



THE SYMBOLIC WEIGHT OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT AND THE RISE OF ANTISEMITISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA WORLDWIDE

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The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has undeniably been a source of tension and strife, not just within the region but also globally. The conflict, with its deep-rooted historical and political complexities, often spills over into different parts of the world, triggering a range of emotions and reactions.

One unfortunate consequence has been the rise of antisemitism and Islamophobia on a global scale. As the conflict escalates, it tends to evoke strong sentiments among various communities, leading to misguided generalizations and prejudices. This phenomenon creates the situation that certain individuals mistakenly equate the actions of political entities with entire religious or ethnic communities.



In the case of antisemitism, individuals of Jewish descent, regardless of their personal stance on the conflict, may find themselves unfairly targeted. This is not only unjust but also counterproductive, as it distracts from the nuanced realities of the situation and further perpetuates stereotypes. Similarly, Islamophobia often surfaces as a result of the conflict, with Muslims worldwide facing discrimination and prejudice. Just as it's unfair to hold all Jews responsible for the actions of the Israeli government, it's equally unjust (and profoundly ignorant) to blame all Muslims for the actions of certain Palestinian groups.

Voice of America [has registered](#) this trend in the US since the beginning of the conflict. For instance, as is it sadly well-known, on October 14, a 6-year-old Palestinian American boy [was killed](#) because he was Muslim. Also, too many incidents of antisemitism and Islamophobia in a number of campuses are inflaming America, [calling three college presidents](#) to testify before the House committee on Education on Tuesday, Dec. 5. Harvard University's Claudine Gay, the University of Pennsylvania's Liz Magill and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sally Kornblut were called to explain and defend their approaches directed to stopping antisemitic language, actions and sentiments—[whose responses have also triggered mixed reactions](#).

In UK [the situation is similar](#), and especially [in the schools](#), where there has been a notable increase in discrimination, vandalism, graffiti, and abusive behavior since the beginning of October. Recently, even the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby [addresses the issue](#) of antisemitism and Islamophobia during a vigil in London, emphasizing the importance of unity in the fight against hatred.

The same happens in Germany, where since the escalation of Gaza conflict, Muslims face growing animosity and widespread suspicion suggesting a broad assumption that they support Hamas. Mathias Rohe (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg) [said](#)



[that](#): “At schools for example we now hear that Muslim students are asked to take a position on these terrible incidents in Israel and Palestine”, stating further that those advocating for this assume, as a default position, that all Muslims express support for Hamas.

In Italy the trend is the same: between October 7 and October 30, 2023, [there were 42 episodes](#) of antisemitism, twice as many as during the same period in 2022. This occurrence follows the development observed in other Western countries. The [Osservatorio Antisemitismo](#) methodically collects all cases of anti-Semitism, ranging from graffiti to hostile attitudes to actual attacks. Not to mention some television programs that blame Islam outright for the war, also linking the issue to that of significant immigration patterns, which have nothing to do with the matter.

The same phenomenon is observed [in Canada](#), [in France](#) (which is home to Europe’s largest Jewish and Muslim communities), [in South Africa](#), [in India](#), and other countries. For specific data on anti-Semitism in the world, the NGO “Anti-defamation League” [drafted a file](#) that collects all global antisemitic incidents after the Hamas attack.

These incidents collectively underscore the explosive symbolic impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, wherein the intricacies and nuances of the conflict are swiftly overshadowed and transfigured. The repercussions extend beyond the immediate geopolitical context, creating fault lines between Jewish and Islamic communities present in countries across the globe. The symbolic weight of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems to transcend its geographical boundaries, permeating various societies and sparking reactions that often deviate from an actual understanding of the situation. What begins as a localized conflict becomes a catalyst for widespread discord. The reasons behind the conflict, rooted in historical, political, and territorial complexities, risk being oversimplified and distorted in the process.



The challenge lies in navigating through the symbolic minefield that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become on a global scale. It requires a concerted effort to separate the political aspects of the conflict from the diverse and multifaceted communities it represents. Engaging in open and informed dialogue, promoting education about the historical context, and fostering mutual understanding are crucial steps toward mitigating the divisive impact of the conflict and working towards a more harmonious coexistence among different communities worldwide.

Therefore, it is crucial for people to separate political disagreements from prejudiced attitudes towards entire communities. Constructive dialogue and efforts towards understanding the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are essential to prevent the spread of antisemitism and Islamophobia. In a world that is increasingly interconnected, fostering empathy and promoting informed discussions becomes imperative to overcome the divisive repercussions of this longstanding conflict. It is imperative to do this to prevent the conflict from escalating into a full-fledged religious war, something we thought we had moved beyond. And maybe it's time to reexamine and revisit the concept of *religious tolerance* developed in modernity—a new theoretical effort on this subject is anticipated as crucial.