



Lemkin Institute Statement on the Rise of Antisemitism Worldwide

Released on November 22, 2023

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention is alarmed by the rise of antisemitism worldwide in the wake of Hamas's lethal October 7 attack on southern Israel and the State of Israel's genocide of the Palestinian people that is unfolding in Gaza. In particular, we were horrified by the events in the Republic of Dagestan, Russia, on 29 October 2023, when a mob broke into Makhachkala airport waving Palestinian flags, inciting violence, and screaming antisemitic chants. The crowd rushed to the plane, which arrived from Tel-Aviv, Israel, searching for Jews on board with the intent of harming them. Luckily, none of the passengers were harmed. While Russian officials and operational services acted quickly and firmly, detaining around 83 protesters and jailing 15, the scale and rapid development of the incident clearly showed how antisemitic attitudes can quickly transform into mob violence.

Sadly, this was not an isolated incident. The day before, on 28 October 2023, angry Dagestani residents inspected several hotels in Khasavyurt, Dagestan, searching for Jewish guests.

Given the long history of antisemitism in the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and post-Soviet Russia, Dagestani authorities and the Russian government should take both these incidents very seriously. The situation in multi-ethnic Russia is very sensitive. As the tide of antisemitism rises, other forms of racism increase as well, putting at risk not only Jewish citizens and residents but all non-Slavs. Therefore, the Lemkin Institute urges the Russian government to focus its efforts on curbing and denouncing all forms of antisemitism.

Unfortunately, Russia is not the only country where instances of antisemitism have been observed since Israel began its war against Gaza in response to the attacks of 7 October 2023. In Montreal, Canada, a Jewish school has been shot at twice in recent weeks, while in Berlin, the houses of Jewish residents were graffitied with the Star of David, and in New York City the Sholem Aleichem Cultural Center was defaced. Stars of David were also painted onto buildings in Paris neighborhoods and suburbs. These are only a few examples out of many that have occurred since October 7.

Instances such as these impact Jewish communities worldwide, not only imperiling their sense of safety today but triggering generational trauma born of centuries of antisemitic violence. Over and over, Jewish people have endured small-scale acts of hate and large-scale acts of genocide, especially in Europe. The memory of events such as the Spanish Inquisition, the pogroms in Europe and the Russian Empire, and of course, the Holocaust, can never be erased and must never be forgotten.

The modern state of Israel, established after the Holocaust within the British Mandate of Palestine, arose partly in response to this history of persecution and genocide. It was built upon the nationalist ideology of Zionism, which emerged in nineteenth century Europe in response to anti-Jewish violence and hostility as well as the limits of assimilation. In Europe Zionism was a national liberation movement aimed at establishing self-determination and sovereignty for the Jewish people. In practice, this ideology set up a zero sum dynamic between identity groups that is common to settler colonial projects and frames Palestinians as illegitimate residents on the Biblical territory of the Land of Israel (Eretz Yisrael) that must be returned to the Jewish people. Establishing the state of Israel has relied on the dislocation of Palestinian Arabs who had been living in the historical land of Palestine for centuries. Zionism has therefore been used to justify Israel's unequal treatment of Palestinians since 1948. Given the horrific treatment of Jews in Europe and elsewhere, Israel and Zionism are felt by their supporters to be necessary for the survival of the Jewish people in our current world.

However, not all Jewish people are Zionists. Many Jews all over the world oppose Israel's policies of apartheid toward Palestinians and are protesting to end its current genocide in Gaza. In reality, not all Zionists are Jewish. Christian Zionists, particularly in the United States, are fervent supporters of Israel because they believe that the return of Jews to Israel is in line with a biblical prophecy. Nineteenth and twentieth century European leaders supported Zionism as a "solution" to Europe's violent rejection of Jews as equal and full members of European society.

Unfortunately, despite this complex history, ire against the Israeli government's policies is frequently used as an excuse for antisemitism, making Jews everywhere less safe. No matter how outrageous the genocidal operation currently being prosecuted by Israel against Palestinians, Jewish people cannot and must not be "punished" for Israel's genocidal treatment of Gazans. Anyone who stands up for the lives and rights of Palestinians, denouncing Zionism, should keep this well in mind and also protect the lives and well-being of the Jewish people in this vulnerable time and always. Especially in light of the global scourge of antisemitism, support for the security of Jewish life must be clearly and repeatedly proclaimed.

The Lemkin Institute rejects all forms of antisemitism. We appeal to the governments of the world to closely monitor its rise and act decisively to protect their citizens of Jewish faith and heritage. We note that the prevention of antisemitism cannot and should not be used as an excuse

to suppress pro-Palestinian voices. Instead, leaders should protect free speech, shore up existing democratic institutions, and nurture a culture of social, political, religious, and economic equality within their states as a means of addressing rising hate speech worldwide. We believe that Palestinians and Israelis—Jews and Arabs, of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths—must find a way to coexist on their beautiful and deeply meaningful historical land in peace and equality. All peoples deserve safety and security in the full expression of their identities.