![INACH logo — bringing the online in line with human rights]

REPORT
INACH ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2020
14-15 October 2020

Introduction

The theme of the INACH annual conference 2020 was 'antisemitism'. It is not the first time INACH covered this subject. In 2016, INACH organized the first conference on online antisemitism in Jerusalem, Israel. That conference was a great success. Participants from 21 countries, among them politicians, ambassadors, and representatives of NGOs attended.

Due to the Corona situation INACH organised the 2020 conference online via ZOOM instead of in Malaga, Spain. Sadly, like online hate in general, antisemitism only grew since 2016 coming from all sectors of society, activism, and ethnicity and religion. No longer is the main protagonist of hate against Jews white and extreme right. The conference looked at left -and right-wing antisemitism, Holocaust Denial, the history of The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) and the use of law to combat antisemitism and Holocaust denial. It also looked at perspectives on antisemitism from Feminist, Religious, Youth and Black viewpoints. Lastly, empowering educators to prevent antisemitism, antigypsyism and other types of hate online (Project Re-ACT) and the use of technology to curb anti-Semitism (OpCode project) was discussed. Her excellency Ms. Hana Jalloul, Spanish secretary of state for migration, attended the conference to speak words of welcome.
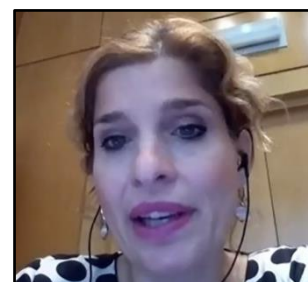

Day 1

More than 80 participants from all over the world registered for the INACH online conference 2020 on antisemitism. The participants were welcomed by **Suzette Bronkhorst, Secretary general of the INACH board**.

The **opening speech** was made by **Philippe Schmidt**, chairman of INACH. Schmidt welcomed all participants and introduced the conference theme and program. Schmidt noted that *'Since the last conference in 2016, antisemitism is still prevalent as if it is not possible to learn the lessons of the past. The rise of antisemitism appears in everyday life and has become disturbingly normalised and comes from all sectors of society, ethnicity and religion. Antisemitism has become mainstream'*. Schmidt underlined that antisemitism is not a Jewish problem but a global problem and should be delt with globally.

After Mr. Schmidt, **Ms. Hana Jalloul Muro, Spanish secretary of state for migration** gave the participants a short description of the situation of antisemitism in Spain today, and the measures the government takes to combat the wave of antisemitic voices and to provide protection to the Jewish community and its institutions.

The key-note speaker of the day was **Dr. David Hirsh**, senior lecturer at the Goldsmiths University of London. Hirsh gave a presentation about **'Left wing antisemitism'**. He explained that 'antisemitism is not the exclusive province of the far Right and has taken hold on the political Left, in which individuals claiming to hold anti-racist views employ antisemitic narratives in the course of their disapproval of the policies of the State of Israel'. Hirsh described three events around 2000/2001, that can be seen as symbolic for the re-emergence of left-wing antisemitism: the end of the peace process, the re-statement of political antisemitism that put Zionism as a key problem during the UN World Conference against Racism and 9/11 symbolic for the resurgence of Jihadist and Islamist antisemitism. In the UK these developments were followed by the rise of a movement to exclude Israeli academics from campus in the UK in 2003, the so-called academic boycott. He described how antizionism, the BDS movement and the antisemitism that comes with it, found its way into the Labour Party. In the 21st century it is the process of the mainstreaming of left-wing antisemitism that takes root.

After the break the group was split into **4 parallel working groups** of which the **highlights** per working group are reported below:

1. The use of law to combat antisemitism and Holocaust denial –Karoline Fernandez de la Hoz, director of OBERAXE, Spanish monitoring centre for racism and xenophobia

The presentation focused on the MoU between ministries in which they try to connect all different stakeholders that intervene in hate-cases, including prosecutors, council of judges, NGO's etc. with the goal to improve information and analyse the traceability of hate crimes along the judicial track in order to identify gaps and progress in the penal response to hate crimes. One part of the project focusses on analysing the verdicts. The reason for this focus is that there is an important difference

between the number of incidents and the number of verdicts in Spain. Analysing the verdicts gives insight into why this is happening which eventually helps in using the law properly. With that aim the whole process is analysed from the actual incident; the police report up to the court ruling. The working group discussed what is the best strategy to get the best results and to have hate content removed from the internet. It was found important to make use of all tools available to protect the rights and dignity of the people, varying from prosecution, counter narrative, education to awareness raising etc.

2. The history of BDS – Saskia Pantell, President, Zionist Federation of Sweden
Pantell gave a description of the hold BDS has on Sweden's public opinion, turning all Jews and Israeli sympathizers into racists and thus banning all considered Israeli. BDS has affected all levels of society beginning with contracts being canceled between Israeli producers and those in Sweden, banning of import of Israeli goods and even branding all buyers of products with a recognizable stamp into 'apartheid' sympathizers. She described the operations of the small Jewish community, holding their meetings of worship in underground locations in order to heighten the security of the participants. Her words lead to a discussion between the participants of the workshop around the issue of the Right and Left wings who use the Israeli and Jewish people as a symbol of evil and as a mode of recruiting believers.

