



## **Antisemitism Workshop Using Statements**

### **Lesson Plan**

Ages: **High school students**

Duration: **1.5 hours**

- **Introduction**
- **Materials and Instructions**
- **Statement 1: "The wave of antisemitism throughout..."**
- **Statement 2: "Freedom of expression is a paramount..."**
- **Statement 3: "The best way to deal with antisemitism..."**
- **Statement 4: "Every person in the world is obliged..."**
- **Statement 5: "Preserving the memory of the Holocaust..."**
- **Statement 6: "In a place where there are no Jews..."**
- **Statement 7: "Those who view Holocaust denial..."**
- **Statement 8: "Minorities in European countries..."**
- **Statement 9: "The strengthening of the radical Right..."**
- **Statement 10: "Any criticism of the State of Israel..."**

To view or print a worksheet with all the statements, [click here](#).

### **Introduction**

The paragraph below is taken from a manifesto that was publicized by Holocaust survivors at the conclusion of the international conference sponsored by Yad Vashem (in 2002) on "Legacy of Holocaust Survivors – Moral and Ethical Effects on Humanity:"

"Antisemitism and all other forms of racism present a danger not only to Jews but also to the community of nations. These days the 'new antisemitism' is directed simultaneously against Jews, against Israel and against Zionism. By equating these terms the danger for Jews as a whole is exacerbated. This phenomenon is also common in propaganda emanating from the Arab world. The Holocaust showed the world the extent of the destructive power of antisemitism and racism. Holocaust denial, as well as minimization and banalization of the Holocaust provide a means of avoiding the evident conclusions and learning the lessons for the future. We, the survivors, call upon the world to wipe out these phenomena and to combat them relentlessly."

In these words, Holocaust survivors who have had firsthand experience with the destructive power of antisemitism in its most extreme form, turn to us, the post-Holocaust generations, with a plea to battle this



scourge. The first step in the struggle against antisemitism lies in recognizing its different manifestations. This workshop illuminates different aspects of antisemitism.

The workshop is designed for high school students and can be transmitted both in formal as well as in informal settings. We recommend presenting the activity in groups of about thirty students for about an hour and a half. However, it is also effective in smaller groups and for shorter time periods.

The workshop is based on ten statements related to antisemitism. Each statement relates to a different topic and is meant to stimulate discussion on different current issues. The facilitator is given a variety of sources that contain pertinent information on the issues or discussion. The role of the facilitator is to direct the discussion in such a way that each participant will be able to express an opinion. At the same time, the facilitator must ensure that the discussion will touch upon all the aspects of the workshop's issues either by expressing a contrasting opinion to the one raised by the participants or by introducing new information.

We recommend that you conclude the workshop by reading the survivor manifesto passage above, or other relevant passages, in order to galvanize commitment to the issues raised.

## Materials and Instructions

Materials needed for this workshop: a) copies of a **page of statements** (those below) to be distributed by the facilitator to the students, and b) internet access to view the **appropriate sources** (web links included below) for use of the facilitator. The sources display different approaches and factual information relating to the issues under discussion. These are meant to enrich the discussion and give the facilitator the tools to broaden horizons and viewpoints.

A list of the quotes, suitable for distribution, is ready to print [here](#).

### Three Stages of the Activity:

1. This activity is based on a list of ten statements, each of which is formulated as a factual declaration. The list will be distributed by the facilitator to the students who will then be asked to form initial opinions and decide if they agree or disagree with each respective statement.
2. The second stage is optional: After each student privately forms an initial opinion, the participants are divided into groups in which they discuss the statements. Each group selects one statement that everyone in the group agrees with, and one statement that they all disagree with. At the end of this optional stage, each group presents the statements that they chose and defends them.
3. A discussion is carried out with the entire group and the main points are summarized.



### Statement 1:

***“The wave of antisemitism throughout the world today, which many people equate with the antisemitism that preceded the Holocaust, proves that history is repeating itself.”***

#### Discussion Topics

- Is contemporary antisemitism “new antisemitism?” Are there differences between “new,” or post-Holocaust antisemitism and the antisemitism that reached its height in the Thirties and Forties? Make sure to bring up new elements of current antisemitism such as anti-Zionism, as well as old elements that have characterized antisemitism in the past such as the portrayal of the Jew as the source of all evil.
- What are the differences between the position of Jews today and their status before the Holocaust? (Existence of the State of Israel as well as the existence of institutions today that preserve the memory of the Holocaust and its significance)

#### Source

- Dr. Robert Rozett, “What’s new about new antisemitism,” Yad Vashem.

### Statement 2:

***“Freedom of expression is a paramount value that must be preserved at all costs. Therefore, the United States has deemed Holocaust Denial not to be a criminal offense (such as on the Internet), as opposed to Germany where it is an offense. The American approach is the correct one.”***

#### Discussion Topics

- Explore the principle of freedom of expression. What is the thin line that separates freedom of expression from incitement?
- The media in general and the Internet, in particular, are tools for disseminating antisemitic propaganda on the one hand, and tools for fighting propaganda, on the other.

