

United Kingdom / Mike Whine

In 2014, 1168 antisemitic incidents were recorded by CST, making it the worst year on record for antisemitic incidents.

The total was more than double the 535 incidents recorded in 2013, and was a 25 per cent increase on the previous high of 931 incidents recorded in 2009.

The single biggest contributing factor to the high number was antisemitic reactions to the conflict in Israel and Gaza. During July, the first four weeks of Operation Protective Edge, 314 incidents were recorded, a rise of over 400 per cent from the 59 incidents recorded in July 2013, and the highest monthly total ever recorded. During August, 229 incidents were recorded compared with 48 incidents in August 2013.

The combined total of 543 incidents for the two summer months represent an increase of 407 per cent over the 107 incidents during the same period in 2013, and was more than the whole of 2013, when 533 incidents were recorded.

During the first half of the year, the level of incidents was already substantially higher than in 2013, although there was no specific trigger. Between January and June, CST recorded 307 incidents, a 38 per cent jump over the 223 incidents recorded during the first half of 2013. Although this period preceded Operation Protective Edge, a comparison can be made with the January 2009 Operation Cast Lead, the previous Israel incursion into Gaza, when the antisemitic reaction resulted in 629 antisemitic incidents being recorded during the first six months of 2009.

It is likely that the increase in the number of incidents between January and June reflects a genuine increase in the number of incidents that are taking place, or a further improvement in the reporting of incidents to CST and the Police by members of the Jewish community and the wider public, or a combination of these two factors.

Across the two months of July and August, 29 incidents (5 per cent) involved assaults, though none was serious or life threatening. 24 per cent of incidents involved threats or abusive messages on social media.

257 of the 543 incidents recorded in July and August involved direct reference to the hostilities in Israel and Gaza, but 171 incidents recorded in those two months involved the use of language or imagery relating to the Holocaust, of which 43 showed evidence of far right political motivation or beliefs. More commonly, reference to Hitler or the Holocaust was used to taunt or offend Jews, often in relation to events in Israel or Gaza, such as the twitter hashtag #HitlerWasRight.

Also of note is that a substantial number of incidents were clustered between 28th July, when the al Shifa hospital in Gaza was reported to have been hit during the fighting in Gaza, and the 4th August, the day after a UN School was reported to have been bombed. In between, on 30th July, the UNWRA school in Gaza was hit, leading to 19 fatalities.

The increase in antisemitic incidents in 2014 was common throughout the UK, but was more pronounced in Greater London than in Greater Manchester. In the former, CST recorded 583 incidents in 2014 compared to 246 during 2013, an increase of 137 per cent. In the latter, CST recorded 309 antisemitic incidents in 2014 compared to 173 in 2013, an increase of 79 per cent. Beyond these two largest communities, CST recorded 276 incidents in 89 locations around the UK in 2014, compared to 112 incidents from 50 different locations in 2013. It is likely however that there is significant under reporting of antisemitic incidents. Both the 2013 survey of Jewish experiences and perceptions of antisemitism in the EU, published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), and the annual Crime Survey for England and Wales, published by the Home Office, note that significant numbers of victims do not report hate crimes to the police or other agencies, such as CST.

During 2014, there were 81 violent antisemitic assaults, including one incident categorised as Extreme Violence, an increase of 17 per cent over the 69 incidents recorded in 2013. Incidents of Damage and Desecration of Jewish property increased by 65 per cent over the 49 incidents reported in 2013. This was the highest number of incidents recorded by CST in this category since 2010, when 83 such incidents were recorded.

There were 884 incidents of Abusive Behaviour recorded in 2014, an increase of 136 per cent over the 374 incidents recorded in this category in 2013, and the highest total ever recorded in this category. This category includes verbal abuse, hate mail, antisemitic graffiti on non-Jewish property and antisemitic content on social media.

There were 92 incidents reported to CST in the category of Threats, an increase of 142 per cent over the 138 incidents recorded in 2013. 30 incidents were recorded in the category of Literature, which comprises mass-produced antisemitic mailings and emails, rather than individual hate mail, compared with five such incidents in 2013.

CST received a physical description of the incident offenders in 340, or 29 per cent, of the 1168 antisemitic incidents recorded in 2014. Of these, 148 offenders (44 per cent) were described as 'White-Northern European'; 5 offenders (1 per cent) were described as 'White-South European'; 26 offenders (8 per cent) were described as 'Black'; 127 offenders (37 per cent) were described as 'South Asian', and 34 offenders (10 per cent) were described as 'Arab or North African'.

In 2014, the College of Policing, the professional body which advises Britain's police forces on strategy and professional standards, published guidance on Tackling Hate Crime. The chapter on antisemitic hate crime uses the Working Definition on Antisemitism originally published by the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, since replaced by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) as a guide to much contemporary antisemitism, although it is stressed that it does not have the force of law nor does it replace the definition on hate crime employed by the criminal justice system.

Also in 2014, the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), who directed the research for the FRA Survey on Discrimination and hate crime against Jews in EU Member States, published a further analysis on Perceptions and experiences of antisemitism among Jews in

the United Kingdom, using the FRA survey data from 2012, some of which had not previously been published. In their findings, JPR reported that a clear majority of respondents (close to 70 per cent) indicated that antisemitism had increased in the last five years, and over a quarter said it had increased a lot. They pointed to the internet and the media as the two most problematic arenas, with over a third suggesting that it is a 'very big problem'. Between 35 and forty per cent considered antisemitism in political life a problem, with about 10 per cent considering it 'a very big problem'. Putting these perceptions in context, it is important to note that the proportion of respondents who thought the state of the economy and unemployment were big or very big problems (90 to 100 per cent) was nearly twice as high as the number of respondents who thought that antisemitism was a big or very big problem.

Putting the data into another comparative context indicates that Jews in the UK who believe antisemitism to be a problem (48 per cent) is the lowest relative to all the other EU Member States in the FRA comparison. At the same time, most feel a strong sense of belonging to the UK.

Among the notable incidents occurring during the year, one involved Ian Campbell, a north London resident, who hurled antisemitic abuse at Jewish passengers on a bus on which he was also travelling. In October, he was sentenced to 16 week's imprisonment.

A Spurs footballer, Benoit Assou-Ekotto, was banned for three Premier League games and fined £50,000 in September for quenele tweets in a gesture of support for Nicholas Anelka who was sacked by his club in 2013 for a similar gesture. In February, the French activist Dieudonne M'Bala M'Bala, who invented the quenelle, was banned from visiting the UK.

Two 13 year old boys who had vandalised graves at the Jewish cemetery in Blackley near Manchester in June, were convicted in October at a local youth court and banned from going near any cemeteries.

In January, the Prime Minister, launched a Holocaust Commission tasked with building a lasting memorial to avoid the "real danger" of future generations forgetting what took place. The Commission, staffed by civil servants and representatives of Jewish community bodies, including the Chief Rabbi, is due to report its findings in time for the 70th anniversary of the British liberation of Bergen-Belsen in April 2015.

The All Party Parliamentary Group against Antisemitism commissioned a Parliamentary Inquiry into the antisemitism emanating from the Operation Protective Edge, which reported early in the new-year. Additionally, and to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism, the government published a final report on its work across all government departments to combat antisemitism.