



Health, Religiosity and Hatred: A Study of the Impacts of COVID-19 on World Jewry

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Abstract

This exploratory study examines the likely causes of the alarming global rise of anti-semitism during the COVID-19 pandemic. Beginning with an appraisal of today's world Jewry, this exploratory study highlights the main social, health, and religious impacts COVID-19 has had on Jews worldwide and goes on to highlight how various Jewish communities managed and adjusted to COVID-19 public health restrictions. From this contextual backdrop, an assessment of how and why antisemitism has surged during the pandemic is presented, along with a review of what efforts are being taken to curtail this rise in hatred toward Jews. A central aim of this study is to underline the point that until meaningful, broad, and international steps are taken to curb online hate, the historic antisemitic tropes and myths suggesting Jews are the cause of disease will undoubtedly evolve and surge (especially across social media) during future pandemics and times of global crisis and unrest.

Keywords COVID-19 · World Jewry · Public health restrictions · Religious freedoms · Antisemitism · Judaism · Canada

Introduction

Without question, the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic stands as one of this century's most devastating global events. Since emerging in late 2019, over 300 M people worldwide have contracted COVID-19, with over 5.4 M dying from the disease (John Hopkins University, 2022a, b). Specific to those nations are where the majority of the world's 15.2 M Jews call home (Dashefsky, 2022), between March 2020 and 2022, Israel has had over 1.4 M cases with 8 K deaths, the United States over

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58 M cases, and 830 K deaths, France over 11 M cases and 120 K deaths, Canada over 2.4 M cases and 30 K deaths, and the United Kingdom over 14.2 M cases and 150 K deaths (John Hopkins University, 2022a, b). Assuming proportionate counts of infection and death among Jews and non-Jews, it is estimated that between March 2020 and March 2022, over 760 K Jews worldwide have contracted COVID-19, with over 10 K of this population dying. Highlighting the devastation COVID-19 has had on Jewish communities around the world, in the two years following the start of the pandemic, over four times more Jews have died because of COVID-19 than died because of combat, war, and terrorism over the past twenty years (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022).

Sadly, yet not surprisingly, notwithstanding the fact Jews around the world have been impacted by COVID-19 in a comparable manner to other populations, Jews (especially Israeli Jews) have yet again been the subject of ridiculous and libelous accusations suggesting they are the cause of the pandemic—an echo of the centuries-old antisemitic tropes and myths suggesting Jews are ‘dirty people’ responsible for the spread of disease (Brachear Pashman, 2021; Ehsan, 2020). As noted in the *Antisemitism Worldwide Report 2021* published by *The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry* at the University of Tel Aviv, conspiracy theories blaming Jews for engineering and profiting from the COVID-19 pandemic began appearing online as early as March 2020 and have continued to spread globally at an alarming rate over social media—findings echoed in similar reports by the *Institute for Freedom of Faith and Security in Europe* (Rose, 2021) and the *Institute for Strategic Dialogue* (Comerford & Gerster, 2021). By reflecting on the state of today’s world Jewry, this exploratory study aims to provide an overview of how and why antisemitism has surged since the emergence of COVID-19 and seeks to highlight possible counters to this age-old plight. Beginning with a general account of today’s world Jewry, followed by a brief description of the main impacts COVID-19 has had on Jews worldwide (including how various Jewish communities managed and adjusted to COVID-19 public health restrictions and laws), it is hoped this brief study will inspire and support more robust and detailed research regarding how COVID-19 has impacted world Jewry.

Today’s World Jewry

Nearly half ($\approx 47\%$) of the world’s 15.2 M Jews live in nations other than Israel—48.1% living in the United States, 2.9% in France, 2.6% in Canada, 1.9% in the United Kingdom, 1.2% in Argentina, 1.0% in Russia, 0.8% in Germany, 0.8% in Australia, 0.6% in Brazil, and the remaining $\approx 1.4\%$ primarily living within South Africa, Ukraine, Hungary, Mexico, and the Netherlands (Dashefsky, 2022). Of significance is understanding that over 75% of world Jewry live in one of fifteen metropolitan regions within one of five liberal democracies (see Table 1).

