



Bundesamt für
Verfassungsschutz

Antisemitism in Islamist extremism



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Table of Contents

1	Introduction	5
2	Definitions	8
2.1	What is antisemitism?	8
2.2	What is Islamist extremism?	11
3	Origin and development of Islamist extremist antisemitism	13
4	Antisemitic stereotypes in Islamist extremism	17
5	Rejection of the State of Israel by Islamist extremist organisations	20
6	Antisemitism within Islamist extremist organisations and movements	23
6.1	Muslim Brotherhood (MB)	23
6.2	HAMAS	25
6.3	Hezbollah	26
6.4	Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT)	29
6.5	Millî Görüş movement	29
6.6	Islamic State (IS)	32
6.7	Salafism	33
7	Conclusion: Prevalence of Islamist extremist antisemitism in Germany	35
	Imprint	37

1 Introduction

On account of the historical experience with National Socialism, any antisemitic behaviour in Germany was for a long time associated with right-wing extremism. Until the end of the 20th century, hardly anyone considered it possible that antisemitism might have a different background or motivation.

It was only after the turn of the millennium that people came to realise that antisemitism is not exclusively found in the right-wing extremist scene. Besides a “general antisemitism”, which has spread deep into the social and political centre of society, anti-Zionist and antisemitic tendencies also manifest themselves in left-wing extremism.

Zionism

The term “Zionism” is derived from the word Zion, which is the name of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. In the 19th century, the term referred to the political efforts to establish an independent nation state for all Jews. Since the State of Israel was officially founded in 1948, the expression has been used to describe all efforts to preserve and develop that state. Hence, any statement or action that rejects or endangers the existence of the State of Israel is considered anti-Zionist.

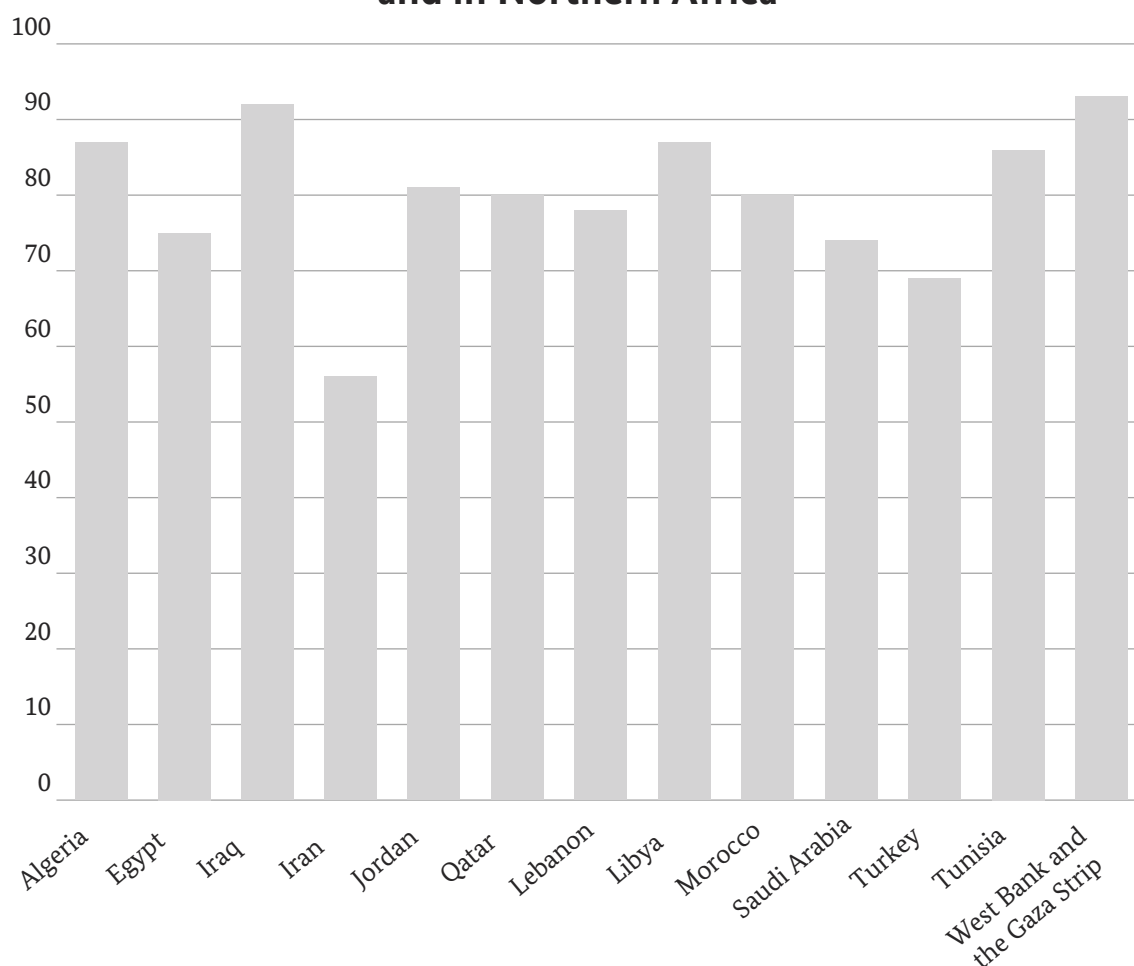
However, antisemitic views are even more common in Islamist extremism, where religious, territorial and/or political motives form an antisemitic worldview. The hostile perception of Judaism is an essential pillar supporting the lines of argument that all Islamist extremist groups use.

