



Ministry of Strategic Affairs  
and Public Diplomacy

## The Virus of Hate

Delegitimization and Antisemitism  
Converge Around the Coronavirus

ANOTHER SYMPTOM OF  
**CORONAVIRUS**



May 2020



## Main Findings

In September 2019, the Ministry of Strategic Affairs published a report, "Behind the Mask," which demonstrated the connection between antisemitism and the Boycott Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement and its delegitimacy campaign against the State of Israel. The report included over 80 examples of leading BDS activists disseminating antisemitic content, consistent with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.

Following the report, and in the wake of the coronavirus crisis, the Ministry has been monitoring antisemitism and efforts to delegitimize Israel with the linking of the State of Israel and Jews to the coronavirus. The Ministry and other organizations focused on combatting hate speech found multiple cases of BDS-supporting organizations and senior government and quasi-governmental officials propagating antisemitic conspiracies and libels.

The increased antisemitic rhetoric around the coronavirus has also been accompanied by threats of violence against Jews and Israelis. In the US, the FBI warned that right wing extremists may try to infect Jews with the coronavirus; in Gaza, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar warned that if Gaza were to lack ventilators, "six million Israelis will not breathe." Such threats may materialize into acts of violence, especially as stay home orders are lifted and right wing extremists then may vent their anger at Jews and Jewish institutions. As such, it is time to take action to counteract potential violence – through increased information gathering, law enforcement readiness, and augmented security, both physical and technological.

The seriousness of the situation was reflected in an April 17 statement by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief Ahmed Shaheed, who warned that



"Antisemitic hate speech has risen alarmingly since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis" and called for "tougher measures" to counter this worrying development.

US Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism Elan Carr noted that just as “new antisemitism” against Zionism and the State of Israel is an adaptation of classic antisemitism to the new reality of a Jewish polity, the current wave of corona-related antisemitism is similarly predictable. "Antisemitism, in order to remain relevant, always adapts to current events." He noted that his office is putting together a plan to counteract the rise in antisemitism in the US, which includes enhancing security for Jewish communities; promoting the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism; countering antisemitism online; and positive education initiatives on the US Jewish contribution to society.

The antisemitic conspiracy theories against Jews and Israel in the context of the coronavirus, can be divided in two:

1. **“Classic antisemitism” against Jews** – consistent with the centuries-old tradition blood libels against Jews, including for spreading viruses and plague. This antisemitism is perpetrated by **the radical right** in the North America and Europe and, to a minor extent, by the general public and the radical left.
2. **“New antisemitism” against the State of Israel** – consistent with the campaign to delegitimize Israel. This antisemitism is perpetrated by governments and quasi-governmental actors, terror organizations and civil society, specifically: **Iran, the Palestinian Authority, Hamas and the BDS movement.**

**The common motif** of much of the antisemitic rhetoric of both these groups **is the equation of Jews and/or Israel to the coronavirus**, with the libel that Jews/Israel are **using or spreading the virus for political or economic gain.**



	“Classic antisemitism”	“New antisemitism” / Delegitimization of Israel
The perpetrator	Jews	Israel
The libel	Use or spread the coronavirus as a means of control or for financial gain	
The victim	the world (non-Jews)	the Palestinians

Thus, the coronavirus provides a perfect "test case" for observing how a common motif and libel is being used by both classic antisemites on the far right against Jews, and new antisemites and Israel delegitimizers, including the far left, against the State of Israel.

This is significant because until today, the leaders of the BDS movement and the delegitimization campaign against Israel have insisted that their anti-Zionist and anti-Israel rhetoric was not antisemitic, but rather, legitimate political criticism. Now however, the current wave of hateful rhetoric relating to the coronavirus demonstrates simply and clearly how both classic antisemites on the far right and far-left Israel delegitimizers, including BDS, are using a common antisemitic motif and libel.

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Over recent weeks, there has been significant activity to delegitimize Israel using the antisemitic libel described above, by several different actors in tandem:

1. **The BDS movement and civil society actors** – use the coronavirus as the latest reason to demonize Israel, under the pretext of its treatment of the Palestinians.