Over millennia, as the Jewish Diaspora moved throughout the world, unique ethnic Jewish communities emerged, while all sharing the same religion, they each developed distinct and historically rich traditions—the German-descendent *Ashkenazi* Jews, who make up nearly 75% of world Jewry, Iberian-descendent *Sephardic*

Table 1 2020 Ranking of metropolitan regions having largest percentages of world jewry

Global ranking	Metropolitan region	Country	Jewish population	Jewish of metro Pop (%)	Percentage world jewry (%)
1st	Tel Aviv	Israel	3,891,800	94.8	25.6
2nd	New York/Newark/Jersey City	USA	2,109,300	10.8	13.9
3rd	Jerusalem	Israel	992,800	72.3	6.5
4th	Hatifa	Israel	710,600	73.1	4.7
5th	Los Angeles/Long Beach/Anaheim	USA	622,480	4.7	4.1
6th	Miami/Fort Lauderdale/Pompano Beach	USA	535,500	8.7	3.5
7th	Philadelphia/Camden/Wilmington	USA	419,850	6.8	2.8
8th	Paris	France	337,600	2.8	2.2
9th	Washington DC/Arlington/Alexandria	USA	297,290	4.7	2.0
10th	Chicago/Naperville/Elgin	USA	294,280	3.1	1.9
11th	Boston/Cambridge/Newton	USA	257,460	5.2	1.7
12th	Beersheba	Israel	247,600	60.4	1.6
13th	San Francisco/Oakland/Berkeley	USA	244,000	5.1	1.6
14th	London	United Kingdom	230,400	2.4	1.5
15th	Buenos Aires	Argentina	230,300	1.4	1.5
			11,420,990		≈75.1

Source: (Pergola, 2021)

Jews who comprise approximately 20% of world Jewry, *Mizrachi* Jews whose ancestors are of Middle Eastern descent and who account for over 1.5 M of world Jewry, and *Ethiopian* Jews whose early communities can be traced as far back as 15 centuries ago (Himmelstein, 2015; Solomin, 2017). In addition to the millions of ethnic ‘*Jews by Birth*’ or ‘*Jews by Chance*,’ are the estimated 16% of ‘*Jews by Choice*’ who live in Australia, Canada, and the United States—meaning those consciously chose to convert to Judaism (Maor & Ellenson, 2022). Notwithstanding conversions being extremely rare in Israel (Fisher, 2015), they are relatively common throughout the Diaspora (Pew Research Center, 2016a), especially in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2016b), Canada (Brym et al., 2019), and Australia (Graham & Markus, 2018), with $\approx 4,000$ people worldwide converting to Judaism each year.

As also noted by the Pew Research Center (2016b), most of the Jews living in Israel and the United States—which together account for $\approx 80\%$ of world Jewry—consider themselves to have a close and shared destiny with the other. This research found that Israeli and American Jews share strong emotional connections to Israel, which serves as a core tenet of their ‘Jewishness’—a finding Brym et al. (2019) and Graham and Markus (2018) also found when surveying Canadian and Australian Jews. Furthermore, most Jews live in highly developed urban centers situated in wealthy liberal democracies, value close family and community ties, and view education as a core quality for individual and family success. As such, it is no surprise that Jews constitute the highest educated cohort of people per capita in the world—Canadian, followed by Israeli Jews being the most educated (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2020; Brym et al., 2019; Pew Research Center, 2016a, c).

Although numerous similarities exist among Jewish communities around the world (especially between American, Canadian, and Australian Jews), there are also significant differences. In the most comprehensive study of Canadian Jews to date, Brym et al. (2019) found Canada’s Jewish communities were more traditional in their religiosity than in the United States, with most Canadian Jews belonging to either Conservative (26%), Orthodox/Modern–Orthodox (17%), or Reform (16%) congregations, compared to the United States where most belonged to either Reform (35%), Conservative (18%), or Orthodox/Modern–Orthodox (10%) congregations. One of the starkest differences found between Israeli and non-Israeli Jews was that far fewer Israeli Jews support an independent Palestinian state when compared to Jews in the United States, Canada, Australia, and elsewhere in the world (Brym et al., 2019; Graham & Markus, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2016a).

Lastly, specific to world Jewry growth, Israel’s Jewish population has been growing at an annual rate of $\approx 2\%$ (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020), with the Diaspora’s population remaining mainly static year after year yet predicted to enter a decline in the coming years due to aging and low birth-rates (Pew Research Center, 2015). Aside from Israel, Canada’s Jewish population has been growing at a moderate rate, with Canada being predicted to soon have the world’s third-largest Jewish population after Israel and the United States (Brym et al., 2019). Specific to synagogue memberships, as reported by Csillag (2018) and Eliezrie (2019), Jews around the world seemingly are becoming more orthodox in their religiosity, with

Conservative and Reform synagogue memberships declining and membership in Chabad and Modern–Orthodox synagogues growing.