Such information especially gains in importance when considering that more than 1 million Muslims¹ entered Germany between 2014 and 2017. Many of these people come

1 The number of first-time asylum applications filed by people of Muslim faith alone amounted to more than 1 million between 2014 and 2017. See Federal Office for Migration and Refugees: “Das Bundesamt in Zahlen”, 2014 to 2017 editions, www.bamf.de (accessed on 11 January 2019).

from countries where antisemitic views have for many decades been so common that even children take them for granted.

Prevalence of antisemitism in the Middle East and in Northern Africa



■ Endorsement of antisemitic statements (%)

Source: Worldwide survey conducted in 2013 and 2014 by the Anti-Defamation League, global100.adl.org (accessed on 11 January 2019).

Of course, it cannot be inferred from these figures that every Muslim refugee is an active antisemite. If integration fails, however, the lasting effect antisemitism has had on many refugees might present a starting point for Islamist extremist radicalisation. The (latent) antisemitic stereotypes conveyed to

them during socialisation in their home countries seem familiar to Muslim refugees who become subject to Islamist extremist recruiting efforts, making it more likely that these refugees will also accept other Islamist extremist statements.

A demonstration held in front of the Brandenburg Gate in December 2017 suddenly made it clear that such a scenario is more than just a theoretical possibility. In the course of the demonstration staged against the US President's decision to acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, several antisemitic incidents occurred:

- posters demanding the destruction of the State of Israel were shown,
- the demonstrators chanted slogans such as “Khaybar, Khaybar, o Jews, the army of Muhammad will return!”, which is an allusion to the prophet Muhammad's armed conquest of a Jewish oasis in the year 628,
- an Israeli flag was set on fire.

It is worth noting that these incidents were caused by individuals who had not previously had any obvious connection to Islamist extremist organisations. These incidents in front of the Brandenburg Gate have shown the attraction antisemitic agitation can have on individuals even beyond Islamist extremist organisations and what threat they may pose to a peaceful and tolerant coexistence in Germany.

In order to prevent any further spreading of Islamist extremist antisemitism among the Muslim population in Germany, awareness of the topic will have to be raised among the wider public. Especially anyone who, at work, has contact with Muslims with a migratory background and/or with Muslim refugees will have to be prepared for facing antisemitic ideas. This group includes teachers, social workers, police officers and staff members of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and of the corresponding offices at the federal states.

But members of social organisations or volunteers engaging in integration projects may also be confronted with antisemitic ideas. Produced by the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV) in co-operation with the federal domestic intelligence services of Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia, this brochure intends to make a contribution to raising awareness.

2 Definitions

To enable our readers to identify antisemitism marked by Islamist extremism, the central terms “Islamist extremism” and “antisemitism” are defined below.

2.1 What is antisemitism?

The term “antisemitism” describes a hostility towards Jews that is justified by political, social, racist or religious reasons. Any statement or behaviour directed against one or more Jews because of their Jewishness and/or against a Jewish community is antisemitic. In this context, it is irrelevant whether such a community is organised within or outside the State of Israel.

There are various ways of dividing antisemitism into categories. The six forms of appearance mentioned below are found quite often:

- **Religious antisemitism**

Religious antisemitism is the oldest form and relates to the Jewish religion. It “develops from the idea that one’s own understanding of religion is the only legitimate one, which is associated with a general rejection and defamation of all other beliefs.”² While Christianity mainly accused the Jews of having killed Jesus Christ,

2 Pfahl-Traughber, Armin: “Ideologische Erscheinungsformen des Antisemitismus” (“Ideological forms of antisemitism”), www.bpb.de/apuz/30327/ideologische-erscheinungsformen-des-antisemitismus (accessed on 30 October 2018).

discrimination against Jews in Islam revolved around the reproach of them not acknowledging Muhammad as the new prophet.

- **Social antisemitism**

Social antisemitism is rooted in the role of outsiders that Jews have had in European society since the Middle Ages for their frequent specialisation in trade and financial services. The success of some Jewish individuals and families in business matters later resulted in the myth of the Jews dominating the international financial world.

- **Political antisemitism**

Political antisemitism is based on the idea of a worldwide secret conspiracy of Jews aimed at controlling the policies of all countries to serve Jewish interests. It is often assumed that Jews have extraordinary intellectual and social skills which they use to achieve these aims, but such assumptions always have a negative connotation.

- **Racist antisemitism**

Racist antisemitism is a much more recent phenomenon than the three above-mentioned ones. Since the last quarter of the 19th century, its advocates have endeavoured to work out the Jewish race's alleged biological deficits and to prove its destructive effects on the other, "more valuable" human races. Racist antisemitism was the ideological basis for the National Socialists' killing of the European Jews.

- **Secondary antisemitism**

Secondary antisemitism is the attempt to slander remembrance of the Holocaust or to question its historical existence. It mainly is political players in the Near and Middle East who, by denying the Holocaust, try to reject the right to exist of the State of Israel, whose founding is directly linked with the genocide of the European Jews.