These groups and individuals equate Israel with the coronavirus online with shared hashtags in an aim to reach millions of people.

2. **The Palestinian Authority** – in tandem with the campaign by civil society actors, is propagating libel and conspiracy theories against Israel in relation to the coronavirus, replete with antisemitic rhetoric. Leading this effort is Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh. He and **the Palestinian authority blame Israel for purposefully spreading of the coronavirus in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.** They claim Israel is sending infected Palestinian workers back to Palestinian territories in order to infect the local population, and claim Palestinians are fighting two viruses – the coronavirus and “the occupation.” More recently, they have proffered a new libel: that **Israel is infecting drinking water and wells, by burying infected medical equipment and allowing sewage tainted with the coronavirus to flow into Palestinian territories.**
3. **Iran** is proliferating antisemitic and anti-Israel content, including through its international foreign-language media outlets, accusing Israel of being behind the coronavirus outbreak.

At the same time, far right activists are active in proliferating antisemitic content connecting Jews with the coronavirus, following the motif and libel outlined above. There is a worry that this antisemitic content spread on major social media platforms will gain tractions with segments of the public.

A recent, more invasive tactic known as "*zombombing*" has begun which the far-left and far-right have used to target web-calls of Jewish and Israeli groups with antisemitic and anti-Israel content. A recent example of such was a Holocaust Remembrance Day memorial hosted by Israel's Ambassador to Germany being disrupted by activists



shouting antisemitic slogans, as was a Yeshiva University videoconference for students with the university's president. Other Jewish organizations reported similar incidents.

In summary, the aim of this report is to highlight, through the detailed examples which follow, the common antisemitic coronavirus motif and libels shared by the "classic" antisemites on the far-right (whose antisemitism is beyond dispute) and "new" antisemitism which demonizes, delegitimizes and holds the Jewish State to a double standard, namely, the Palestinian Authority, Hamas, Iran and BDS (despite their ongoing insistence that they are not antisemitic). The recent hateful rhetoric of both these group around coronavirus puts their shared antisemitic motif and libel in stark relief.



## Recommendations

To counteract antisemitism against the Jewish people and the State of Israel, the following actions are called for:

1. Vigilantly monitor antisemitism, on the ground and online, with an emphasis on identifying the perpetrators behind its spread and their methods of disseminating content. Ideally, there would be a **central clearinghouse** which would gather and analyze all data collected internationally, so as to provide as accurate and holistic situation assessment as possible.
2. Work with leading social media networks to quickly identify and delete any antisemitic content or other forms of hate speech.
3. Call on Western countries to increase enforcement of laws against hate speech and antisemitism.
4. Work with governmental and international bodies to **adopt the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, namely: to invest in preventive security measures to ensure the security of Jewish communities; to enact appropriate hate crime legislation; to adopt the IHRA Working Definition on Antisemitism.**
5. Ensure measures are taken to improve the security for Jewish communities and institutions against threats of physical violence, and examine how both technological and physical security means are augmented to protect Jewish communities.
6. Encourage Jewish and pro-Israel activists to explore ways to increase the security of web-calls and prevent “zoombombing” such meetings.
7. Work in cooperation with the Western countries and **demand that Palestinian officials immediately cease their campaign of incitement and antisemitism against Israel and its citizens, including their claims that Israel is behind the spread of coronavirus.**

# Antisemitism and the Coronavirus

## The Motif: Equating Jews/Israel with the Coronavirus

### The Jews as the Coronavirus ("Classic Antisemitism")



An illustration circulated by the far-right in the US at the outbreak of the virus in late March, depicting the coronavirus as a multi-headed spider-like bearded Jew.  
(via ADL) <https://bit.ly/2ym6HYs>

### Israel as the Coronavirus ("New Antisemitism")



This illustration, depicting the Star of David as the coronavirus, was released on March 20 by the "International Campaign Against Normalization," launched during the crisis to counter any normalization of Arab countries with Israel.  
<https://bit.ly/3fe8JKY>