Illness, Death and Public Health Restrictions

Though much has been reported by journalists, academics, and pundits regarding the impact of COVID-19 on specific populations throughout the world—including numerous reports highlighting the disproportionate numbers of infections and deaths among African and Latino Americans (Maciolek, 2020), disadvantaged women in Australia (Wilkins, 2020), First Nations (Russell, 2020) and South Asian Canadians (Mason, 2020), along with Roma and Arab Europeans (Murphy, 2020)—few reports specifically examine the impact COVID-19 has had on today's world Jewry. Aside from the domestic coverage of COVID-19 in Israel, most reports concerning COVID-19 and Jewish populations focus on isolated outbreaks or small protests among the ultra-Orthodox communities of greater London, New York, Melbourne, and Montréal (Dalsheim, 2020). Considering near half the world Jewry live outside Israel (Heilman, 2014)—where $\approx 7\text{ M}$ or 47% of the world's 15.2 M Jewry live—there is great value in examining how this devastating pandemic, and corresponding public health restrictions, have impacted the Jews living in Canada, Europe, the United States, and elsewhere around the world.

Worldwide since mid-2020, governments at all levels, businesses of all sizes, together with religious and community groups, have had to take extraordinary steps to curtail the spread of COVID-19—a virus many times more infectious and deadly than the typical seasonal flu (Maragakis, 2020). Among the five nations having the world's largest Jewish populations, Canada, followed by Israel, have proven the most successful in curtailing the devastation of COVID-19 through the implementation of public health restrictions and laws (see Table 2) (Pew Research Center, 2015; University of Oxford, 2020).

As found by Silver and Connaughton (2022), along with Bricker (2020) and Weakliem (2020), most Americans, Australians, Canadian, French, German, Israeli, and United Kingdom citizens viewed their respective countries as having done a 'good' job dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding the general support for the public health measures taken in these liberal democracies, citizens' rights, and religious freedom groups in each of these countries held public protests or filed lawsuits against their respective governments in opposition of the public health restrictions imposed by each country during the early months of this pandemic (Francis, 2020). Many protests around the world emerged due to social media posts claiming COVID-19 was either a hoax, conspiracy by pharmaceutical companies, or worse, an evil plot by China, Israel, or some secret cabal seeking to destroy freedom and democracy (Ayed, 2020). Noting most objections to the COVID-19 public health restrictions were based on false or misleading narratives spread across the Internet and social media, healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, and community leaders quickly came together to prevent future public health efforts and laws from being appropriated by conspiracy

Table 2 2020—2022 Key COVID-19 data points for nations having largest percentages of world jewish

Country	Total population	Total jewish population	Pop. who are jewish (%)	People/km ²	Mean age	Total COVID-19 cases	COVID-19 Cases/Pop (%)	Total COVID-19 deaths	COVID-19 Deaths/Pop (%)	Jewish COVID-19 deaths
Israel 2020	8,970,900	6,665,600	74.3	400	30.5	423,262	4.7	3,325	0.04	≈2,470
Israel 2022	9,217,000	6,998,000	75.9	426	30.5	1,463,193	14.1	8,259	0.09	≈6,270
USA 2020	328,000,000	5,700,000	1.7	36	38.3	19,968,087	6.1	345,737	0.11	≈6,008
USA 2022	333,000,000	7,300,000	2.2	36	38.5	59,031,556	13.5	835,815	0.25	≈18,322
France 2020	65,140,000	450,000	0.7	119	42.3	2,677,666	4.1	64,759	0.10	≈447
France 2022	65,455,900	446,000	0.7	123	42.3	11,618,224	10.8	126,195	0.19	≈859
Canada 2020	37,200,000	393,000	1.1	4	41.1	584,409	1.6	15,632	0.04	≈165
Canada 2022	38,160,000	393,500	1.0	4	41.1	2,465,578	4.3	30,713	0.08	≈316
United Kingdom 2020	66,600,000	292,000	0.4	281	40.5	2,496,231	3.7	73,622	0.11	≈323
United Kingdom 2022	67,220,000	292,000	0.4	281	40.5	14,279,775	12	150,222	0.22	≈652

Sources: (Berman Jewish DataBank, 2019; Pergola, 2021; John Hopkins University, n.d.-a; John Hopkins University, n.d.-b; The World Bank, n.d.-a; The World Bank, n.d.-b)

2020: ≈9413
2022: ≈26,419

theorists and political opportunists (Ayed, 2020; Hapuhennedige, 2020). As will be discussed, despite efforts by government, public health, and community leaders to quash the misinformation and conspiracy theories relating to COVID-19, as the pandemic progressed over the years, vocal minorities in near every country seemingly increased their rejection of the information and advice provided by public health authorities, healthcare professionals, and academic researchers.

