



2004 AUDIT OF ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS IN CANADA

Executive Summary

On March 15, 2005 the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada released its 2004 *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents*, an annual study on antisemitism in this country. The *Audit* documented an increase in the number of individuals acting out on their feelings of prejudice in a progressively less restrained way. The *Audit* also noted signs that a climate is being created in which open expressions of antisemitism are becoming increasingly acceptable.

- Antisemitic activity has risen dramatically, with a 46.7% increase country-wide in 2004 compared to 2003. **In total, 857 incidents were reported, the highest number in the twenty-two year history of the *Audit*.** Since 2000, the total number of incidents has increased more than three-fold.
- Out of the 857 incidents in 2004, more than half (54.7%) took place between March and June. The highest monthly total (156) occurred in March, representing almost one-fifth of the year's total. The total number of incidents for the months of March and April combined (275), amounted to almost one-third of the year's total.
- Incidents were reported across the country, including for the first time in Nunavut. Once again, **the most significant numbers were collected in Ontario and Quebec, where the majority of Canadian Jews reside.** In Ontario, there were 530 incidents, 405 of which took place in the Greater Toronto area (GTA). In Quebec there were 204 incidents, of which 187 took place in Montreal.
- In **Ottawa** there was an increase of 46.7% to 66 incidents, an unprecedented number for the capital. In **Winnipeg**, there was a three-fold increase, with incidents up from 18 in 2003 to 55 in 2004. In **Alberta**, incidents doubled to 33 incidents, a number never before recorded in the province. In **the Maritimes**, which has traditionally seen a low incidence of antisemitic activity, there was an increase of 16.7% to 14 incidents.
- The 857 incidents took place in the following categories: 457 (53.3%) harassment, 369 (43.1%) vandalism, and 31 (3.6%) violence. **The highest increases were in the categories of both violence and vandalism, where the numbers doubled on average.** In the category of harassment, **one third of the year's cases involved threats of physical harm, including death threats.**
- **There were 40 incidents targeting synagogues, a 74% increase over 23 such incidents in 2003.** There were 25 incidents targeting Jewish community buildings and 10 cases of cemetery desecration, up from three in 2003.

- **Incidents targeting Jewish homes jumped 59% from 95 to 151 cases.** Incidents in workplace settings more than doubled (up from 23 in 2003 to 47 cases in 2004).
- **Jewish students continued to be targeted on campus, with 47 incidents reported.** These were often linked to anti-Israel or anti-war events. Anti-Jewish propaganda was distributed during anti-Bush rallies in Canadian cities.
- **The number of incidents carried out by persons identifying themselves as Arab more than doubled** from 36 in 2003 to 80 cases reported in 2004.
- **There was a three-fold jump in incidents reported in the public school system, up from 22 in 2003 to 66 in 2004.** Attempts to recruit high school students to the far right wing/White Supremacist cause have been recorded on a number of websites.

EXAMPLES OF INCIDENTS

Graffiti on a city street in **Cambridge** proclaimed: “Help save the world. Kill the Jews.”

Messages blaming Jews for the death of Jesus were found spraypainted on a private residence and near a senior citizens’ home in **Toronto**.

An Arab student at an adult educational facility in **Montreal** announced to other students, “Now we’re going to kill all the Jews”.

Homes and cars in a Jewish neighborhood in **Thornhill** were defaced and vandalized.

Oshawa’s only synagogue was vandalized with antisemitic graffiti and Nazi symbols.

A Jewish elementary school in **Montreal** was firebombed on the eve of Passover.

Threats of violence were made against a Jewish school in **Winnipeg**.

Antisemitic material was distributed at a local discount store in **Saskatoon**

Phone calls threatening physical violence were made to Jewish homes in **Toronto**.

A Jewish applicant was chased away by a **Guelph** landlord who set his dog on him. “We Austrians know all about you people ...Go back home” “We used dogs in Germany”.

An **Ottawa** Rabbi received a threatening letter at his home stating, “Die, Die Jews”.

There was a bomb threat against a Jewish organization in **Montreal**.

Swastikas were spraypainted on private property and homes in **Orangeville**.

A shop clerk in **Edmonton** repeated anti-Jewish conspiracy theories to a customer, alleging that Jews control the world and have all the money.

A visible Jew was harassed and threatened by teens outside a **Kitchener** public school.

Antisemitic material was sold in a **London** bookstore.

An ultra-orthodox *Chassidic* man was assaulted and threatened when walking home from synagogue in **Montreal** by a group of young men who identified themselves as Arabs.

A teenager in **St. John's NF** created a website filled with anti-Jewish comments.

Jewish students in a university residence common room in **Mississauga** were called “murderers and criminals”.

A **Vancouver** Imam preached that Jews were the “brothers of the monkeys and swine”.

Graffiti such as “Kill the Jews” was scrawled in a university library in **Hamilton**.

Articles denying the Holocaust and denigrating Jews appeared in a foreign language ethnic newspaper distributed in **Toronto**.

A Jewish home in **Calgary** was spraypainted with the graffiti “Hitler Rules”. It was identified as a Jewish home by the Chanukah candles on display in the window.

A woman wearing a Jewish Star of David necklace on a **Montreal** subway was harassed and threatened with physical assault by teens who identified themselves as Arab.

The only Jewish child in an elementary public school in **Bolton** was physically assaulted by a group of boys referring to themselves as a “Nazi gang”.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Almost 45% of the cases included in the 2004 *Audit* were reported to police for criminal investigation, as well as to the League. Thirteen resulted in charges, with one leading to a prison sentence, while several cases are still ongoing before the courts. The *Audit* contends that even when complaints are laid, investigations are often protracted, inconclusive and lack the type of closure that would send a strong message to Canadians that antisemitism is not acceptable in this country. Outlined below are the League’s recommendations for combating not just antisemitism, but all forms of racism in Canada, through enhanced protections for the victims, and increased vigilance and action by government, the police, the courts, school boards and society in general:

1. All the major police forces in Canada should have dedicated hate crime units.
2. Stringent legislation should be drafted to prohibit the publication of hate speech.
3. Sentencing guidelines should be established for hate crimes.
4. The *Criminal Code* should be amended to include Holocaust denial as a hate crime.
5. Funding for the Canadian Human Rights Commission should be increased.
6. All hate speech jurisdictions should be consolidated under the Commission’s authority.
7. Community-based anti-hate initiatives should be encouraged through funding support.
8. Public schools should adopt a zero tolerance policy to antisemitism and racism.
9. Attention should be directed to identifying sources of antisemitic and racist propaganda.
10. Racist groups and racist symbols should be banned.

The full text of the Audit can be accessed at:

<http://www.bnaibrith.ca/pdf/audit2004.pdf>

<http://www.bnaibrith.ca/audit2004.html>

For more information please call 416-633-6224 X 140.