An illustration of Jews as the replicating coronavirus, appearing here on an American-Russian website for sharing videos.  
<https://bit.ly/2KEoX1S>



An illustration released on April 29 by the Bethlehem Times of a TV with the words "an Arab Drama on Normalization" from which corona virus cells are coming out.  
<https://bit.ly/3dgQfrr>



A sticker blaming Jews for coronavirus found on window of German subway cars in Hamburg. It reads "Corona. Infected!"  
<https://bit.ly/3dcyhX0>



During the week of April 16-23, under the hashtag #covid48, dozens of caricatures and illustrations were published along with the tagline, "Zionism is more dangerous than Corona." The image above equates Israel with the coronavirus.  
<https://bit.ly/3aHIF8y>



### The Jews as the Coronavirus ("Classic Antisemitism")



A far-right cartoon published in the US, shows a man looking into a microscope to find the coronavirus as antisemitic stereotype of a Jew. (via ADL) <https://bit.ly/2z7MuGO>

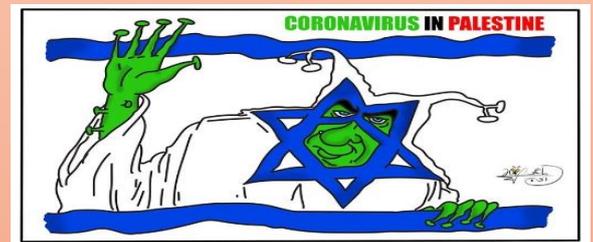
### Israel as the Coronavirus ("New Antisemitism")



Under the #covid48 hashtag, an illustration of the coronavirus with the Star of David. Above the tweet: "The occupation is a virus like Corona. The difference is that the world is fighting Corona, Palestinians are fighting the greatest virus since 1948. Zionism is more dangerous than Corona." The tweet has since been deleted.



A demonstrator in Ohio during an anti-quarantine protest on April 18, holding a sign portraying Jew as a rat under the heading "the real plague". (via Cleaveland.com) <https://bit.ly/35K7miM>



Maher al-Haj, a Hamas-affiliated cartoonist whose drawings are frequently shown in Palestinian media outlets, released the above caricature equating Israel with the Coronavirus outbreak in Palestinian territories. <https://bit.ly/2UgpwU1>



The following is from the Boycott Campaign Palestine, headed by the former Gaza Minister of Health and senior Hamas official Basem Naim, who is now promoting boycotts against Israel. The organization shared several illustrations featuring a Star of David spreading like the Coronavirus, with the caption, "the occupation is the most dangerous virus in the world." The above posted on his account on March 21.

<https://bit.ly/2WyYN5Z>



## The Libel: Using or spreading the coronavirus as a means of controlling

The Jews use or spread the coronavirus as a means of controlling the world (and making a profit)  
("Classical Antisemitism")

Israel uses or spreads the coronavirus as a means of controlling the Palestinians  
("New Antisemitism")

### Coronavirus as a Jewish Conspiracy



An antisemitic caricature published on Telegram and 4Chan on March 22-23, in which a stereotype Jew offers a "Corona Virus shot" while himself protected from it.  
(via ADL) <https://bit.ly/2KTmBw5>

Montreal BDS activist: "The Zionist Jews created the Corona virus"



Jasoud Najjar: Photo: Shehab Facebook video - screenshot  
Jasoud Najjar is a Palestinian-born Canadian who is involved in leading and organizing anti-Israel activities, including BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions), in Montreal.  
On March 6, 2020 Abou Yazan Abuazzza [Jasoud Najjar] posted on Facebook (originally in Arabic):

A BDS activist in Montreal posted: "the Zionist Jews created the Corona virus."  
(via The Documentation Project) <https://bit.ly/2SuYhow>

### Poisoning



A classical antisemitic caricature posted online between March 20-24 depicting France's former minister of health, Agnès Buzyn, who is Jewish and a daughter of Holocaust survivors, poisoning a well, at a time when the coronavirus was spreading in France. (via CRIF) <https://bit.ly/2W9c6LG>