Religion and Religiosity

Unquestionably, COVID-19 restrictions have had a significant impact on religion and religiosity. As discussed by Sabina Magliocco (2020), Chair of the Program in the Study of Religion at the University of British Columbia, ‘*at a time when people most need religiosity, religion has become much harder to practice.*’ Included in Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Judaism are traditions involving communities, families, and friends coming together in places of worship or private residences to pray, celebrate, or mourn. When governments around the world began enacting laws banning public gatherings, religious leaders were put in the difficult position to quickly close their churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues while simultaneously finding new ways to support the spiritual needs of their congregants (Baker et al., 2020).

Thankfully, with hundreds of religious organizations already broadcasting services over the Internet, television, or radio prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, religious leaders needing to transition their own services from in-person to online had voluminous examples they could follow (Yurieff & O’Brien, 2020). A positive result of the global pandemic has been a marked rise in religious observance. As reported by Bentzen (2020), Trumpener (2020), Magliocco (2020), and others, tens of millions of people worldwide have turned to the Internet to find prayers, participate in faith-based discussion groups, and attend online religious services—including a significant increase in younger congregants among all the major religions. As stated by Rabbi Mark Glickman of Temple B’nai Tikvah in Calgary, Alberta, ‘*...the connections and the relationships that we have with one another are the most important things we in a religious community can offer*’ (Thomas, 2020). In many regards, the enactment of new public health laws and requirements to combat the community spread of COVID-19 resulted in many religious groups experiencing increased participation via online services.

Unfortunately, yet understandably, several religious groups have come to view the COVID-19 restrictions and laws as constituting an offense on their religious freedoms as guaranteed by Article 18 of the United Nations *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (Berkmann, 2020). Although religious exceptions to certain laws exist within our legal landscape, the heavy public health, safety, and welfare burden that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on governments thwarted that regime in this case (Guercio, 2020). Whilst most legal scholars agree that §3 of Article 18 allows governments to temporarily limit religious liberties to protect public health if such limitations are not prejudicially or subjectively applied and other viable options are not readily available, it is also widely agreed that governments

must be extremely cautious when invoking ‘temporary’ restrictions on religious liberties (Berkmann, 2020; United Nations, Office of the High Commission for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2020; Ponta, 2020).

Unquestionably, ultra-Orthodox Jews—*whose religious observance prohibits them from using technology during Shabbat, requires regular synagogue attendance for group study and prayer, as well as in-person attendance during religious holidays, weddings, funerals, and other important community events*—were some of the hardest hit by the pandemic. Because the vast majority of ultra-Orthodox Jews live in large households, attach great importance to communal gatherings for prayers, have limited access to robust and personalized healthcare services, and characteristically are skeptical of secular authorities, they were disproportionately impacted by this disease. Around the globe, ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities experienced significantly higher rates of COVID-19-related illness and death when compared to the general population (Kingsley, 2021; Stack, 2021). Moreover, these communities also were targeted by hate-groups intent on maliciously and falsely labeling Jews as being a main vector of the virus. Recognizing the genuine efforts ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities took to mitigate the risks posed by COVID-19 while also maintaining their strict religious traditions and practices when subjected to government-imposed public health restrictions, this community unquestionably was forced into a religious and moral dilemma significantly more impactful than most other religious groups—maintain their devout religious observance or risk possible severe legal sanctions.

Antisemitism, Hate and the Internet

As Luthra and Nandi (2020) identify, global crises (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) nearly always result in an upswell of racist attitudes and discriminatory practices. Specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, with hundreds of millions of people worldwide self-isolated, tens (if not hundreds) of millions of people around the globe turned to social media and other non-traditional news sources to glean information about the origins, spread, and impact of the virus (Bellaiche, 2020). Woefully, since the emergence of the public Internet in the late 1980s, and most notably since the mid-2000s when social media first emerged, hate groups worldwide have gained the unprecedented ability to rapidly disseminate their discriminatory, racist, sexist, and antisemitic views and conspiracy theories (Ayed, 2020). As falsehoods, mistruths, and conspiracy theories about COVID-19 rapidly spread over social media (largely originating in the United States, Russia, China, and Iran), racist tropes and antisemitic canards quickly began to permeate public discourse in the United States and around the world (Bell, 2020; Anti-Defamation League, 2020; Kearney et al., 2020).

