



Executive Update

Antisemitism a Persistent Driver of Transnational Violent Extremist Narratives and Attacks

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Violent extremists adhering to various ideologies that endorse anti-Semitic narratives—especially racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs) and violent extremists inspired by foreign terrorist organizations—pose a persistent threat to Jewish communities and institutions in the United States and abroad.^{a, b} Violent extremists frequently promote anti-Semitic themes in their violent extremist messaging to spur supporters to conduct violence against Jewish individuals, communities, institutions, and houses of worship, which provide attractive targets due to their vulnerability to attack, ability to garner extensive public attention, and symbolic significance. Many RMVEs and violent extremists inspired by foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs), such as al-Qa’ida or ISIS, demonize Jewish people as malevolent actors, and promote conspiracy theories about international Jewish control of government, finance, and media.

- Multiple attackers inspired by the transnational RMVE movement, driven by a belief in the superiority of the white race, have encouraged violence against Jewish communities in their online manifestos. In April 2019, a US RMVE who claimed inspiration from the March 2019 New Zealand mosque attacker attacked a synagogue in Poway, California, and claimed that “every Jew is responsible for the meticulously planned genocide of the European race.”^{c, d} At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, some individuals driven by a belief in the superiority of the white race claimed the virus was either fabricated or orchestrated by Jewish people or groups, adapting historical conspiracy narratives about powerful elites using money and influence to reshape society to their benefit.
- Foreign RMVE attackers have also targeted Jewish communities, including the October 2019 lethal attack by a German RMVE who used homemade firearms and explosives in an attack on a synagogue in Halle, Germany. An RMVE who killed two people outside an LGBTQ+ bar in Bratislava, Slovakia, in October 2022 couched his grievances in the anti-Semitic belief of a “Zionist Occupied Government” controlling the United States and Russia and selected his target based on his belief that Jews contributed to the corruption of Western values.

^a Per the Attorney General’s Guidelines, the FBI does not and may not base any investigative activity solely on the exercise of rights guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. In addition, the FBI cannot collect, maintain, or disseminate information on how a US person exercises his or her First Amendment rights unless pertinent to and within the scope of an authorized law enforcement activity. Some forms of speech are not protected, for example true threats. However, statements that may be considered offensive, distasteful, or repugnant may be legal and protected by the First Amendment. Absent some indication of potential violent and/or criminal activity, the FBI cannot investigate solely on the basis of such statements.

^b NCTC joins those portions of this Update that concern international terrorism; general terrorist tactics, techniques, and procedures; and threats posed by foreign violent extremists and those violent extremists they inspire.

^c In his manifesto, the Poway synagogue attacker claimed inspiration from the New Zealand mosque attacker for his willingness to commit violence on behalf of their common desire to preserve the European race. He differed from the New Zealand attacker, however, in basing his attack on anti-Semitic beliefs, including historical anti-Semitic tropes, such as blood libel, and the use of anti-Semitic interpretations of Christian scripture. Though the New Zealand attacker, in his own manifesto, excluded Jews from European identity, he did not cite anti-Semitism as a primary aspect of his own motivation.

^d The FBI and NCTC assess this to be a reference to the popularly held RMVE belief that a “Zionist Occupied Government” (ZOG) is working to replace white people and Western civilization.



- A smaller percentage of lethal violence in the United States has been attributed to RMVEs motivated by perceptions of racial injustice in American society, or a violent interpretation of Black Hebrew Israelite religious teachings.^e
- In the past 15 years, there have been at least five violent global jihad-inspired individuals who have considered or targeted the Jewish community.^f Some individuals have expressed hatred toward the Jewish community, but their ideological justifications for violence often target anyone who does not share their interpretation of Islam or is not Muslim. Homegrown violent extremists' (HVE)^g grievances toward the Jewish community can be linked to anti-Israel sentiment, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, and a desire to save Muslims from perceived threats.
- In the past 15 years, violent extremist perpetrators with grievances linked to Israel have targeted a range of Jewish establishments in Europe, including a synagogue, a kosher grocery store, a museum, and a school.

Future violent extremist attacks on Jewish targets in the United States and abroad could inspire subsequent attacks against these or related entities, particularly if accompanied by a widely distributed and consumed manifesto or livestream. The emergence or promotion of conspiracy narratives with anti-Semitic themes means current events seemingly unrelated to the Jewish community may result in increased threats against the Jewish community. Al-Qa'ida, ISIS, and their affiliates have long promoted anti-Israel narratives in their messaging and periodically will direct supporters to conduct attacks against Jewish targets. An escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict this year could spur some HVEs to pivot toward Jewish or Israeli targets in the United States. Though HVEs rarely respond directly to singular events, increased sociopolitical tensions that result in a high-profile and media-saturated attack targeting Muslims could inspire HVEs who are already mobilizing to refocus their attacks on Jewish or Israeli targets.

Prepared by Counterterrorism Division and NCTC

^e These actors have typically targeted perceived symbols of oppression, including government officials, law enforcement, white people, and individuals and locations associated with Judaism.

^f In January 2022, British national Malik Faisal Akram took hostages at a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas. Other than the perpetrator, who was killed by law enforcement, there were no fatalities in this incident. Akram intended through his hostage taking to leverage what he perceived as Jewish influence and power in the United States to help him secure the release of an inmate from a nearby federal prison.

^g The FBI defines an HVE as an individual who is inspired by violent global jihad extremist ideology, is primarily radicalized in the United States, primarily located in the United States, and is not receiving assistance or direction from a foreign terrorist organization.



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