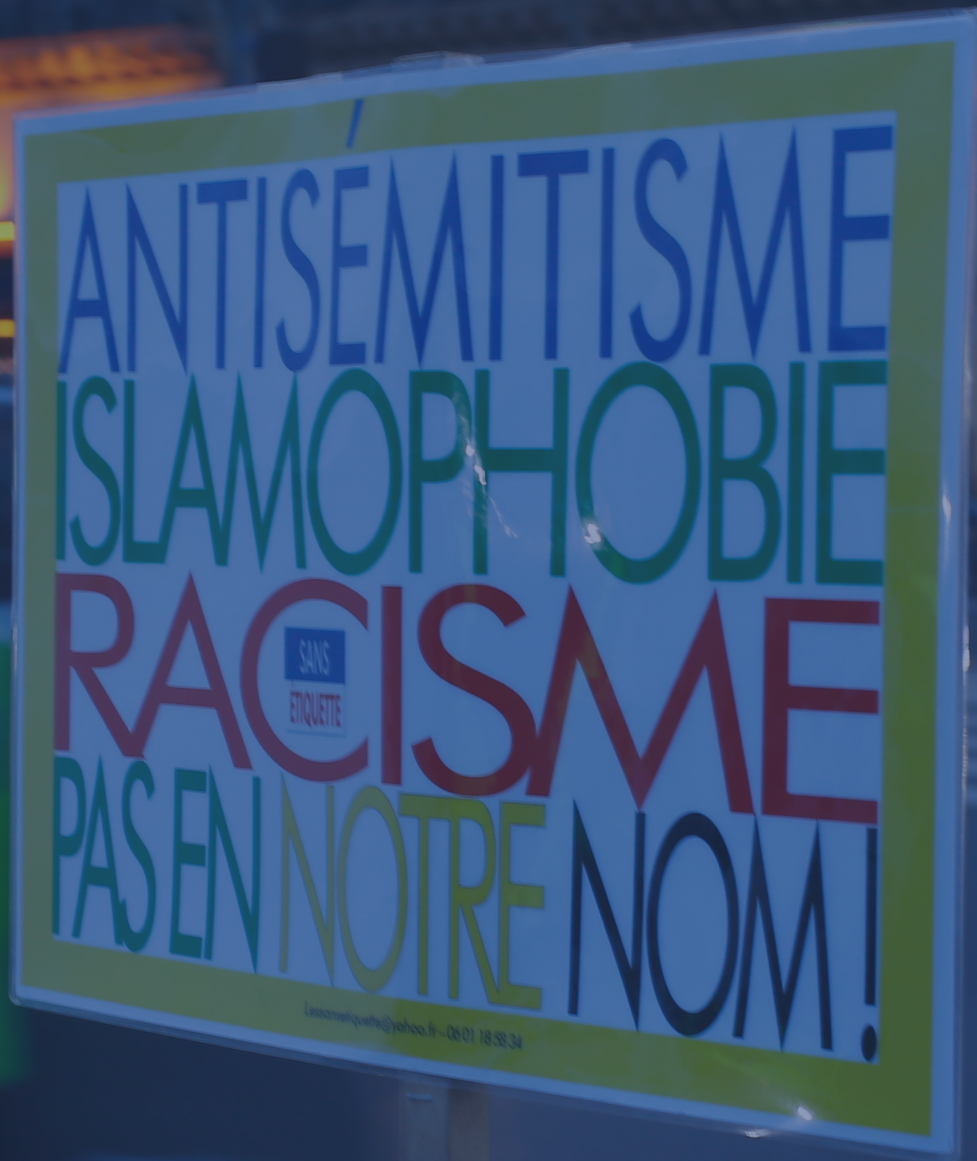


## SPECIAL REPORT

# ACCELERATING HATE:

*The Impact of October 7 on Terrorism  
and Political Violence in the West*

September 2024



THE SOUFAN CENTER SPECIAL REPORT

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Violence in the West*

CO-AUTHORED BY

CLARA BROEKAERT, COLIN P. CLARKE, MICHAELA MILLENDER,  
ANNIKA SCHARNAGL, AND JOSEPH SHELZI

THE SOUFAN CENTER  
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THE **SOUFAN** CENTER

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## Table of Contents

<b><i>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b><i>INTRODUCTION</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Risk of Lone Actor Terrorism</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>State-sponsored Terrorism</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b><i>CASE STUDIES</i></b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>US Case Study</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>UK Case Study</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Italy Case Study</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>France Case Study</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>Germany Case Study</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b><i>COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS</i></b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b><i>CONCLUSION</i></b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b><i>ANNEX</i></b> .....	<b>56</b>
<b>Data Collection Methodology</b> .....	<b>56</b>
<b><i>ABOUT THE AUTHORS</i></b> .....	<b>60</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The horrific attacks by Hamas on October 7, 2023, fundamentally shifted the security posture of the Middle East, while also having severe humanitarian consequences and ripple effects in countries throughout the globe, including many in the West. This TSC Special Report, generously sponsored by the Airey Neave Trust, aims to explore how October 7 impacted several Western countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy. While the conflict remains ongoing – and indeed will reverberate long after the fighting actually ends — this report attempts to take the pulse of five Western countries just shy of the one-year anniversary marking the attack.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, and in line with trends that have been unfolding in recent years, there has been a spike in both Islamophobic and antisemitic incidents across all five countries — it is not an either/or phenomena. Still, the data underpinning these incidents remains challenging, limited, and frequently incomplete, often collected by civil society groups or non-profit organizations with different definitions of the terms. Government data varies on how it is collected, if it is recorded at all, across local, state, and federal levels. This makes it exceedingly difficult to compare the data rigorously and make generalizable conclusions with confidence. The data that is available, however, does suggest that extremist groups are leveraging the conflict to promulgate and amplify preexisting antisemitic and Islamophobic narratives. In other words, the terrorist attacks of October 7 and the Israeli response provide an opportunity to promote their hateful narratives and repackage them for the moment, often inciting their followers to wreak havoc and pushing their supporters to engage in violence.

Shortly after October 7, the heads of intelligence services in the United States and elsewhere spoke openly about the nature of the threat, warning that terrorist groups and their followers would seize upon the conflict in Gaza to launch attacks of their own in the West. Due in part to proactive and preventative measures of law enforcement, intelligence services, and security agencies, there has not been a high-profile, mass casualty terrorist attack in the West linked directly to the war in Gaza. There have, however, been many violent incidents, acts of intimidation and coercion, and charges of hate crimes associated with the conflict. And few would disagree that the conflict itself acts as an accelerant to other societal issues, providing fertile ground for violent extremism, the spread of radical ideologies, and a general deterioration of the social fabric.

In some cases, longstanding societal ills and polarization have been exposed and amplified. During the recent riots in Southport, UK, there were calls to target both Jews and Muslims.<sup>1</sup> The politics of hate can result in strange bedfellows, with unusual alliances across the far-left and the far-right, united in a common goal of exploiting sentiments of antisemitism and Islamophobia. There is also the issue of reciprocal radicalization, which is a concept wherein extremist groups feed off one another in a cycle of escalating rhetoric or even actions.<sup>2</sup> There could even be attempts by the far-right to actively co-opt the conflict to radicalize and recruit those on the far-left within the pro-Palestine movement towards virulent antisemitism. The far-right has also used the pro-Palestine movement as a way to proliferate anti-immigration narratives in the UK. During the recent protests, legions of social media posts attempted to equate violent Islamism with the pro-Palestine movement more broadly.

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<sup>1</sup> Shira Li Bartov, “After UK Riots, British Jews Grapple with Extremism That Targeted Them,” *Jerusalem Post*, August 16, 2024, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-814986>.

<sup>2</sup> Kim Knott, Simon Copeland, and Ben Lee, “Reciprocal Radicalisation” (Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats, August 2018), 4, <https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/reciprocal-radicalisation/>.

The attacks of October 7 and the conflict in Gaza could be generation shaping in the same way that the Vietnam War was for millions of people across the world in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As college and university students return to campus in the fall, administrators, faculty, and staff are bracing for more protests and demonstrations. As students currently in college and graduate school age, their demographic may portend a significant shift in political alliances and allegiances over time. In the United States, this could signal an evolution in American citizens' views of and support for Israel. Abroad, these protests may lead to enduring transnational dimensions that could shape the future of the pro-Palestinian movement. There have been some transnational connections forged in several of the cases studied in this report, including in Germany.

And as is becoming increasingly more common in myriad cases of political violence, the role of emerging technologies looms large in the countries analyzed in this report, especially the role of 3D-printed weapons – seen in Italy and the UK – a phenomenon quickly becoming quotidian, even as it remains somewhat nascent. Lastly, foreign meddling, especially by Russia, remained prevalent, as Moscow's penchant for disinformation was evident in multiple cases, including France and the United Kingdom.

## INTRODUCTION

Almost overnight, the Hamas terrorist attacks of October 7, 2023, altered the global terrorist threat landscape. The attacks injected new energy into global terrorism worldwide and served as a catalyst for violent extremists across the ideological spectrum. That this feat was achieved by Hamas, a group largely considered an afterthought by many counterterrorism analysts outside of Israel, is interesting in and of itself, demonstrating the power that a spectacular attack can have, altering the status quo and plunging countries and regions into conflict.

There are several important challenges related to the current threat landscape. To begin with, the targets of potential attacks are diverse. Although on the rise in recent years before October 7, antisemitic and Islamophobic attacks have spiked worldwide in the aftermath of the attacks, and the cumulative impact could go beyond hate crimes and morph into terrorism. Moreover, whether Jewish or Muslim, there are a number of soft targets that are related to the threat, with synagogues, mosques, community centers, and other religious and community institutions that could be attacked.

Intelligence agencies and law enforcement authorities have no control over the images that flood the media news cycle, pictures and videos of civilian casualties and other forms of death and destruction. As mentioned in the 2024 US Intelligence Community Annual Threat Assessment, "Media coverage of the destruction and loss of life are being amplified by active social media campaigns on all sides, roiling public reactions among neighboring countries and around the world."<sup>3</sup> US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas also commented on this aspect of the conflict, concluding that "graphic visuals will likely continue to circulate online and garner significant media attention, potentially acting as a catalyst

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<sup>3</sup> "2024 Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community" (Office of the Director of National Intelligence, March 11, 2024), 24, <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2024-Unclassified-Report.pdf>.

for various violent actors who have shared and continue to share this kind of material.”<sup>4</sup> These horrific images, either in isolation or combined with propaganda and/or disinformation, could serve as triggers for individuals contemplating violence in the name of a specific cause or ideology.

It is increasingly important to pay attention to videos that go viral or have the potential to, or forms of doctored or altered media used as part of a disinformation campaign, either orchestrated by individuals, groups, or nation-states. Taking a proactive approach could mitigate some of the fallout, especially as law enforcement and security agencies identify the ways in which this type of information is resonating with online and offline communities. Still, the real images and videos themselves, are disturbing in their own right, without the additional element of digital manipulation.

The virus of antisemitism remains the connective sinew of myriad violent ideologies across the spectrum. Antisemitism partly explains the emergence and growing popularity of so-called “salad bar ideologies,” where extremists pick and choose certain aspects of different ideologies to form an inchoate, yet still dangerous, worldview.<sup>5</sup> Antisemitism is a foundational element of salad bar ideologies and also helps explain the concept of “fringe fluidity,” wherein extremists make the transition from neo-Nazis to militant Islamism or jihadism.<sup>6</sup> In the wake of the Hamas attack and the ongoing conflict with Israel, we should expect to see more of this, particularly in the West.

And although the most pressing threat to the West seems to be from self-radicalized or inspired lone actors, it is important not to discount the impact that established terrorist groups can have on the current threat landscape. Shortly after the attacks of October 7, perhaps unsurprisingly, jihadist groups weighed in with their approval of the attacks. Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), an al-Qaeda offshoot based in South Asia, called the Hamas attack the deadliest blow to Israel in the history of the conflict, noting that “the attack exposed the cowardice of Israeli soldiers.”<sup>7</sup> Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen lauded the Hamas attack and spoke about the “myth” of Israeli military might, prodding its supporters in the Muslim world to harness the momentum of the “Al-Aqsa Flood,” the name Hamas gave to its operation.<sup>8</sup>

Al-Qaeda’s Somalia branch, known as al-Shabaab, released a statement that read: “we salute all the brave heroes, the brave commandos, and all those stationed in the Holy Land, and we say to all of them: May God reward you with good on behalf of the Islamic Ummah [worldwide Islamic community], and may God

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<sup>4</sup> “Testimony of Alejandro N. Mayorkas Secretary U.S. Department of Homeland Security Before the Committee on Homeland Security U.S. House of Representatives on ‘Worldwide Threats to the Homeland’” (Washington, DC, November 15, 2023), 4, <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023-11-15-HRG-Testimony.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> “IntelBrief: The Counterterrorism Challenge of ‘Salad Bar’ Ideologies - The Soufan Center,” accessed August 20, 2024, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2021-march-29/>.

<sup>6</sup> Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Madeleine Blackman, “Fluidity of the Fringes: Prior Extremist Involvement as a Radicalization Pathway,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 45, no. 7 (January 7, 2019): 555–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1531545>.

<sup>7</sup> Abd. Sayed ترمذی سادات [@abdsayeddd], “‘Al Qaeda in the Subcontinent (AQIS) Celebrated the Hamas Attack on Israel...’” Tweet, *Twitter*, October 8, 2023, <https://x.com/abdsayeddd/status/1711030557449056502>.

<sup>8</sup> Elisabeth Kendall [@Dr\_E\_Kendall], “#IsraelPalestineWar: New Statement by #AlQaeda in #Yemen Celebrates Operation #AlAqsaFlood & the End of the Myth of #Israel’s Might.” Tweet, *Twitter*, October 9, 2023, [https://x.com/Dr\\_E\\_Kendall/status/1711471181625278567](https://x.com/Dr_E_Kendall/status/1711471181625278567).



reward you for your jihad and your noble deeds.”<sup>9</sup> Several other jihadist groups praised Hamas, including Hurras al-Din, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Ansar al-Islam, and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.

Working through its central command apparatus, in addition to legions of online supporters, Islamic State (ISIS) is seeking to capitalize on hostile sentiments stirred up throughout the Muslim world by Israel’s assault on Hamas in Gaza. In late October 2023, Islamic State’s Central Command issued its most overt and aggressive call yet for attacks on Israeli, Jewish, and Western targets.<sup>10</sup> Relatedly, there is a growing threat of ISIS Central and its branches carrying out coordinated external attacks and continuing to incite supporters to act.<sup>11</sup> A pro-ISIS group chat with the express purpose of updating supporters on developments in Gaza was created.<sup>12</sup>

In al-Naba, the official weekly ISIS newspaper, the organization suggested that it remains obligatory for its supporters and all Muslims to strike inside Israel and “to target the Jewish presence throughout the world, whatever the form of this presence, especially the Jewish neighborhoods in America and Europe.” The communique likewise demanded that Islamic State supporters conduct attacks inside the West – in retaliation for their war on Islamic State and for US-led Western support for Israel. So far, these threats have not yet materialized in terror attacks on US soil.

But these groups are doing more than just praising Hamas and denigrating Israel. According to FBI Director Christopher Wray, as a direct result of the conflict in Gaza, “multiple foreign terrorist organizations have called for attacks against Americans and the West,” while al-Qaeda “issued its most specific call to attack the United States in the last five years.”<sup>13</sup> The US State Department subsequently issued a worldwide travel warning for Americans, noting the “potential for terrorist attacks” abroad “due to increased tensions in various locations around the world.”<sup>14</sup>

### ***Risk of Lone Actor Terrorism***

For individuals who are already radicalized, incitements can serve as triggers, increasing the likelihood that an extremist will act on these appeals and attempt to plan and conduct an attack. The threat of a “lone wolf” actor attempting to exploit the conflict between Israel and Hamas and incited to violence by an ideology of hate is of particular concern. Lone attackers inspired by, or reacting to developments within the broader Israel-Hamas conflict, could pose a threat to various groups in the United States, including Jewish, Muslim, and Arab-American communities.

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<sup>9</sup> Caleb Weiss, “Shabaab Celebrates Hamas-Led Invasion of Israel, Calls People to Jihad,” Long War Journal, October 11, 2023, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2023/10/shabaab-celebrates-hamas-led-invasion-of-israel-calls-people-to-jihad.php>.

<sup>10</sup> Colin P. Clarke and Lucas Webber, “How the Islamic State Propaganda Machine Is Exploiting the Israel-Hamas Conflict,” *Irregular Warfare Initiative* (blog), November 21, 2023, <https://irregularwarfare.org/articles/how-the-islamic-state-propaganda-machine-is-exploiting-the-israel-hamas-conflict/>.

<sup>11</sup> Colin P. Clarke and Lucas Webber, “How the Islamic State Propaganda Machine Is Exploiting the Israel-Hamas Conflict,” *Irregular Warfare Initiative* (blog), November 21, 2023, <https://irregularwarfare.org/articles/how-the-islamic-state-propaganda-machine-is-exploiting-the-israel-hamas-conflict/>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Jeff Seldin, “Hamas Attack Galvanizing Terror Groups Worldwide, Warn US Officials,” *Voice of America*, October 31, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/hamas-attack-galvanizing-terror-groups-worldwide-warn-us-officials/7335141.html>.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of State - Bureau of Consular Affairs, “Worldwide Caution,” May 17, 2024, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/worldwide-caution.html>.

As mentioned in recent Congressional testimony from FBI Director Wray, the Hamas-Israel conflict could inspire violent extremists and lone actors to attempt attacks on US soil. According to Wray, “Here in the United States, our most immediate concern is that violent extremists — individuals or small groups — will draw inspiration from the events in the Middle East to carry out attacks against Americans going about their daily lives.”<sup>15</sup> According to the most recent Annual Threat Assessment of the US intelligence community, the events of October 7 have encouraged individuals “to conduct acts of antisemitic and Islamophobic terror worldwide” with supporters of terrorist groups leveraging the situation in Gaza, especially the suffering of Palestinian civilians, to recruit new members and inspire attacks.

Lone actors, or so-called “lone wolves,” have become a central component of the terrorist threat landscape.<sup>16</sup> In their landmark study of lone wolves, Mark S. Hamm and Ramón Spaaij define lone wolf terrorism as “terrorist actions carried out by lone individuals, as opposed to those carried out on the part of terrorist organizations or state bodies.”<sup>17</sup> However, even while acting alone, the lone wolf’s “radicalization to action may be spurred by violent media images, incendiary books, manifestos, and fatwas.”<sup>18</sup> As such, terrorist groups and their supporters will likely study the tactics, techniques, and procedures used by Hamas, both in its attack on Israel, but also in how it spreads terror online through its social media and propaganda releases related to the attack. In the past, Islamic State has successfully leveraged its ability to inspire individuals online, urging supporters in the West to launch lone-actor attacks against a range of targets.

Given the intensity of the conflict between Hamas and Israel, few expect the situation to improve any time soon. And even as Islamic State continues to have a particular disdain for Hamas, it does not mean that the jihadists will forgo taking advantage of the fighting for their own purpose — pushing supporters to strike in the West, nudging fence-sitters toward action, and aiming to radicalize a growing pool of angry individuals, pushing them closer toward extremist violence that will very likely have deadly results in the West. The same applies to far-right violent extremists, who will also likely continue to use the conflict to mainstream their narratives and ideology, recruit new members, and encourage followers and sympathizers to emulate the October 7 attacks.

### ***State-sponsored Terrorism***

In addition to the threat posed by terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS and a global network of far-right extremists and lone actors inspired by a range of violent ideologies, there is also a threat posed by state-sponsored terrorism. In the United States, this is encapsulated mainly by the Iranian Threat Network (ITN) and Tehran’s worldwide network of proxies.<sup>19</sup> According to Secretary of Homeland Security Mayorkas, “Among state actors, we expect Iran, the principal funder of Hezbollah and Hamas, to remain the primary state sponsor of terrorism and continue its efforts to advance plots against individuals in the United States.”

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<sup>15</sup> “IntelBrief: Dangerous Escalation in Gaza Imperils Civilians, Risks Global Ramifications,” The Soufan Center, November 2, 2023, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2023-november-2/>.

<sup>16</sup> Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley, “The Psychology of Lone-Wolf Terrorism,” *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (June 2011): 115–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2011.581835>.

<sup>17</sup> Mark S. Hamm and Ramón Spaaij, *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism* (Columbia University Press, 2017), 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> “IntelBrief: The Iranian Threat to the U.S. Homeland,” The Soufan Center, January 14, 2020, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-the-iranian-threat-to-the-u-s-homeland/>.

Depending on how the situation in the Middle East evolves, Iran could look to stir up trouble on US or Western soil through several different threat vectors, including by using supporters of Hamas or Hezbollah to launch attacks.<sup>20</sup> As Brian Michael Jenkins suggested, “Hamas could try to recruit operatives in the criminal underworld as Hezbollah and Iran have done. Iran has extensive connections in this domain and has used them to plot assassinations abroad, including in the United States.”<sup>21</sup>

The Annual Threat Assessment also referenced the role of state-based actors in fomenting instability in the homeland surrounding events related to the war in Gaza. The briefing noted that the conflict itself was fueled by “a regionally ambitious Iran” while also being “exacerbated by narratives encouraged by China and Russia.”<sup>22</sup> US adversaries see a golden opportunity to wreak havoc at little cost, keeping Washington focused on internal matters, leaving less bandwidth to deal with the foreign policy adventurism of Tehran, Beijing, and Moscow. State-sponsored disinformation campaigns are now a regular facet of everyday life. When crises like Gaza erupt, they present foreign actors with myriad chances to meddle in domestic politics, exacerbating existing societal tensions and political fissures.

### **Methodology**

Through a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, this report analyzes the evolution of the terrorist threat landscape in the West post-October 7 through five case studies: the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, and Germany. The case studies were selected to encompass Western countries that have been frequently targeted by international terrorist organizations operationally and narratively, with relatively sizable Jewish and Muslim populations, and for geographic and language diversity. The case studies also include European Union (EU) and non-EU countries.

In order to allow for a comparison across the case studies, this report has utilized the working definition for antisemitism outlined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance,<sup>23</sup> which has also been adopted by all five of the case study countries in this report.<sup>24</sup> The states and organizations that monitor antisemitism that are quoted in this report use this definition or recognize the preeminence of this definition in recording their data. The definition utilized for Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hate is the working definition of the United Nations.<sup>25</sup> The data on Islamophobia quoted in this report aligns with this definition. Both definitions were selected in order to distinguish between incidents targeting particular communities, from political opposition to particular policies.

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<sup>20</sup> Colin P. Clarke, “Hezbollah Has Been Active in America for Decades,” *The National Interest*, August 26, 2017, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/hezbollah-has-been-active-america-decades-22051>; Colin P. Clarke, “Could Hamas Become a Global Threat?,” *Foreign Policy*, August 23, 2024, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/12/19/hamas-terrorism-threat-global-europe-germany-arrests/>.

<sup>21</sup> Brian Michael Jenkins, “The Israel-Hamas War Has Upended the Terrorist Threat Matrix,” *The Hill*, November 22, 2023, <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/4321121-the-israel-hamas-war-has-upended-the-terrorist-threat-matrix/>.

<sup>22</sup> “Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community,” 5.

<sup>23</sup> The working definition by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance which has 35 member countries, including all five of the case studies examined in this report. See: <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>.

<sup>24</sup> “The IHRA Member Countries,” International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, accessed September 5, 2024, <https://holocaustremembrance.com/who-we-are/member-countries>.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, “What Is Islamophobia?,” United Nations (United Nations), accessed September 5, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/anti-islamophobia-day>.

Thanks to the generous support of the Airey Neave Trust, this report fits within The Soufan Center’s broader work analyzing security trends within an ever-changing geopolitical landscape. The Special Report seeks to contribute to understanding how terrorists and violent extremists capitalize on events to further their own agendas and how law enforcement and counterterrorism practitioners can utilize preexisting tools, or explore the utility of new ones, to address such challenges.

## CASE STUDIES

### *US Case Study*

#### *Introduction*

The ramifications of the October 7 attack on Israel in the United States have highlighted that the perception of threat actors by the US public has changed significantly since the al-Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001. Just like 9/11, the complex, multi-phase assault was deliberately designed to provoke massive retaliation, with the fallout from the retaliation — in this case, Palestinian civilians killed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in Gaza — serving as a recruiting tool for Hamas and a range of other violent extremist organizations, including jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda, ISIS, and their global network of affiliates, branches, and franchise groups. The conflict has also allowed groups like Hamas and the Houthis to whitewash their public image on a global stage, refashioning themselves as revolutionary-style freedom fighters, akin to the romantic notions of Che Guevara.

But unlike 9/11, where seemingly no Americans sympathized with al-Qaeda or their Taliban hosts in Afghanistan, the attacks of 10/7 and the subsequent war in Gaza have led to stark divisions within US society. The fact that the Palestinian cause is at its core rooted in nationalism rather than global jihad, has led to widespread sympathy in the Arab world and beyond – often aligned with broader anti-colonialist movements and narratives, many of which are the driving force behind college and university protests in the West. Moreover, the mass destruction of Gaza post-October 7, including the severe loss of civilian life and displacement, has further cemented concern for Palestinians and advocacy on their behalf. In some cases, this has translated into support for Hamas itself, equating pro-Hamas stances with pro-Palestinian sentiment. Yet jihadist groups like al-Qaeda and Islamic State look down with scorn upon groups like Hamas, which they see as illegitimate due to Hamas’ participation in elections and focus on Palestinian nationalism.<sup>26</sup>



<sup>26</sup> Colin P. Clarke and Michael Kenney, “Hamas is Not ISIS—and the Comparison Itself Is Counterproductive,” *Politico*, November 21, 2023, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2023/11/21/hamas-isis-are-not-the-same-00128107>.