- **Anti-Zionism**

Anti-Zionism is aimed at the complete elimination of the State of Israel, whose very existence is considered a basic evil in world politics putting peace at risk. The conflict between Israel and Palestine is described as a Jewish “war of destruction” fought against the Palestinians. Since antisemitic statements in Germany are subject to criminal prosecution for incitement to hatred, advocates of anti-Zionism sometimes argue that their propaganda is exclusively directed against the State of Israel, and not against Jewry itself, concluding that anti-Zionism is not antisemitic. Considering that Israel is the only Jewish country in the world and that its elimination would inevitably cause the death or expulsion of millions of Jews, this argument is a dodge used to conceal the actual goal pursued by anti-Zionism.³

³ See Puschnerat, Tania: “Antizionismus im Islamismus und Rechtsextremismus” (“Anti-Zionism in Islamist extremism and right-wing extremism”), in: Federal Ministry of the Interior (ed.): “Feindbilder und Radikalisierungsprozesse. Elemente und Instrumente im politischen Extremismus” (“Enemy images and radicalisation processes. Elements and instruments in political extremism”), Berlin, 2005.

Legitimate criticism or anti-Zionism?

In order to effectively distinguish between anti-Zionism and legitimate criticism of the State of Israel's policy, a working group of the EU Parliament developed guiding principles in 2005. These principles say that antisemitism – instead of valid criticism of the State of Israel – exists where Israel's right to exist is denied, where double standards are applied (i.e. where Israel is expected to behave differently from other democratic countries), where images or symbols are used to describe Israel or its population that are associated with traditional antisemitism (such as the reproach of having killed Jesus Christ or the blood libel), where Jews are collectively held responsible for the activity of the State of Israel, or where Israeli policy is compared with the policy pursued by the National Socialists.

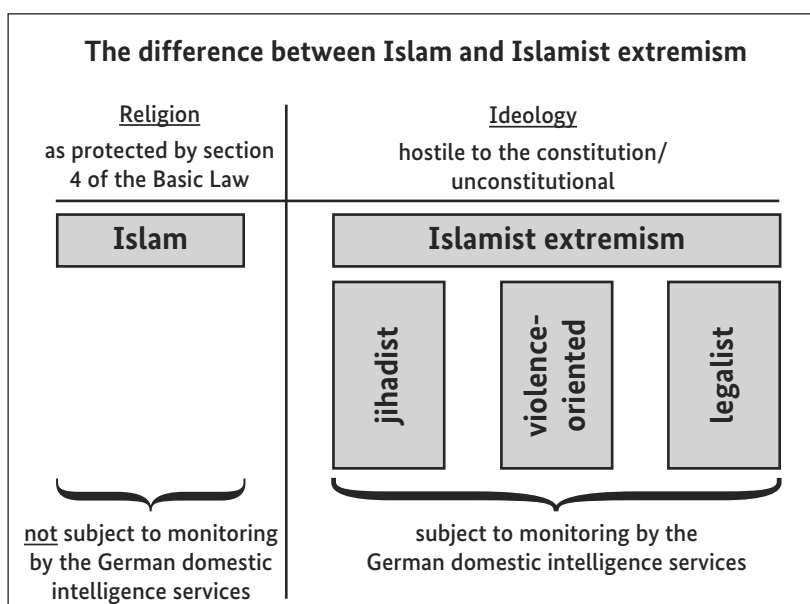
It hardly ever happens that only one of the six forms of antisemitism described above is used. Antisemitic propaganda usually relies on a mixture of religious, social, political and secondary arguments, which it varies according to topic and target group.

2.2 What is Islamist extremism?

The term “Islam” refers to a religion the practice of which is protected by the German Basic Law and the freedom of religion guaranteed therein. By contrast, “Islamist extremism” describes a form of political extremism. Invoking Islam, Islamist extremism aims at the partial or complete abolition of the free democratic basic order of the Federal Republic of Germany. Islamist extremism is based on the conviction that Islam is not only a personal and private affair, but that it rules social life and the political order or regulates at least part of it. Islamist extremism calls for the existence of a divinely ordained – and therefore “true” and absolute – order which overrides the orders made by man. The aim pursued by all Islamist extremists is to establish this divinely ordained order

not only in Arab and other Muslim countries, but also in Western states. Antisemitism is one of the essential ideological elements of Islamist extremism.

With their interpretation of Islam, Islamist extremists are in conflict with principles established in Germany's Basic Law, in particular the sovereignty of the people, the separation of state and religion, the freedom of expression and equal rights in general. Islamist extremist organisations are therefore subject to monitoring by the German domestic intelligence services.



The generic term “Islamist extremism”, however, takes several forms, which often show considerable differences as to their ideological premises, their geographic orientation and their strategies and means. By exerting political and social influence, legalist tendencies such as the Millî Görüş movement try to impose an order they consider to be in conformity with Islam. They reject violence as a means of putting forward their demands. The followers of Islamist extremist terrorist groups such as HAMAS and Hezbollah striving for the destruction of the State of Israel are focussed on their regions of origin, which is where they commit most of their terrorist acts of violence. In Western countries such as Germany, they try to gain support for their demands through their political and social

commitment. Jihadist groups like the Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda, for example, consider terrorist violence used against “infidels” and supposedly corrupt regimes to be indispensable in their fight for a “theocracy”. Their terrorist agenda is a global one and presents a threat to all countries at international level.

Jihad

The original meaning of the Arabic term “jihad” is effort, endeavour or struggle. In the Koran, it refers to a believer’s efforts to live a godly life. Among other aspects, this includes the struggle against followers of another belief – the so-called holy war. Jihadists consider the violent conflict with all followers of another belief the only way to overcome the division of the world into believers and nonbelievers and to establish a worldwide caliphate, which they regard as the only type of state ordained by God. Besides waging open war, they also commit terrorist attacks to achieve this.

All Islamist extremist tendencies and organisations clearly show antisemitic ideas; the only thing that varies is the way each group represents them in public.