With COVID-19 lingering from early 2020 through to 2022, people understandably have become emotionally fatigued, frustrated, and anxious. What’s more, virtually every economy around the world experienced increased unemployment, food insecurity, homelessness, bankruptcy, and violent crime in the months following the pandemic outbreak (The World Bank, 2021). As the global economy declined during 2020 and 2021, people became increasingly isolated and financially challenged,

with widespread fears and frustrations becoming commonplace. Sadly, the global upheaval caused by COVID-19 opened the door for hateful and antisemitic conspiracy theories to develop, flourish, and spread across the world via social media and the Internet. As observed by the Anti-Defamation League (2020), Bond (2021), Jee (2021), Pasta et al. (2021), and Rose (2021), it only took days after the COVID-19 pandemic was announced for antisemitic and anti-Israel groups (including extremists from both the left and right sides of the political spectrum) to yet again resurrect and repackage centuries-old tropes aimed at blaming, demonizing, and disparaging Jews (ADL, 2020).

While illness, death, and public health restrictions clearly posed significant challenges for Jews and non-Jews alike, the Jewish and Asian diasporas unquestionably have had to endure significant and targeted hate and social ridicule. Some of the most hateful and outlandish conspiracy theories to be spread across social media during the pandemic include: (1) Israeli scientists engineered and deliberately spread COVID-19 globally (Anti-Defamation League [ADL], 2020); (2) Hungarian-born Jew, billionaire, and philanthropist, George Soros, collaborated with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other world leaders to spread COVID-19 for financial and political gain (Connolly, 2020); and (3) the Israel Defense Force (IDF) ‘weaponized’ COVID-19 to kill Palestinians (Anti-Defamation League, 2020; Weiner, 2020). Moreover, anti-vaccination activists and other conspiracy theorists from across Europe, North America, and Oceania have also appallingly and repugnantly manufactured the ridiculous narrative that the public health restrictions aimed at curbing illness and death somehow are comparable to the persecution of Jews under the Nazi regime during the Holocaust (Bond, 2021).

Despite the seemingly never-ending and revolting flood of antisemitic aggression that fills the Internet and societies around the world, significant triumphs against antisemitism have been achieved at the global level over the years. One of the more notable advancements in the fight against antisemitism was the 2016 acceptance of a working definition¹ for ‘antisemitism’ by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)—a definition adopted by 21 nations (including Canada) in 2019 (Gerstenfeld, 2019). Similarly, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a global task force comprised of elected national representatives from Australia, Canada, Israel, the United Kingdom, and the United States came together to stop the spread of antisemitic and other hateful content across social media by jointly applying government pressure on technology companies to block antisemitic content (Cotler-Wunsh et al., 2020). Most recently, on December 2, 2020, the Council of the European Union approved a declaration aimed at fighting antisemitism through a coordinated, Europe-wide, education-focused approach—supporting increased educational programming specific to the Holocaust, antisemitism, and Jewish life (European Council, 2020).

¹ The non-legally binding working definition achieved reads: Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

Study Limitations

Of the dozens of studies examining and comparing the many ways COVID-19 has impacted populations around the world, only a handful specifically examined how the pandemic impacted the lives, public health, religiosity, and public safety of Jews—some of the key studies being those of Bankier-Karp and Shain (2022) who studied the impact COVID-19 has had on the mental health of Orthodox Jews, Gaughan et al. (2021) and Staetsky (2021) who studied the variation in risk of COVID-19 deaths among differing religious groups across England and Wales, Gilbert and Gilbert (2021) who examined how South African Jewish communities aided with community outreach and support, Rutland (2021) who examined the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on Australian Jews, Staetsky and Paltiel (2020) who undertook the first global assessment of COVID-19 mortality rates, Trencher (2021) who examined how COVID-19 impacted the lives of American Orthodox Jews, and Livne and Bejarano (2021) who studied the impact COVID-19 has had on the lives of Jewish seniors around the world. Recognizing the scarcity of scholarship specific to how COVID-19 has impacted world Jewry, this study demonstrates that by reflecting on the few regional studies that do exist—*together with a comparison of national and regional Jewish populations against general population counts*—a limited, yet still informative contextual account of the impact COVID-19 has had on Jews and Jewish communities can be achieved.