Against this backdrop, the result has been a drastic spike in antisemitism, Islamophobia, and hate crimes within the United States. There have also been incidents of political violence motivated by the ongoing war in Gaza, which itself is a direct result of the terror attacks on October 7. In comparison to the other case studies presented in this report, the US has not released data on foiled plots connected to October 7 on US soil.

For the past year, numerous high-ranking US government officials and cabinet-level secretaries have offered dire assessments of the impact that 10/7 has had on the terrorism threat landscape. Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Christopher Wray said the number of threats is at a "whole other level" since Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel, adding, "I've never seen a time where all the threats, or so many of the threats, are all elevated all at exactly the same time." Avril Haines, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), added: "The crisis has galvanized violence by a range of actors around the world. And while it is too early to tell, it is likely that the Gaza conflict will have a generational impact on terrorism."

This section will focus on what a generational impact could look like and the different ways in which threats might manifest. It also looks at the effect of October 7 on US public opinion, the proliferation of antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents, and violent acts committed linked to the Hamas-Israel conflict on US soil.

#### *Pre-and Post-October 7 Terrorist Threat Landscape*

Due to the extensive financial and military support the US provides Israel, one of the greatest concerns within US national security and counterterrorism circles is that terrorist groups, from jihadists to far-right extremists, will seize upon the dark energy resulting from the 10/7 attacks to engineer a high-profile attack on the homeland. In the immediate aftermath of the Hamas attack, myriad terrorist groups distributed propaganda in an attempt to galvanize and incite their followers. Commenting on the catalyzing effect of the Hamas attack, former Director of the National Counterterrorism Center Christine Abizaid observed, "How AQAP, ISIS, or other regional groups may seek to capitalize on HAMAS' 7 October attack to recruit and rebuild anti-West attack capabilities will be critical to assess as tensions and violence rise as the conflict continues."<sup>27</sup>

The attacks of October 7 were somewhat unique in that they drew the attention of, and were seemingly applauded by, violent extremist organizations and their supporters across a broad swath of the ideological spectrum. Despite historical enmity between Hamas and groups like al-Qaeda and Islamic State — related to both Hamas's engagement with electoral politics and willingness to collaborate with Shia extremist groups — numerous al-Qaeda-linked groups heaped praise upon Hamas, while also taking the opportunity to celebrate the death of Israelis.

"Although they have a different agenda, IS and al-Qaeda, as well as smaller violent Islamic groups, will probably benefit from the current conflict. The recent Quran burnings in Sweden, the attacks by Hamas, the military response by Israel can all contribute to fueling a rise in violent extremist and/or jihadist terrorism," according to Tanya Mehra of the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) – The

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<sup>27</sup> Testimony of Ms. Christine Abizaid, Statement for the Record, Annual Threat Assessment to the Homeland, November 15, 2023, <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023-11-15-HRG-Testimony.pdf>

Hague.<sup>28</sup> It's the amalgamation of different factors, to some degree, that make the threat landscape so dangerous and unpredictable. Austin Doctor, a political scientist at the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (NCITE), warned about the "combined ripple effects" of the 10/7 attack and Israeli reprisal.<sup>29</sup>

Just days after the attack, Kathy Hochul, the governor of New York, released a statement that read: "While there are no credible threats at this time, online monitoring has shown increased chatter from Neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and pro-Hamas extremists."<sup>30</sup> The New York Police Department (NYPD) called the current situation a "heightened threat environment," and far-right extremists linked to groups like the Proud Boys have spoken openly online about a desire to harm or kill Jewish people.<sup>31</sup>

Multiple Telegram channels associated with white supremacists celebrated the attacks and urged others to do the same. Telegram channels affiliated with the Atomwaffen Division (AWD), Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM), and various accelerationist groups also shared videos and comments, urging their followers to use Hamas as an example.<sup>32</sup> Extremists operating on the 'Terrorgram' network have been sharing content related to the conflict, "hoping to inspire mass attacks on Jewish communities."<sup>33</sup> Telegram channels and Gab users made overt threats about killing Jews, using inflammatory and racist terms and inciting others to action. As noted by Catrina Doxsee, a terrorism expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), "It's important to understand how international attention on a conflict like this can exacerbate some of the race- and ethnicity-based violent extremist attitudes that we're confronting within the United States."<sup>34</sup> As mentioned in recent Congressional testimony from FBI Director Wray, the Hamas-Israel conflict could inspire violent extremists and lone actors to attempt attacks on US soil. According to Wray, "Here in the United States, our most immediate concern is that violent extremists—individuals or small groups—will draw inspiration from the events in the Middle East to carry out attacks against Americans going about their daily lives."<sup>35</sup> According to the most recent Annual Threat Assessment of the US intelligence community, the events of October 7 have encouraged individuals "to conduct acts of antisemitic and Islamophobic terror worldwide" with supporters of terrorist groups

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<sup>28</sup> Tanya Mehra, "How the Conflict between Hamas and Israel Fuels Terror Threats in the West," International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - ICCT, November 14, 2023, <https://www.icct.nl/publication/how-conflict-between-hamas-and-israel-fuels-terror-threats-west>.

<sup>29</sup> Austin Doctor, "The Signal in the Noise: The 2023 Threats and Those on the Horizon," Lawfare, January 5, 2024, <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/the-signal-in-the-noise-the-2023-threats-and-those-on-the-horizon>.

<sup>30</sup> Lauren Said-Moorhouse and Lianne Kolirin, "Protests Over Israel-Hamas War Sweep the Globe as Nations Ramp Up Security," *CNN*, October 11, 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/11/world/global-protests-israel-hamas-war-intl-cmd/index.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Ken Dilanian et al., "Pro-Hamas Extremists and Neo-Nazis Flood Social Media with Calls for Violence," *NBC News*, October 18, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/-hamas-extremists-neo-nazis-flood-social-media-calls-violence-rcna121043>.

<sup>32</sup> Counter Extremism Project, "Extremist Content Online: Hamas Attack Documented on Telegram, Al-Qeda, ISIS, White Supremacists Praise Attacks on Israel," October 10, 2023, <https://www.counterextremism.com/press/extremist-content-online-hamas-attack-documented-telegram-al-qaeda-isis-white-supremacists>.

<sup>33</sup> Moustafa Ayad and Tim Squirrell, "Illegal, Violent Terrorist Content Relating to Hamas-Israel Conflict Reaches Millions on X," November 29, 2023, [https://www.isdglobal.org/digital\\_dispatches/illegal-violent-terrorist-content-relating-to-hamas-israel-conflict-reaches-millions-on-x/](https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/illegal-violent-terrorist-content-relating-to-hamas-israel-conflict-reaches-millions-on-x/).

<sup>34</sup> Catrina Doxsee, "Asked and Answered: Global Terrorism Threat Assessment 2024," interview by Lauren Adler, February 9, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/asked-and-answered-global-terrorism-threat-assessment-2024>.

<sup>35</sup> "IntelBrief," November 2, 2023.

leveraging the situation in Gaza, especially the suffering of Palestinian civilians, to recruit new members and inspire attacks.

Given the intensity of the conflict between Hamas and Israel, few expect the situation to improve any time soon. And even as Islamic State continues to have a particular disdain for Hamas, it does not mean that the jihadists will forgo taking advantage of the fighting for their own purposes — pushing supporters to strike in the West, nudging fence-sitters toward action, and aiming to radicalize a growing pool of angry individuals, pushing them closer toward extremist violence that will very likely have deadly results in the West.

In addition to the threat posed by terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and Islamic State, a global network of far-right extremists and lone actors inspired by a range of violent ideologies, there is also a threat posed by state-sponsored terrorism. In the United States, this is encapsulated mainly by the Iranian Threat Network (ITN) and Tehran's worldwide network of proxies.<sup>36</sup> According to US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, "Among state actors, we expect Iran, the principal funder of Hezbollah and Hamas, to remain the primary state sponsor of terrorism and continue its efforts to advance plots against individuals in the United States."

Depending on how the situation in the Middle East evolves, Iran could look to incite violence in the US through several different threat vectors, including by using supporters of Hamas or Hezbollah to launch attacks.<sup>37</sup> As Brian Michael Jenkins suggested, "Hamas could try to recruit operatives in the criminal underworld as Hezbollah and Iran have done. Iran has extensive connections in this domain and has used them to plot assassinations abroad, including in the United States."<sup>38</sup>

The Annual Threat Assessment published by the US intelligence community also referenced the role of state-based actors in fomenting instability in the homeland surrounding events related to the war in Gaza. The briefing noted that the conflict itself was fueled by "a regionally ambitious Iran" while also being "exacerbated by narratives encouraged by China and Russia."<sup>39</sup> US adversaries see a golden opportunity to wreak havoc at little cost, keeping Washington focused on internal matters, leaving less bandwidth to deal with the foreign policy adventurism of Tehran, Beijing, and Moscow. State-sponsored disinformation campaigns are now a regular facet of everyday life. When crises like the one currently unfolding in Gaza erupt, they present foreign actors with myriad chances to meddle in domestic politics, exacerbating existing societal tensions and political fissures.<sup>40</sup>

#### *Violent Acts, Thwarted Attacks, and Arrests*

Multiple violent incidents have taken place within the United States related to the October 7 attacks and the subsequent Hamas-Israel War.

- In October 2023, a six-year-old Palestinian American boy named Wadea Al-Fayoume was fatally stabbed 26 times by his mother's landlord in Plainfield Township, IL. The accused killer, Joseph

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<sup>36</sup> "IntelBrief," January 14, 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Clarke, "Hezbollah Has Been Active in America for Decades." and Clarke, "Could Hamas Become a Global Threat?".

<sup>38</sup> Brian Michael Jenkins, "The Israel-Hamas War Has Upended the Terrorist Threat Matrix."

<sup>39</sup> "Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community."

<sup>40</sup> Simone Shah, "The Israel-Hamas War Is Leading to an Uptick in Hate Crimes," TIME, October 18, 2023, <https://time.com/6324995/muslim-jewish-hate-crimes-israel-hamas-war/>.

Czuba, allegedly shouted “You Muslims must die” during the attack. He was charged with murder and a hate crime.<sup>41</sup>

- In October 2023, an individual physically broke into the home of a Jewish family in Los Angeles, CA shouting “Free Palestine” and “Kill Jews.” The suspect, Daniel Garcia, was charged with making criminal threats, vandalism, and burglary and is also under investigation for committing hate crimes.<sup>42</sup>
- In October 2023, Carl Mintz was arrested and charged with one felony count of making a threat of terrorism. Mintz made online posts threatening to “hunt Palestinians” in Dearborn, MI, a city with a large population of Arab Americans. He claimed to be part of a Jewish group protecting Israel.<sup>43</sup>
- In October 2023, a man from Lebanon, PA, was arrested for pointing a gun at pro-Palestine protestors in Harrisburg, PA, threatening them and yelling racial slurs. The individual was charged with making terroristic threats and simple assault by physical menace.<sup>44</sup>
- In October 2023, a 20-year-old Jordanian named Sohaib Abuayyash was arrested in the United States on a federal firearms charge, with authorities alleging that he was planning to attack a Jewish gathering. In Congressional testimony that same month, FBI Director Wray referenced Abuayyash and said, “The reality is that the terrorism threat has been elevated throughout 2023, but the ongoing war in the Middle East has raised the threat of an attack against Americans in the United States to a whole other level.”<sup>45</sup>
- In November 2023, an Arab Muslim student at Stanford University was run over by a car with the alleged perpetrator yelling, “fuck you and your people.” The incident is being investigated as a hate crime.<sup>46</sup>
- In November 2023, three college students were shot in Burlington, VT while speaking Arabic and wearing keffiyehs (traditional Arab scarves). One of the victims, Palestinian American Hisham Awartani, was left paralyzed. The shooter, Jason James Eaton, was charged with attempted murder, and the incident was investigated as a hate crime.
- In November 2023, a 69-year-old Jewish man named Paul Kessler was fatally injured in a dispute between pro-Israel and pro-Palestine demonstrators, in Thousand Oaks, CA. Loay Alnaji, a 51-

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<sup>41</sup> The Associated Press, “Illinois Man Charged with Hate Crime in Fatal Stabbing of Muslim Boy, Attack on Mom,” *NPR*, October 31, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/10/31/1209633437/illinois-man-charged-with-hate-crime-in-fatal-stabbing-of-muslim-boy-attack-on-m>.

<sup>42</sup> Christian Martinez, “Man Allegedly Invades Studio City Home, Threatens Jewish Family, Yells ‘Free Palestine,’” *Los Angeles Times*, October 25, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-10-25/home-invasion-suspect-reportedly-threatened-to-kill-jewish-family-in-studio-city-yelled-free-palestine>.

<sup>43</sup> Sara Powers, “Farmington Hills Man Charged after Making Threats against Palestinians in Dearborn,” *CBS Detroit*, October 17, 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/detroit/news/farmington-hills-man-charged-with-terrorism-after-making-threats-against-palestinians-in-dearborn/>.

<sup>44</sup> Jonathan Bergmueller, “Man Who Pointed Gun, Shouted Slurs at pro-Palestinian Demonstrators on Capitol Steps Arrested,” *Pennlive*, October 14, 2023, <https://www.pennlive.com/news/2023/10/man-who-pulled-gun-shouted-slurs-at-pro-palestinian-demonstrators-on-capitol-steps-arrested.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Alisha Ebrahimji et al., “Jordanian Arrested in Houston Spoke about ‘Martyrdom,’ Made Statements That Support ‘Killing Individuals of Particular Religious Faith,’ Judge’s Order Said,” *CNN*, November 13, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/02/us/sohaib-abuayyash-jordanian-arrested-houston/index.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Maanvi Singh, “Muslim Stanford Student Hospitalized in Suspected Hate Crime Hit-and-Run,” *The Guardian*, November 6, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/nov/06/stanford-muslim-student-hit-run-hate-crime>.



year-old computer science professor, was implicated in Kessler's homicide and charged with involuntary manslaughter and battery.<sup>47</sup>

- In October 2023, multiple attacks on pro-Palestinian protests throughout the United States were noted.<sup>48</sup>
- In February 2024, 36-year-old Bert James Baker was arrested for stabbing a 23-year-old Palestinian-American man in Austin, TX, following a pro-Palestinian demonstration. Baker was charged with a hate crime.<sup>49</sup>
- In February 2024, an individual was arrested in Hewlett, NY for assaulting someone who had an Israeli flag hanging outside of their home. The perpetrator, Bechir Lebeib, who entered the United States illegally through the southern border, was charged with a hate crime, robbery, and assault.<sup>50</sup>
- While not an act of violence against another person, in February 2024, Aaron Bushnell, a member of the US Air Force, lit himself on fire to protest US support to Israel, yelling "Free Palestine" while self-immolating.
- In August 2024, a Cornell University student, Patrick Dai, was sentenced to 21 months in prison for making online threats to "stab, rape, and behead" Jewish people.<sup>51</sup>
- In June 2024, a woman in Euless, TX was arrested and accused of attempting to drown a three-year-old Palestinian boy. The perpetrator was charged with attempted capital murder.<sup>52</sup>
- In August 2024, a Jewish man in Brooklyn, NY was arrested and charged with attempted murder and hate crimes for attacking his neighbor repeatedly over the course of several months.<sup>53</sup>

### *Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Reciprocal Radicalization*

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<sup>47</sup> Taylor Romine and Elizabeth Wolfe, "Man Charged in Death of Jewish Protester in California Will Face Trial," *CNN*, May 16, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/05/16/us/loay-alnaji-paul-kessler-death-will-stand-trial/index.html>.

<sup>48</sup> "Man Fires Splatter Ball Gun at Pro-Palestine Marchers in Eugene," *FOX 12 Oregon*, October 23, 2023, <https://www.kptv.com/2023/10/23/man-fires-splatter-ball-gun-pro-palestine-marchers-eugene-faces-bias-crime-charge/>; Violet Miller, "Shot Fired, Crowd Maced at pro-Palestinian Protest Outside Israeli Solidarity Event in Skokie," *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 23, 2023, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2023/10/22/23928012/pro-palestinian-protesters-israel-solidarity-skokie-lincolnwood-shots-fired-hamas-war/>; Maura Zurick, "Video Shows Vehicle Drive through Minneapolis Pro-Palestinian Rally," *Newsweek*, October 22, 2023, <https://www.newsweek.com/video-shows-hostile-driver-plow-through-minneapolis-pro-palestinian-rally-1836786>.

<sup>49</sup> Dakin Andone, Andy Rose, and Dianne Gallagher, "Muslim Advocacy Group Urges Hate Crime Charges against Suspect Accused of Stabbing Palestinian American," *CNN*, February 7, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/06/us/austin-stabbing-palestinian-american-cair/index.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Carolyn Gusoff, "Hate Crime Charges Filed against Man Who Allegedly Assaulted Long Island Homeowner after Stealing Pro-Israeli Flags," *CBS News*, February 6, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/hewlett-pro-israel-flags-stolen-homeowner-assaulted/>.

<sup>51</sup> Shah, "The Israel-Hamas War Is Leading to an Uptick in Hate Crimes."

<sup>52</sup> Mirna Alsharif and Meriam Bouarrouj, "Texas Woman Arrested, Accused of Trying to Drown 3-Year-Old Palestinian Muslim Child in Possible Hate Crime," *NBC News*, June 23, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/texas-woman-arrested-allegedly-attempting-drown-3-year-old-palestinian-rcna158473>.

<sup>53</sup> Lola Fadulu and Romaisaa Benzizoune, "Jewish Man Charged With Attempted Murder in Attacks on Muslim Neighbor," *The New York Times*, August 14, 2024, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/14/nyregion/muslim-hate-crimes-brooklyn.html>.

The conflict between Hamas and Israel has generated significant vitriol from both the far-right *and* the far-left in the United States. New networks could form across ideological boundaries that could present a tangible threat to Jews both now, and in the future.

Left-wing extremists use a different frame in their discussion of the conflict. For them, the issue is less about destroying Israel or attacking Jews because of their religion, which is more common on the far-right, and more about destroying Israel or attacking Jews because they are perceived as colonizers. So, the frame of decolonization is essentially used as an on-ramp for more extreme views. This worldview consumed US college and university campuses in the spring of 2024, where students ostensibly demonstrating in favor of a Palestinian state went on to occupy buildings, construct encampments, and engage in a wide array of non-violent protests.

Still, others went beyond the pale and expressed overt support for terrorist organizations. At Princeton University, a student posed proudly with a Hezbollah flag.<sup>54</sup> At Stanford University, a student casually donned Hamas's trademark green headband.<sup>55</sup> And in perhaps the most disturbing image of all, standing in front of several Columbia University students who were waving Israeli and American flags, was a young woman with her face obscured by a kaffiyeh, holding a sign that read: "Al-Qasam's Next Targets," with an arrow pointing to the flag wavers.<sup>56</sup> College and university campuses have become a major area of contention and debate over safety, free speech, and hate crimes; there are implications for politics broadly, and political violence more specifically - especially as students return to university campuses.

Far-right extremists have long been proponents of attacking the Jewish community in the United States. John Minadeo, leader of the Goyim Defense League, celebrated the Hamas attacks on Israel, watching videos of Israelis being slaughtered and providing commentary denigrating Jewish people.<sup>57</sup> While some may shrug these off as the self-serving statements of racists, antisemites, and xenophobes, there are real concerns that these types of provocations could lead to individuals taking action. The focus goes well beyond Israel itself, with Jews, in general, bearing the brunt of online and in-person opprobrium. Moreover, far-right extremists have actively sought to utilize the conflict to radicalize and recruit members of the pro-Palestinian far-left and others by normalizing antisemitism.<sup>58</sup>

There is also a serious possibility of reciprocal radicalization, where statements and actions by one side fuel responses from the other. Rallies in support of Israel will remain targets of violent actions, while pro-

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<sup>54</sup> Matthew Impelli, "Hezbollah Flag at US College Protest Sparks Fury," *Newsweek*, April 26, 2024, <https://www.newsweek.com/pro-palestinian-protest-princeton-hezbollah-1894654>.

<sup>55</sup> Kaushikee Nayudu and Jessica Zhu, "Stanford Forwards Encampment Photo with Hamas Headband to FBI," *The Stanford Daily*, April 30, 2024, <https://stanforddaily.com/2024/04/30/stanford-forwards-encampment-photo-to-fbi/>.

<sup>56</sup> "Campus Antisemitism Surges Amid Encampments and Related Protests at Columbia and Other U.S. Colleges," *Center on Extremism - ADL* (blog), May 1, 2024, <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/campus-antisemitism-surges-amid-encampments-and-related-protests-columbia-and-other>.

<sup>57</sup> "White Supremacist Leaders Applaud Hamas and Violence Against Israelis | ADL," *Center on Extremism - ADL* (blog), October 10, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/white-supremacist-leaders-applaud-hamas-and-violence-against-israelis>.

<sup>58</sup> Uri Klempner and Liram Koblentz-Stenzler, "Methodologies in Manipulation: The Far-Right's Antisemitic Discourse Online Amid the Israel-Hamas War," *GNET* (blog), July 11, 2024, <https://gnet-research.org/2024/07/11/methodologies-in-manipulation-the-far-rights-antisemitic-discourse-online-amid-the-israel-hamas-war/>.

Palestinian rallies, especially those featuring overt support for Hamas, could generate violence in cities across the world.

Figures vary by the data collected and coded, but unequivocally, there has been a drastic rise in the number of Islamophobic and antisemitic incidents in the United States since the Gaza conflict kicked off after October 7. There are concerns that one incident could spur another, creating a “copycat effect” or reaching a tipping point, leading to a cascade of incidents escalating over time. What begins as protests or demonstrations can devolve into the defacement of property and even attacks on individuals.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)<sup>59</sup> reported a sharp rise in anti-Muslim bias incidents following October 7, 2023. CAIR documented 8,061 complaints of anti-Muslim discrimination and bias in 2023, marking a 56 percent increase from the previous year. Notably, approximately 3,600 of these incidents occurred between October and December 2023, highlighting the immediate impact of the Israel-Hamas conflict. The most common complaints involved immigration and asylum issues, employment discrimination, hate crimes, and discrimination in educational settings. Simultaneously, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported a significant increase in antisemitic incidents following October 7, 2023. The ADL<sup>60</sup> recorded 3,283 antisemitic incidents between October 7, 2023, and January 7, 2024, representing a staggering 360 percent increase compared to the same period in the previous year. However, ADL’s data also includes any protests that are anti-Zionist in nature.

While these statistics are alarming, it's crucial to consider several limitations when interpreting the data. Both CAIR and ADL rely on self-reporting and their own monitoring systems, which may not capture all incidents. The definition of incidents, particularly the ADL's inclusion of rallies and protests against Zionism, represents a change in methodology that may affect comparisons with previous years. Underreporting due to fear of retaliation or lack of trust in authorities could also impact the accuracy of the data. Additionally, the distinction between criticism of Israeli policies and antisemitism can be subjective, potentially affecting the classification of some incidents.

Data collected by TSC through social listening software (annex outlines all methodological notes) to capture the extent of the use of antisemitic and Islamophobic phrases, as well as mentions of antisemitism and Islamophobia in English, paints a similar picture. In the immediate aftermath of the October 7 attacks, mentions of antisemitism increased, but it was during the university and student protests in April and May 2024 that mentions reached an all-time high. The activist landscape of US universities was a crucial aspect in the increase in antisemitic discourse online, which included accusations of antisemitism and criticism of the alleged overly expanded use of the word antisemitism. Similarly, during the protests, mentions of Islamophobia increased significantly — specifically in relation to countermeasures against protests.

Dealing with the fallout from the conflict in Gaza is challenging because there are so many potential threat vectors in the United States. Those radicalized by the images they are viewing or by propaganda pushed by terrorist organizations could have direct or indirect motivation to conduct an attack, and their role could be either active or passive. In general, even if, at this stage, few attacks are a direct result of the war in Gaza, the conflict creates the conditions necessary for terrorism to flourish. This is more art than science and is reflected in the testimonies of the various intelligence chiefs discussed throughout this section. The

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<sup>59</sup> The Council on American-Islamic Relations definition of Islamophobic aligns with the UN’s working definition. See: <https://islamophobia.org/anti-prejudice-tools/defining-islamophobia/>.

<sup>60</sup> The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) considers the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism “to be the preeminent tool for understanding antisemitism.” See: <https://www.adl.org/antisemitism>.

conflict creates a context in which individuals who might not otherwise support violence become willing to do so.

## ***UK Case Study***

### *Introduction*

Terrorism has been a consistent and evolving threat in the UK for decades. The nature of the threat has been continuously shaped by a wide range of international and domestic sociopolitical factors. Although a majority of the UK's counterterrorism resources remain fixed on the real possibility of Islamist terrorism, authorities have observed a concerning rise in far-right terrorism in recent years. This case study will explore how the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack on Israel and the ensuing Israeli military campaign has affected the nature of terrorism in the UK. Despite warnings by public officials, over a resultant increase in the risk of terrorism, no major terrorist attack has occurred, and the official government threat level has remained unchanged. Rather than fundamentally altering the threat landscape, the crisis in the Middle East has accelerated the pace of change and served to further polarize segments of the population.