3 Origin and development of Islamist extremist antisemitism

Islamic tradition tells of Muhammad’s attempts to convert three Jewish tribes to his faith. When his efforts failed, armed clashes broke out, ending in the military defeat of the tribes. These events provide the background to the Koran passages that are critical of Jews. The main accusation is that the Jews allegedly broke the covenant with Allah and the Muslims by not accepting Muhammad as the prophet chosen by God. Another reproach is that Jews allegedly cheat on their clients when conducting financial business. These passages of the Koran, which have time and again been taken out of their

historical context and taken literally, form the basis of a hostility of Jews in Islam that constitutes “an integral part of the religious identity”⁴.

Nonetheless, Jews lived in safety in Islamic countries for many centuries, especially when compared with Central Europe and its Christian traditions. Antisemitic clashes or pogroms were relatively rare. It was only in the middle of the 19th century that European antisemitism started spreading to the Islamic world too.

Violent clashes between Jews and Muslims increasingly occurred from the 1920s onwards, when large numbers of European Jews emigrated to Palestine, where they faced economic and political competition with the local Arab population.



Mohammed Amin el-Husseini and Adolf Hitler in Berlin in 1941.

Antisemitic views were also on the rise in organised Islamist extremism during that time. The Mufti⁵ of Jerusalem, Mohammed Amin el-Husseini, for instance, maintained close contact with the German National Socialists, openly agitating against Jews on the radio. Another example is the spreading, from the 1930s, of the Arabic translations of European anti-Jewish writings among the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB), where they met with full approval.

The founding of Israel in 1948 and the country's military triumph over the allied states of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq in the war of independence marked the peak of the conflict. In the course of the war, hundreds of thousands of Muslim Palestinians fled or were driven out of the country, which continues to strain relations between Israel and Palestine to this day. This military defeat caused an increase in antisemitic views also among large parts of the population of the other Arab states. The only possible explanation for the fact that the small and supposedly weak country had managed to defeat the allied states seemed to be the construct of a "Jewish world conspiracy", as described in the antisemitic "Protocols of the Elders of Zion". Initiated by the Egyptian government, the reprint of an Arabic translation of the "Protocols" finally resulted in their widespread distribution throughout the Arabic-speaking countries.

"The Protocols of the Elders of Zion"

First published in the early 20th century in tsarist Russia, this text was probably written by members of the tsarist secret police. This document, which is entirely fictional, purports to be the notes of a secret meeting of Jewish representatives plotting to achieve a Jewish leadership of the world.

5 A Mufti is an Islamic legal scholar.



Title page of a German edition of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion", published by the Nazi Party's central publishing house.

Published by Sayyid Qutb in 1950, the essay entitled "Our Struggle with the Jews" was an "ideological milestone" of Islamist extremist antisemitism. Qutb was born in Egypt and was already considered one of the most important theoreticians of the Islamist extremist Muslim Brotherhood in his own lifetime. His essay took up European antisemitic stereotypes, the conspiracy theories laid down in the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and anti-Jewish quotations from the Koran to form a unit that was to serve as the ideological basis of antisemitism in Islamist extremism.

By adapting traditional European antisemitism to the religious, social and cultural characteristics of the Arab world, Qutb created a new type of antisemitism: Islamist extremist antisemitism. Due to its European roots, Islamist extremist antisemitism continues to attract antisemites from various parts of society. One example of this is the partial co-operation

between right-wing extremist and Islamist extremist Holocaust deniers.⁶ The support left-wing extremist groups provide to HAMAS can also be seen in that light.⁷

4 Antisemitic stereotypes in Islamist extremism

Islamist antisemitism as developed by Qutb is a characteristic feature of all Islamist extremist organisations. This is why all Islamist extremist ideologies have the same or at least a similar conception of Jews. The core idea is that Jews secretly endeavour to dominate the world or already do so and thus control world policy and economy. The above-mentioned “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” are the written basis of this theory of a worldwide conspiracy, which was also taken up by Qutb.

Islamist extremists frequently refer to the following elements and motives:

- **Jews controlling the financial and economic systems**

The supposed Jewish conspirators allegedly cause economic crises and deliberately cut back funds with the aim of making the rest of the world dependent on them. This assertion takes up the idea of the “greedy Jew”, which has existed since the Middle Ages, and transfers it to modern times.

6 See Pfahl-Traughber, Armin: “Das Verhältnis von Islamisten und Rechtsextremisten” (“The relation between Islamist extremists and right-wing extremists”), www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/antisemitismus/37977/islamismus-und-rechtsextremismus?p=all (accessed on 3 September 2018).

7 As an example, see the pro-HAMAS articles published on the website of the Anti-imperialist Camp via www.antiimperialista.org/de (accessed on 23 September 2018).



- **Jews stirring up wars and conflicts**

According to the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, Jewish conspirators provoke wars and conflicts all over the world to play peoples and nations off against each other and to wear them down. This allegation can for instance be found in the HAMAS charter of 1987, which accuses the Jews of having caused both World War I and II. Allegedly, the Jews’ purported (and achieved) aim was to make money out of these wars, forming the financial basis for their world domination:

They [author’s note: the Jews] were behind World War I, when they were able to destroy the Islamic Caliphate, making financial gains and controlling resources. [...] They were behind World War II, through which they made huge financial gains by trading in armaments [...].⁸

- **Jews enjoying the support of secret agents and organisations**

Part of the Jewish efforts to dominate the world described in the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” allegedly consists in causing conflicts and tensions in society through secret agents and organisations. This accusation too was taken up by several Islamist extremist organisations. They allege that Jews are the masterminds behind a variety of associations and movements such as the USA, the UN, liberalism or the Freemasons. Consequently, a common strategy is to discredit political opponents by portraying them as allies or accomplices of the Jews. The third edition of the IS magazine “Dabiq”, for instance, showed the former US President Barack Obama wearing a kippa after he had ordered an air raid against IS troops.