Conclusion

Often, tragedy and crisis result in an upsurge of personal resolve, community solidarity, and a collective undertaking to prevent future crises—with every crisis having examples of women and men overcoming seemingly impossible odds. Yet, as also can be the case, society returns to pre-crisis social norms in the weeks, months, and years following a crisis. Lovell (1984), Stern (1997), and others rightfully note the important lessons that ought to be learned from a crisis often become diluted or overlooked because they counter the prevailing societal and political post-crisis mindset. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of some of humankind's most devastating global crises, such as the 1918 Flu Pandemic, Great Depression, World Wars I & II, Cuban Missile Crisis, and 9/11, to list but a few, significant and positive social changes and advancements have been realized. These positive social advancements include the enactment of human rights and civil liberties laws and commissions since the late 1940s, Civil Rights and Women's Liberation movements of the 1960s, and a multitude of international conventions and peace agreements that emerged after the Cold War.

Specific to the impact COVID-19 has had on today's world Jewry, there is no doubt Jews worldwide have had to endure not only illness and death but also widespread (and unjustifiable) blame, prejudice, and hate—a misfortune also shared with Asians worldwide. Yet, despite the many challenges, there are also

many successes. Worldwide, synagogue attendance has increased considerably thanks to online services, millions of people have discovered or rediscovered the virtue spirituality has on overcoming adversities, and friends, families, and communities have in many ways become emotionally closer despite physical distancing. Optimistically, as Boin and t Hart (2001) observe, crises often lead to social and political ‘learning’ that ultimately results in positive adaptation, change, and reform—albeit typically modest yet sustained. As insightfully stated by Zakaria (2020), ‘...this ugly pandemic has created the possibility for optimism, change, and reform. It has opened a path to a new world. It’s ours to take that opportunity or to squander it. Nothing is written.’

As observed by Moshe Kantor, President of the European Jewish Congress, the online language, and imagery used by antisemitic groups during the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes a ‘...revival of the medieval “blood libels” when Jews were accused of spreading disease, poisoning wells or controlling economies’ (Guzman, 2020). There is no question that antisemitism has significantly and globally increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite efforts to curb this hate. To combat antisemitism more effectively (especially in the post-COVID era) it is suggested lawmakers, along with religious and community leaders, consider the following:

- Similar to how nations in the early 2000s aligned their respective national laws to more effectively combat transnational crime and terrorism (, it is suggested nations again come together and develop new laws specifically focused on combating online hate, radicalization, and recruitment into hate-focused organizations (Broadhurst, 2006; Chalk, 2019; Harfield, 2008);
- Increase the global capacity to monitoring online (social media) in real-time—by both Internet and social media companies as well as law enforcement and related institutions of civil society—with both legal and market pressure being imposed on Internet and social media companies to quickly remove hateful content, block individuals engaged in spreading hate, and have better safeguards in place to prevent individuals and groups from anonymously posting and disseminating hate online (Hübscher & Von Mering, 2022; Jacobs et al, 2021; Chandra et al, 2021)
- Collaboratively develop online and classroom-based education programs (i.e., short courses or lessons that can be integrated into existing school curriculums, freely available infographics, short yet informative video clips, etc.) that can be easily presented to audiences at the local through to international levels, online, in print, and in person, and most importantly, easily found and understood by the general public (Rothgagel, 2019; von Schnurbein, 2019).

Notwithstanding the volumes upon volumes of books, reports, and articles that address how to identify, analyze, and combat antisemitism, the COVID-19 pandemic stands as a unique and concerning period in the fight against antisemitism. During the pandemic, hundreds of millions of people were required to socially distance and isolate. Schools, businesses, places of worship, recreation and shopping centers, restaurants, and cafés around the world were closed, leaving the Internet and social media as one of the few places where people could socially interact, be

entertained, and acquire up-to-the-minute news. Sadly, the Internet and social media also became places where hateful conspiracy theories and misinformation were quickly and widely absorbed by mostly unwitting people secluded by the pandemic. While recent research suggests people around the world are returning to a sense of social normality—including research suggesting that belief in conspiracy theories and misinformation is not getting worse (see, Jerry, 2022)—Jews and others committed to combating antisemitism must be open to learning from the pandemic and investing in new, global, evidence-based, and education-focused efforts.

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