This chapter will examine the surge in expressions of antisemitism and Islamophobia in the UK following the October 7 attack. It will also describe violent incidents and foiled terrorist plots that have occurred in the UK in the past year, with a particular focus on how recent events in the Middle East might affect the potential for radicalization across the ideological spectrum. Finally, the study will provide an overview of the steps so far taken by UK government authorities to reduce the resultant risk of terrorism in the UK.

### *Pre-and Post-October 7 Terrorist Threat Landscape*

The UK faces a broad spectrum of terrorist threats motivated by a sometimes overlapping patchwork of ideologies. MI5 classifies these ideologies into four main categories: Islamist terrorism, Northern Ireland-related terrorism, extreme right-wing terrorism, and left-wing, anarchist and single-issue terrorism.<sup>61</sup> Of these, Islamist terrorism (international and domestic) is considered the primary threat, accounting for 67 percent of attacks, around 75 percent of MI5's caseload, and 64 percent of those in custody for terrorism-related offenses between 2018 and March 2023.<sup>62</sup> Growing year on year, extreme right-wing terrorism is the main driver of domestic terrorism within the UK, making up 22 percent of attacks, around 25 percent of MI5's caseload, and 28 percent of terrorism arrests over the same period.<sup>63</sup> Although Islamist terrorism makes up the largest share of the security service's caseload and is the most immediately impacted by the Gaza conflict, all four of these ideologies have been affected by the social and political upheaval resulting from the crisis in the Middle East.

In the wake of the October 7 attacks in Israel, top UK law enforcement and security officials warned of an increased risk of terrorism in public statements. In January 2024, Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Matt Jukes reported seeing an "unprecedented" rise in the threat of terrorism in the

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<sup>61</sup> "Counter-Terrorism," MI5 - The Security Service, accessed July 1, 2024, <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/what-we-do/countering-terrorism>.

<sup>62</sup> "CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism 2023" (UK Home Office, July 2023), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest-2023>.

<sup>63</sup> "CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism 2023."



months following the October 7 attacks and the beginning of Israeli military operation in Gaza.<sup>64</sup> Jukes also reported that the counterterrorism police had seen a 25 percent increase in intelligence relating to terrorism since 10/7.<sup>65</sup> In a series of classified meetings between December and March, security officials advised Members of Parliament (MPs) that the conflict in Gaza had triggered a massive spike in the number of messages from potential terrorists being intercepted by security services and a subsequent increase in the threat of terrorism in the UK.<sup>66</sup>

Despite these public warnings, MI5's Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), which evaluates the UK's terrorism threat level has not deemed the changed circumstances significant enough to elevate the national threat level. As such, the threat to the UK from terrorism is Substantial (3 of 5), meaning an attack is considered likely.<sup>67</sup> The official threat level has remained unchanged since February 9, 2022, when it was downgraded from Severe to Substantial.<sup>68</sup>

### *Antisemitism and Islamophobia*

Expressions of antisemitism and Islamophobia increased sharply in the months following the 10/7 attacks and the beginning of Israeli military operations in Gaza. This surge in incidents corresponds with the post-10/7 upticks in online English language antisemitism and Islamophobia observed in data collected by TSC through social media monitoring as referenced in the previous case study (see annex for methodological notes).

For the Jewish community in the UK, this impact was immediate. Community Security Trust (CST),<sup>69</sup> a non-profit organization that tracks antisemitic incidents, reported that of the 4,103 instances of anti-Jewish hate reported in 2023, a staggering 2,699 of them (66 percent) occurred after October 7.<sup>70</sup> More than half (56 percent) of the post-10/7 incidents involved references to Israel, Gaza, or Hamas.<sup>71</sup> Only 19 percent of incidents during the first part of 2023 involved similar discourse, highlighting the rhetorical effect the conflict has had on expressions of antisemitism.<sup>72</sup> The number of incidents that occurred in the less than three months between October 7 and the end of 2023 was higher than any previous annual total recorded by CST and marked a 589 percent increase over the same period in 2022.<sup>73</sup> Accounting for the possibility

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<sup>64</sup> Duncan Gardham and Lauren Russell, "UK's Counter-Terror Chief Warns of 'unprecedented' Rise in Terrorism Threat since Israel-Gaza War Started," *Sky News*, January 20, 2024, <https://news.sky.com/story/uks-counter-terror-chief-warns-of-unprecedented-rise-in-terrorism-threat-since-israel-gaza-war-started-13052040>.

<sup>65</sup> Gardham and Russell.

<sup>66</sup> John Dunne, "Terror Threat 'highest since 9/11' as Gaza Conflict Used to Recruit Extremists," *Evening Standard*, March 3, 2024, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/terror-threat-highest-since-9-11-as-gaza-conflict-fuels-fears-b1142860.html>.

<sup>67</sup> "Threat Levels," MI5 - The Security Service, accessed July 1, 2024, <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threats-and-advice/terrorism-threat-levels>.

<sup>68</sup> "Threat Levels."

<sup>69</sup> The Community Security Trust regards the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition on antisemitism, which is the working definition of this report, as a helpful set of guidelines to help identify different examples of antisemitism. See: <https://cst.org.uk/antisemitism/what-is-antisemitism>.

<sup>70</sup> "Antisemitic Incidents 2023" (Community Security Trust, February 15, 2024), 18, [https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic\\_Incidents\\_Report\\_2023.1707834969.pdf](https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic_Incidents_Report_2023.1707834969.pdf).

<sup>71</sup> "Antisemitic Incidents 2023," 42.

<sup>72</sup> "Antisemitic Incidents 2023," 42.

<sup>73</sup> "Antisemitic Incidents 2023," 18.

that antisemitic incidents may have been more likely to be reported following the events in Israel and Gaza, these numbers still point to a significant rise in expressions of antisemitism in the UK.

The rise in antisemitic incidents was both immediate and unprecedented. On October 7, 31 incidents were reported to CST, which also recorded a single day record of 80 cases on October 11.<sup>74</sup> Though not all the incidents were deemed criminal offenses, or investigated as hate crimes, members of Jewish communities have felt threatened, nonetheless. Calling for additional police presence at public demonstrations in the immediate aftermath of the October 7 attacks, immigration minister Robert Jenrick, suggested some protestors were "glorifying the terrorist activities of Hamas."<sup>75</sup> In Golders Green, an area of London known for its large Jewish community, residents were unnerved after the words "Free Palestine" were graffitied onto two bridges and a nearby kosher restaurant was vandalized and robbed in the days following the October 7 attack.<sup>76</sup>

Anti-Muslim and Islamophobic incidents in the UK also spiked in the months following October 7. Tell MAMA,<sup>77</sup> a UK-based organization that monitors anti-Muslim hate crimes, recorded 2,010 Islamophobic incidents between October 7 and February 7, 2023, a 335 percent increase over the 600 incidents it documented for the same period in 2022.<sup>78</sup> According to the Office for National Statistics' 2021 census, Muslims make up 6.5 percent of England and Wales' populations.<sup>79</sup> Between 2011 and 2021, demographic expansion in Muslim communities contributed 33 percent of England and Wales' overall population growth.<sup>80</sup> Populist politicians and extreme right-wing groups have politicized the rapid growth in Muslim communities across the UK to stir up fears surrounding a perceived waning national British identity and to rally support for anti-Muslim policies. The memory of Islamist terrorist attacks in the UK, such as the 2005 London bombings, the Lee Rigby incident, the Manchester Arena bombing, and a series of additional attacks in 2017, have been cynically invoked by public figures and the media to stir up Islamophobic sentiment. The Muslim Council of Britain, the UK's largest Muslim advocacy group, reports that 40 percent of England's Muslim population resides in its most deprived areas.<sup>81</sup>

#### *Violent Acts, Thwarted Attacks, and Arrests*

Despite surges in expressions of antisemitism and Islamophobia and public warnings of an increased risk of terrorism, the UK has not experienced a large-scale terrorist attack since the conflict in Gaza began. Heightened tensions have, however, resulted in violent incidents. On October 15, 2023, just days after

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<sup>74</sup> "Antisemitic Incidents 2023," 4.

<sup>75</sup> Yasmin Rufo and Jordan Reynolds, "Israel Attack: London Police Patrols Increase amid Celebration Claims," *BBC*, October 8, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-67040611>.

<sup>76</sup> "Jewish Restaurant Vandalised and 'Free Palestine' Graffiti on Bridges in London after Israel Attacks," *Telegraph*, October 9, 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/10/09/jewish-restaurant-pita-attack-golders-green-free-palestine/>.

<sup>77</sup> Tell MAMA's definition of Islamophobia anti-Muslim hate is aligned with the UN's working definition. See: <https://tellmamauk.org/tell-mama-submission-a-working-definition-of-islamophobia-and-anti-muslim-hatred-prejudice/>.

<sup>78</sup> "Greatest Rise in Reported Anti-Muslim Hate Cases to Tell MAMA since Oct 7th," *Tell MAMA* (blog), February 21, 2024, <https://tellmamauk.org/greatest-rise-in-reported-anti-muslim-hate-cases-to-tell-mama-since-oct-7th/>.

<sup>79</sup> "Religion (Detailed)," Office for National Statistics, 2021, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS031/editions/2021/versions/1#summary>.

<sup>80</sup> "2021 Census: As UK Population Grows, So Do British Muslim Communities," *Muslim Council of Britain* (blog), November 29, 2022, <https://mcb.org.uk/2021-census-as-uk-population-grows-so-do-british-muslim-communities/>.

<sup>81</sup> "2021 Census: As UK Population Grows, So Do British Muslim Communities."

the outbreak of conflict in Gaza, a man severely wounded his housemate, an Iranian-national who had recently converted to Christianity, before randomly killing a pensioner on a nearby street in Hartlepool.<sup>82</sup> Although the attacker was convicted on murder charges, the judge described the crime as a terrorist act after the attacker told police his actions were a protest against Israel and the Gaza conflict.<sup>83</sup>

Low-tech attacks perpetrated by individuals wielding easily accessible weapons and without any apparent links to international terrorist groups are exceedingly difficult for authorities to anticipate and counter. The potentially rapid transition from radicalization to action and the resultant scarcity of indications and warnings associated with these kinds of attacks currently represent the most significant threat to the UK public. This risk is compounded by the real possibility that domestic extremism and or heavy-handed government responses to perceived security threats could trigger reciprocal radicalization, motivating similar attacks.

Several complex plots have been identified and disrupted by UK law enforcement and security services in recent months. On February 20, 2024, three men were arrested on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack against an Islamic education center in Leeds.<sup>84</sup> The three men reportedly distributed information on firearms and ammunition, participated in extreme right-wing chat forums, and were found to be in possession of extreme right-wing material as well as a 3D-printed FGC-9 semi-automatic firearm.<sup>85</sup> Use of 3D-printed guns, especially in countries like the UK where access to firearms is heavily regulated, has been a growing concern for law enforcement and counterterrorism officials.<sup>86</sup>

Although producing 3D-printed weapons is a complex and skill-intensive process, their use can allow malicious actors to anonymously obtain homemade weapons that would otherwise be unavailable to them.<sup>87</sup> This incident also highlights the strong possibility those arrested were influenced by reciprocal radicalization or having developed an "us vs. them" mentality against Muslims<sup>88</sup> exposure to far-right material demonizing minority groups in the UK. Such a path to radicalization would be consistent with

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<sup>82</sup> "Moroccan Asylum-Seeker Gets Life Sentence for Killing UK Retiree in Attack Motivated by War in Gaza," *AP News*, May 17, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/asylum-seeker-britain-stabbed-retiree-revenge-gaza-f9594df1f1cebb32cb80237c728f3afa>.

<sup>83</sup> "Extremist Ahmed Alid Guilty of Hartlepool Knife Murder," April 25, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-tees-68899601>.

<sup>84</sup> "Alleged Islamic Centre Attack Plotters to Face Trial," *BBC*, March 15, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-leeds-68574447>.

<sup>85</sup> "3 Men Snared in Right-Wing Extremism Probe Charged in London Court with Prepping for Terrorism," *AP News*, February 27, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/rightwing-extremists-arrested-england-terrorism-75b4ca7a55d8331b90a9d010dababc4c>.

<sup>86</sup> Margaret Davis, "Haul of 3D-Printed Gun Parts and Bullets One of Largest in UK," *The Independent*, October 12, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/metropolitan-police-london-b2201262.html>; Daniel Koehler, "The Halle, Germany, Synagogue Attack and the Evolution of the Far-Right Terror Threat," *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point* 12, no. 11 (December 18, 2019), <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/halle-germany-synagogue-attack-evolution-far-right-terror-threat/>.

<sup>87</sup> Rueben Dass and Benjamin Mok, "Assessing the Impact of 3D-Printed Weapons on the Violent Extremist Milieu," *GNET* (blog), February 20, 2023, <https://gnet-research.org/2023/02/20/assessing-the-impact-of-3d-printed-weapons-on-the-violent-extremist-milieu/>.

<sup>88</sup> Dominic Casciani, "Finsbury Park: What Led Darren Osborne to Kill?," *BBC*, February 1, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-42886464>.

previously observed cases of extreme right-wing terrorism (EWRT) targeting of Muslims, such as the 2018 Finsbury Park Mosque attack.<sup>89</sup> This indicates reciprocal radicalization remains a major concern in the UK.

Another plot was foiled in May, when two men were arrested for allegedly planning what prosecutors described as an Islamic State-inspired terrorist attack against members of the Jewish community as well as military and law enforcement targets.<sup>90</sup> The pair reportedly began planning the attack on December 13 and had taken steps to acquire automatic weapons to execute the attack.<sup>91</sup> Though events in Israel and Gaza since October 7 likely served as a motivating factor for this foiled plot, it should be noted that Hamas does not issue global calls to action in the same fashion as Islamic State. This distinction helps to more accurately characterize both groups' global impact and highlights Islamic State as the group most likely to inspire and or coordinate incidents of domestic terrorism within the UK.

Similar to the Hartlepool attack, it is unclear if the individuals arrested in connection with these incidents had any functional ties to extremist organizations or whether they were instead merely inspired by them. Security services may have disrupted additional plots that have not been made public for investigative and operational security reasons. Such cases may be linked to transnational groups, however, the absence of such ties to date is notable as the known incidents since October 7 do not appear to have been directed from abroad.

### *Protests and Polarization*

Protests have been regular and often controversial fixtures in the UK since October 7. A wide range of ideologies and sociopolitical positions have motivated these Gaza related public demonstrations. The largest and most frequent, however, have urged the UK government to demand Israel implement an immediate ceasefire and halt sales of weapons used in the conflict. Though the lion's share of these protests has been peaceful in nature, scores of arrests have been made at them for allegations of hate crimes and violence. The controversial nature of the post-10/7 demonstrations was immediately highlighted on October 8, when isolated cases of demonstrators described as celebrating Hamas' terrorist attack were observed, prompting officials to increase police presence at subsequent protests.<sup>92</sup>

Counter-protests have been a particular concern for authorities and a significant trigger for violence and arrests. In early November, far-right counter-protesters carrying St. George's flags and chanting "England til I die," broke through police barricades injuring several officers.<sup>93</sup> Far-right group English Defence League (EDL) founder and former leader, Tommy Robinson, was seen amongst the crowd,<sup>94</sup> indicating possible links between the violent counter-protesters and known Islamophobic groups like EDL.

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<sup>89</sup> Dominic Casciani, "Finsbury Park: What Led Darren Osborne to Kill?," *BBC*, February 1, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-42886464>.

<sup>90</sup> Alistair Gray, "Court Hears of Alleged Plot to Attack UK Jewish Community," *Financial Times*, May 14, 2024, <https://www.ft.com/content/29934c1e-8b11-42ab-9c3a-4e2c4863a5b0>.

<sup>91</sup> "2 Men Accused of Plotting Islamic State-Inspired Attack against Jews in England," *AP News*, May 14, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/britain-antisemitism-plot-27c1e2b6f7f1e6a9b7a47dfc6ff5b7c2>.

<sup>92</sup> Yasmin Rufo and Jordan Reynolds, "Israel Attack."

<sup>93</sup> Mark Townsend et al., "Hundreds of Thousands Rally for Gaza in London as Police Arrest Far-Right Protesters," *The Guardian*, November 11, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/11/hundreds-of-thousands-rally-for-gaza-in-london-as-police-arrest-far-right-protesters>.

<sup>94</sup> Townsend et al.

In late July and early August, a series of protests and riots associated with the far-right movement occurred across the UK.<sup>95</sup> Following a deliberate distortion of facts surrounding the stabbing attack in Southport, which falsely claimed the perpetrator was a Muslim asylum seeker,<sup>96</sup> riots spread across the UK. This prompted government officials to open an investigation into the seemingly likely possibility that state actors had played a role in stoking the unrest.<sup>97</sup> During the riots, mosques and hotels sheltering asylum seekers were violently attacked by crowds of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rioters.<sup>98</sup> Less than a week after the tragic events in Southport, several police officers had been injured in the violence and nearly 400 individuals had been arrested.<sup>99</sup> Although the violence was not directly motivated by the war in Gaza, the conflict has corresponded with increases in expressions of Islamophobia and has been used to shape the public discourse surrounding polarizing issues in the UK, such as immigration. Framing existing societal fissures through the lens of the Gaza conflict has helped far-right influencers, like Tommy Robinson, reenergize racist and xenophobic narratives in the UK.

The violence occurring on the peripheries of Gaza-related protests is emblematic of the polarizing nature of the conflict internationally and in the UK. Polls conducted by YouGov in May 2024 found that nearly seven in ten Britons feel Israel should end its military operations in Gaza and implement a ceasefire.<sup>100</sup> The protests themselves and the government response to them have developed into a full-blown controversy of their own. Government officials have limited and blocked protests due to fears the demonstrations were being used as platforms to promote proscribed terrorist groups like Hamas and antisemitic activity. Communities Secretary Michael Gove called for protestors to do more to distance themselves from extremist ideologies, saying many well-intentioned demonstrators risk standing “side by side with those who are promoting hate.”<sup>101</sup> Gove has faced threat of legal action for previous comments and has gone further to suggest that “extremist organizations” have helped orchestrate demonstrations.<sup>102</sup> Rights advocates have decried the government crackdown on protests, which has been applied to both Gaza and non-Gaza-related demonstrations, such as environmental protests.

### *Prospects about Terrorism and Potential for (Reciprocal) Radicalization*

Although radicalization may not inevitably lead an individual to commit acts of terrorism, UK officials are unambiguous in their assessment that October 7 has increased the likelihood of radicalization. Metropolitan Police assistant commissioner Matt Jukes described the months following October 7 as a

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<sup>95</sup> The Soufan Center, “Far-Right Riots Fueled by Disinformation Proliferate in the UK After Stabbing Attack,” *IntelBrief* (blog), August 7, 2024, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2024-august-7/>.

<sup>96</sup> Megan Specia, “How Disinformation Fed a Far-Right Riot After a Deadly Stabbing in England,” *New York Times*, July 31, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/31/world/europe/uk-stabbing-southport-riot-police.html>.

<sup>97</sup> Matt Honeycombe-Foster and Andrew McDonald, “UK Probes Whether ‘State Actors’ Stoked Far-Right Riots,” *POLITICO*, August 5, 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/uk-probes-whether-state-actors-stoked-far-right-riots/>.

<sup>98</sup> Rob Picheta, “Violent, Racist Attacks Have Gripped Several British Cities. What Happened, and What Comes Next?,” *CNN*, August 5, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/08/05/uk/uk-far-right-protests-explainer-gbr-intl/index.html>.

<sup>99</sup> Picheta.

<sup>100</sup> Matthew Smith, “British Attitudes to the Israel-Gaza Conflict: May 2024 Update,” May 10, 2024, <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/49366-british-attitudes-to-the-israel-gaza-conflict-may-2024-update>.

<sup>101</sup> Andrew McDonald, “Gaza Protesters Failing to Confront Antisemitism, Warns UK’s Michael Gove,” *POLITICO*, May 21, 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/london-gaza-protests-israel-war-antisemitism-uk-michael-gove-jewish-abuse-palestine-genocide/>.

<sup>102</sup> Andrew McDonald; Rajeev Syal and Ben Quinn, “Gove Faces Legal Action Threats after Suggesting Muslim Groups Are Extremist,” *The Guardian*, March 14, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/mar/14/gove-says-three-muslim-led-groups-and-two-far-right-to-be-assessed-for-extremism>.

“radicalisation moment” in the UK.<sup>103</sup> In a closed-door briefing, MPs were informed the conflict was being used as a “recruitment advert” by global terrorist organizations.<sup>104</sup> The prominence of an issue as incendiary as the Israel-Hamas conflict in the public discourse, particularly online, all but guarantees the likelihood of resultant radicalization. This trend has been observed across the ideological spectrum for a variety of dogma specific reasons. Pointing to the increase in pro-Palestinian rhetoric and using language evoking the “Great Replacement Theory,” far-right activists have labelled protesters as “jihadists” and called for them to be deported.<sup>105</sup>

A growing number of young people are being arrested for terrorism-related activity. The UK Home Office reported significant increases in arrests made for terrorism-related activity in the year ending March 31, 2024 among young adults (82 percent increase) and adolescents (67 percent increase).<sup>106</sup> London Mayor Sadiq Khan pre-empted these figures, in November 2023, when he voiced his concern over the possibility the Israel-Gaza war would leave a new generation vulnerable to radicalization.<sup>107</sup> The prevalence of the Israel-Gaza conflict in the online discourse, which contains both disinformation and fact-based reporting, likely increases the impact on children and adolescents who spend significant amounts of time on social media.

Heavy-handed government responses to protests and overly securitized reactions to increases in reports of extremist activity may constitute additional aggravating factors in individuals’ susceptibility to radicalization. Politicians who demonize Muslims and programs that inadvertently single out the Muslim community, as critics of the *Prevent* strategy have accused it of doing, could exacerbate EWRT targeting of Muslims. A letter signed by British victims of Islamist-inspired terrorism echoed this concern in March of this year.<sup>108</sup>

#### *Counter-Terror Resources, Stakeholders, and Responses*

The UK’s response to the October 7 attacks has built on existing counterextremism and law enforcement policies. The Contest framework, now in its fourth iteration after having been first launched in 2003, coordinates the UK’s multiagency approach to countering terrorism. Broken into four pillars, the

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<sup>103</sup> Gardham and Russell, “UK’s Counter-Terror Chief Warns of ‘unprecedented’ Rise in Terrorism Threat since Israel-Gaza War Started.”

<sup>104</sup> Dunne, “Terror Threat ‘highest since 9/11’ as Gaza Conflict Used to Recruit Extremists.”

<sup>105</sup> Tommy Robinson [@TRobinsonNewEra], “Just like in the UK, Muslims Are Starting Their Own Political Parties in Australia...,” Tweet, *Twitter*, July 2, 2024, <https://x.com/TRobinsonNewEra/status/1808258358077501660>; Tommy Robinson [@TRobinsonNewEra], “Chaos on the Streets of Our Capital Again Tonight...,” Tweet, *Twitter*, May 28, 2024, <https://x.com/TRobinsonNewEra/status/1795554955157242289>; Paul Golding [@GoldingBF], “Oh Just Bore off Losers. No One Gives a shit about #Hamas.,” Tweet, *Twitter*, December 29, 2023, <https://x.com/GoldingBF/status/1740700421726060655>.

<sup>106</sup> “Operation of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and Subsequent Legislation: Arrests, Outcomes, and Stop and Search, Great Britain, Quarterly Update to March 2024” (UK Home Office, June 13, 2024), <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/operation-of-police-powers-under-tact-2000-to-march-2024/operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000-and-subsequent-legislation-arrests-outcomes-and-stop-and-search-great-britain-quarterly-u>.

<sup>107</sup> James W Kelly and PA Media, “London Mayor ‘worried’ about Youth Radicalisation over Israel-Gaza Conflict,” *BBC*, November 3, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-67311522>.

<sup>108</sup> “Attack Victims Hit out at Extremism in Open Letter,” *BBC*, March 10, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68526577>.

framework addresses the full spectrum of counterterror activity, seeking to *Prevent* radicalization, *Pursue* terrorism suspects, *Protect* the public against attacks, and *Prepare* for attacks to minimize their impact.<sup>109</sup>

The UK has taken a wide range of responses to address the rise in antisemitism, Islamophobia, and increased likelihood of extremist violence triggered by the events and aftermath of October 7. In the months following the attacks, the government has strengthened security at key locations where hate crimes or terrorist attacks are likely to occur. The government has committed to spend more than £200 million to boost security at Jewish and Islamic sites across the country.<sup>110</sup>

A controversial change to the UK's definition of extremism was also enacted following the October 7 attacks to address the resultant increase in extremist threat activity.<sup>111</sup> Unlike the previous definition, which described extremism as "active opposition to fundamental British values," the new definition allows actors to be proscribed for "the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance." The updated language, which targets ideology as well as action, is far more expansive and has been criticized as an infringement on free speech.<sup>112</sup> Although the new policy is intended to circumscribe groups irrespective of ideology, including extreme right-wing groups promoting neo-Nazi ideologies, critics fear the new definition will serve as a new government tool for singling out British Muslims.<sup>113</sup> Implementation of this new definition and the strong reactions to it highlight the charged social and political environment in which government and civil society partners have to operate in as they confront the terrorist threat in the UK.