- **The eternal struggle between Muslims and Jews**

Both the Salafist and the jihadist spectrum are particularly prone to dividing the world into believers and nonbelievers. This worldview portrays Jews as belonging to the infidels and often also as their leaders. The Jews’ supposed aim is to systematically fight and destroy Islam. This ideological attitude is mostly based on Qutb’s work, which describes the alleged worldwide conflict in drastic terms. Qutb in turn cited a Hadith⁹ containing a prediction of an apocalyptic battle between Jews and Muslims. This apocalyptic idea conveyed in the Hadith is frequently referred to in jihadist and other Islamist extremist texts and propaganda material.

⁹ Hadith are the prophet’s statements and actions handed down over time that serve as binding examples to devout Muslims. Together with the instructions laid down in the Koran, they form the basis for a godly life.

5 Rejection of the State of Israel by Islamist extremist organisations

There are organisations within the Islamist extremist spectrum whose primary aim is to fight the very existence of the State of Israel. These include the Palestinian HAMAS and the Lebanese Hezbollah. Both organisations fight against Israel using military and terrorist means while frequently calling for the complete annihilation of Israel in their propaganda. One of their commonly used slogans of propaganda is: “Palestine will be free, from the river to the sea!” These words refer to the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea, implying that there is no space available for the State of Israel and thus denying its right to exist.



While other Islamist extremist groups do not consider the State of Israel their main enemy, they still have a very hostile attitude towards the country. Besides, they show a stronger tendency towards viewing the Middle-East conflict as part of a

general global conflict between Muslims and the rest of the world (believers/nonbelievers). A statement made by the Islamist terrorist who killed several people in a kosher supermarket in Paris in January 2015 is a characteristic example of this. When asked why he had chosen that particular supermarket, he answered:

The Jews! Because of their oppression, mainly of Islamic State, but also anywhere else. It is for all areas where Muslims are being oppressed. Which includes Palestine!¹⁰



Several people were killed in a kosher supermarket in Paris in January 2015.

10 As stated by the perpetrator in his telephone call with the TV station BFMTV, www.focus.de/politik/ausland/coulibalys-gespraech-mit-franzoesischen-sender-das-sagte-der-geiselnehmer-von-paris-am-telefon_id_4394491.html (accessed on 3 September 2018).



A characteristic all Islamist extremist organisations have in common is that they hardly make any distinction between the State of Israel and the Jewish people, neither in terms of language nor in terms of content. They often transfer centuries-old antisemitic stereotypes to the contemporary State of Israel. A common example is the so-called blood libel, which has its roots in the Christian Middle Ages. It accuses the Jews of baking unleavened flatbread (matzo) using the blood of Christian children during the preparations of the Passover festival¹¹. The motif of the child-slaughtering Jew became a central element of anti-Israeli agitation after the 2014 Gaza war, which saw many civilians – including children – killed by Israel’s attacks. Both the slogan “child murderer Israel” used in

11 The Passover festival celebrates the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt.

many demonstrations and the sometimes excessive display of dead children in anti-Israeli propaganda material fit into that context.

6 Antisemitism within Islamist extremist organisations and movements

A description of Islamist extremist organisations and movements can be found below, including examples illustrating the antisemitic attitude they display in Germany.

6.1 Muslim Brotherhood (MB)



Founded by Hasan al-Bannā in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood is considered the oldest and most influential Sunni¹² movement in Islamist extremism. According to its own statements, it exists in more than 70 countries in various forms. Through missionary work (“da’wa”) in these countries, MB strives to win a majority of each society over to its conservative interpretation of Islam. Its declared (overall) aim is to establish Islamist extremist political systems based on sharia.

Qutb’s essay entitled “Our Struggle with the Jews” continues to shape MB’s antisemitic attitude to this day. In May 2017, for instance, MB’s official leadership published a press release stating that the active resistance against Israel and the support for HAMAS were justified until “the entire Islamic land has been liberated from the Zionist occupying forces”¹³.

12 Approx. 85 per cent of all Muslims in the world are Sunnites. They form the majority of Muslims in most Islamic countries. Their conviction is that the successor to Muhammad does not necessarily have to be one of his relatives, but that he has to be chosen according to political, religious, and military skill. Approx. 12 to 15 per cent of all Muslims are Shias. They make up the majority of the populations of Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, and Azerbaijan. Shias consider Ali – Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law – and his descendants the only legitimate successors to Muhammad. Besides Sunnites and Shias, there are several other smaller groups such as the Alevis.

13 Press release of 8 May 2017 available on the MB website http://ikhwanonline.com/official_statements/229838/Default.aspx (accessed on 3 September 2018).

Sharia

Today, the term “sharia” is understood as the “Islamic law”, i.e. the regulations, duties and prohibitions that are binding to each believer or to the communion of the faithful. They range from rules for ritual practices (performing ablutions before a prayer, for example) to penal or even state regulations. Sharia is the basis of a jurisdiction influenced by religion in more than 50 Islamic countries. The European Court of Human Rights, however, has found sharia to be “incompatible with the fundamental principles of democracy”.