An illustration from the Twitter campaign #covid48 depicting a Palestinian prisoner being injected with the coronavirus. The heading reads: "Palestinian prisoners are still suffering from Zionist experimentations."  
<https://bit.ly/2VXuMOB>



مجاري كورونا

المياه العادمة التي تصفها المستوطنات إلى أراضي الضفة الغربية أصبحت

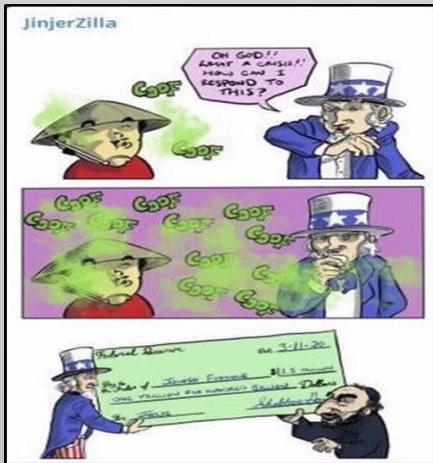
Under the heading "The Corona Sewer," the Palestinian Authority media outlets disseminated accusations of coronavirus-infected sewage, claiming "the spread of Israeli settlements' sewage in the PA territories have become the greatest threat due to Corona".

<https://bit.ly/2WyoK5L>

The Jews use or spread the coronavirus as a means of **controlling** the world (and making a profit) ("Classical Antisemitism")

Israel uses or spreads the coronavirus as a means of **controlling** the Palestinians ("New Antisemitism")

### Willfully infecting with cough



This American illustration shows a supposedly infected Asian man coughing on Uncle Sam (the US government) who, in turn, gives a \$1 trillion check to a stereotype Jew. (via ADL) <https://bit.ly/35BXJTj>



The Palestinian Youth Movement, a leading BDS organization in the United States, published an illustration showing a coughing IDF soldier purposefully spreading Corona among Palestinian prisoners. <https://bit.ly/2YsF4aF>

### Profiteering

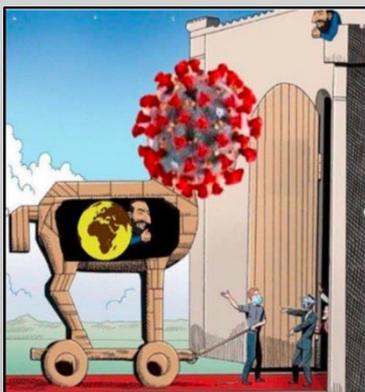


Former Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke, Jr. suggests that Jewish billionaire and philanthropist George Soros of being behind the coronavirus. Posted on Twitter on March 15. (Via ADL. Tweet removed by Twitter) <https://bit.ly/35BXJTj>



Palestinian Authority spokesman Ibrahim Milham explaining the alleged lack of cooperation of Israelis with preventive measures against coronavirus "because they love money." <https://bit.ly/2y2dLt6>

### Conspiracy to subjugate



The figure shows the virus as a "Trojan horse" with a Jew infiltrating under the guise of the coronavirus. Posted on Telegram on March 15. (via ADL) <https://bit.ly/2ypBOIM>



A caricature disseminated by Addameer, a BDS-promoting NGO with links to the PFLP terrorist group, showing an Israeli soldier throwing in a coronavirus-grenade into a Palestinian prisoner's cell. <https://bit.ly/2KTBBu3>



The Jews use or spread the coronavirus as a means of **controlling** the world (and making a profit) ("Classical Antisemitism")

Israel uses or spreads the coronavirus as a means of **controlling** the Palestinians ("New Antisemitism")

Conspiracy to subjugate



Conspiracy theories circulating on social media led to this post by actress Rosanna Arquette on Twitter on March 17, wondering why Israel had been working on a coronavirus vaccine "for a year already" and claiming that Jared Kusher, President Trump's Jewish son-in-law, is a "major investor." She subsequently removed the tweet.



Carlos Latuff, the main cartoonist of the-BDS campaign, published an illustration showing Israel purposefully enabling the spread of the Coronavirus in the Gaza Strip depicted as a locked prison.