### **Italy Case Study**

#### *Introduction*

Thus far, Italy has not faced the same terrorist threat landscape as other European countries in recent years, including other case studies in this report — France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, as well as the United States. Scholars attribute this to a variety of factors, such as the fact that Italy has not experienced as acute of a radicalization problem, has seen less foreign fighter travel to Syria, and has not been as active in the anti-Islamic State/Daesh coalition as other countries.<sup>114</sup> This so-called "Italian exceptionalism" has previously existed despite the fact that there has been long-standing jihadi activity on Italian soil over the last two decades, as well as Islamic State's direct threats against Italy — more than

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<sup>109</sup> "CONTEST 2023 Factsheet," UK Home Office, July 18, 2023, <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2023/07/18/contest-2023-factsheet/>.

<sup>110</sup> "Record Funding Will Protect Jewish Communities from Harm," UK Home Office, February 29, 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-funding-will-protect-jewish-communities-from-harm>; "£117m to Protect UK Mosques and Muslim Schools from Hate Attacks," *BBC*, March 11, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68529601>.

<sup>111</sup> "New Definition of Extremism (2024)," UK Home Office, March 14, 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-definition-of-extremism-2024/new-definition-of-extremism-2024>.

<sup>112</sup> Haroon Siddique and Sammy Gecsoyler, "How Has UK Extremism Definition Changed and Why Is It Attracting Criticism?," *The Guardian*, March 14, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/mar/14/how-has-uk-extremism-definition-changed-and-why-is-it-attracting-criticism>.

<sup>113</sup> Siddique and Gecsoyler.

<sup>114</sup> Michelle Groppi, "The Terror Threat to Italy: How Italian Exceptionalism Is Rapidly Diminishing," *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point* 10, no. 5 (May 4, 2017): 20, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-terror-threat-to-italy-how-italian-exceptionalism-is-rapidly-diminishing/>.



any other terrorist organization – including targeting “Rome” or “Rumiyah,” a catch-all term for Western Christendom, in the group’s propaganda and messaging.<sup>115</sup> Yet, despite the fact there hasn't been a large-scale terrorist attack in Italy recently, some experts believe this Italian exceptionalism is diminishing.<sup>116</sup>

This chapter will focus on the persistence of Italian exceptionalism in the aftermath of October 7, including the tempered polarization in the country when compared with other case studies, the lack of materialized violent attacks, and the responses of the Italian government to the threat. The chapter also examines how the threat landscape could evolve as the war in Gaza continues, including a potential increased threat from self-radicalized “lone actors” across the ideological spectrum, the rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia, and the role of technology, such as 3-D printers and encrypted platforms like Telegram.

### *Pre- and Post-October 7 Terrorist Threat Landscape*

Particularly as the war continues in Gaza, the October 7 attack by Hamas could serve as a potential catalyst for the erosion of Italian exceptionalism. Alleged discrimination against Muslims, including the banning of Muslim prayer spaces,<sup>117</sup> far-right backlash against migrants and Islam,<sup>118</sup> the transnational strengthening of far-right and far-left violent extremist groups, and increasingly high unemployment, crime, and poverty among certain neighborhoods with high concentrations of Muslim immigrants could provide apt opportunities for radicalization within Italy.<sup>119</sup> A few notable attacks and thwarted attacks related to October 7 from individuals across the ideological spectrum demonstrate that Italy is not exempt from this potential (explored further in this chapter). Moreover, at the regional level, the EU has noted an increased threat of violence within the bloc, including Italy, following the attack on Israel, due to the risk of possible terrorist infiltration into irregular migration flows from the Balkan route.<sup>120</sup> This reality could render a country such as Italy – which saw over 157,000 refugees and migrants arrive to the country by sea in 2023, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)<sup>121</sup> – at a more severe risk for terrorist groups to potentially infiltrate operatives into refugee flows.

Yet, as was the case in the years preceding and after 9/11, the fact jihadis continue to see Italy as a useful logistical hub, especially due to its location and proximity to North Africa, could continue to serve as one possible factor inhibiting the country from being a priority target, even in the aftermath of October 7.<sup>122</sup> Such a factor may apply more to coordinated attacks by transnational groups rather than “lone wolf” or inspired actors, as examples in this chapter, including an attack on the US Consulate in Florence, will demonstrate. This, coupled with the use of deportations and other legal tools at the disposal of law

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<sup>115</sup> Groppi, 22–23.

<sup>116</sup> Groppi, 20.

<sup>117</sup> “No Place to Pray for Muslim Workers in Italian City,” AFP, June 5, 2024, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20240506-no-place-to-pray-for-muslim-workers-in-italian-city>.

<sup>118</sup> Angela Giuffrida, “Model Seeks Legal Advice after Salvini’s Party Uses Image for Anti-Islam Poster,” *The Guardian*, May 8, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/08/model-legal-advice-matteo-salvini-the-league-party-image-anti-islam-poster>.

<sup>119</sup> Groppi, “The Terror Threat to Italy,” 25.

<sup>120</sup> “Temporary Reintroduction of Border Control - European Commission,” European Commission, accessed June 18, 2024, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-area/temporary-reintroduction-border-control\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-area/temporary-reintroduction-border-control_en).

<sup>121</sup> “Italy | Sea Arrivals Dashboard” (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, June 7, 2024), <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/109199>.

<sup>122</sup> Groppi, “The Terror Threat to Italy,” 25.

enforcement, as expanded on later in this chapter, may continue to mitigate the terrorist threat and potential major attacks in Italy. An attempted attack on the US Consulate in Florence allegedly by a man of Palestinian heritage demonstrates how an event such as October 7 and the war in Gaza could serve as an inflection point for potential radicalization and the erosion of Italian exceptionalism. As terrorists and violent extremists have already shown their adeptness at capitalizing on the conflict for propaganda, radicalization, and recruitment, the risk of attacks or attempted attacks increases.

### *Antisemitism and Islamophobia*

After the October 7 terrorist attack, there was a notable increase in both antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents and hate speech online throughout Europe and the US, including violent and deadly attacks.<sup>123</sup> Such trends were consistent in the Italian context; however, there are limitations to the interpretation of available data due to inconsistent monitoring of such incidents and rhetoric in Italy. Further, the Italian government does not disaggregate crime data to track hate crimes specifically, so statistics in this context are limited in comparison with other case studies.<sup>124</sup>

Between 2022 and 2023, there was an 88 percent increase in antisemitic incidents in Italy, including offline and online threats,<sup>125</sup> according to the *Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC)* Observatory which monitors antisemitism in Italy.<sup>126</sup> The total number of incidents recorded by CDEC in 2023 was 454, with a 185.19 percent increase between the months of September (27 total incidents) and October (77 total incidents).<sup>127</sup> Although the total number of incidents is relatively small, the numbers are likely under-represented, as they are self-reported, victims may not be willing to come forward, and the final numbers are not calibrated with government data. Despite this reality, the increase in incidents was attributed to the October 7 attack, comparable with a similar climate in Italy following the First Lebanon War in 1982 – when the country experienced the most severe increase in antisemitism since World War II.<sup>128</sup> Antisemitic incidents post-October 7 have included death threats written on the interior walls of places frequented by Jews,<sup>129</sup> threatening letters sent to Jewish communities, verbal and physical assaults of students in schools and universities, among others.<sup>130</sup> Particularly with antisemitic rhetoric online, the new context of the conflict in Gaza was applied to or repackaged ancient tropes,

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<sup>123</sup> Holly Yan et al., “A 6-Year-Old Palestinian-American Was Stabbed 26 Times for Being Muslim, Police Say. His Mom Couldn’t Go to His Funeral Because She Was Stabbed, Too,” *CNN*, October 16, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/16/us/chicago-muslim-boy-stabbing-investigation/index.html>.

<sup>124</sup> The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has criticized Italy for its failure to collect disaggregated data regarding racial and ethnic discrimination. See: Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, “Concluding Observations on the 21st Periodic Report of Italy.”

<sup>125</sup> “L’antisemitismo in Italia nel 2023 – Relazione annuale – CDEC – Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea” (l’Osservatorio antisemitismo della Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea, February 1, 2024), 23, <https://www.cdec.it/902-lantisemitismo-in-italia-nel-2023/>.

<sup>126</sup> The *Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea* endorses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, which is the working definition for this report. See: International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, “What Is Antisemitism?”

<sup>127</sup> “L’antisemitismo in Italia nel 2023 – Relazione annuale – CDEC – Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea,” 13.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> Gabriele Cappi, “Minacce Di Morte Nel Quartiere Degli Ebrei: ‘Israele Nazisti,’” *Il Giornale*, October 20, 2023, <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/minacce-morte-nel-quartiere-degli-ebrei-israele-nazisti-2228561.html>.

<sup>130</sup> “L’antisemitismo in Italia nel 2023 – Relazione annuale – CDEC – Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea,” 16–17.

conspiracies, and hate.<sup>131</sup> This is consistent with broader trends in Europe; in one study by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), the majority of online antisemitic narratives on YouTube following October 7 were related to previously-existing conspiracy theories of a perceived Jewish or Zionist collective “subverting the rights and interests of global populations” or Zionist control over certain institutions.<sup>132</sup>

Moreover, an undercover investigation by the newspaper *Fanpage* infiltrated the Gioventu Nazionale, the youth movement of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni’s right-wing populist Brothers of Italy party, and revealed recorded videos in June 2024 in which members declared themselves fascists and shouted the Nazi slogan “Sieg Heil.”<sup>133</sup> The investigation also revealed incidents of antisemitism in chats on messaging platforms where members targeted ethnic minorities, underscoring how the political environment in Italy – particularly with a strengthening far-right – may reinforce trends in antisemitism and xenophobia post-October 7.

The data on Islamophobia in Italy is extremely limited, as there is no recent methodological data available from either civil society or government sources for analysis. However, the missing data does not mean that there were no noticeable trends in Islamophobic incidents in the country in the aftermath of October 7. Several factors, including historic discrimination identified by Muslim communities in Italy, high levels of migration, and a resurgent political far-right – which has capitalized on Islamophobic tropes<sup>134</sup> – indicate that a potential increase in Islamophobic incidents cannot be dismissed outright. For example, a 50-year-old man allegedly set fire to a mosque in the village of Montello in June 2024, as well as defaced several electoral signs with the phrase: “No more mosques in Montello, death to the mayor.”<sup>135</sup> Although the motive for the crime has not been directly connected to October 7 or the war in Gaza, the incident demonstrates the risk for Islamophobic incidents in a heightened political environment.

Similar to antisemitism, Islamophobia in Italy has historically relied on old tropes repackaged for the modern moment, such as the alleged danger of the “Islamization” of Italy, stereotypes of Muslim women and their status of cultural submission, a perceived invasion by Muslims, often typified by migrants, among other narratives.<sup>136</sup> Such narratives are consistent with those observed by ISD in the four days after October 7, which saw a forty-fold increase in anti-Muslim hate.<sup>137</sup> Although there is no Italy-specific data available on Islamophobia in the aftermath of October 7, there are indicators of a likely increase in such incidents and rhetoric in the Italian context.

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<sup>131</sup> “L’antisemitismo in Italia nel 2023 – Relazione annuale – CDEC – Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea,” 24.

<sup>132</sup> Hannah Rose and Paula-Charlotte Matlach, “Narratives of Hate: Post-7 October Antisemitism and Anti-Muslim Hate on Social Media” (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, June 13, 2024), 5, <https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/narratives-of-hate-post-7-october-antisemitism-and-anti-muslim-hate-on-social-media/>.

<sup>133</sup> Angelo Amante, “Rome’s Jews Outraged after Videos Show Antisemitism in Meloni’s Youth Movement,” *Reuters*, June 27, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/romes-jews-outraged-after-videos-show-antisemitism-melonis-youth-movement-2024-06-27/>.

<sup>134</sup> Giuffrida, “Model Seeks Legal Advice after Salvini’s Party Uses Image for Anti-Islam Poster.”

<sup>135</sup> Maddalena Berbenni, “Montello, l’attentato Dell’operaio al Centro Islamico. «Niente Più Moschee». A Casa Aveva Le Taniche,” *Corriere Della Sera*, June 27, 2024, [https://bergamo.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/24\\_giugno\\_27/montello-il-video-dell-attentato-alla-moschea-gli-stivali-le-taniche-e-gli-altri-indizi-che-inchiodano-l-operaio-b5acf67f-f597-4269-87f7-bc5b36a90xlk.shtml](https://bergamo.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/24_giugno_27/montello-il-video-dell-attentato-alla-moschea-gli-stivali-le-taniche-e-gli-altri-indizi-che-inchiodano-l-operaio-b5acf67f-f597-4269-87f7-bc5b36a90xlk.shtml).

<sup>136</sup> Alessandra Vitullo, “The Online Intersection among Islamophobia, Populism, and Hate Speech: An Italian Perspective,” *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 10, no. 1 (August 6, 2021): 104, <https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-bja10028>.

<sup>137</sup> Rose and Matlach, “Narratives of Hate,” 4 & 12.

In data collected by the authors, there was an uptick in both antisemitic and Islamophobic discourse in Italian (see annex for comprehensive methodological notes). For Italian antisemitism, these spikes occurred in the immediate aftermath of October 7 (around 4,000 mentions), in late January 2024, around International Holocaust Remembrance Day (around 4,000 mentions), in late April 2024 during the start of campus protests and encampments in the US and other parts of the West, and in late June 2024 (nearly 6,000 mentions), when the undercover investigation by Fanpage became public (over 7,000 mentions). Rather than a reflection of an uptick in antisemitic rhetoric, the captured data correlated with discussions of antisemitism in the media and online. For Islamophobia, there were far fewer mentions overall in the data capture; however, there were similar spikes in the data as with antisemitism. There was a spike in late October 2023 (over 250 mentions), late April 2024 (nearly 300 mentions), and May 2024 (nearly 300 mentions). The mentions were a mixture of Islamophobic rhetoric, as well as discussion of Islamophobia in the aftermath of October 7 and protests on university campuses. The lack of data, and strong correlation with discourse about antisemitism and Islamophobia rather than capturing xenophobic rhetoric itself, is likely explained by the preferred social platforms of Italian users, which tends to be Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube – and were not captured through the data analytics platform. Further study with social listening software of these platforms may better capture antisemitic and Islamophobic discourse in the Italian language context.

### *Violent Acts, Thwarted Attacks, and Arrests*

Although fewer relative to other case studies, there have been several notable attempted or thwarted attacks and arrests in Italy since October 7. Between January 31 and February 1, 2024, two Molotov cocktails were thrown near the US Consulate in Florence allegedly by a 22-year-old Italian-born man who is the son of Palestinian parents.<sup>138</sup> The incident was also claimed in a video sent to several newspaper editorial offices via Telegram, where an altered voice claimed that the attacks were a “warning” and that more would come if “Italy and Europe continue to support the crimes of Israel and the USA.”<sup>139</sup> The video also reportedly linked to a Telegram channel which included a list of the “first 50 Zionist targets.”<sup>140</sup>

Beyond these attacks, the Italian police arrested three Palestinians in early March 2024 on terrorism charges for spreading propaganda and allegedly planning suicide attacks on foreign soil outside of Italy.<sup>141</sup> The three men had set up a cell in L’Aquila linked to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades,<sup>142</sup> according to the Italian police. Further, a 39-year-old Tunisian man was arrested in late May 2024 in the Abruzzo region on terrorism charges and incitement to commit terrorism.<sup>143</sup> The man was rapidly “self-radicalized,” particularly stemming from the October 7 attack by Hamas, and was allegedly Facebook friends with Abdessalem Lassoued, a 45-year-old Tunisian living in Brussels who attacked and killed two Swedish

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<sup>138</sup> “Molotov against the US Consulate and Florence: 22-Year-Old Arrested, Accused of Terrorism,” *L’Unione Sarda English*, February 3, 2024, <https://www.unionesarda.it/en/italy/molotov-against-the-us-consulate-and-florence-22-year-old-arrested-accused-of-terrorism-y6e3dkhp>.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> “Italian Police Arrest Three Palestinians on Terrorism Charges,” *Reuters*, March 11, 2024, sec. Europe, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italian-police-arrest-three-palestinians-terrorism-charges-2024-03-11/>.

<sup>142</sup> The Al-Asqa Martyrs Brigade formed in 2000 as a militant wing of the West Bank’s Fatah political faction. The group has been designated a terrorist organization by the European Union, United States, and Israel.

<sup>143</sup> “Terrorismo: Il ROS Arresta Un Cittadino Tunisino in Abruzzo,” *Carabinieri - Ministero Della Difesa*, May 30, 2024, <http://www.carabinieri.it/in-vostro-aiuto/informazioni/comunicati-stampa/terrorismo-il-ros-arresta-un-cittadino-tunisino>.

soccer fans and wounded another in the wake of October 7.<sup>144</sup> Although no motivations have been connected to October 7, another case involved a 20-year-old man arrested in early June for creating weapons and ammunition with a 3-D printer.<sup>145</sup> According to investigators, the man spread racially-motivated and antisemitic videos on Telegram, which triggered an anti-terrorism alert. The arsenal of homemade weapons and the man's alleged idolization of Brenton Tarrant,<sup>146</sup> the perpetrator of the Christchurch massacre where over 50 people were murdered in two mosques, demonstrates not only the potential for individuals to be radicalized and spread propaganda online, but also for the evolving ease with which they can obtain or create weapons. Further, the Italian Ministry of Interior announced it had arrested and repatriated two Tajik nationals who were flagged by intelligence as affiliated with Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP).<sup>147</sup> Officials believed that the two individuals were involved in planning terrorist activities in Europe. This was the first repatriation operation of Tajik nationals from Italy since 2019, according to the Italian Ministry of Interior. These incidents, while not exhaustive or as frequent as other case studies, indicate that Italy is not exempt from potentially being a target or operational sphere for extremist violence, or, more likely, citizens or residents being radicalized by the ongoing conflict in Gaza or racially motivated content online.

### *Protests and Polarization*

There have been some notable protests in Italy following the recent war in Gaza; however, unlike other case studies in this report, Italy has seen lower rates of polarization overall in the country, attributed to several factors. A protest in early January 2024 at an international jewelry fair in Vicenza, where Israel had its own pavilion, saw hundreds of demonstrators violently clash with police. Footage of the unrest showed protestors firing smoke bombs and flares, with the police firing water cannons on demonstrators and, in one case, dragging a protestor away and hitting them with a baton.<sup>148</sup> However, pro-Palestinian protests in Florence and Pisa, most of whom reportedly consisted of school-aged children, were eventually blocked by police in late February. Footage emerged of police beating the protestors with truncheons,<sup>149</sup> reportedly leaving several injured.<sup>150</sup> The incident sparked widespread outrage in Italy on social media and from politicians across the ideological spectrum, including Italian President Sergio Mattarella and

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<sup>144</sup> Tore Hamming, "The Beginning of a New Wave? The Hamas-Israel War and the Terror Threat in the West," *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point* 16, no. 10 (November 2023): 27.

<sup>145</sup> Marco Carta, "Kilob, 'Il Suprematista Bianco' Di Roma Nord, Finisce Ai Domiciliari. Ma Piovono Accuse Dalla Rete: 'Voleva Vendermi Delle Armi,'" *La Repubblica*, June 4, 2024, [https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2024/06/04/news/gianmarco\\_fiacchi\\_ai\\_domiciliari\\_armi\\_stampante\\_3d-423163946/](https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2024/06/04/news/gianmarco_fiacchi_ai_domiciliari_armi_stampante_3d-423163946/).

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Il Viminale [@Viminale], "Due cittadini Tagiki, espulsi dal Ministro dell'Interno, sono stati rimpatriati per motivi di prevenzione del terrorismo. Segnalati dall'intelligence in quanto affiliati a un ramo dell'autoproclamato Stato Islamico ritenuto responsabile dell'attentato commesso a Mosca lo scorso," Twitter, July 18, 2024, 4:11am, <https://x.com/Viminale/status/1813848978611462548>.

<sup>148</sup> Susie Coen, "Protest against Israeli Exhibitors at Jewellery Fair Turns Violent in Italy," *The Telegraph*, January 21, 2024, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2024/01/20/protest-against-israeli-exhibitors-turns-violent-in-italy/>.

<sup>149</sup> "Police Beatings of Pro-Palestinian Schoolchildren Spark Outrage in Italy," *Reuters*, February 23, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/police-beatings-pro-palestinian-schoolchildren-spark-outrage-italy-2024-02-23/>.

<sup>150</sup> Allan Kaval, "Police Violence during Italian Demonstrations in Support of Gaza Sparks Controversy," *Le Monde*, February 26, 2024, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/02/26/police-violence-during-italian-demonstrations-in-support-of-gaza-sparks-controversy\\_6561268\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/02/26/police-violence-during-italian-demonstrations-in-support-of-gaza-sparks-controversy_6561268_4.html).

Michele Conti of the far-right Lega party, due to the fact many of those beaten were reportedly children and such incidents of police violence are a relatively rare feature of policing in the country.<sup>151</sup> Other protests, such as a student protest in March 2024 which interrupted a conference with ministers from the ruling coalition in attendance,<sup>152</sup> populist Italian lawmakers in the 5-Star Movement in May 2024 who unfurled Palestinian flags in the Italian parliament,<sup>153</sup> a blockade of the Port of Genoa in June 2024,<sup>154</sup> as well as student encampments at universities in Florence, Milan, Rome, Bologna, and other cities, were not met with a similar police reaction.

The backlash from the response in February, coupled with a more nuanced reaction to the war in Gaza from some politicians, such as Italian President Mattarella,<sup>155</sup> may have contributed to tempering the potential polarization within the country and other violent clashes between protestors and police, as in other countries like the United States. Moreover, a poll published in late January 2024 stated that 58 percent of Italians thought Israel did not have the right to continue bombing Gaza, with 26 percent of respondents stating Israel did have that right, according to Reuters.<sup>156</sup> According to another poll conducted in April 2024, 65 percent of Italians of voting age support a ban on arms trade with Israel, with 49 percent believing claims that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza – the highest percentage in both survey questions among countries polled, including Sweden, Belgium, France, and Germany.<sup>157</sup> These societal realities may also contribute to the lack of polarization among the Italian public on the war in Gaza, as well as the responses by law enforcement to protests.

#### *Counter-Terror Resources, Stakeholders, and Responses*

Certain measures and responses at the disposal of the Italian government and law enforcement have also likely contributed to the lack of materialized threats on Italian soil, including in the post-October 7 landscape. Legal preventative measures grant Italian officials the right to execute environmental monitoring, or wiretapping, and allow them to intervene at early stages of presumed criminal activity.<sup>158</sup> This has facilitated the thwarting of many terrorist plots in the past before they have taken place, including a plot inspired by Islamic State in Iraq to target Milan's Jewish Synagogue in 2012, an IS-inspired plan to carry out a suicide bombing operation at the Vatican in 2016, and an IS-inspired plan to attack Venice's Rialto Bridge in 2017.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, the government's responses to the post-9/11 terrorist threat

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Seçkin, "Pro-Palestinian Protesters Disrupt Conference in Italy," *Anadolu Agency*, April 24, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/pro-palestinian-protesters-disrupt-conference-in-italy/3200574>.

<sup>153</sup> Barış Seçkin, "Italian Lawmakers Unfurl Palestinian Flags in Parliament," *Anadolu Agency*, May 29, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/italian-lawmakers-unfurl-palestinian-flags-in-parliament/3233582>.

<sup>154</sup> "Pro-Palestinian Protesters Blockade Italy Port of Genoa," *Middle East Monitor*, June 25, 2024, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240625-pro-palestinian-protesters-blockade-italy-port-of-geoa/>.

<sup>155</sup> "Pro-Palestinian Rally in Italy Moved From Holocaust Remembrance Day Amid Rising Antisemitism," *The Associated Press*, January 26, 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/2024-01-26/ty-article/italian-pro-palestinian-rally-moved-from-holocaust-remembrance-day-as-antisemitism-spikes/0000018d-462e-d02c-a79f-47bf86d60000>.

<sup>156</sup> "Italian Police, Protesters Clash over State Broadcaster RAI's Gaza Stance," *Reuters*, February 14, 2024, sec. Europe, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italian-police-protesters-clash-over-state-broadcaster-rais-gaza-stance-2024-02-13/>.

<sup>157</sup> "Public Opinion Poll: How 5 European Countries See Palestinian Issues," *The Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy*, April 16, 2024, [https://www.thepipd.com/resources/polling-2024/#:~:text=The%20polls%20shows%20that%20at,true%20\(Italy%2D49%25%2C](https://www.thepipd.com/resources/polling-2024/#:~:text=The%20polls%20shows%20that%20at,true%20(Italy%2D49%25%2C)

<sup>158</sup> Groppi, "The Terror Threat to Italy," 23.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

landscape and foreign fighter phenomenon, including reliance on arrests and deportations of non-EU citizens from Italy suspected of having links to terrorism or “merely manifested the will to fight in conflicts abroad,”<sup>160</sup> have also been attributed to reducing the terrorist threat and attacks on Italian soil.

Many of these same tactics have been employed in the post-October 7 context and have been utilized to thwart potential attacks before they occur, such as with the three Palestinian men arrested in March 2024, the “self-radicalized” Tunisian man arrested in May 2024, and the 20-year-old man arrested in June 2024 for allegedly spreading racist and antisemitic content online. Italy has also continued its policy of deportations related to national security risks. Between October 7, 2023, and March 28, 2024, the Italian government expelled around 50 individuals from the country it said had links to terrorist organizations,<sup>161</sup> and the number has likely grown in the interim.