In Germany the Deutsche Muslimische Gemeinschaft ((DMG) “German Muslim Community”; formerly called the Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland (IGD)) is considered the central and most important organisation of MB followers. One of its major goals is to present itself as a respectable, moderate contact for politicians, authorities and social associations. Although official leaders avoid making antisemitic statements so as not to jeopardise this goal, such remarks by German MB followers can be determined time and again. In September 2017, for instance, a pro-MB board member of a local Islamic community in Northern Germany posted a video on his private Facebook page of a group of children singing an Arabic song, the text of which denounces Jews and encourages children to engage in jihad against Israel.

In December 2017 the imam of a pro-MB community in Eastern Germany held a sermon closing with the following words of prayer: “We pray for Jerusalem as the capital of the Muslims and for its liberation from the hands of the Jews!”

6.2 HAMAS



HAMAS was founded in the Gaza Strip at the start of the first Palestinian intifada (“uprising”) beginning in 1987. Seeing itself as the Palestinian arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, its aim is to establish a Palestinian Islamic state stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the River Jordan, which would result in the end of the State of Israel. In addition to acting politically, HAMAS also carries out violent activities against Israeli institutions. Its argumentation combines religious, national and territorial motives.



The first intifada broke out in 1987.

The antisemitic attitude of HAMAS was already laid down in its founding charter, which includes statements such as the following: “In their Nazi treatment, the Jews made no exception for women or children. Their policy of striking fear in the heart is meant for all. They attack people where their

breadwinning is concerned, extorting their money and threatening their honour.”¹⁴ The charter also claims that Jews endeavour to control international media, founding “secret societies [...] in different parts of the world for the purpose of sabotaging societies and achieving Zionist interests”¹⁵.

The “new” HAMAS charter published in February 2017, while managing without the traditional forms of antisemitic propaganda found in the original charter, contains paragraphs with a clearly anti-Israeli stance. It also continues to call for violence.

In Germany HAMAS has not staged any acts of violence so far. The organisation mainly endeavours to attract new followers among the Palestinians living here and to collect donations. Still, it engages in spreading its antisemitic and anti-Israeli ideas in Germany too. HAMAS followers and sympathisers holding a demonstration in November 2015, for example, chanted slogans such as “mass murderer Israel”, “terror state Israel” and “child murderer Israel”.

6.3 Hezbollah



The Shia Hezbollah was founded in 1982 during the Lebanon War on the initiative of the leader of the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini. Starting as a guerrilla movement fighting against Israel’s occupation of South Lebanon, Hezbollah began a violent terrorist struggle against Israel after the end of the occupation in 1985. Inspired by the ideological and religious model of Iran, the organisation at the same time promoted the “Islamic Revolution” and the worldwide spreading of Islam.

¹⁴ Article 20 of the HAMAS charter, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp (accessed on 26 February 2020). The clearly antisemitic orientation of the text is also reflected in the fact that its authors deliberately employ the term “Jews” instead of the possible alternatives “Israelis” or “Zionists”.

¹⁵ Ibid., article 22.



Graffiti showing the leader of the Iranian Revolution Ayatollah Khomeini.



View of the newsroom of the television station "al-Manar TV".

Similar to HAMAS, Hezbollah also uses antisemitic statements – in the sense of hatred against all Jews – to support its line of argument against Israel. Referring to the Koran, they frequently describe Jews as devious and dangerous enemies of Islam. The content of the Arabic-language pro-Hezbollah TV station “al-Manar TV”, which openly calls for the destruction of the State of Israel, is a particularly clear example of this. Consequently, on 29 October 2008, the Federal Ministry of the Interior imposed a ban on “al-Manar TV” in Germany. Since then, its programmes may no longer be shown in public buildings in Germany (hotels, cafés, restaurants, clubhouses etc.). However, since “al-Manar TV” is broadcast via an Egyptian satellite, its antisemitic content can still be viewed on private television sets.

Antisemitic incidents also regularly occur in the course of the annual al-Quds Day¹⁶ demonstrations attended by Hezbollah activists and sympathisers.

In July 2017 a group of people hoisted a Hezbollah flag in Berlin. When police officers tried to stop them, one of them shouted: “These bloody Jews are killing our children and we are not even allowed to show our flag! Damn those nasty Jews!”

Hezbollah also uses social media to spread its antisemitic ideas. Various speeches with strong antisemitic content delivered by Hezbollah’s secretary general Hassan Nasrallah in particular can be found on the Internet. One of those speeches was shared as a video entitled “Write with blood, death to Israel” in December 2017.

¹⁶ The al-Quds Day celebrations have taken place every year on the last Friday of Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting, since 1979. Initiated by the leader of the Iranian Revolution Ayatollah Khomeini, its purpose is to remind all Muslims of their moral duty of liberating Jerusalem (Arabic: al-Quds) from the “Zionist occupying forces”. Every year on al-Quds Day, a central demonstration with hundreds of participants is held in Berlin. Antisemitic incidents have repeatedly taken place throughout Germany in connection with the al-Quds Day celebrations.

6.4 Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT)



HuT was founded in Jerusalem in 1953 by Taqiaddin al-Nabhani, whose principal work, “The System of Islam” (“Nizam al-Islam”), serves as the organisation’s ideological basis still today. HuT’s aim is to unite the Muslim community in a worldwide caliphate with an Islamic legal system. HuT considers Islam and democracy to be incompatible, thus rejecting secular state systems and asserting they must be fought against.