3. The Holocaust as a figure of speech – Ionuț Codreanu, Active Watch Romania
The topic was discussed in the light of the new development of Facebook policies. The question was raised of whether a transition can be expected to more trivial and hidden language to 'compensate' this new Facebook policy. In the workshop Codreanu showed several examples of the use of the Holocaust as a figure of speech. It was concluded that trivialisation of the Holocaust requires education and awareness raising and that it is important not to wait for things to change. It was suggested to insist for example on public figures and influencers to correct the narrative, to develop more regressive narrative that could eventually reach the regular user in order to approach the Holocaust in a correct historical manner.

4. Right wing Antisemitism - Joel Finkelstein, Princeton University
In the workshop Finkelstein showed visibly how antisemitism has become the number one hate topic to be found on the internet and that there are feedback loops between the online and offline (examples such as Charlottesville, Pittsburgh mosque were mentioned) and also between different platforms (from irregulated platforms to mainstream platforms). Finkelstein also talked about solutions such as AI and how de-platforming can have a suppressive effect on extremism online. The workshop essentially called for an international regulatory body that can really do something about online hate speech.

**** END of DAY 1 ****

DAY 2

On day 2 of the INACH online conference on antisemitism the participants were welcomed by **Ronald Eissens, Director General of INACH**. Around 65 participants tuned in for another afternoon with interesting speakers and workshops.

The program started off with 4 plenary presentations on Intersectionality within antisemitism, followed by a Q&A.

Jeremy Jones, an Australian-based international interfaith and human rights activist, presented his findings on **'Antisemitism and other Religions'**. Jones explained that the question that is always present, when talking about antisemitism and other religion(s), is how much each example has to do with religion and how much it is using religion as a pretext for a bigotry in a particular cultural context. Nowadays, (pockets of) antisemitism can be found around the world and within every different part of Christianity and across the broad spectrum of Islam, as well as some other faiths. Unfortunately, there are also plenty of sources from which people can draw negative conclusions about Jews, as there are many stereotypes within Islam, Christianity and other religions. At the same time, Jones noted, that we also have to realise that this year is the 55th anniversary of Nostra Aetate, in which the Catholic Church recognized the legitimacy of Judaism and Jews as brothers and sisters, and it is also a year in which Saudi Arabia is hosting the (online) G-20 interfaith forum to encourage people from different religious backgrounds to come together and work together for the common good.

Mina Kupfermann was invited to offer a **feminist perspective on antisemitism**. Based in the UK, Kupfermann is an artist specializing in contemporary antisemitism. She showed the audience a short, impressive film telling the story behind her artwork 'Witness', which she felt compelled to make as a result of her experiences of antisemitism as a British Jew. Witness, a monumental, 3-meter-tall artwork containing hundreds of pieces of social media material, tells a story about a moment in time that could be any moment in Jewish history. It asks the viewer to recognize antisemitism, speak up against hatred, think about the language they use, and listen.

Kupfermann elaborated on the similarities she found between antisemitism and misogyny, highlighting that the demand to provide quantifiable evidence of the abuse that is being faced is itself a form of gaslighting. She raised the question of how the emotional damage that has been done to a single person can be quantified.

The **Youth perspective** was presented by **Ilan Selby**, policy officer at the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS) based in Brussels. EUJS is the European umbrella organisation of Jewish student unions throughout Europe. Selby elaborated on the work of EUJS, their experiences and approach

towards antisemitism. EUJS works on union building and political advocacy. The EU Commission / FRA 2019 report on young Jewish perception and experiences with antisemitism, which showed that half of young Jews experienced antisemitism, forms an important basis for their work. Next to focussing on antisemitism EUJS also puts an emphasis on a positive Jewish identity, establishing positive representations and learning experiences. A project currently run by EUJS is the #deleteantisemitism campaign. In response to the EU Digital Services Act EUJS, together with 6 other organisations, promoted a set of 10 policy recommendations for better regulation on social media platforms. In terms of experiences, BDS seems to be the focal point of questions received by students. EUJS believes that BDS is an inherently antisemitic movement. Next to building coalitions and gaining partners, EUJS also fights for causes that other minorities are facing. One such example is the '#actforromalives' campaign that highlights discriminatory governmental policies in Eastern Europe.

Larry Olomofe, Executive director of People of African Descent Link Resource (Padlink), former advisor at the OSCE and based in Poland, addressed the **Black perspective** on the intersectionality of antisemitism and other forms of discrimination. How does this overlap lead to collaboration? Olomofe gave the examples of the sporting arena and social media, how these are misused as legitimate grounds for antisemitism and other forms of discrimination and how this led to collaboration and solidarity building amongst communities. Olomofe also elaborated on how current political rhetoric is informing action and justifying intolerance in the streets, while at the same time there is a lack of response by authorities against acts of antisemitism, acts of violence against people of colour and Roma across the region. Olomofe underlined the importance of working together at the grass roots level to share knowledge and to get access to resources to combat (online) hate and hate incidents.