In addition to common tactics it has employed in the past, Italy also temporarily suspended its open border with Slovenia in October 2023, reportedly due to the heightened risk of terrorist attacks across the Mediterranean and in the EU, which remained in effect until June 18, 2024.<sup>162</sup> Italy’s Ministry of the Interior specifically cited the risk of terrorists hiding among migrants transiting through the Balkan route. Further, the Italian government raised the terrorist threat level in the country following the Moscow terrorist attack in March 2024.<sup>163</sup> The Ministry of Interior announced increased surveillance and security checks, particularly for crowded spaces and public transit areas, as well as additional security measures implemented in Rome during the Easter weekend. These additional measures, coupled with the tactics Italy has steadily employed over the past few years, have likely contributed to a lack of materialized attacks within the country.

It is difficult to pin point which exact factor has led to the persistence of some “Italian exceptionalism” in the aftermath of October 7; it is likely that it remains a confluence of the aforementioned variables, particularly the use of deportations and the fact that Italy seems to continue to be a logistical hub for terrorist actors, such as the three Palestinians arrested for allegedly planning terrorist attacks on foreign soil. The arrests of “self-radicalized” individuals, such as the Tunisian man in May 2024 and the 20-year-old man with the 3-D printer, displays the ability of law enforcement to preemptively act and intervene early before an attack occurs, and may also contribute to the continued exceptionalism. Yet, as the war in Gaza continues, terrorists and violent extremists have continued to capitalize on the war as a means to mainstream their narratives, spread propaganda, further radicalization, and recruit members, such as far-right extremist channels which have issued instructions on how to use the war to mainstream antisemitic narratives and “redpill” far-left or left-leaning individuals to white supremacist narratives and causes.<sup>164</sup> This could impact the terrorist threat landscape in Italy, which has seen several cases of radicalized individuals intending to spread propaganda or potentially commit acts of violence, seemingly spurred on by the Israel-Hamas war, and possibly eroding Italian exceptionalism in the future.

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<sup>160</sup> “Fight against Terrorism – Ministero Degli Affari Esteri e Della Cooperazione Internazionale,” Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, accessed June 21, 2024, [https://www.esteri.it/en/politica-estera-e-cooperazione-allo-sviluppo/temi\\_globali/lotta\\_terrorismo/](https://www.esteri.it/en/politica-estera-e-cooperazione-allo-sviluppo/temi_globali/lotta_terrorismo/).

<sup>161</sup> “Italy Raises Security Alert Level for Easter Weekend,” *Euronews*, March 29, 2024, <https://www.euronews.com/2024/03/28/italy-raises-security-alert-level-for-easter-weekend-following-moscow-attacks>.

<sup>162</sup> “Italy Extends Border Controls with Slovenia until June,” *Reuters*, January 17, 2024, sec. Europe, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italy-extends-border-controls-with-slovenia-until-june-2024-01-17/>.

<sup>163</sup> “Italy Raises Security Alert Level for Easter Weekend.”

<sup>164</sup> Klempler and Koblenz-Stenzler, “Methodologies in Manipulation.”

## France Case Study

### Introduction

France has consistently faced an elevated terrorist threat level within the European context due to its particular sociocultural, geopolitical, and historical context. France's military pursuit of its foreign policy objectives, more pronounced and forceful than many of its other European counterparts, has been one major factor in its disproportionate targeting in terror attacks. Its military has been actively involved in major counterterrorism operations, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, which has rendered it a target for retaliation by terrorist groups.<sup>165</sup> Operations such as Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Barkhane (2014-2022) in the Sahel region, and Chammal (2014-present) in Iraq and Syria have directly involved French forces in combat against jihadist groups like Islamic State and al-Qaeda. Additionally, France has faced significant challenges with domestic radicalization.<sup>166</sup> France is also home to the largest Muslim community in Europe.<sup>167</sup> Subsets of the community have been especially susceptible to radicalization due to socio-economic marginalization, discrimination, and the influence of extremist propaganda.

One sociocultural aspect that has particularly raised the ire of many jihadist groups has been France's strict commitment to its form of national secularism (*laïcité*). Relatedly, France's ardent defense of the freedom of expression, including actions like the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, have made it a symbolic target for Islamist extremists.<sup>168</sup> These principles and values are seen as intrinsic to France's republican identity and have caused significant resentment within conservative subsets of the Muslim community. France also hosts the largest Jewish community after Israel and the United States, rendering it particularly vulnerable to jihadist terrorism. Scholars have also conceptualized France's disproportionate targeting in terror attacks in comparison to the rest of the EU as linked to its colonial legacy in the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as its historical role in carving up the Levant.<sup>169</sup> Lastly, France has well-established jihadi networks, including foreign fighters, some of whom have repatriated after traveling abroad to join jihadist groups.<sup>170</sup> These pre-existing factors have served as fertile ground for the further proliferation of the transnational and domestic Islamist terror threat in France since the October 7 terrorist attack by Hamas.

The October 7 terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel and the subsequent regional conflict has had wide-ranging impacts on the threat landscape in France. Immediately after the attack, eight out of ten French

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<sup>165</sup> "Terrorism: France's International Action," Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, accessed June 28, 2024, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/security-disarmament-and-non-proliferation/terrorism-france-s-international-action/>.

<sup>166</sup> Rasika Joshi, "Religious Radicalization in France: Contextualizing the 2021 'Anti-Separatism' Bill," *Strategic Analysis* 0, no. 0 (2021): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2021.1966870>.

<sup>167</sup> "Muslim Populations in European Countries Statistic," Statista, accessed June 28, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/868409/muslim-populations-in-european-countries/>.

<sup>168</sup> Namu Abdulla, "Why Is France the Top European Target for Jihadists?" *Voice of America*, November 9, 2020, [https://www.voanews.com/a/extremism-watch\\_why-france-top-european-target-jihadists/6198163.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/extremism-watch_why-france-top-european-target-jihadists/6198163.html).

<sup>169</sup> John R. Bowen, "How France Became a Target for Jihad," *TIME*, January 8, 2015, <https://time.com/3660002/france-muslim-africa-organized-religion/>.

<sup>170</sup> Peter Nesser, "Military Interventions, Jihadi Networks, and Terrorist Entrepreneurs: How the Islamic State Terror Wave Rose So High in Europe," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, March 21, 2019, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/military-interventions-jihadi-networks-terrorist-entrepreneurs-islamic-state-terror-wave-rose-high-europe/>.



people surveyed believed the Hamas-Israel conflict would lead to increased tensions in France.<sup>171</sup> Such tensions manifested rapidly, with rising terror threats, a significant increase in antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents in the country, and various uncovered Russian interference efforts seeking to further polarize the population on topics such as immigration and antisemitism.<sup>172</sup> The following sections explore these dynamics in detail.

### *Violent Acts, Thwarted Attacks, and Arrests*

While the issue of Israel and Palestine has long motivated terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States, the recent Hamas-Israel conflict has again brought this issue to the forefront. The disproportionate number of civilian deaths in Gaza has raised concerns that jihadi groups may exploit the anger among Muslim communities to perpetrate attacks in the West.<sup>173</sup> The Gaza war thus has the potential to further radicalize already extremist individuals and to attract new recruits to jihadi causes in France. Young activists frustrated by ineffective peaceful protests might also be groomed into committing violence. Although Gaza protests in France have been relatively peaceful, there have been instances of skirmishes. If protests escalate or government responses become more severe, this could increase the risk of recruitment by jihadis or other malign actors.<sup>174</sup>

Notable terror attacks and violent incidents in France motivated entirely or in part by the Hamas-Israel war include:

- On October 13, 2023, the murder of French teacher Dominique Bernard in Arras by one of his former pupils of Chechen origin was at least partly motivated by the developments in Gaza. The perpetrator had become fixated on the war in the days leading up to the murder.<sup>175</sup> The murder came almost exactly three years after Samuel Paty, a teacher in a Parisian suburb, was murdered by a radicalized 18-year-old Chechen.<sup>176</sup>
- On November 4, 2023, a young Jewish woman in Lyon was stabbed to death in her home that had been defaced with a swastika. The perpetrators could not be identified, and the case was consequently closed.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> “8 Français sur 10 pensent que le conflit Israël-Hamas représente un risque de tensions en France, en nette hausse,” BFMTV, October 25, 2024, [https://www.bfmtv.com/police-justice/8-francais-sur-10-pensent-que-le-conflit-israel-hamas-represente-un-risque-de-tensions-en-france-en-nette-hausse\\_AN-202310250593.html](https://www.bfmtv.com/police-justice/8-francais-sur-10-pensent-que-le-conflit-israel-hamas-represente-un-risque-de-tensions-en-france-en-nette-hausse_AN-202310250593.html).

<sup>172</sup> “IntelBrief: The War in Gaza Reverberates in Europe as France Grapples with the Fallout,” *The Soufan Center* (blog), March 28, 2024, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2024-march-28/>.

<sup>173</sup> Petter Nesser and Wassim Nasr. “The Threat Matrix Facing the Paris Olympics,” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, June 28, 2024, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-threat-matrix-facing-the-paris-olympics/>.

<sup>174</sup> Petter Nesser and Wassim Nasr, “The Threat Matrix Facing the Paris Olympics” (CTC, 2024), <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CTC-SENTINEL-062024.pdf>.

<sup>175</sup> “Attentat à Arras: l’assaillant motivé par l’attaque du Hamas ?,” *Le Point*, October 14, 2023, [https://www.lepoint.fr/societe/attentat-a-arras-l-assaillant-motive-par-l-attaque-du-hamas-14-10-2023-2539349\\_23.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/societe/attentat-a-arras-l-assaillant-motive-par-l-attaque-du-hamas-14-10-2023-2539349_23.php).

<sup>176</sup> “Après la mort de Samuel Paty, l’« enchaînement des faits » détaillé par l’inspection générale,” *Le Monde*, December 4, 2020, [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/12/04/apres-la-mort-de-samuel-paty-l-enchainement-des-faits-detaille-par-l-inspection-generale\\_6062175\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/12/04/apres-la-mort-de-samuel-paty-l-enchainement-des-faits-detaille-par-l-inspection-generale_6062175_3224.html).

<sup>177</sup> “French Jewish Woman Stabbed in Her Home in France’s Lyon, Police Hunts Suspect,” *France 24*, November 4, 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20231104-french-jewish-woman-stabbed-in-her-home-in-france-s-lyon-police-hunts-suspect>.

## Accelerating Hate: The Impact of October 7 on Terrorism and Political Violence in the West

- On November 11, 2023, the ultra-right group Guignol Squad attacked a pro-Palestinian conference in Lyon, France, injuring seven people and leading to the arrest of eight suspects.<sup>178</sup>
- In December 2023, the deadly attack on a German tourist near the Eiffel Tower was perpetrated by a radicalized Iranian Frenchman. He explained to police after his arrest that he had had enough of the killing of innocent Palestinians and Afghans and that France was complicit in Israel's actions in Gaza.<sup>179</sup> Two others were injured in the terror attack.
- On May 17, 2024, a synagogue in Rouen was attacked by an Algerian national who started a fire in the place of worship and threatened a police officer with a knife before being shot. Although he did not make an explicit mention of the Hamas-Israel war, the event occurred in the context of increasing antisemitism (see details in the following section).
- In June, 2024, a 12-year-old Jewish French girl was gang-raped in Courbevoie, a Parisian suburb, by three teenagers between 12 and 13 years old (see details in the section below).<sup>180</sup>
- On August 24, 2024, a 33-year-old Algerian national attacked the Beth Yaacov synagogue in La Grande Motte with the intention of killing Jews. The perpetrator was carrying a Palestinian flag and gun.

In response to the Arras terror attack in October 2023, the General Secretariat for Defence and National Security (SGDSN) raised its threat level to Emergency Attack Level, the highest on the Vigipirate threat scale. While the threat level was decreased in mid-January 2024, after the deadly ISIS-K attack on the Crocus City Hall in Moscow on March 22, 2024, France re-instated the highest level on the threat scale. This threat level manifests concretely in a reinforced security posture at all outdoor sites of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, educational institutions and places of worship, large gatherings, public transport and buildings, and information systems.<sup>181</sup>

Law enforcement and intelligence services in France have foiled numerous plots since the onset of the Hamas-Israel war:

- In March, a 14-year-old boy was charged in Paris, suspected of planning an attack on a shopping center in Lille with an explosive device.<sup>182</sup>
- In April, French authorities arrested a 16-year-old teenager who sought to commit a suicide attack during the Olympics, declaring he wanted to “die a martyr” on social media.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> “Three People Injured at Pro-Palestinian Conference in Lyon, France,” euronews, November 12, 2023, <https://www.euronews.com/2023/11/12/three-people-injured-at-pro-palestinian-conference-in-southwestern-france>.

<sup>179</sup> “Ce que l’on sait du profil d’Armand Rajabpour-Miyandoab, placé en garde à vue après l’attaque près de la tour Eiffel,” *Le Monde*, December 3, 2023, [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2023/12/03/ce-que-l-on-sait-du-profil-d-armand-rajabpour-miyandoab-place-en-garde-a-vue-apres-l-attaque-pres-de-la-tour-eiffel\\_6203646\\_3225.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2023/12/03/ce-que-l-on-sait-du-profil-d-armand-rajabpour-miyandoab-place-en-garde-a-vue-apres-l-attaque-pres-de-la-tour-eiffel_6203646_3225.html).

<sup>180</sup> “Viol et injures antisémites : le récit consigné par les enquêteurs du calvaire d’une fille de 12 ans,” *Le Monde*, June 19, 2024, [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2024/06/19/viol-et-injures-antisemites-le-recit-consigne-par-les-enqueteurs-du-calvaire-d-une-jeune-fille-de-12-ans\\_6241473\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2024/06/19/viol-et-injures-antisemites-le-recit-consigne-par-les-enqueteurs-du-calvaire-d-une-jeune-fille-de-12-ans_6241473_3224.html).

<sup>181</sup> “Vigipirate | SGDSN,” accessed June 30, 2024, <http://www.sgdsn.gouv.fr/vigipirate>.

<sup>182</sup> “France : Un Adolescent de 14 Ans Inculpé Pour Un Projet d’attentat Contre Un Centre Commercial à Lille,” RTBF, March 22, 2024, <https://www.rtb.be/article/france-un-adolescent-de-14-ans-inculpe-pour-un-projet-d-attentat-contre-un-centre-commercial-a-lille-11348540>.

<sup>183</sup> “Paris Olympics: 16-Year-Old Arrested after He Said He Wanted to ‘die a Martyr’ at Games,” Sky News, April 24, 2024, <https://news.sky.com/story/paris-olympics-16-year-old-arrested-after-he-said-he-wanted-to-die-a-martyr-at-games-13122216>.

- In May, French authorities arrested an 18-year-old Chechen national who was plotting an attack against a soccer stadium in Saint Étienne during the 2024 Paris Olympics. The suspect planned to target spectators and law enforcement.<sup>184</sup>

Discussing these trends, French criminology professor Alain Bauer on *France 5* observes a resurgence in terrorist attacks plotted by small cells rather than pure lone wolves.<sup>185</sup> He notes that there has been an unprecedented number of adolescents arrested by the intelligence services on charges of *actively* preparing an attack. The majority of those who have been detained were previously unknown to security services. These figures shed light on the growing trend of new radicalization in French society following the Hamas-Israel conflict and indicate that not just individuals already labeled “fiche S” — a measure used by law enforcement to flag individuals that pose a severe threat to national security — are plotting and committing violent acts.<sup>186</sup>

Terrorism financing from the European continent has also skyrocketed, with terrorist groups using the war in Gaza to incentivize the financial support of individuals living in Europe. Specifically, donations to Hamas and Hezbollah from individuals in Europe have proliferated since October 7, according to German security officials.<sup>187</sup> In June, a Palestinian man was charged in France with the financing of terrorism and conspiracy in attempted murder. The man is accused of being a member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the armed wing of Fatah, and having been behind the financing of terror attacks against Israelis in the occupied West Bank in 2023.<sup>188</sup>

Since the start of the Hamas-Israel conflict, there has also been an unprecedented increase in false bomb alerts and terror threats to public institutions in France that have led to significant disruptions of transport, education, and cultural activities. The Palace of Versailles has been evacuated multiple times, with at least seven evacuations reported in a short span after false bomb threats. The Louvre has experienced similar threats. Fifteen airports in France have been evacuated since October 7 due to emailed threats and abandoned luggage scares, causing hours of delays and flight cancellations. Educational establishments throughout the country have also received multiple bomb threats, primarily by “pranksters.” In March 2024, roughly 30 schools in the Paris region received threatening messages via the student digital learning platform accompanied by footage of beheadings.<sup>189</sup> While not directly linked to the Hamas-Israel conflict, the heightened threats landscape has rendered these “pranks” more credible.

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<sup>184</sup> “JO 2024 : un projet d’attentat visant le tournoi de football a été déjoué, annoncent les autorités,” *Le Parisien*, May 31, 2024, <https://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/jo-2024-un-projet-dattentat-visant-le-tournoi-de-football-a-ete-dejoue-annoncent-les-autorites-31-05-2024-4XXXCWCE5ZFCTFF5M7EDP5IY6A.php>.

<sup>185</sup> “État islamique : après Moscou, la France menacée,” *France TV*, 2024, <https://www.france.tv/france-5/c-dans-l-air/5780880-emission-du-lundi-25-mars-2024.html>.

<sup>186</sup> “Terrorisme : qu’est-ce que la fiche « S » ?,” *Le Monde*, October 16, 2023, [https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2023/10/16/terrorisme-qu-est-ce-que-la-fiche-s\\_4741574\\_4355771.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2023/10/16/terrorisme-qu-est-ce-que-la-fiche-s_4741574_4355771.html).

<sup>187</sup> Bojan Pancevski and Bertrand Benoit, “WSJ News Exclusive | A New Terror Threat Is Emerging in Europe Linked to Iran, Gaza War,” *WSJ*, March 12, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/world/europe/a-new-terror-threat-is-emerging-in-europe-linked-to-iran-gaza-war-fb297119>.

<sup>188</sup> AFP, “France Charges Palestinian Man With Financing Terrorism,” *Barron’s*, June 6, 2024, <https://www.barrons.com/news/france-charges-palestinian-man-with-financing-terrorism-e4121007>.

<sup>189</sup> “French Schools Sent Threatening Messages and Beheading Videos, Says Ministry,” *France 24*, March 21, 2024, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20240321-french-schools-sent-threatening-messages-and-beheading-videos-says-ministry>.

According to an article by terrorism expert Tore Hamming published after October 7, the main three factors that would determine the impact of the Israel-Hamas war on the terrorism threat in the West are the length of the war, the scale of Israel's offensive in Gaza, and the degree of support from Western nations to Israel.<sup>190</sup> In the context of continued intense military action in Gaza as well as continued support from Western nations — though diminished — the Paris Olympics was a prime opportunity for radicalized individuals to act.<sup>191</sup> The pro-Islamic State Halammu propaganda outlet had previously incited its supporters to attack the sporting event with knives, Molotov cocktails, and explosives.<sup>192</sup>

### *Antisemitism and Islamophobia*

Expressions of antisemitism and Islamophobia have skyrocketed in France in the aftermath of the October 7 Hamas attack and the subsequent Israeli military response in Gaza. During an event organized by the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions of France (CRIF), French PM Gabriel Attal denounced the wave of antisemitism and stated that “no one can deny the fact that it is estimated that French Jews represent 1 percent of the French population, but that more than 60 percent of anti-religious acts are anti-Semitic acts.”<sup>193</sup> According to



the civil society organization *Service de Protection de la Communauté Juive*,<sup>194</sup> antisemitic incidents in France in 2023 increased by 1000 percent after the October 7 attack and increased significantly even before Israel's military response in Gaza.<sup>195</sup> Roughly 25 antisemitic incidents were recorded in the first month following the attack. In the three months following October 7, the number of antisemitic acts equaled that of the last three years combined, 1,242 incidents. Antisemitic incidents in education settings were predominantly motivated by Nazism or jihadism. This data set only reflects complaints and reports to police authorities and, thus, may potentially be a vast underestimation of the actual scale of the proliferation of antisemitism in France after October 7. The first trimester of 2024 saw 366 reported

<sup>190</sup> Tore Hamming, “The Beginning of a New Wave? The Hamas-Israel War and the Terror Threat in the West,” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, November 28, 2023, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-beginning-of-a-new-wave-the-hamas-israel-war-and-the-terror-threat-in-the-west/>.

<sup>191</sup> Tore Hamming, “The Beginning of a New Wave? The Hamas-Israel War and the Terror Threat in the West,” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point* 16, no. 10 (November 2023): 27–32.

<sup>192</sup> “IntelBrief: Islamic State Threat to the West and New Campaign Targeting Sporting Events,” *The Soufan Center* (blog), April 26, 2024, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2024-april-26/>.

<sup>193</sup> “Prononcé le 6 mai 2024 - Gabriel Attal 06052024 lutte contre antisémitisme 38e diner annuel crif | vie-publique.fr,” May 6, 2024, <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/294116-gabriel-attal-06052024-lutte-contre-antisemitisme-38e-diner-annuel-crif>.

<sup>194</sup> The *Service de Protection de la Communauté Juive* utilizes the IHRA definition for antisemitism. See: <https://www.spcj.org/antis%C3%A9mitisme/definition-antis%C3%A9mitisme>.

<sup>195</sup> “SPCJ - Rapport Sur l’antisémitisme En France En 2023,” SPCJ, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://www.spcj.org/antis%C3%A9mitisme/chiffres-antis%C3%A9mitisme-france-2023-b>.

antisemitic incidents, a 300 percent increase in comparison to the same period in 2023.<sup>196</sup> A study by the pollster *Institut français d'opinion publique* (IFOP) of antisemitism in 2024 in France already showed that younger individuals (under 35) are more likely to justify antisemitic acts and hold antisemitic views compared to older age groups. Additionally, despite the proliferation of antisemitic incidents, the proportion of the French population holding antisemitic prejudices has remained stable since 2022, according to the IFOP. A notable exception is the Muslim community, which has seen an increase in antisemitic prejudices.<sup>197</sup>

The data on Islamophobic incidents in France has been far less documented. However, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin did acknowledge an increase in Islamophobic incidents in France since October 7.<sup>198</sup> While released data from 2023 seemed to indicate it would see fewer Islamophobic incidents than the year before, this is highly unlikely to be the case in light of reporting on individual acts of Islamophobia. According to Darmanin, Islamophobic incidents have included death threats, threats of attack, and Islamophobic discourse, including on television.<sup>199</sup> In the first month after October 7 alone, the French Council of the Muslim Faith, the elected official interlocutory body between France's Muslim community and the government, stated it had received 42 threatening letters.<sup>200</sup> That same month, mosques were also heavily targeted, with 17 receiving threats and 14 being vandalized.<sup>201</sup> Additionally, the Interior Ministry's Statistics Service reported a 32 percent increase in racist, xenophobic, and religion-based hate crimes in 2023, though it did not provide data on the victims' religion. There were twice as many crimes and misdemeanors related to racism recorded in the last quarter of 2023 as in the same period in 2022.<sup>202</sup> An exposé by *Le Monde*, published in April 2024, highlighted a phenomenon of highly educated Muslim French people leaving for other countries due to the discrimination and/or suspicion they faced, particularly since the October 7 attacks.<sup>203</sup>

Data captured by TSC through a data analytics company (see annex for comprehensive methodological notes) to understand both the use of antisemitic and Islamophobic slurs and phrases, as well as general

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<sup>196</sup> "Gabriel Attal dévoile les chiffres d'une 'déferlante antisémite' en 2024," *L'Express*, May 7, 2024, <https://www.lexpress.fr/societe/gabriel-attal-devoile-les-chiffres-dune-deferlante-antisemite-en-2024-CAEQV7L56JA47P2WX7OLDG3WSI/>.

<sup>197</sup> "Radiographie de l'antisémitisme en 2024," IFOP, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://www.ifop.com/publication/radiographie-de-lantisemitisme-en-2024/>.

<sup>198</sup> "Muslims in Europe Feel Vulnerable as Hostilities Rise," *Middle East Monitor*, November 29, 2023, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20231129-muslims-in-europe-feel-vulnerable-as-hostilities-rise/>.

<sup>199</sup> "Gérald Darmanin: «La France ne protège pas un culte plutôt qu'un autre»,» *Europe 1*, November 14, 2023, <https://www.europe1.fr/emissions/linterview-politique-de-8h20/gerald-darmanin-la-france-ne-protege-pas-un-culte-plutot-quun-autre-4214276>.

<sup>200</sup> "'Là, c'est pire que d'habitude' : face à la hausse des actes islamophobes, les musulmans de France entre peur et résignation," *franceinfo - Radio France*, December 6, 2023, [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/societe/islamophobie/la-c-est-pire-que-d-habitude-face-a-la-hausse-des-actes-islamophobes-les-musulmans-de-france-entre-peur-et-resignation\\_6222585.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/societe/islamophobie/la-c-est-pire-que-d-habitude-face-a-la-hausse-des-actes-islamophobes-les-musulmans-de-france-entre-peur-et-resignation_6222585.html).

<sup>201</sup> Ashifa Kassam and Ashifa Kassam European, "European Officials 'Deeply Concerned' for Muslims amid Surge in Attacks," *The Guardian*, November 30, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/nov/30/european-officials-deeply-concerned-for-muslims-amid-surge-in-attacks>.