Before being banned, HuT used leaflets, a magazine of its own and the Internet to promote antisemitic views in Germany and to call for the destruction of Israel. Its propaganda called the State of Israel “a crime against humanity”¹⁷ that had to be wiped out. The Jews were referred to as “the lowest part of God’s creation on earth”¹⁸. Because of its aggressive statements and its ideology directed against the concept of international understanding, the Federal Ministry of the Interior imposed a ban on HuT’s activity in Germany in 2003. While the party has no longer displayed any public activity since that time, the people associated with HuT continue to pursue their activities underground and especially via social media. They strive to spread the party’s radical ideology and its antisemitic ideas among young people, including among refugees in Germany.

6.5 Millî Görüş movement

Founded by the Turkish politician Necmettin Erbakan, this political religious movement attaches great importance to the terms “millî görüş” (“national vision”) and “adil düzen” (“just order”). The followers of this movement consider to be “just” any order that is based on “divine revelation”. By contrast, they reject as “invalid” any order made by man. They claim that these “invalid” systems have to be replaced by a “just order”

17 “50 Jahre – Happy Birthday Israel” (“50 years – Happy Birthday Israel”), in: “Explizit”, no. 5, April to June 1998.

18 Leaflet entitled “Offener Brief der HuT an die arabischen Herrscher, die am Gipfelkongress in Kairo teilnehmen” (“Open letter of HuT to the Arab rulers attending the summit in Cairo”) dated 19 October 2000.

exclusively based on Islamic principles instead of adhering to rules made by man and therefore regarded as “arbitrary”. The primary aims pursued by the Millî Görüş movement are the creation of a “new great Turkey” and the establishment of an Islamic social order. The latter is not only demanded for Turkey, but for the whole world, which is why Western democracies are rejected.

While Millî Görüş strives to achieve its aims without violence, antisemitic statements have been an integral part of the movement from the start. One of Erbakan’s texts, “The Just Economic System”, already supported the thesis of “Zionists” controlling “Imperialism” and exploiting all mankind with the help of the capitalist concept of interest.¹⁹

More antisemitic statements can be found up to present times in printed material published by the Millî Görüş movement, especially in the daily paper “Millî Gazete”, whose antisemitic self-concept can be seen i.a. from a column published in August 2015 entitled “To write for Millî Gazete means to oppose the world domination of the Zionist ideology!”

Recurrent antisemitic statements have also been determined from among the political party “Saadet Partisi” (SP), which belongs to the Millî Görüş movement and which has had a representation in Germany since 2013. In October 2015, for instance, a supporter of SP posted a picture entitled “How Zionism works...” showing an octopus wearing a black hat with a white Star of David and a map. One of the tentacles holds a group of Muslim women prisoner on the Arabian Peninsula, another digs itself into the ground, coming up again on Turkish territory bearing the inscription “PKK”²⁰.

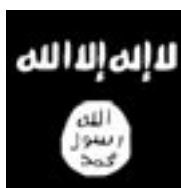
19 See Erbakan, Necmettin: “Gerechte Wirtschaftsordnung” (“The Just Economic System”) (German edition), Ankara, 1991.

20 The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) was founded by Abdullah Öcalan in Turkey in 1978. It originally aimed at establishing an independent Kurdish state with a socialist orientation. On 22 November 1993, after several waves of violent action undertaken by PKK, the Federal Minister of the Interior imposed a ban on the organisation’s activity in Germany.



In July 2017 an association based in East Westphalia belonging to the Millî Görüş movement shared a Facebook post quoting the following verses by the poet Necip Fâzıl Kısakürek: “Collapse, Israel. I want to see your ruins. I spit in the faces of those who call you a country.”

6.6 Islamic State (IS)



Founded as a part of the worldwide al-Qaeda network²¹ in late 2003, IS adopted a central role in the Syrian civil war in the course of 2013, conquering areas in northern Iraq in early 2014. IS proclaimed the “caliphate” on 29 June 2014, which attracted thousands of jihadists from all over the world. In the name of “true” Islam, IS subjugated the population in Syria and in northern Iraq and committed a large number of terrorist attacks in Western countries. Despite the almost complete military defeat the organisation suffered in 2017, IS and the lone actors and small groups it inspires or controls still pose a major terrorist threat.

IS also strives to destroy the State of Israel and the entire Jewish people, a goal regularly found in the organisation’s propaganda. The second edition of the IS magazine “Dabiq”, for instance, states as follows: “It is only a matter of time before it [author’s note: IS] will reach Palestine to fight the barbaric Jews and to kill those who hide behind the ‘Gharqad’ trees, the trees of the Jews.”

When IS reinforced its positions on the Sinai Peninsula in 2016, a series of propaganda videos portrayed this as a step towards the “liberation of Jerusalem”. The hostile stereotypes of “Israel” and the “Jews” are closely intertwined, which is why jihadist groups consider them particularly suitable for mobilising their followers. Consequently, these stereotypes have been continuously present in jihadist propaganda.

21 After 9/11, the global terrorist network al-Qaeda, which had been founded by Usama Bin Ladin, was considered the most important jihadist group in the world. Even after Bin Ladin’s death in 2011 and despite the fierce rivalry with IS, al-Qaeda still strives to stage “large” attacks that are likely to draw a lot of media attention. Besides, al-Qaeda – just like IS – calls upon lone perpetrators or small groups having no formal links to the organisation to stage attacks without prior agreement.

