

Making Jewish voices audible: Documenting antisemitism from a Jewish perspective in Germany since October 7, 2023.

Interview partners wanted.

October 7, 2023 marks a turning point in Jewish historiography. Since on that day the terrorist organization Hamas murdered more than 1,200 people, took over 240 hostages and deported them to Gaza, and fired several thousand rockets at Israel, a new quality of threat has been felt by Jews worldwide. Although the victims included Arab Israelis, migrant workers and tourists, the vast majority of the victims of the massacre carried out by Hamas and its allies were Jewish Israelis. No act of antisemitic violence, no act of terror primarily directed against Jews, had claimed more victims since the Holocaust. While the massacre and the suffering of the victims dominated international media outlets in the first few days after October 7, media as well as public attention soon shifted to Gaza and the situation of the Palestinian civilian population there, which has experienced and continues to experience an enormous amount of suffering as a result of the ongoing Israeli attacks. While the full extent of the massacre became apparent to Jews living inside and outside of Israel only in the weeks and months that followed October 7, the majority of the international public had already started to lose interest and the events of that day were pushed into the background in favor of more recent ones.

At the same time and as a direct result, there was a sharp rise in antisemitic violence throughout the Western world. This applies to Germany in particular. In an initial [survey](#) from November 9, 2023, the Federal Association of Departments for Research and Information on Antisemitism (RIAS e.V.) spoke of an increase of over 320 percent compared to the previous year. In absolute figures, this corresponds to an increase from around seven to 29 antisemitic incidents per day. Antisemitism manifests itself in various forms, ranging from the destruction of property and verbal threats to physical violence and (attempted) arson attacks. The fact that Jews feel threatened by antisemitic attacks and that their everyday lives have changed massively since October 7 is also demonstrated by the sharp rise in the [number of requests](#) received by OFEK e.V., a counseling center for antisemitic violence in Germany. It is further backed by numerous [newspaper articles](#) and [documentaries](#) in which Jews, predominantly those well-known to the public, report on their changed everyday lives in Germany.

While with RIAS e.V. a documentation center for antisemitic crimes in Germany has existed since 2018, there has so far been no central contact point that scientifically and systematically collects, documents, and evaluates Jewish voices and their perspectives on and experiences of antisemitism in Germany since October 7, 2023. Similar to documentation and oral history projects in [Israel](#) and the [USA](#), which have begun to systematically document the massacre of October 7 and collect the voices of the victims and eyewitnesses, we are concerned primarily with the systematic collection, documentation and evaluation of the experiences of Jews in response to the antisemitism that has been spreading in Germany since October 7.

Yet, the collection and documentation of antisemitic violence from an explicitly Jewish perspective looks back on a long tradition. As early as the Kishinev pogrom in 1903, a group of Jewish writers, journalists and academics set themselves the task of collecting evidence documenting antisemitism, as well as interviewing and encouraging Jews to record their experiences. The collected material was intended to be used later for their own historiography, but also as evidence in possible court proceedings.

Similar documentation projects were carried out later in the context of other pogroms during and after the First World War and especially during and after the Shoah. In addition to the well-known Ringelblum archive in the underground of the Warsaw ghetto, this also includes the numerous Jewish historical commissions that were founded throughout Europe towards the end of World War II and systematically recorded Jewish testimonies and eyewitness accounts. On several occasions these were also used as evidence in the various court trials of the post-war period. Today, the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation (Shoah Foundation), founded by Steven Spielberg in 1994, is probably the largest documentation project of Jewish voices, collecting the experiences of Holocaust survivors worldwide in the form of video interviews in order to make them accessible to future generations as part of educational and research projects.

Aim of the study:

The research project aims to build on this tradition of witnessing. Our interdisciplinary research team consists of Dr. Anne-Christin Klotz, historian, and cultural scientist with a focus on the history of the Shoah in Eastern Europe and Yiddish culture, and Dr. Jasmin Spiegel, psychologist, and psychoanalyst with a clinical focus on post-traumatic stress disorder. As an interdisciplinary research team that operates at the interface between psychology, history and cultural studies, we have set ourselves the goal of collecting, recording and bearing witness to Jewish perspectives on and experiences with antisemitism after the massacre of October 7 within the German context. The interviews are to be conducted by using interview guidelines and analyzed scientifically. The questions that will be asked relate, among other things, to the experience of various forms of antisemitism, the perceived safety as Jews in Germany and the relationships with the respective non-Jewish environment. Furthermore, a possible transmission of familial traumas, influences, and changes on the individual's own Jewish identity as well as possible coping strategies will also be examined.

Procedure of the study:

The interviews are scheduled to last around 60 minutes. They will be conducted via Zoom, recorded for analysis and – given the consent of the interviewees – archived in an anonymized way. We are explicitly addressing all people who either feel affected by antisemitism or would like to share their perspectives on this topic. The interviews will usually be conducted in German, English or Hebrew and are subject to confidentiality. If it is not possible to conduct the interview in one of these languages, interviews can also be conducted in other relevant languages such as Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish, Polish, Spanish or French on request.

Confidentiality of the data:

Only the employees involved in the study have access to the material collected and are subject to strict confidentiality without exception. Your data will be encrypted, i.e. reference data such as name and date of birth will be deleted and replaced by a key (code) (pseudonymization). The key list remains exclusively with the employees involved in the study. You have the right to view your data at any time. The data will be archived in an anonymized way. We comply with all data protection regulations and will not make your name public anywhere, neither in a publication nor on the Internet. You can end your participation in the project at any time if you wish. This will not result in any disadvantage for you. Unfortunately, the interviews cannot be remunerated.

Contacting us:

If you are interested in participating in the project and being interviewed, please contact the following address: interviewproject@savion.huji.ac.il. We will contact you as soon as possible and arrange an interview date.

Research team:

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