<sup>202</sup> "Info Rapide N°34 : Les Atteintes à Caractère Raciste, Xénophobe Ou Antireligieux En 2023," Ministère de l'Intérieur, accessed June 30, 2024, <http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Interstats/Actualites/Info-Rapide-n-34-Les-atteintes-a-caractere-raciste-xenophobe-ou-antireligieux-en-2023>.

<sup>203</sup> "Ces Françaises et Français de Confession Musulmane « bien Installés » Qui Songent de plus En plus à Émigrer," *Le Monde*, April 18, 2024, [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2024/04/18/francais-de-confession-musulmane-la-tentation-du-depart\\_6228469\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2024/04/18/francais-de-confession-musulmane-la-tentation-du-depart_6228469_3224.html).

mentions of Islamophobia and antisemitism in French, show that in the immediate aftermath of the October 7 attack, mentions online, particularly on X (previously Twitter), only increased moderately. However, in the months after, widely reported antisemitic incidents, as well as public discourse in the lead-up to the European Parliament and the subsequent French legislative elections, led to a significant increase in discourse about these two forms of religion and ethnicity-based hate. Around April and May, when significant pro-Palestine protests took place on university campuses across the country, a notable increase in discourse about antisemitism was observed, which further escalated in the lead-up to the elections and in light of the news of the brutal gang rape of a 12-year-old Jewish girl in Courbevoie. Domestic affairs have thus influenced public discourse on antisemitism more than the Hamas attack on Israel itself. Nevertheless, the sensitivity of domestic acts of antisemitic incidents is undoubtedly tied to the climate the Hamas terror attack has created in France. A significant spike in discourse related to Islamophobia was observed in April when controversy emerged regarding a protest against racism, islamophobia, and police violence, first prohibited by the Paris Police Prefecture but then deemed lawful by the Council of State.<sup>204</sup> The electoral results by the *Rassemblement National* in the European Parliament elections and the French legislative elections also caused significant discourse on Islamophobia.

### *State Interference*

In this atmosphere of heightened sociopolitical tension, France has had to contend with Russian state interference, seeking to exploit and exacerbate societal divisions. In November 2023, more than 60 stars of David were found graffitied on public and private property around Paris. France's domestic intelligence service (DGSI) believes that the FSB's fifth division, which is responsible for international operations, directed a Moldovan couple, through a pro-Russia Moldovan handler, to carry out the campaign of antisemitic vandalism.<sup>205</sup> Additionally, the well-documented Kremlin-linked network dubbed *Doppelgänger* was actively circulating pictures and posts depicting the graffiti to amplify their potentially divisive effect.<sup>206</sup> The notorious private military company the Wagner Group is suspected to be in charge of one of the networks that actively promoted the images of the fabricated antisemitic incident.<sup>207</sup> Additionally, in May 2024, red hands were painted over the Wall of the Righteous, a monument in tribute to those who helped rescue French Jews during the Second World War, at the Shoah Memorial in Paris. It followed a similar operational pattern to the Stars of David graffiti and points towards Russian

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<sup>204</sup> "Marche du 21 avril contre le racisme et l'islamophobie à Paris : la justice suspend l'interdiction," *Le Monde*, April 19, 2024, [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2024/04/19/la-justice-suspend-l-interdiction-d-une-marche-prevue-dimanche-a-paris-contre-le-racisme-et-l-islamophobie\\_6228804\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2024/04/19/la-justice-suspend-l-interdiction-d-une-marche-prevue-dimanche-a-paris-contre-le-racisme-et-l-islamophobie_6228804_3224.html).

<sup>205</sup> "France Blames Russia's FSB for Anti-Semitic Star of David Graffiti Campaign," France 24, February 23, 2024, <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20240223-france-blames-russia-s-fsb-for-anti-semitic-star-of-david-graffiti-across-paris>.

<sup>206</sup> "Piste d'une ingérence russe dans les tags d'étoiles de David : une 'volonté de récupérer tout ce qui peut être récupéré pour attiser les tensions', selon un journaliste," *franceinfo - Radio France*, November 10, 2023, [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/societe/antisemitisme/piste-d-une-implication-russe-dans-les-tags-d-etoiles-de-david-il-y-a-la-volonte-de-recuperer-tout-ce-qui-peut-etre-recupere-pour-attiser-les-tensions-selon-un-journaliste\\_6175653.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/societe/antisemitisme/piste-d-une-implication-russe-dans-les-tags-d-etoiles-de-david-il-y-a-la-volonte-de-recuperer-tout-ce-qui-peut-etre-recupere-pour-attiser-les-tensions-selon-un-journaliste_6175653.html).

<sup>207</sup> Noemie Bisserbe, "France Investigates Possible Russian Link to Star of David Graffiti in Paris," *WSJ*, November 7, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/world/europe/france-investigates-possible-russian-link-to-star-of-david-graffiti-in-paris-ff16da15>.

interference.<sup>208</sup> In June, one of the operatives suspected to be involved in the defacement of the Wall of the Righteous is believed to also have been part of the Russian operation that saw five concrete-filled coffins donned with the words “French soldiers of Ukraine” exhibited at the Eiffel Tower.<sup>209</sup>

In the lead-up to the legislative elections in France and the Paris Olympics, Russia has been actively spreading various disinformation narratives targeting the French public.<sup>210</sup> It is thus highly likely that there will be continued Russian hybrid activity, whether disinformation or covert actions, to polarize the public further and tarnish France’s reputation while hosting the 2024 Olympics. The fact that France hosts the largest Jewish and Muslim populations in Europe will undoubtedly continue to be leveraged by Russia to exacerbate polarization and a sense of fear among the general public.

### *Protests and Polarization*

While France has a strong history of protest and civil disobedience, attitudes towards pro-Palestinian protests have overall been negative. IFOP has found that most French view pro-Palestinian demonstrations very unfavorably, with roughly 73 percent of those surveyed in April explaining their negative attitude due to antisemitic or antirepublican values espoused in these types of demonstrations.<sup>211</sup> Interestingly, French people’s attitudes towards pro-Palestinian protests do not have any real impact on their overall sentiment towards the Palestinian cause and the current situation in Gaza. The majority of French (59 percent) blame the current situation in the Gaza Strip on both Israel and Hamas. Meanwhile, 63 percent and 61 percent feel neither antipathy nor sympathy for the Palestinian Authority and Israel, respectively.<sup>212</sup>

After October 7, French Minister of Interior Gérald Darmanin ordered a ban on all pro-Palestinian protests due to the risk of disturbances to public order. This decision sparked intense controversy and was contested by organizations such as the Palestine Action Committee, which appealed to the Council of State to suspend the ban. On October 18, 2023, the Council rejected the request to suspend the general prohibition. Still, it underlined that the responsibility for prohibiting a demonstration lies with the prefects, who must assess the risks of disturbances to public order on a case-by-case basis.<sup>213</sup> Some have

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<sup>208</sup> “Tags de mains rouges sur le Mur des Justes du Mémorial de la Shoah : encore une opération d’ingérence russe ? : épisode /11 du podcast On vous explique,” *franceinfo - Radio France*, May 22, 2024, <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinfo/podcasts/les-documents-franceinfo/tags-de-mains-rouges-sur-le-mur-des-justes-du-memorial-de-la-shoah-encore-une-operation-d-ingerece-russe-2308059>.

<sup>209</sup> “Cercueils à la tour Eiffel : un lien direct établi avec l’affaire « des mains rouges » et des soupçons pointant vers la Russie,” *Le Monde*, June 3, 2024, [https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2024/06/03/cercueils-a-la-tour-eiffel-un-lien-direct-etabli-avec-l-affaire-des-mains-rouges\\_6237067\\_4408996.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2024/06/03/cercueils-a-la-tour-eiffel-un-lien-direct-etabli-avec-l-affaire-des-mains-rouges_6237067_4408996.html).

<sup>210</sup> Annabelle Timsit and Aaron Gregg, “Russia Is Trying to Disrupt 2024 Paris Olympics, Microsoft Says,” *Washington Post*, June 4, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/olympics/2024/06/03/russia-paris-olympics-disinformation-microsoft/>.

<sup>211</sup> “Le regard des Français sur le conflit israélo-palestinien et ses conséquences sur la France – Vague 3,” IFOP, accessed July 1, 2024, <https://www.ifop.com/publication/le-regard-des-francais-sur-le-conflit-israelo-palestinien-et-ses-consequences-sur-la-france-vague-3/>.

<sup>212</sup> “Le regard des Français sur le conflit israélo-palestinien et ses conséquences sur la France – Vague 3.”

<sup>213</sup> “Top Court Rules France Cannot Ban Pro-Palestinian Rallies Outright,” RFI, October 18, 2023, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20231018-top-court-to-rule-whether-france-s-ban-on-pro-palestinian-rallies-is-legal>.

branded the ban a disproportionate attack on the right to demonstrate and freedom of expression.<sup>214</sup> Several pro-Palestinian demonstrations took place in Paris, Rennes, Lille, and other French cities. In many cases these demonstrations were dispersed by the police. Higher education institutions have especially been places of protest, with a significant student body mobilizing for pro-Palestinian causes in Paris, Toulouse, and Menton.<sup>215</sup>

### *Counter-Terror Resources, Stakeholders, and Responses*

Since the October 7 attack on Israel, France has implemented a series of measures to address the rising terror threat. These responses encompass heightened security measures and efforts to combat antisemitism and radicalization. France has taken a comprehensive approach to combat Hamas, focusing on cutting off its funding and combating its propaganda. This includes stepping up sanctions, regulating the use of cryptocurrencies, and enhancing international cooperation to fight the spread of terrorist content online.<sup>216</sup> Aside from adjusting the threat level to the highest level (see Vigipirate), the government also ramped up Operation Sentinelle, deploying thousands of soldiers to assist police and gendarmerie in monitoring public spaces such as shopping malls and schools.<sup>217</sup> In the aftermath of the Arras attack, Macron instructed the interior minister to review security files and take special measures against young men from the Caucasus region to fully understand their radicalization and the threat they pose to French national security.<sup>218</sup>

### **Germany Case Study**

#### *Introduction*

Due to its historical responsibility for the Holocaust and the subsequent enduring friendship with the State of Israel, Germany has struggled since October 7 to navigate both an increase in antisemitism and internal political dynamics with far-right political parties and their anti-immigrant stance. While rates of antisemitism have risen to the highest levels in years and instances of physical attacks on Jewish people occurring in all federal states of Germany have been reported, the increase in Islamophobia, often falsely associated with recent influxes of immigrants and refugees, has also reached a new level post-October 7. Germany is not only grappling with these two phenomena. The country has also observed growing public discontent with the German government's outright support towards Israel, which has led to bridge-building between different ideological groups over their common enemies: Jews in Germany and the state of Israel. So far, the tactic of the government has been to observe and ban protests, slogans, and groups supporting Hamas and to raise more awareness for topics such as antisemitism and Islamophobia. Against the backdrop of these developments, 2024 is a crucial year for elections in Germany, as three former East

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<sup>214</sup> "Les hostilités entre Israël et la Palestine affectent les droits en Europe," Human Rights Watch, October 27, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2023/10/27/les-hostilites-entre-israel-et-la-palestine-affectent-les-droits-en-europe>.

<sup>215</sup> "Nationwide Student-Led Movement Grows in France for Gaza," *The New Arab*, May 9, 2024, <https://www.newarab.com/features/nationwide-student-led-movement-grows-france-gaza?amp=1>.

<sup>216</sup> "Fight against Terrorism - Meeting on Combating Hamas (Paris, 13 Dec. 2023)," Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, accessed July 1, 2024, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/israel-palestinian-territories/news/2023/article/fight-against-terrorism-meeting-on-combating-hamas-paris-13-dec-2023>.

<sup>217</sup> "Attentat à Arras."

<sup>218</sup> Angelique Chrisafis, "Macron Calls for 'Ruthless' Approach to Extremism in Wake of Arras Attack," *The Guardian*, October 16, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/16/macron-calls-for-ruthless-approach-to-extremism-in-wake-of-arras-attack>.



German federal states are going to the polls in the fall. A foretaste of the election results was already evident in the European elections in June 2024, where far-right and far-left parties gained the most electorally. Polls from the EU election show that the younger generation was particularly attracted by parties such as the far-right Alternative for Germany Party (AfD). 16 percent voted in favor of the AfD, 17 percent for the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) and 15 percent for the Greens. This represents an increase of 11 percentage points for the AfD in this age group since the last EU elections.<sup>219</sup> Underscoring this appeal among the country's youth, a number of young Germans were filmed singing a neo-Nazi song on the island of Sylt in May 2024, triggering outrage all over Germany.<sup>220</sup> In addition to the current internal political situation, the demographic makeup of the over 83 million people in the country is notable, with roughly 5.5 million Muslims and 91,000 Jews, while the majority of Germans are Christian.<sup>221</sup> Apart from religious influences, Germany has the second largest Middle Eastern population in Western Europe, with the largest Palestinian diaspora outside of the Middle East living in Berlin.

### *Pre- and Post-October 7 Terrorist Threat Landscape*

The 2023 report of the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution was published in June 2024. It reports that previously the longstanding, overall biggest threat in Germany stemmed from right-wing extremists targeting foreigners.<sup>222</sup> In 2023 the Office for the Protection of the Constitution has recorded an increase in violence from right-wing, left-wing, and Islamist extremists. The report also covers the specific threat developments in Germany since the start of the recent war between Israel and Hamas. The war in the Middle East has drastically increased the threat potential in Germany. The president of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution declared a real and extremely high threat level for a jihadist attack in Germany in November 2023, which was exacerbated by the war in Gaza and the subsequent call for attacks by extremist groups like Islamic State and al-Qaeda.<sup>223</sup>

One of the aspects that will be closely observed by analysts in the next years in Germany is the rise of the political parties on the fringe of the political spectrum and their impact on the country's politics. Looking at the statistics for the three (former Eastern) German states which will go to the polls in fall 2024, the AfD is leading in all of them. The newly formed Coalition Sahra Wagenknecht is polling in third or fourth place.<sup>224</sup> In December 2023, Sahra Wagenknecht left the Left Party and founded the party "Coalition Sahra Wagenknecht" (BSW). This newly formed left-wing party surprised many in the election results, rising to more than 10 percent in some federal states in the European election. It is therefore important to keep

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<sup>219</sup> "Europawahl: Warum Junge Menschen Rechts Gewählt Haben," Deutschlandfunk, June 12, 2024, <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/europawahl-2024-junge-waehler-afd-100.html>.

<sup>220</sup> Katja Belousova and Nils Metzger, "Vorfall auf Sylt: Wie ein Techno-Hit rassistische Hymne wurde," ZDFheute, May 24, 2024, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/deutschland/sylt-lamour-toujours-rassismus-rechtsextremismus-100.html>.

<sup>221</sup> "Themenseite: Religion in Deutschland und weltweit," Statista, accessed August 9, 2024, <https://de.statista.com/themen/125/religion/>.

<sup>222</sup> "Verfassungsschutzbericht 2023" (Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat, 2024), 31, [https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/verfassungsschutzberichte/2024-06-18-verfassungsschutzbericht-2023-startseitenmodul.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/verfassungsschutzberichte/2024-06-18-verfassungsschutzbericht-2023-startseitenmodul.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4).

<sup>223</sup> "Auswirkungen des Terrorangriffs der HAMAS gegen Israel auf die Sicherheitslage in Deutschland," Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, November 29, 2023, [http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/service/presse/presse\\_node.html](http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/service/presse/presse_node.html).

<sup>224</sup> Martin Hoffmann, "Das Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht wird im Osten zum Machtfaktor," *Tagesschau*, June 12, 2024, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/buendnis-sahra-wagenknecht-108.html>.

an eye on this party for the elections in eastern Germany.<sup>225</sup> After the EU elections voters explained that they voted for BSW due to their proposals for more social welfare and less immigration, and because they are worried that Islam could gain too much influence in Germany.<sup>226</sup>

One of the elements that dominates nearly every political party's agenda in Germany is the topic of foreigners. An especially dangerous plan for foreigners was sketched out during a secret meeting in November 2023 in Potsdam where AfD members met with members of the "Values Union", a part of the CDU, followers of the Identitarian movements such as the alt-right leader of the Identitarian Movement in Austria, Martin Sellner and members of nationalist student fraternities. They were also joined by middle-class German doctors, lawyers, and entrepreneurs. As the German nonprofit, CORRECTIV, analysis made clear in January of 2024, they discussed plans for "re-migration" of asylum seekers, non-Germans with residency rights, and "non-assimilated" German citizens. This so-called "masterplan" was not only discussed during the meeting, but several wealthy potential donors were also willing to fund this project.<sup>227</sup>

#### *Violent Acts, Thwarted Attacks, and Arrests*



Since the start of the war, a number of potential attacks have been thwarted, while other attacks have resulted in casualties or injuries, such as the death of a German tourist in Paris in December, whose attacker had potential links to Islamic State.<sup>228</sup> In order to protect the cathedral in Cologne and Vienna

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> "Ansichten der BSW-Wählenden über die eigene Partei," *Tagesschau*, July 22, 2024, <https://www.tagesschau.de/wahl/archiv/2024-06-09-EP-DE/umfrage-bsw.shtml>.

<sup>227</sup> Marcus Bensmann et al., "Secret Plan against Germany," *Correctiv.Org* (blog), January 15, 2024, <https://correctiv.org/en/latest-stories/2024/01/15/secret-plan-against-germany/>.

<sup>228</sup> "Messerangriff in Paris: Deutscher Tourist erstochen," *Deutsche Welle*, December 3, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/de/messerangriff-in-paris-deutscher-tourist-erstochen/a-67618626>.

from a possible attack by a jihadi group with links to Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISK), security was increased drastically around places of worship during the Christmas season and New Year celebrations in late 2023.<sup>229</sup> Further, individuals with alleged ties to Hamas were arrested in Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark in November 2023 for plotting attacks against Jewish targets in Europe.<sup>230</sup> Three Lebanese and one Egyptian citizen with links to Hamas were arrested in Germany, allegedly affiliated with the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing.<sup>231</sup> It is still unclear if the alleged attacks were planned by Hamas leadership, semi-independent, or rogue cells. However, the arrests revealed that substantial and highly organized support structures for Hamas exist in Germany.<sup>232</sup> The German security service also supports this assumption by estimating that around 450 active Hamas members live in Germany, in addition to around 1,250 Hezbollah members.<sup>233</sup> Three people were killed and eight injured, four of them seriously, at the Solingen city festival on August 23. After the attack, the attacker surrendered to the police and was taken into custody. At the same time, the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack via a propaganda channel on Telegram. In the distributed video, the reason given for the attack was to take revenge on Muslims in Palestine and everywhere. The attacker, a 26-year-old Syrian, came to Germany via Bulgaria in 2022 and was supposed to be deported back to Bulgaria in 2023, but this failed.<sup>234</sup> The failed deportation and the subsequent terrorist attack in Solingen triggered a discussion about migration across the political spectrum.<sup>235</sup>

### *Antisemitism and Islamophobia*

Germany follows in its analysis the definition of antisemitism provided by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The Federal Criminal Police Office collects information on antisemitism in a statistic on politically motivated crime. Recent data shows that cases have been rising steadily since 2015 and average between 2,000 and 3,000 antisemitic crimes in Germany per year. The number has risen dramatically since October 2023. Between October 7 and November 9, a total of 994 antisemitic incidents were reported by the office for reporting antisemitism, which is an average of 29 cases per day and translates into an increase of more than 300 percent compared with the same period in 2022.<sup>236</sup> A total

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<sup>229</sup> "Terrorverdacht: Weihnachten Unter Polizeischutz Im Kölner Dom," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 25, 2023, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/koeln-dom-terrorverdacht-polizei-weihnachten-1.6324340>.

<sup>230</sup> "Germany, Netherlands Arrest 4 over Hamas Plot," *Deutsche Welle*, December 14, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-netherlands-arrest-4-over-hamas-plot/a-67724305>.

<sup>231</sup> "Four Suspected Members of the Foreign Terrorist Organisation 'HAMAS' Arrested," Der Generalbundesanwalt beim Bundesgerichtshof, December 14, 2023, <https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/EN/2023/Pressemitteilung-vom-14-12-2023-Nr-57-Englisch.html>.

<sup>232</sup> Petter Nesser and Wassim Nasr, "The Threat Matrix Facing the Paris Olympics" (CTC, 2024), 12, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CTC-SENTINEL-062024.pdf>.

<sup>233</sup> "Verfassungsschutzbericht 2023," 245.

<sup>234</sup> Tagesschau, "Was über den Anschlag in Solingen bekannt ist," tagesschau.de, accessed August 28, 2024, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/solingen-faq-100.html>.

<sup>235</sup> Tagesschau, "Scholz in Solingen: 'Das war Terrorismus gegen uns alle,'" tagesschau.de, accessed August 28, 2024, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/solingen-konsequenzen-106.html>.

<sup>236</sup> "Antisemitische Reaktionen in Deutschland Auf Die Hamas-Massaker in Israel," (Bundesverband der Recherche- und Informationsstellen Antisemitismus, 2023), 3, [https://www.report-antisemitism.de/documents/2023-10-18\\_antisemitische\\_reaktionen\\_in\\_deutschland\\_auf\\_die\\_hamas-massaker\\_in\\_israel.pdf](https://www.report-antisemitism.de/documents/2023-10-18_antisemitische_reaktionen_in_deutschland_auf_die_hamas-massaker_in_israel.pdf).

of 5,164 crimes were recorded for 2023,<sup>237</sup> a 95 percent increase from 2022 to 2023.<sup>238</sup> A European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights study covering the years 2013 – 2018 found that 71 percent of antisemitic incidents were not officially reported.<sup>239</sup> Accordingly, the true number of antisemitic cases is significantly higher than the authorities can officially report. However, it must be assumed that due to the special media attention regarding antisemitism after October 7, more people reported attacks or incidents to the police. Antisemitic attacks officially reported to the police include, for example, the vandalizing of the Kanaan restaurant in Berlin, a place of understanding opened as a joint project by a Palestinian and an Israeli.<sup>240</sup> In February 2024, a Jewish student was brutally beaten up by a pro-Palestinian fellow student at the Free University of Berlin because he had expressed pro-Israeli views. He was hospitalized with a traumatic brain injury, a broken nose and a broken cheekbone and had to undergo surgery. He is now suing the university because in his eyes they did nothing to counter antisemitic discrimination and allowed antisemitism to turn into violent action.<sup>241</sup>

Although antisemitic hate crimes are most associated with far-right groups, a 1,670 percent increase in cases in the so-called section “foreign ideology”<sup>242</sup> was reported by German authorities between 2022 and 2023, which most likely is connected to the war in Gaza.<sup>243</sup> Further, the war in Gaza has also created alliances among different antisemitic groups. “Anti-Semitism and hostility towards Israel are common elements between Islamists, German and Turkish left-wing and right-wing extremists and supporters of extremist Palestinian organizations,” according to the German government.<sup>244</sup> The rise in antisemitism is a key discussion point at the federal and local levels of German politics to ensure better safety for Jews living in Germany. The AfD even offers a solution to the problem, which the party characterizes as “imported antisemitism” by migrants and refugees. The AfD parliamentary group in the Bundestag (Parliament) tabled a motion on November 7, 2023, to “clearly identify and effectively combat immigration-related antisemitism - deport supporters of antisemitic terrorism”.<sup>245</sup> Thus, while the focus

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<sup>237</sup> “Lagebild Antisemitismus 2022/23,” (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2024), 21, [https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/allgemein/2024-05-lagebild-antisemitismus.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=2](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/allgemein/2024-05-lagebild-antisemitismus.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2).

<sup>238</sup> “Bundesweite Fallzahlen 2023 Politisch Motivierte Kriminalität” (Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat, May 21, 2024), 11, [https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/UnsereAufgaben/Deliktbereiche/PMK/2023PMKFallzahlen.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=3](https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/UnsereAufgaben/Deliktbereiche/PMK/2023PMKFallzahlen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3).

<sup>239</sup> “Second Survey on Discrimination and Hate Crime against Jews in EU Member States,” (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019), 56, [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-antisemitism-technical-report\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-antisemitism-technical-report_en.pdf).

<sup>240</sup> “Berliner Landesregierung: Wegner Sagt Dem Restaurant 'Kanaan' Solidarität Zu,” Tagesspiegel, July 26, 2024, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/berliner-landesregierung-wegner-sagt-dem-restaurant-kanaan-solidaritat-zu-12095741.html>.

<sup>241</sup> Beate Frenkel and Michael Haselrieder, “Antisemitismus: Jüdischer Student verklagt FU Berlin,” ZDFheute, June 25, 2024, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/deutschland/fu-berlin-juedischer-student-klage-antisemitismus-100.html>.

<sup>242</sup> Foreign ideology = a non-religious ideology originating from abroad was decisive for the commission of the offence, especially if it is aimed at influencing conditions and developments at home and abroad.

<sup>243</sup> “Bundesweite Fallzahlen 2023 Politisch Motivierte Kriminalität,” 12.

<sup>244</sup> “Auswirkungen des Terrorangriffs der HAMAS gegen Israel auf die Sicherheitslage in Deutschland.”

<sup>245</sup> AfD Fraktion Bundestag, “Antrag Antisemitismus Durch Zuwanderung Klar Benennen Und Effektiv Bekämpfen – Unterstützer von Antisemitischem Terrorismus Ausweisen,” November 7, 2023, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/091/2009151.pdf>.

should be on the long-standing antisemitic tradition in Germany, the "problem" is being solely externalized by an aspiring political party.