<https://bit.ly/2SaBgH4>



Maher al-Haj, a Hamas-affiliated cartoonist whose drawing are frequently shown in Palestinian media outlets, drew Israel and its "settlements" as a monstrous Coronavirus devouring the "West Bank"

<https://bit.ly/2QrQN4I>



The PA's Prisoner Affairs Authority released a caricature of a Palestinian prisoner, who is being fed through transfusion, is menaced from one window by an IDF soldier (drawn with a large nose) who tries to reach for the transfusion, as the coronavirus tries to do the same from the opposite window.

<https://bit.ly/2KSfHXN>

The Jews use or spread the coronavirus as a means of controlling the world (and making a profit) ("Classical Antisemitism")

Israel uses or spreads the coronavirus as a means of controlling the Palestinians ("New Antisemitism")

### Conspiracy to subjugate

**David Duke** @DrDavidDuke · Apr 17  
Dr Duke & Mark Collett – The ZioDemic Apocalypse: It's Now Here & It's not Covid-19 – It's the Hysterical Zio Media and Gov Scorched Earth Response!  
[davidduke.com/friday200417/](http://davidduke.com/friday200417/)

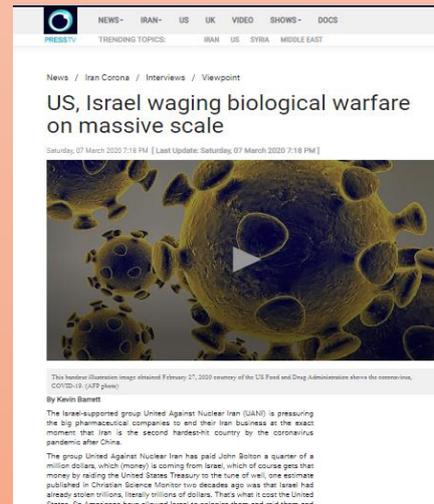


David Duke, the former leader of the KKK, claiming the "Ziodemic apocoplypse" and the "Ziomeia" as the culprits behind the US government's "scorched earth repsonse" to thwart the spread of the coronavirus.

<https://bit.ly/2S8cbMX>



This illustration, part of the #covid48 campaign, shows an Israeli tank with a coronavirus as its turret, charging toward a Palestinian, with the heading, "Zionism is a greater threat than Corona." <https://bit.ly/35zetKM>



The Iranian news outlet Press TV published an article titled "US, Israel waging biological warfare on massive scale"

<https://bit.ly/3aJv5vo>



The popular Iranian-backed Spanish-language news network, HispanTV, published an article titled "The new coronavirus is a result of a Zionist plot."

<https://bit.ly/2SdiH9t>

## Iran — Spreading antisemitism against both Jews and Israel

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus, Iran has been disseminating antisemitic conspiracy theories against Jews and the State of Israel – through its media outlets, its clerics, and in cultural activities.

**The media:** Iran uses its existing media platforms operating outside Iran in foreign languages. See examples above, including from the Iranian English news channel PRESS TV and Hispan TV.

**Religion:** Recently, the official website of Supreme Leader Khamenei hosted senior cleric Ahmad Abdi, who stated that "Jews, especially Zionists, are obviously responsible for supernatural things like these. They are known to work with the demons and the devil. Their spy agencies, like the Mossad, are also involved..." Iran's official media channel, IRIB also promoted his interpretation of recent events.

**Culture:** In March, a special coronavirus art exhibition was held in Tehran, supported by the government – the Ministry of Culture and the Office of the Vice President for Information and Technology. This exhibition is similar to previous Iranian-sponsored events promoting Holocaust denial. Most of the illustrations, also published on a dedicated website for the exhibition, promote the regime's narrative, among them several which are clearly antisemitic:



Examples from the Iranian Cartoons Exhibition on coronavirus that attribute its spread to Israel and the United States as a means to take over the world.

<https://www.irancartoon.com/site/gallery/gallery-of-intl-cartoon-contest-we-defeat-coronavirus>