6.7 Salafism

Deriving from the Arabic word “Salafiyya”, the term “Salafism” can be translated as “following the pious predecessors”. The term “Salaf” means “ancestor”.

Salafists claim that their entire way of thinking and acting exclusively follows a literal understanding of the Koran and the Sunna²² as well as the example of the companions of the prophet and the first three generations that came after him. As a result, they reject not only any democratic orders, but also the subsequent historical development of Islam and its interpretation by Muslim legal schools. Stressing their alleged exclusiveness, Salafists think of themselves as the only “true” believers. Among its followers, their extreme ideas often lead to radicalisation and an approval of violence towards supposed nonbelievers.²³ Consequently, there is no clear-cut dividing line between political and jihadist Salafism.

Salafism sees itself as a deliberate counter-concept to Western societies and their values, which also shows in Salafists’ clothing and in the language they use. At the same time, Salafism is a product of our Western society. Salafism thus is the first “homegrown Islamist extremism”, which has been profoundly shaped by the Salafists living here and which – unlike the “established” Islamist extremist organisations – does not have to take into account any traditions followed in the respective countries of origin.²⁴ That is one of the reasons why Salafism continues to attract large numbers of people in Germany. The Salafist scene currently comprises more than 11,000 individuals²⁵.

22 “Sunna” is the short form of the Arabic expression “sunnat an-nabi”, which means “way of the prophet”. Muhammad’s actions serve as an example to every devout Muslim, especially in situations of their lives where no specific rule exists in the Koran. In addition to the Koran, the Sunna is the second source of Islamic law.

23 Almost all of the individuals having left Germany over the last few years to take part in the jihad fought by IS had previously maintained direct contact with the Salafist scene.

24 See Ceylan, Rauf/Kiefer, Michael: “Salafismus: Fundamentalistische Strömungen und Radikalisierungsprävention” (“Salafism: Fundamentalist currents and radicalisation prevention”), Wiesbaden, 2013.

25 Date of information: June 2018.



Rally held by a Salafist preacher.

In addition to Shias, atheists and converts who had previously professed the Muslim faith, the hostile stereotype of the Jews and/or the State of Israel is a central element within the German Salafist scene too. This is particularly evident on the Internet, which Salafists use to spread antisemitic propaganda on websites, Facebook profiles and WhatsApp groups. One example of this is the association Islamische Audios (“Islamic audio files”), which the Federal Ministry of the Interior banned in 2013 and which had used the Internet to publish numerous pictures and statements such as “Nazi & Israel: same shit, different asshole”. Another example is a Salafist group’s post of a picture showing Adolf Hitler with the text “There will be a time when you will swear at me for every Jew still alive because I did not have all of them wiped out”.

In public, Salafist preachers pretend to be moderate and usually avoid any antisemitic statements that may give reason to criminal prosecution. Still, time and again there are exceptions to this rule, such as the following statement made by an itinerant preacher in a Berlin mosque in summer 2014: “Oh Allah, call these Zionist Jews to account, they can do nothing against you. Count them, kill them all, and do not spare even one of them!”

7 Conclusion: Prevalence of Islamist extremist antisemitism in Germany

To get an idea of the extent and of the various forms antisemitic propaganda and events can take in the German Islamist extremist spectrum, BfV since late 2015 has been registering any antisemitic incidents with a potential Islamist extremist background that the domestic intelligence services of the Federation and the federal states learn of in the course of their work. One of the registration requirements is that the incident caused harm to people or institutions clearly belonging to the Jewish religious community. Additionally, there at least has to be the suspicion that the author of the incident supports Islamist extremist ideas and that this fact was decisive for the incident to occur in the first place.

The figures so far recorded show that antisemitic incidents with an Islamist extremist background are unfortunately not uncommon in Germany. Between January and December 2017 alone, more than 100 incidents were registered, ranging from anti-Zionist sermons to antisemitic graffiti and verbal or physical attacks on individuals – which probably is just the tip of the iceberg.

While only a few violent acts have been registered so far, even those isolated cases show that ideological radicalisation and incitement to hatred and violence through antisemitic ideas provide fertile soil for violent escalation.

Another fact worth pointing out is that many incidents were caused by individuals who had not previously had any connection with organised Islamist extremism. In Berlin in April 2016, for example, two men of Arab ethnicity approached a woman about her wearing a pendant in the shape of Israel. The two men then insult her with, among others, the following words: “You damn Jews! You are the scum of the earth.” In December 2017, an Arab high-school graduate in Berlin

attacked a Jewish schoolmate with the following words: “You are child murderers, you ought to have your heads cut off!”. Still in December 2017, two unknown individuals attacked a synagogue in North Rhine-Westphalia, shouting insults to the staff: “Al-Quds is ours! Clear off, you sons of a bitch!”

Such incidents suggest that the antisemitic ideas spread by Islamist extremists can increasingly be found among Muslim groups even outside of Islamist extremist organisations. It remains to be seen whether that tendency will become a permanent phenomenon.

Regardless of the future development, however, it can be said that the antisemitic ideas spread by Islamist extremist groups and individuals already are a serious challenge to peaceful and tolerant co-existence in Germany. The next years will require an increasing proactive examination of such ideas, not least against the background of the efforts to successfully integrate Muslim migrants and refugees into society.



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Public Relations (Öffentlichkeitsarbeit)
Merianstraße 100
50765 Cologne
oeffentlichkeitsarbeit@bfv.bund.de
www.verfassungsschutz.de
Phone: +49(0)228-99/792-0
Fax: +49(0)228-99/10-792-2915

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