The data analytics platform used by TSC to understand antisemitism in Germany paints the following picture. From October 2 - 16, 2023, there is a drastic increase in the figures, which remain high until mid-November. Even after the spike subsides, the numbers are higher than the data before the start of the war. However, the recorded highest values occurred in and after May 2024, when the university protests started and there were increased antisemitic attacks or statements in their wake. Also in May 2024, the Eurovision Song Contest took place in Malmö, where Israel's participation ban was covered extensively in Germany. Most of the information comes directly from various news portals; it is only from January onwards that there is an increase in data on X, which is analogous to the peaks in the various news outlets. Notably, the data does not paint the full picture and captures both antisemitic slurs and mentions of antisemitism. However, interestingly, antisemitism or antisemitic terms are mentioned much more frequently in connection with domestic political issues and less with the war in the Middle East.

For the concept of Islamophobia, no consensus has yet been found in Germany on which definition to follow, therefore the following definition from the Federal Agency for Civic Education supports this chapter: "Islamophobia is the devaluation and rejection of people of the Muslim faith, their religious practices and culture(s). Other terms are anti-Muslim racism."<sup>246</sup> The statistic for politically motivated crimes with the reference term Islamophobia reports a 140 percent increase between 2022 and 2023. While 610 cases were reported in 2022, 1,464 incidents were reported in 2023, according to the Federal Criminal Police Office.<sup>247</sup> The statistics on hate crimes against Muslims in 2023 report that right-wing individuals or groups committed 82 percent of the incidents, according to the Federal Criminal Police Office.<sup>248</sup> Between the beginning of October and November 2023, the NGO CLAIM alliance reported three cases a day of Islamophobia.<sup>249</sup> Since October 2023, 46 mosques have been targeted in Germany ranging from swastika graffiti to arson attacks or the sending of hate messages.<sup>250</sup> Two young men were stabbed by a man in Munich in July because he thought they were Muslims. As no political motivation for the crime could be ruled out at this stage, the Bavarian Central Office for Combating Extremism and Terrorism took over the investigation from the police.<sup>251</sup> However, underreporting of Islamophobic instances is expected and the true case number is expected to be significantly higher. In 2022, a group of experts on the topic of hostility towards Muslims set up by the German Ministry of the Interior concluded that around one in two people in Germany agree with anti-Muslim statements.<sup>252</sup> This high stigmatization of the Muslim community in Germany and potentially high levels of Islamophobia in the police and other authorities create structural challenges for reporting.

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<sup>246</sup> "Islamfeindlichkeit," Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/rechtsextremismus/dossier-rechtsextremismus/500788/islamfeindlichkeit/>.

<sup>247</sup> "Bundesweite Fallzahlen 2023 Politisch Motivierte Kriminalität," 13.

<sup>248</sup> "Bundesweite Fallzahlen 2023 Politisch Motivierte Kriminalität," 13.

<sup>249</sup> "Pressemitteilung – CLAIM warnt vor einer Zunahme von antimuslimischem Rassismus: Aktuell drei antimuslimische Vorfälle pro Tag in Deutschland," CLAIM – Allianz gegen Islamfeindlichkeit und Muslimfeindlichkeit, November 2, 2023, <https://www.claim-allianz.de/presse/pressemitteilung-claim-warnt-vor-einer-zunahme-von-antimuslimischem-rassismus-aktuell-drei-antimuslimische-vorfaelle-pro-tag-in-deutschland/>.

<sup>250</sup> "Timeline," *Brandeilig* (blog) (Fair International), accessed June 25, 2024, <https://brandeilig.org/timeline/>.

<sup>251</sup> Frank Jordan, "Hass auf Muslime mögliches Motiv für Messerangriff in München," BR24, July 25, 2024, <https://www.br.de/nachrichten/bayern/messerangriff-in-pasing-verdacht-auf-hasskriminalitaet,UJSXSe3>.

<sup>252</sup> "Experten-Bericht: Jeder zweite Deutsche muslimfeindlich," ZDFheute, June 29, 2023, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/deutsche-muslimfeindlichkeit-rassismus-bericht-100.html>.

The data analytics platform used reported a slight spike in the data referencing Islamophobic terms or reporting about Islamophobia directly after the start of the war; however, the level from the end of November has returned to the level before the outbreak of the war (The period of data capture was September 1, 2023, 12:00 AM to July 30, 2024, 11:59 PM (EST). The data then often refers to arson attacks on Jewish institutions, and it can be observed that the authors of articles and commentaries confuse Islam and Islamism, which emphasizes their limited knowledge of this religious community. The main data comes from various news portals, and between May and July 30, 2024, there was an increase in Islamophobic references on X. There is not a clearly recognizable connection between these Islamophobic statements and the war in Gaza from the data, it appears to be, rather, correlated with domestic political phenomena.

Looking at the data collected on the data analytics platform for this report, one of the German terms which was used to filter the information was “Ausländer” (foreigner). The reason to do so is that since September 11, 2001, it is important to observe two trends in Germany: Firstly, Muslims are often reduced to their religious affiliation. Secondly, problems in connection with migration and integration are often attributed one-sidedly to this religious affiliation.<sup>253</sup> The inclusion of the term ‘foreigner’ in the evaluation is therefore not intended to make a generalizing statement, but rather to illustrate a phenomenon that is also used by various political parties.

Mid-May 2024, a spike in the data relating to the term foreigner can be observed on the used data analytics platform. This clearly relates to the Pentecost weekend, May 20 - 21, 2024, when videos were widely circulated of a party of middle and upper-class young Germans on the island of Sylt. During this party, they started singing neo-Nazi songs and showed the Hitler salute.<sup>254</sup> In addition, a study from early 2024 shows the enormous influence of AfD on social media. In 2022 and 2023 they reached around 430,000 impressions per video on TikTok, while other parties did not surpass 55,000 impressions.<sup>255</sup> This demonstrates that younger people in particular are attracted to the content created and opinions shared by the AfD and that radical views are held across all strata of society. It is especially dangerous as the zones of overlap with radical groups on the fringes of the political spectrum are particularly strong.

### *Protests and Polarization*

Since October 7, protests have been taking place on a regular basis all over Germany across the ideological spectrum. Berlin is a particular hotspot for pro-Palestinian groups’ protests; they vary in size and oftentimes trigger clashes with the police. However, since the start of the war, a number of protests have not been allowed to take place which Palestinian communities perceive as a restriction of freedom of expression.<sup>256</sup> After a May 2024 pro-Palestinian protest march took place in Berlin, about 50 individuals started singing the neo-Nazi slogan “Germany to the Germans, foreigners out” to the tune of the song “L’amour toujours”<sup>257</sup> which has since become a rally cry with far-right activists across Europe.

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<sup>253</sup> “Muslimische Identitäten,” RISE, May 21, 2020, <https://rise-jugendkultur.de/artikel/muslimische-identitaeten/>.

<sup>254</sup> “Über 360 Polizeieinsätze wegen Nazi-Parole zu ‘L’amour toujours,’” Tagesschau, July 7, 2024, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/polizei-einsaetze-amour-toujours-ns-parolen-100.html>.

<sup>255</sup> Nils Metzger, “AfD auf TikTok: So abgehängt sind die anderen Parteien,” ZDFheute, February 10, 2024, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/deutschland/afd-tiktok-erfolg-strategie-jugendliche-100.html>.

<sup>256</sup> Amnesty Deutschland, “Recht auf Protest für alle: Zu aktuellen Einschränkungen von Palästina-solidarischen Protesten in Deutschland,” Amnesty International, June 10, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.de/deutschland-einschraenkung-pro-paleastinensischer-proteste>.

<sup>257</sup> The song recently became known throughout Germany after videos surfaced on social media of young people on the German North Sea Island of Sylt singing the song and making right-wing extremist gestures.

Since the 2024 summer term at university started in Germany, protest camps emerged at universities all over the country following the US example. While some of the protesters were university students, oftentimes professional activists would also join these protests.<sup>258</sup> The demonstrations have often been a mixture of conventional criticism of the Israeli government and warfare, while at the same time, a denial of Hamas terror and questioning Israel's right to exist through blanket criticism of the Israeli state or even Israeli society.<sup>259</sup> Discussions have been held in Germany to establish if these are legitimate protests or if academia has been instrumentalized.<sup>260</sup> During these protests, Islamist and anti-imperialist alliance building has become visible.<sup>261</sup> The disagreement about the origin of the protests and the people present is also reinforced by the red triangles that repeatedly appear in connection with the protests. They have appeared in locations with Jewish or Israeli connections, especially in Berlin, and are seen by some as an obvious Hamas symbol to mark targets. However, many protestors believe that it symbolizes the red section of the Palestinian flag.<sup>262</sup>

### *Counter-Terror Resources, Stakeholders, and Responses*

On October 10, 2023, various factions of the German parliament, including the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), the Christian-Democratic Union (CDU)/the Christian-Social Union (CSU) the Greens, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP), all joined the chancellor in a statement,

“To grant Israel full solidarity and support in the face of the brutal attacks against its country and innocent citizens; to continue to actively advocate the existence and legitimate security interests of the State of Israel as a central principle of German foreign and security policy and to intensify efforts for a negotiated two-state solution [...] and to continue to resolutely oppose antisemitism in the future, whether in Germany, Europe or other parts of the world, with all the means available to the democratic constitutional state.”<sup>263</sup>

The AfD on October 10, 2023, called for, among other things, the immediate stop of all financial support to UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).<sup>264</sup>

Hamas was designated as a terrorist organization in Germany before October 7, and since the beginning of November 2023, all other activities by or in support of Hamas have also been banned, including the

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<sup>258</sup> Tatjana Coerschulte, “Pro-Palästina-Proteste in Deutschland: Keine ‘Zäune Um Die Unis Wie in Den USA,’” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, July 6, 2024, <https://www.fr.de/politik/zaeune-uni-usa-israel-palaestina-gazastreifen-hochschulen-antisemitismus-kritik-polizei-freiheit-93116984.html>.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> “Propalästinensische Demos an Unis Legitimer Protest oder ‘Tiefpunkt für die Wissenschaft’?,” *Tagesschau*, 2024, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/universitaeten-proteste-nahost-100.html>.

<sup>261</sup> Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, “Antisemitische Allianzen nach dem 7. Oktober · Zivilgesellschaftliches Lagebild Antisemitismus #13,” 2024, 5, <https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Lagebild-Antisemitismus-13.-Antisemitische-Allianzen.-Pressefahne.pdf>.

<sup>262</sup> Luise Greve, “Pro-Palästina-Bewegung in Berlin: Differenzen bei Dreiecks-Deutung,” *Die Tageszeitung*, May 25, 2024, sec. Berlin, <https://taz.de/!6012578/>.

<sup>263</sup> Fraktionen SPD, CDU/CSU, BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN und FDP, “Entschließungsantrag Zu Der Abgabe Einer Regierungserklärung Durch Den Bundeskanzler Zur Lage In Israel,” 2023, 2f, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/087/2008736.pdf>.

<sup>264</sup> AfD Fraktion Bundestag, “Antrag Angesichts Des Terrorangriffs Der Hamas Auf Israel – Mittelvergabe An Das Hilfswerk Der Vereinten Nationen Für Palästina-Flüchtlinge Im Nahen Osten Umgehend Stoppen,” 2023, 3, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/087/2008739.pdf>.



Samidoun network.<sup>265</sup> The Shiite Islamic Center in Hamburg and six other related centers in various federal states were officially banned at the end of July 2024 for supporting terrorism. The center is considered to be directly controlled by Iran and actively supports Hezbollah. In its argumentation, the Federal Ministry of the Interior sees aggressive antisemitism and massive hostility towards Israel at the center and emphasizes that it is not a ban on the Shiite practice of faith.<sup>266</sup> In Saxony-Anhalt, people applying for naturalization must now confirm in writing "that they recognize Israel's right to exist and condemn any efforts directed against the existence of the state of Israel".<sup>267</sup> In contrast, the governing parties see the proposal from Saxony-Anhalt as incompatible with the Constitution and declare that the current revision of the Citizenship Act is sufficient. They also fear increasing polarization due to the proposal from Saxony-Anhalt, which has previously been endorsed by main opposition (CDU) leader Friedrich Merz on the federal level.<sup>268</sup>

In Berlin, schools are allowed to "ban symbols, statements and actions if they could be interpreted as advocating or approving of terrorist attacks on Israel or as supporting the Islamist Palestinian organization Hamas", such as students wearing keffiyeh, Palestinian flags, or using free Palestine stickers.<sup>269</sup> In addition, in several German states the slogan "From the river to the sea" is banned and will therefore be categorized as a criminal offence.<sup>270</sup> In Berlin, a German woman was sentenced to a 600€ fine for the usage of the slogan in a protest in October 2023. However, the assessment of courts in Germany varies, as not all of them associate the statement only with HAMAS and it is therefore not prosecutable.<sup>271</sup>

Similar to other European countries, Germany temporarily suspended its support for UNRWA between January and late April 2024, when accusations circulated of UNRWA employees supporting Hamas. Since then, the money flows have been restored and Germany has called for reforms of the UN entity.<sup>272</sup>

As a consequence of the attack on Israel by Hamas and the subsequent incitement on the Internet, as well as the online celebration of the fatal knife attack on a police officer in Mannheim by an Afghan, the German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser has now presented a draft law for the expulsion of foreigners, which the Cabinet has already approved. However, before it comes into force, it still must be voted on in

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<sup>265</sup> "Germany Announces Complete Ban of Hamas Activities," *Al Jazeera*, November 2, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/2/germany-announces-complete-ban-of-hamas-activities>.

<sup>266</sup> Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat, "Bundesinnenministerin Faeser verbietet das 'Islamische Zentrum Hamburg' und dessen Teilorganisationen," Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat, 2024, <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2024/07/exekutive4.html;jsessionid=42EC97AA4E6DCB9C44C39798BC8D3897.live871?nn=9390260>.

<sup>267</sup> MDR Sachsen-Anhalt, "Sachsen-Anhalt knüpft Einbürgerung an Bekenntnis zum Existenzrecht des Staats Israel," 2024, <https://www.mdr.de/nachrichten/sachsen-anhalt/einbuengerung-bekenntnis-existenzrecht-israel-104.html>.

<sup>268</sup> Jens Thureau, "Deutscher Pass nur beim Ja zu Israel?," *Deutsche Welle*, December 8, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/de/deutscher-pass-nur-beim-ja-zu-israel/a-67670683>.

<sup>269</sup> "Schulen nutzen Verbotsmöglichkeit für Palästinenser-Symbole," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 17, 2023, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/senat-schulen-nutzen-verbotsmoeglichkeit-fuer-palaestinsener-symbole-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-231017-99-594704>.

Max Kolter, "Hamas-Verbot: 'From the River to the Sea' nun strafbar?," *Legal Tribune Online*, 2023, <https://www.lto.de/recht/hintergruende/h/hamas-parole-river-sea-palaestina-palastine-free-israel-antisemitisch-antisemitismus-billigung/>.

<sup>271</sup> "Berlin: Gericht verurteilt Frau wegen Parole 'From the River to the Sea,'" *Die Zeit*, August 6, 2024, <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2024-08/berlin-gericht-geldstrafe-pro-palaestina-parole>.

<sup>272</sup> "Deutschland nimmt UNRWA-Unterstützung wieder auf," *Tagesschau*, 2024, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/deutschland-unrwa-100.html>.



the Bundestag, with subsequent approval from the federal states. The draft law represents an extension of the previous legal basis for the expulsion of foreigners, and, if this is adopted, even a single comment glorifying and condoning a terrorist offense on social media could lead to the deportation of foreigners.<sup>273</sup> However, there are still uncertainties regarding the law, particularly its practical implementation by the immigration authorities in the federal states. At the same time, it must be noted that Germany is not yet deporting people to Afghanistan and Syria, as the German government is not yet prepared to negotiate deportations with these countries.<sup>274</sup>

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Although violence related to the war in Gaza has not manifested in a coordinated, large-scale attack in the case studies evaluated in this report, the events of October 7 and its aftermath have undoubtedly impacted the terrorist threat landscape in each case and more broadly. Across the case studies, several trends emerge, including a perpetrator profile of “lone wolves,” rapid self-radicalization, and increasing involvement of youth; growing alliances by extremist and terrorist actors across the ideological spectrum; foreign and state meddling to foment societal polarization; the financing of terrorism; increased antisemitism and Islamophobia in the wake of October 7; and in the threat landscape. This section will explore these trends.

### *Perpetrator Profile: “Lone wolf” phenomenon, involvement of youth, and rapid “self-radicalization”*

Despite a lack of large-scale terrorist violence or attacks since October 7, there has been a noticeable uptick in each case study of violence or attempted violence related to or inspired by the war in Gaza. The “lone actor” phenomenon was observed in all case studies, with targets including the Muslim and Jewish communities, respectively, Palestinians, including the boy who was brutally murdered in the US, and individuals or entities targeted as a representation of a government’s “complicity” in Gaza, such as the German tourist who was killed near the Eiffel Tower or the targeting of the US Consulate in Florence. In Italy, the UK, and Germany, cases of small, potentially “rogue cells,” with alleged ties to Hamas, Fatah, Islamist, and far-right groups, were arrested for planning attacks in Europe, demonstrating the radicalization of small groups of actors alongside that of individuals. These examples demonstrate that despite the lack of a large-scale attack, the threat of violence from lone actors and small, independent cells across the ideological spectrum has increased in the wake of October 7, as the events have served to radicalize individuals and further polarization in society.

With jihadists such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State encouraging followers to attack targets in the West, and violence from individuals influenced by far-right and, increasingly, far-left ideologies, this threat will likely continue to proliferate and heighten. Moreover, as the violence perpetrated by individuals are typically low in sophistication and require relatively minimal planning, they will continue to pose a particular challenge to law enforcement and counterterrorism practitioners – as they are often difficult to detect and thwart. The role of emerging technology, such as 3-D printers (explored later in this chapter), will also

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<sup>273</sup> Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat, “Änderung Des Aufenthaltsgesetzes” (2024), [https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/gesetzgebungsverfahren/DE/Downloads/kabinettsfassung/MII1/formulierungsvorschlag-aufenthaltsgesetz.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4](https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/gesetzgebungsverfahren/DE/Downloads/kabinettsfassung/MII1/formulierungsvorschlag-aufenthaltsgesetz.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4).

<sup>274</sup> Tagesschau, “Faeser will Ausweisung nach Terrorverherrlichung im Netz,” [tagesschau.de](https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/faeser-terrorverherrlichung-100.html), 2024, <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/faeser-terrorverherrlichung-100.html>.

add another dimension to the challenges of law enforcement in preventing and responding to violence or attacks by lone actors.

Notably, in several case studies many of the alleged perpetrators of violent attacks or attempted attacks were young people. In France, an unprecedented number of adolescents were arrested by the intelligence services on charges of actively preparing terrorist attacks, with one of those arrested as young as 14-years-old. A similar trend was noted in the UK, where a growing number of young people are being arrested on terrorism-related charges, with the UK Home Office reporting significant increases in arrests made for terrorism-related activity among young adults and adolescents. Several case studies, including France, the US, and Italy, had examples of individuals 20-years-old and below planning or committing violent attacks.

This phenomenon has been previously noted by scholars and counterterrorism practitioners, with children and youth increasingly targeted online by extremists for radicalization and recruitment into extremist movements, including by Salafi-jihadists<sup>275</sup> and far-right extremists.<sup>276</sup> The increasing frequency of online radicalization and recruitment, particularly when it pertains to minors, further complicates law enforcement and practitioner responses, including prevention activities targeting youth, as critics of the UK's *Prevent* program have argued.<sup>277</sup>

In several case studies, individuals involved in attacks or attempted attacks rapidly “self-radicalized.” The Hartlepool attack in the UK, in which a man severely wounded his housemate before killing a passerby on the street, and the Tunisian man arrested in Italy on terrorism charges, both aptly demonstrate the rapid self-radicalization of individuals in the wake of October 7, and the potential pervasiveness of the threat as the war continues. Both cases exemplify how heightened societal tensions have been exacerbated by the October 7 attacks and subsequent war in Gaza, creating an environment ripe for terrorist and extremist actors to exploit. Moreover, this dynamic, and the understandably emotionally charged has eased the radicalization timeline, leading individuals to move quickly toward actualized violence. This rapid “self-radicalization” poses a unique challenge, as prevention and early warning mechanisms may be hindered in flagging such individuals before they commit violence.

#### *Growing Alliances Across the Ideological Spectrum*

The Israel-Hamas war created a unique environment for groups previously unlikely to build alliances to find seemingly new-found common ground. Long before October 7, Salafi-jihadist and Islamist groups<sup>278</sup> and far-right and far-left extremists<sup>279</sup> have espoused antisemitism as part of their ideologies. For some groups antisemitism and opposition to the existence of the state of Israel are foundational concepts.

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<sup>275</sup> Isabelle Frances-Wright, Moustafa Ayad, and Ellen Jacobs, “One Click Away: Foiled Plot Targeting Taylor Swift Concert Highlights Minors’ Access to Terrorist Content Online,” ISD, August 7, 2024, [https://www.isdglobal.org/digital\\_dispatches/one-click-away-foiled-plot-targeting-taylor-swift-concert-highlights-minors-access-to-terrorist-content-online/](https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/one-click-away-foiled-plot-targeting-taylor-swift-concert-highlights-minors-access-to-terrorist-content-online/).

<sup>276</sup> Mollie Saltskog, “Trends in Violent Far-Right Extremism,” 9–11, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/trends-in-violent-far-right-extremism/>.

<sup>277</sup> Therese O’Toole et al., “Governing through Prevent? Regulation and Contested Practice in State-Muslim Engagement,” *Sociology* 50, no. 1 (February 2016): 163, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038514564437>.

<sup>278</sup> David Patterson, “Islamic Jihadism: Religious Fanatic Anti-Semitism,” in *Anti-Semitism and Its Metaphysical Origins* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 80, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139629300.005>.

<sup>279</sup> ISD Global and Krystalle Pinilla, “From Left to Right: An Overview of the ‘Veiled’ Antisemitism Threat Landscape Online,” ISD, m, [https://www.isdglobal.org/digital\\_dispatches/from-left-to-right-an-overview-of-the-veiled-antisemitism-threat-landscape-online/](https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/from-left-to-right-an-overview-of-the-veiled-antisemitism-threat-landscape-online/).

However, October 7 and its aftermath provided an opportunity for growing linkages between these extremist and terrorist groups across the ideological spectrum. For example, the celebration of the attacks by far-right extremists, white supremacists, and accelerationists (further explored later in this chapter), alongside groups such as al-Qaeda, demonstrates this dynamic.

As noted in the German case study, alliance-building between Islamist groups and anti-imperialists has been observed, particularly around protests against the war in Gaza. Further, according to the German government, different antisemitism and opposition to Israel is shared among such disparate groups as Islamists, German and Turkish left-wing and right-wing extremist groups, and supporters of Palestinian organizations – with the conflict providing ample opportunities for groups to see such commonality. The



AP Photo/Jon Super

recognition of this ideological overlap has been documented by far-right extremists and white supremacists, who have actively sought to leverage the conflict in order to “redpill” sympathizers to the Palestinian cause into antisemitism<sup>280</sup> (a dynamic explored in the next section). Growing links between these terrorist and extremist groups could pose a particular challenge as the war continues, elevating the “everything, everywhere, all at once” dynamic some counterterrorism practitioners and law enforcement officials such as NYPD Deputy Commissioner Rebecca Weiner have warned against.<sup>281</sup>

### *Increased Antisemitism and Islamophobia*

Although on the rise in recent years, antisemitism and Islamophobia increased in the immediate aftermath of October 7 in every case study, particularly in the three months after the attack. Antisemitic incidents occurred in each case examined, ranging from fatal attacks (ex. the young Jewish woman stabbed to death in France), to assault (ex. man assaulted for flying an Israeli flag outside his home in the US; Jewish student severely beaten at the Berlin university reportedly due to his expressing support for Israel), to threats against the Jewish community or individuals (ex. threatening letters sent to Jewish communities in Italy; Cornell student making violent threats online toward Jewish students), to vandalism and robbery (ex. Stars of David graffitied on homes in France; kosher restaurant graffitied and vandalized in the UK).

Antisemitic narratives also spiked during the immediate period following October 7, often old tropes or stereotypes repackaged in the context of the war in Gaza.<sup>282</sup> Moreover, far-right extremists capitalized on the conflict and strategically exploited the subsequent societal tensions to further radicalize individuals online. Users on a neo-Nazi board strategized ways to specifically target Black online spaces with antisemitic conspiracies and rhetoric in an attempt to normalize such narratives; a different user on 4chan

<sup>280</sup> Klempler and Koblenz-Stenzler, “Methodologies in Manipulation.”

<sup>281</sup> Steve Swan, “Rise in People Simply Fascinated by Violence - Warn Terror Police,” *BBC News*, July 30, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c6p20dl71jpo>.

<sup>282</sup> Rose and Matlach, “Narratives of Hate.”

claimed that the conflict provided an apt time to “redpill normies on the JQ [Jewish Question],” encouraging others to target center-left and white conservative users on the social media platform X to normalize antisemitism with these groups.<sup>283</sup>

Documented Islamophobic incidents occurred in each case study, with four cases having incidents seemingly connected to October 7 and its aftermath. The incidents also ranged from fatal attacks (ex. Palestinian American boy brutally murdered in the US), to assault and violent attacks (ex. ultra-right group attacking a pro-Palestinian conference in Lyon; the shooting of the three college students speaking Arabic and wearing keffiyehs in the US), to vandalism and arson (ex. 46 mosques targeted in Germany, including swastikas graffitied and arson), and threats to the Muslim community (such as the dumping of a pig’s head at a proposed mosque in the UK). Even in Italy, where comprehensive data on Islamophobic incidents was notably absent, an Islamic center was targeted with arson and threatening messages against mosques were found in the town of Montello in the wake of the war in Gaza.

