 and will resume in 2013.

In the course of the year, the Board provided the SA Human Rights Commission with documentation and other information that it required in preparing its case against COSATU International Relations Spokesperson Bongani Masuku. The SAHRC decided to institute proceedings against Masuku in the Equality Court after he declined to comply with its ruling that he apologise to the SAJBD for antisemitic hate speech in 2009.

In November, National Director Wendy Kahn provided witness testimony on behalf of the Board at the Fraser vs UCU case in London. Ronnie Fraser, a retired academic, has taken the University Union to the employment tribunal alleging that they had created a hostile environment for Jewish academics. An important component of the case was the invitation to Bongani Masuku to speak to academics in the UK and on university campuses in December 2009 despite the SAHRC hate speech finding against him.

2. Abusive behaviour

All reported antisemitic and/or anti-Israel graffiti was photographed and then painted over by a Board staff member.

January: After receiving a complaint about Nazi-related literature and media being sold at the Blood River battle and national heritage site, the Board contacted the Curator of the Dundee Museum and the former CEO of the Voortrekker Monument. Following this and other complaints from the public, the offending items were removed.

March: Following the vandalising of the old Jewish cemetery in Bloemfontein, Board and CSO representatives travelled to Bloemfontein to follow up with the investigating police officers. They met at the cemetery, where they jointly inspected and recorded the damage and offensive graffiti and discussed what further steps would be taken. The Board also provided two articles on the incident for the local paper Dagbreek.

March: The Board wrote to ANC MP Thandile Sunduza to express its concern over an anti-Helen Zille comment with antisemitic overtones posted on her Facebook page (“She must jst go back 2 Israel where all other Jews re waiting 4 her. Bloody filthy racist!”) It was posted by Ntosh Pearl Kama, an employee in the Dept of Education in Lady Frere.

March: After receiving a complaint from a client at Perfect 10 beautician salon in Edenvale who was subjected to a string of offensive statements about Jews by an employee, the Board followed up with the owner, and was satisfied that appropriate disciplinary action had been taken.

May: The Board, on behalf of a community member who had received two abusive, antisemitic SMS messages, wrote to the culprit advising that legal action would be taken against him if he did not apologise in writing and undertake not to undermine the complainant’s business reputation. A satisfactory response was received soon after.

June: A Jewish Johannesburg attorney received an abusive email from an ex-client concluding with the statements: “Unlike the Jews which I do respect, you have learnt nothing from German/Jewish history!!! Your dignity has been tested and you have failed.” The Board obtained an appropriate apology and retraction from the offender.

September: The Board was involved in a case of abusive treatment meted out to a UJ Civil Engineering student by a lecturer, who was furious at having to set another test for him since the original test fell on Rosh Hashanah. Disciplinary proceedings were instituted against the lecturer, who was formally warned and directed to apologise.

3. Offensive Media

July: Following a complaint against an offensive advertisement on Radio Jacaranda, in which the term 'Final Solution' was used to describe an anti-cockroach spray, the advert was pulled from the airwaves and subsequently reworded.

August: In response to the above-noted COSATU press statement, a letter of protest co-signed with the Chief Rabbi and the SAZF was sent to COSATU Secretary General Zwelinzima Vavi. It was also published in full in the Jewish media and on Politicsweb.

August: Highly antisemitic image of an ape depicted as an Orthodox religious Jew accompanies a report on African migrants in Israel, posted on the SABC website. It was originally displayed on posters at an anti-Israel rally in Malaysia in 2010. In its response to

the Board, SABC apologised and advised that measures had put in place “to ensure more rigorous editorial gate-keeping” on its digital (and other) platforms, especially when it came to using agency material.

September: A DSTV Channel 112 programme, The Verge (a Reality TV show) featured two teenagers being given R500 to see what each would spend it on. One of them commented, “I’ll be the Jew here, and see if I can get good bargains”. On being approached by the Board, the programme director apologised and undertook to implement the necessary safeguards to ensure greater sensitivity in future.