After the plenary session the group was split in 2 workings groups. The following highlights were presented:

1.   ***Empowering educators to prevent antisemitism, antigypsyism and other types of hate online - Project Re- ACT - first results and next steps*** – led by **Claudia Schaefer**, director of projects at INACH and project coordinator of Re-ACT.

The session looked at ways to empower educators to prevent different forms of hate speech online, especially when it comes to antisemitism and antigypsyism. Two recently finalized research papers and reports have been presented by their authors. In a third input, an overview of the identified needs of educators, youth workers and activists for their prevention work has been shared with the audience along with the concept of the online 'prevention-hub'.

Main points presentation 1 (LICRA)
- There is an increasing level of manifestations of antisemitism and an increasing type of stereotyping, conspiracy theories and hateful myths. These tend to be widespread with the development of social media.

- There is a worrisome trend of normalising antisemitism, sometimes linked to political/historical/covid-19 events.
- The online and offline is connected and reinforcing each other.
- It is important to understand different structures, the rhetoric and elements of myths in order to understand how to deconstruct and counter these narratives and to be able to combat antisemitism and antigypsyism.
- It is important to not only be aware of the importance of education, but to be proactive and contribute to the production of knowledge and find ways to combat and dismiss antisemitism.

Main points presentation 2 (ROMEA)
- The project and comparative report have proved to be useful to understand the impact of antigypsiym offline and online and progress made by NGO's in reporting and sanctioning antigypsyism.
- Most frequent Roma rhetoric relates to criminalisation and dehumanization.
- There is a worrying rise of hate speech online. Covid-19 seems to function as an enabler of hate speech online and offline.

Main points presentation 3 (SYNYO)
- Short overview of the design process of the prevention-hub and outline of the conducted need analysis.
- There is a significant lack of best practices, which are highly sought after by the surveyed audience.
- Translation issues and time constrains hinder the spread of needed resources
- Material on certain topics is currently missing, especially in the area of antigyspyism
- Further support is needed in the area of resilience building

During the discussion it was said that there is a need:
- To identify different groups or people to mobilise resources and a particular narrative to create an awareness of the situation and mobilise towards joint action.
- For more funding, especially to addressing antigypsyism.

The presented analysis and comparative report as well as a summary of the user survey and needs analysis can be downloaded from the website of project Re-ACT, at https://react.inach.net/publications/
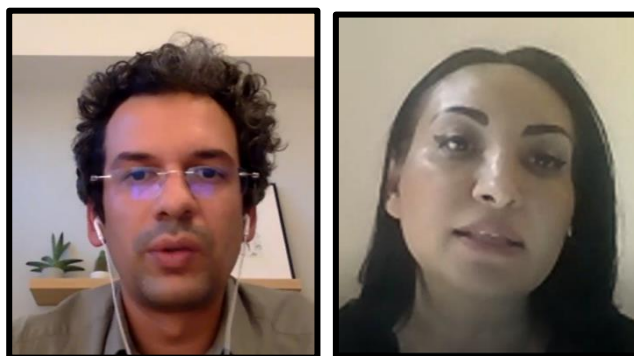

Fig. Workshop rapporteurs

2. *Using technology to curb antisemitism* – led by **Radu Raileanu**, program coordinator at Active Watch Romania and **Jonathan Vick**, INACH representative for North America.

- The industry uses AI to combat hate speech in 'general'; Twitter/Facebook look at patterns of behaviour instead of language and depend on reviewers for analysing the content. 50% of problematic content Twitter identifies is flagged due to AI.
- Twitter can use AI automatically for pieces of content that were banned based on the review of trusted flaggers.
- Trusted reporters remain the main source for identifying harmful content; AI can only flag content for review by actual human beings.
- A few projects were presented that use AI to combat hate speech, i.e.: Hatemeter, Decoding antisemitism (developing solutions that can be integrated in social media accounts and keep haters away) and OpCode (solution that allows moderators to shift out potentially hateful content more easily and educates users at the same time).
- In response to the OpCode project it was mentioned in the discussion that when people know they are being watched, they behave better.
- How well does AI recognise hate speech and understand context? Research found that the higher the level of hostility in a message, the better the results.
- Technology is not there yet, we rely a lot on human interactions, social media still relies a lot on human evaluations of the content.
- It is important for NGO's to collaborate more, to integrate technology in their own work and work with coders in order not to lose the start in the fight against hate speech through these new technologies.

Ronald Eissens closed the INACH annual conference 2020 by thanking all the presenters and participants who were able to join from all over the world. A lot of good practices, projects and information was shared that can help all participants in their efforts to curb online antisemitism.

****

This conference has been made possible thanks to the cooperation between INACH and the following organizations:
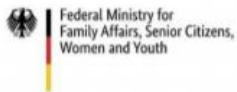
Op:Code
Open Code for Hate-free Communication

Movimiento contra la Intolerancia

ERGO Network
European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network

Funding