Similar to the observed expressions of antisemitism, Islamophobic narratives espoused by perpetrators and extremists seemed to capitalize on the conflict to perpetuate old tropes and stereotypes. In several cases, including in the UK and Germany, the conflict in Gaza seemed to provide an opportunity for extremists and foreign actors (explored later in this chapter) to mainstream anti-Muslim and, oftentimes, anti-immigrant narratives. Moreover, such actors capitalized on the conflict to further enflame preexisting societal tensions, including economic concerns and immigration, evidenced by the UK riots of July and August 2024.

#### *Foreign and State Interference*

October 7 and the war in Gaza also provided an opportunity for foreign and state actors to exacerbate societal fissures, specifically reenergizing antisemitic and anti-immigrant narratives. This dynamic was most prevalent in France, where Russian interference sought to polarize French public opinion by proliferating antisemitic narratives. The graffitiing of the Stars of David in France, connected with the FSB’s fifth division, provides an apt example of this dynamic, as well as the increase of such state interference in the lead up to the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The 2024 UK riots following the brutal Southport stabbings also showed potential evidence of foreign interference, with the government investigating whether state actors had helped foment the unrest. The divisive nature of the university protests, although varying in degrees of severity depending on the case study, reinforce the challenge that further societal polarization – particularly that stoked by foreign or state interference – can pose. Moreover, as the one-year anniversary of the October 7 attack approaches, the environment may be conducive to exploitation by states or extremist actors, furthering the risk of unrest, violence, or the proliferation of disinformation.

#### *Financing of Terrorism*

In the wake of October 7, authorities in Europe and the US were on high alert for an uptick in the financing of terrorist organizations, specifically Hamas and Hezbollah, both of which are considered terrorist groups and subject to sanctions in several countries. This trend was notable in the case studies examined, particularly in Europe more broadly. According to German officials, donations to Hamas and Hezbollah from individuals in Europe surged in the aftermath of the October 7 attack. The case of the Palestinian

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<sup>283</sup> Klemptner and Koblenz-Stenzler, “Methodologies in Manipulation.”

man in France charged with the financing of terrorism against Israelis in the occupied West Bank exemplifies this trend.

As the war continues, extremists and sanctioned groups may be able to continue to capitalize on emotive images of Gaza and the devastation as a tool to elicit funds from sympathizers in the West. Further, this trend will likely contribute to the ongoing debates around the intersection of cryptocurrency and terrorist financing, as well as virtual asset governance and whether the sector requires more governance and oversight, which became an increasing concern in the US Congress post-October 7.<sup>284</sup> Now that the United States Department of Justice has formally announced criminal charges against Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and other senior Hamas militants, it could pave the way for material support charges or other crimes related to the financing of terrorism.<sup>285</sup> Moreover, state-sponsored terrorism, particularly by Iran, advancing and financing plots against individuals in the US and the West more broadly, will likely remain a challenge for authorities as the war continues.

### *The Role of Emerging Technologies*

The role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), within the terrorist threat landscape and its exploitation by terrorist groups and actors has long been recognized by law enforcement and counterterrorism practitioners.<sup>286</sup> This broader trend was observed in several case studies post-October 7, specifically the use of 3-D printing, encrypted messaging apps, and online social media platforms, by terrorist or extremist actors.



The three men found in possession of a 3-D printed FGC-9 semi-automatic firearm alongside right-wing extremist material in the UK, and the 20-year-old man arrested for creating weapons and ammunition with a 3-D printer in Italy, both demonstrate the increasing use of this technology and further complexity it creates for law enforcement. As both cases occurred in the context of heavier gun regulation under the UK and European frameworks, it underscores why this technology is a growing concern for law enforcement and counterterrorism officials.

The use of encrypted apps, such as Telegram, was also notable in several cases. The celebration of the October 7 attacks on Telegram channels associated with white supremacists and Salafi-jihadist groups, as well as the lauding Hamas as an example by groups such as the Atomwaffen Division and Nordic Resistance Movement, demonstrates how extremist and terrorist groups utilize this technology to not only communicate with members or sympathizers, but also disseminate their ideology, propaganda, and call

<sup>284</sup> “Terrorist Financing: Hamas and Cryptocurrency Fundraising” (Congressional Research Service, November 27, 2023), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12537>.

<sup>285</sup> Eric Tucker. “US Charges Hamas Leader, Other Militants in Connection with Oct. 7 Massacre in Israel,” *AP*, September 3, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/justice-department-hamas-sinwar-87674285aa9b066392953db1310312ca>.

<sup>286</sup> Susan Sim, Eric Hartunian, and Paul J. Milas, eds., *Emerging Technologies and Terrorism: An American Perspective* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 2024), <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/monographs/967>.

and/or inspiration for others to commit acts of violence. Further, as seen in the Italian case, these apps can also be utilized by individuals inspired by or self-radicalized by extremist ideology or the Israel-Hamas war. The 20-year-old man arrested for creating 3-D weapons was originally flagged under an anti-terrorism alert for spreading racially motivated and antisemitic videos on Telegram. The man accused of the attempted attack on the US Consulate in Florence, allegedly issued a warning of further attacks via Telegram and linked to a Telegram channel listing the “50 Zionist target.” Both examples highlight the use of encrypted apps radicalization, recruitment, and organization, by radicalized individuals and terrorist groups alike.

The use of social media platforms by extremists and state actors to radicalize, recruit, and, in some instances, inspire attacks in the aftermath of October 7 cannot be understated. The proliferation of antisemitism and Islamophobia online – primarily on social media platforms – was noted in each of the case studies. Extremist and terrorist groups, as previously noted by scholars in other contexts, quickly recognized the opportunity the conflict created for both disseminating their narratives and propaganda, recruiting new members, and radicalizing new demographics.<sup>287</sup>

Both the threats about killing Jews by Gab users and the online threats made against the Jewish community by the Cornell student in the US underscore how extremist and hate-filled narratives can proliferate in the online space (threats that often manifest in the real world). The particular vulnerability of young people and adolescents to extremist content online, due to their active use of such platforms, was noted across case studies. Coupled with the increase in youth participation in terrorist-related activity, this trend will present a continued challenge for law enforcement and debates around content moderation.

## CONCLUSION

The impact of Hamas’ October 7 attack on Israel, and the subsequent war in Gaza, have had a vast impact on the terrorist threat landscape well beyond the immediate region. Although there has not been a large-scale, coordinated terrorist attack in the West since 10/7, and many of the threat prognostications by law enforcement and counterterrorism officials have not come to fruition, the conflict has provided an opportunity for violent extremists and terrorists to exploit. Moreover, new incidents occur on a regular basis, and as the conflict drags on and individuals continue to radicalize, the dire warnings of intelligence chiefs may unfortunately come to fruition, resulting in a major terrorist attack in a Western country motivated by the war in Gaza.

Terrorists and violent extremists from across the ideological spectrum – from Islamists to white supremacists to far-left extremists – have utilized the conflict to spread their propaganda, radicalize, recruit new members, and, even if not overtly, inspire violent attacks. Many arrested on terrorism charges in the West in the months post-October 7 were new to law enforcement, and thus rapidly self-radicalized, and were youth or adolescents, presenting myriad challenges for law enforcement and counterterrorism practitioners.

The prevalence of individuals and small cells of individuals involved in terrorist plots presented in several case studies of this report is in line with trends preceding October 7, as the “lone wolf” phenomenon is nothing new. Yet, this trend underscores the pressing threat posed by inspired individuals or small groups,

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<sup>287</sup> Klempler and Koblenz-Stenzler, “Methodologies in Manipulation.”

who could potentially more easily evade law enforcement, and how an event such as October 7 can serve as a catalyst for individuals to be motivated toward violence. Moreover, although a large-scale attack by Hamas in the West seems unlikely due to the group's main aims, it does not mean that such an attack by a terrorist organization is out of the question, particularly as the war continues and groups' take advantage of the situation for their own purposes.

Beyond violent incidents and attempted attacks, the events of 10/7 and the Israel-Hamas war have also elevated general societal tensions, with extremists and terrorists utilizing the conflict to accelerate polarization, accomplish their own agendas, and mainstream their ideologies. Further, state and foreign actors, such as Russia, have also capitalized on the conflict to increase tensions in the West, furthering divisions around pre-existing issues, such as Islamophobia, antisemitism, and anti-immigrant sentiment. The increase in antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents throughout each case study in this report underlines the threat of violence that many communities have experienced in the wake of October 7 and its aftermath, with such concerns and threats unlikely to abate in the near future.

These dynamics, coupled with the ongoing war and its likely long-lasting impact, will both exacerbate pre-existing challenges, and create new ones, for law enforcement and counterterrorism practitioners. Practitioners will have to continue to contend with complicated issues such as balancing civil liberties with community safety, addressing grievances, responding to the unique needs of youth involvement in extremism, navigating emerging technologies, rapidly self-radicalizing "lone wolves," and countering state and foreign actor interference – with the added element of increasing societal polarization.

The lack of a large-scale, coordinated attack post-October 7 may indeed point to the potential successes of current counterterrorism efforts and infrastructure; however, the challenges highlighted in this report underscore how a geopolitical event such as the Israel-Hamas war can intensify pre-existing challenges plaguing governments and law enforcement. Understanding the impact of the conflict on the threat landscape, as well as the responses by governments and practitioners – as laid out across the five case studies in this report – can potentially aid in contextualizing lessons learned to counter the threat at the national level. Further research could also illuminate how an attack like October 7 and its aftermath can unite violent extremists and terrorists across the ideological spectrum – who have even at times been at odds with one another – creating shared narratives, ideology, and tactics. Such alliance-building will pose a future challenge for practitioners, and more research should be done into what factors can facilitate this coalescing.

As the war in Gaza continues, particularly as the anniversary of the Hamas attack approaches, effectively responding to these challenges and reassuring impacted communities will become even more crucial to reduce polarization, combat foreign and state actor interference, and counter radicalization, recruitment, and – ultimately – the threat posed by violent extremists and terrorists.

## ANNEX

### Data Collection Methodology

In addition to data published by third parties, TSC used a data analytics platform to capture data on discourse related to antisemitism and Islamophobia. Concretely, eight different Boolean queries were set up for the following languages: French, English, Italian, and German. Every language had one Boolean query capturing mentions related to antisemitism and another related to Islamophobia. The Boolean queries (see Table 1) were meant to capture both antisemitic and Islamophobic words and phrases, as well as general mentions of Islamophobia or antisemitism. Previous independent studies on Islamophobia and Antisemitism were consulted in the creation of these Booleans. The period of data capture was September 1st, 2023, 12:00 AM to July 30th, 2024, 11:59 PM (EST). This period of data capture was chosen to capture data before and after October 7th, allowing for trend analysis.

#### Data Sources

The sources leveraged for this report represent a wide range of perspectives, online communities, and discussions, including X/Twitter (due to the number of posts in the four target languages, a statistically significant sample was used), global news articles and blogs, Reddit posts and comments, forum and message board posts (including from alternative sites like Gab and 4chan), online videos (posted on platforms like YouTube, Youku, and DailyMotion), global broadcast video and transcripts, LexisNexis articles, and Q&A web pages (such as Yahoo! Answers and Quora).

Due to the number of X posts related to Islamophobia and antisemitism in the four target languages, a statistically significant sample was used. X sampling was thus a method used for the collection of data based on a subset of X posts captured from the entire stream of X posts drawn in that provides statistically significant analytics. The sample rate used was 10%. Concretely, this means that one-tenth of X mentions based on the established Boolean queries are displayed in the data figures.

#### Booleans

##### **German**

Antisemitism:

(language:de AND ("heil hitler" OR Säuberung OR Soros OR Schwab OR Rothschild OR "sieg heil" OR Weltjudentum OR Judensau OR Judenschwein OR "weißer Rassist" OR arisch OR Antisemitismus OR antisemitisch OR "Juden raus!" OR judenhasser OR #heilhitler OR #sauberung OR #soros OR #schwab OR #rothschild OR #siegheil OR #weltjudentum OR #judensau OR #judenschwein OR #weißerrassist OR #arisch OR #antisemitismus OR #antisemitisch OR #judenraus OR #judenhasser OR auschwitz OR #auschwitz OR #drittesreich OR "drittes reich" OR "feinbild jude" OR #feinbildjude OR #gedenkstätte OR gedenkstätte OR geldjude OR #geldjude OR #globaleelite OR "globale elite" OR "Großer Austausch" OR #großeraustausch OR hakenkreuz OR #hakenkreuz OR Halle OR #Halle OR Hitlergruß OR #hitlergruß OR #holocaust OR #holocaustleugnung OR #internationalesfinanzjudentum OR "internationales finanzjudentum" OR judenhass OR kindermörder OR #judenhass OR #kindermorder OR #mischpoke OR #nationalsozialismus OR #rothschild OR rothschild OR Schändung OR #schändung OR weltverschwörung OR



#weltverschwörung OR stolperstein OR #stolperstein OR "vogelschiss in der geschichte" OR überfall) OR ((Jude OR Jüdin OR jüdisch OR Judentum OR #jude OR #judin OR #judentum) AND (Attacke OR Graffiti OR Angriff OR Beleidigung OR Hassverbrechen OR #attacke OR #graffiti OR #angriff OR #beleidigung OR #hassverbrechen OR hakenkreuz OR #hakenkreuz)))

Islamophobia:

(language:de AND (islamfeindlich OR islamophobie OR merkelland OR Kameltreiber OR Ziegenficker OR Schleiereule OR #islamfeindlich OR #islamophobie OR #merkelland OR #kameltreiber OR #ziegenficker OR #shleiereule OR "anti-muslimischer rassismus" OR ausländer OR #ausländer OR brandanschlag OR #brandanschlag OR ehrenmorde OR #ehrenmorde OR #feinbildmuslim OR "feinbild muslim" OR frauenunterdrücker OR #frauenunterdrücker OR glaubenskrieg OR #glaubenskrieg OR Hanau OR #hanau OR #islamisierung OR islamisierung OR moschee OR überfremdung OR #überfremdung OR "untergang der abendländischen Kultur" OR "untergang der europäischen kultur" OR "wir sind das volk" OR #wirsinddasvolk) OR ((Islamophobie OR islamfeindlich OR #islamophobie OR #islamfeindlich) AND (Attacke OR Graffiti OR Angriff OR Beleidigung OR Hassverbrechen OR #attacke OR #graffiti OR #angriff OR #beleidigung OR #hassverbrechen)))

## French

Antisemitism:

(language:fr AND ("À mort les juifs" OR "Mort aux juifs" OR Antisémitisme OR "suprématie blanche" OR antisémite OR feuq OR "sale juif" OR "sale juifs" OR swastika OR youpin OR youpine OR "sale juive" OR juiverie OR "complot juif" OR "mafia juives" OR hoananas OR "pornographie mémorielle" OR shoax OR "juif voleur" OR "juif rotschild" OR "juif franc-macon" OR "juif traître" OR "sous race de juif" OR soros OR schwab OR rotschild OR #mortaouxjuifs OR #antisemitisme OR #suprematieblanche OR #antisemite OR #feuq OR #salejuif OR #salejuifs OR #swastika OR #youpin OR #youpine OR #salejuive OR #juiverie OR #complotjuif OR #mafiajuives OR #hoananas OR #shoax OR #juifvoleur OR #juifrotschild OR #juiftraître OR #soursacedejuif OR #soros OR #schwab OR #rotschild) OR ((juifs OR juif OR juive OR judaïsme OR judéité OR #juifs OR #juif OR #juive OR #judaïsme OR #judeite) AND (graffiti OR insulte OR atteinte OR attaque OR agression OR "crime de haine" OR #atteinte OR #attaque OR #insulte OR #crimedehaine OR #aggression OR #graffiti)))

Islamophobia:

(language:fr AND (islamophobie OR islamophobes OR islamophobe OR Bouègre OR Boucaque OR Crouille OR Bougnoul OR Bicot OR "Mahomet prophète pédophile" OR #islamophobie OR #islamophobes OR #islamophobe OR #bouegre OR #boucaque OR #crouille OR #bougnol OR #bicot) AND ((islamophobe OR islamophobes OR islamophobie OR #islamophobe OR #islamophobes OR #islamophobie) AND (graffiti OR insulte OR atteinte OR attaque OR agression OR "crime de haine" OR #graffiti OR #insulte OR #atteinte OR #attaque OR #aggression OR #crimedehaine)))

## English

Antisemitism:

(language:(en OR und) AND (kike OR kikes OR heeb OR heebz OR ZOG OR "Zionist Occupation Government" OR Soros OR yid OR yids OR abbie OR abbies OR "christ killer" OR "christ killers" OR christ-killer OR christ-

killers OR hebe OR hebes OR hymie OR hymies OR "oven dodger" OR "oven dodgers" OR ikey OR ike OR khazar OR khazars OR kek OR keks OR "well well well" OR Rothschild OR kyke OR kykes OR "white power" OR "pepe the frog" OR shylock OR yahoodi OR swastika OR antisemitism OR antisemitic OR sheeny OR "white supremacy" OR goyimknow OR #kike OR #kikes OR #heeb OR #heeb OR #ZOG OR #ZionistOccupationGovernment OR #Soros OR #yid OR #yids OR #abbie OR #abbies OR #christkiller OR #christkillers OR #christ-killer OR #christ-killers OR #hebe OR #hebes OR #hymie OR #hymies OR #ovendodger OR #ovendodgers OR #ikey OR #ike OR #khazar OR #khazars OR #kek OR #keks OR #wellwellwell OR #Rothschild OR #kyke OR #kykes OR #whitepower OR #pepethefrog OR #shylock OR #yahoodi OR #swastika OR #antisemitism OR #antisemitic OR #sheeny OR #whitesupremacism OR #goyimknow) OR ((jews OR jewish OR judaism OR jewishness OR #jews OR #jewish OR #judaism OR #jewishness) AND (graffiti OR attack OR insult OR assault OR "hate crime" OR #graffiti OR #attack OR #insult OR #assault OR #hatecrime)))

Islamophobia:

(language:en AND (paki OR haji OR hajji OR "camel jockey" OR hajis OR "towel head" OR "towel heads" OR raghead OR ragheads OR sandniggers OR sandnigger OR sandnigga OR sandniggas OR pakis OR Islamophobia OR Islamophobic OR muzzie OR muzzies OR muzzrat OR muzrat OR muzrats) OR ((Islamophobic OR Islamophobia) AND (graffiti OR attack OR insult OR assault OR "hate crime")))

## Italian

Antisemitism:

(language:it AND (usuraio OR aschenazi OR Soros OR Schwab OR Rothschild OR "naso etrusco" OR "nazisti ebrei" OR deicida OR "accusa del sangue" OR nasoni OR antisemitismo OR antisemita OR "supremazia bianca" OR #usuraio OR #aschenazi OR #soros OR #schwab OR #nasoetrusco OR #nazistiebrei OR #deicida OR #accusadelsangue OR #nasoni OR #antisemitismo OR #antisemita OR #supremaziabianca OR #rothschild) OR ((ebree OR ebrei OR ebreo OR ebreo OR ebraicità OR giudaismo OR #ebree OR #ebrei OR #ebreo OR #ebrea OR #ebraicità OR #giudaismo) AND (attacco OR insulto OR assalto OR calunnia OR "crimine d'odio" OR "crimini d'odio" OR #attacco OR #insulto OR #assalto OR #calunnia OR #criminedodio OR #criminidodio)))

Islamophobia:

(language:it AND (musulmerda OR "Vu cumprà" OR islamofobia OR islamofobico OR #musulmerda OR #vucumpra OR #islamofobia OR #islamofobico) OR ((islamofobia OR islamofobico OR #islamofobia OR #islamofobico) AND (attacco OR insulto OR assalto OR calunnia OR "crimine d'odio" OR "crimini d'odio" OR #attacco OR #insulto OR #assolto OR #calunnia OR #criminedodio)))

## Limitations

This form of data capture has inherent limitations. First, since it is based on Boolean queries rather than natural language processing and semantic clustering, the data does not surface specific narratives and their respective frequency. Instead, the data gives a broad overview over time of antisemitism and islamophobia, as well as discussions on this topic. Concretely, this form of data capture includes the propagation of antisemitic and Islamophobic narratives, general discussions on these forms of hate, as well as criticism thereof. A second limitation to this data capturing is the data sources included. Indeed, these are not necessarily representative of the larger digital ecosystem. For example, while X has a roughly 32% share of social network usage in the United States, data from Italy in 2023 established that only 23%

of respondents were Xusers.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, there is no way to establish the geolocation of all data sources included. While language was used as a rough proxy for our four case study countries: France, the UK, the US, Germany, and Italy. This, of course, does not account for both the international use of their respective languages but also the global use of English as a lingua franca and the adoption of English by many people globally to express themselves online.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### Clara Broekaert

Clara Broekaert is a Research Fellow at The Soufan Center and a Multi-Mission Analyst at The Soufan Group. At the Center, Clara's research focuses on information operations, emerging technologies, radicalization, terrorism, and multilateral security cooperation. In her role as an analyst at Group, she conducts OSINT investigations for a diverse range of clients. Before joining The Soufan Center and The Soufan Group, Clara served as an intelligence analyst specializing in foreign information manipulation and interference, focusing on critical infrastructure, elections, and public health. She also worked as a Research Fellow at Diverting Hate, where she identified and tracked threats of violent attacks online. Clara completed an International Master's degree in Security, Intelligence, and Strategic Studies from the University of Glasgow, Trento University, and Charles University in Prague, where she concentrated on the intersection of security and technology. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Government and International Relations from Smith College.

### Colin P. Clarke

Colin P. Clarke is a Senior Research Fellow at The Soufan Center. He is the Director of Research at The Soufan Group, where his research focuses on domestic and transnational terrorism, international security, and geopolitics. Prior to joining The Soufan Group, Clarke was a professor at Carnegie Mellon University, and a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation, where he spent a decade researching terrorism, insurgency, and criminal networks. At RAND, he led studies on ISIS financing, the future of terrorism and transnational crime, and lessons learned from all insurgencies since the end of the World War II. Clarke has testified before Congress on numerous occasions as an expert witness on a range of terrorism-related issues, appears frequently in the media to discuss national security-related matters, and has published several books on terrorism, including his most recent, *After the Caliphate: The Islamic State and the Future Terrorist Diaspora*. Clarke has a Ph.D. in international security policy from the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA).

### Michaela Millender

Michaela Millender is a Research Analyst at The Soufan Center. Her research focuses on far-right extremism and terrorism, the destruction of cultural heritage, and the intersection of global security with migration, humanitarian access, and multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations. Prior to joining The Soufan Center, Michaela served as a research analyst at the Global Disinformation Index, as well as for the United Nation's UN75 Initiative which produced the report *UN75: The Future We Want, the UN We Need*. She also spent several years working in the non-profit sector where she provided support in cross-cultural communication, leadership development, grant management, and event coordination. Michaela was awarded a Master of Science in Global Affairs from New York University's Center for Global Affairs, with a concentration in international development and humanitarian assistance and specializations in the United Nations and data analytics. She also attended the University of Oklahoma's College of International Studies and was awarded a Bachelor of Arts in International and Area Studies with a minor in Italian language.

## **Annika Scharnagl**

Annika Scharnagl is a research associate at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip), focusing on topics such as terrorism and extremism, gender & security and the MENA region. At the oiip, she is currently working on the EU-funded project PARTES (PARTicipatory approaches to proTECTing placeS of worship). She is also on the jury for a nationwide school project on the prevention of extremism. After studying International Relations and History in Germany and France, she completed the Erasmus Mundus Master in International Security, Intelligence and Strategic Studies (IMSIS) in Glasgow, Trento and Prague. In her master's thesis, she dealt with the deradicalization of female IS supporters in Germany. She is part of the 2023/2024 cohort of the German Federal Agency for Civic Education's MasterClass "Preventing Jihadism".

## **Joseph Shelzi**

Joseph Shelzi is a Research Fellow at The Soufan Center and an Analyst at The Soufan Group. His work focuses on military and operational analysis, conflict resolution, climate security, and the proliferation of terrorist and non-state armed groups. He has published work on the role of cyber power in geopolitics and war, climate security in the Middle East and the Sahel, East Asian security, and cultural geography in Africa. Prior to joining The Soufan Group, he served as a U.S. Army Intelligence Officer. He has worked at the tactical and strategic levels, analyzing both conventional and terrorist threats to U.S. Army operations. While stationed in Japan, he served as a company commander and worked on alliance and security cooperation issues at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. He was awarded a Master of International Affairs degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and earned a Bachelor of Science degree with honors in Human Geography from the United States Military Academy at West Point.

## **About The Soufan Center**

The Soufan Center (TSC) is an independent non-profit organization offering research, analysis, and strategic dialogue on foreign policy challenges with a particular focus on global security, conflict prevention and resolution, and the rule of law. Our work is underpinned by an emphasis on prevention, mitigation, and a recognition that human rights and human security perspectives are critical to credible, effective, and sustainable solutions. As a bipartisan organization, TSC fills a niche role by producing objective and innovative analyses and recommendations that shape strategic policy and dialogue and equip governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society to act effectively.

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