#### Sources



- Werner Bergmann, Juliane Wetzel, *Manifestations of antisemitism in European Union – Synthesis Report*, EUMC, Vienna 2003, pp.
- "What is the role of the media in the current rise in antisemitism?", Yad Vashem Website.
- David S. Hoffman, "What has the web to offer? What can be done?", *The Web of Hate: Extremists Exploit the Internet*, A publication of the Anti-Defamation League, 1996, pp. 33-35.
- David S. Hoffman, "Universities and the Web: To Control or Not Control", *The Web of Hate: Extremists Exploit the Internet*, A publication of the Anti-Defamation League, 1997, pp. 11-19.

### Statement 3:

***"The best way to deal with antisemitism is to ignore it."***

#### Discussion Topics

- Present the two main approaches: The first is to avoid dealing with the phenomenon of antisemitism by simply ignoring it. This corresponds to the innate human "ostrich approach" of hoping that troubles will go away on their own, but is supported by those who feel that struggling vigorously against antisemitism provides a forum for antisemitic opinions and thus achieves the opposite result. The second approach, however, holds that it is our duty to fight antisemitism and that the accumulated experience of the last generations has shown that the passive approach has not been productive and that we must relate to antisemitism with great importance.
- Is there any point in waging a battle for public opinion in our attempts to minimize antisemitism? Should non-Jewish support be mobilized as well?
- How can we fight antisemitism? What should be the role of the State of Israel in this struggle?

#### Sources

- Dr. Robert Rozett, "Swept Under the Rug: The Deeper Threat of Antisemitism," Yad Vashem.
- Michael Malchior: The Israeli Government, Holocaust Issues and Antisemitism, *Europe's Crumbling Myths: The Post-Holocaust Origins of Today's Antisemitism*, Manfred Gerstenfeld, Ben-Zvi Printing Enterprises, Jerusalem 2003, pp.146-154 (mainly p. 151).



#### **Statement 4:**

***“Every person in the world is obliged to learn about antisemitism.”***

#### **Discussion Topics**

- Should we study and deal with the issue of antisemitism and if so, why?
- Does delving into the sensitive issue of antisemitism serve to perpetuate the identity of the Jew as victim?
- Should only Jews confront the issue of antisemitism, or all human beings? What are the universal consequences of antisemitism? (Antisemitism begins with Jews but does not end with them).

#### **Source**

- Per Ahlmark, "Combatting Old/New Antisemitism," Yad Vashem Website.

#### **Statement 5:**

***“Preserving the memory of the Holocaust serves to protect us from the propagation of antisemitism.”***

#### **Discussion Topics**

- The Holocaust serves the contemporary world as a sort of litmus test for educating towards democracy and preservation of human rights. But the central role held by the Holocaust in world consciousness also has a down side. Excessive emphasis on the Holocaust arouses opposition to the issue and hatred of the Jews, and has even become a tool in the hands of the new antisemites. For example, the new antisemitism compares the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the policies of Nazi Germany towards the Jews.
- This is the opportunity to make it clear that there is no room for comparison between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Holocaust.

#### **Source**



- Why can't the Israeli-Palestinian conflict be compared to the Holocaust? - Yad Vashem Website.

### Statement 6:

***“In a place where there are no Jews, there cannot be antisemitism.”***

#### Discussion Topics

- Can someone hate a person he or she has never met? Is it possible to develop negative feelings towards Jews in a place devoid of Jews? Ostensibly this would seem to be impossible, but reality teaches us otherwise.
- Relate to a number of places devoid of Jews, and identify the factors that led to antisemitism in each location: guilt, greed (in places that were forced to pay reparations to Jews), religion (traditional antisemitism) and more.
- What can we learn about antisemitism, from its existence in places without Jews?

#### Source

- Manfred Gerstenfeld, *Europe's Crumbling Myths: The Post-Holocaust Origins of Today's Antisemitism*, Ben-Zvi Printing Enterprises, Jerusalem 2003, pp. 62,63, 68,69.

### Statement 7:

***“Those who view Holocaust Denial as dangerous are only exaggerating.”***

#### Discussion Topics

- What is the difference between Holocaust Denial and racism in general, and antisemitism in particular?
- What importance is there in perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust? Is it important only because of an obligation towards its victims, or does it have moral significance for the entire human race because of possible ramifications for the future? In view of this, what is the significance of



wiping out the memory of the Holocaust?

#### Sources

- David S. Hoffman, "What has the web to offer? What can be done?", *The Web of Hate: Extremists Exploit the Internet*, a publication of the Anti-Defamation League, 1996, pp. 33-35.
- David S. Hoffman, "Universities and the Web: To Control or Not Control", *The Web of Hate: Extremists Exploit the Internet*, a publication of the Anti-Defamation League, 1997, pp. 11-19.
- "Our Living Legacy," as published at the end of the international conference "The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors – The Moral and Ethical Implications for Humanity," Yad Vashem Website.

#### Statement 8:

***"Minorities in European countries do not have to be concerned with antisemitism in their countries."***

#### Discussion Topics

- What are the differences between racism, xenophobia (fear of foreigners), and antisemitism? Can antisemitism exist without xenophobia? Can xenophobia exist without antisemitism?
- The Jewish nation has experienced, and continues to experience, bitter and senseless hatred. Does this impose a moral obligation on the Jewish nation towards other besieged minorities?

#### Sources

- Manifestations of antisemitism in European Union – Synthesis Report (p.67).
- Statement by Rabbi Michael Melchior in Durban – September 3, 2001.
- "Our Living Legacy," as published at the end of the international conference "The Legacy of Holocaust Survivors – The Moral and Ethical Implications for Humanity," Yad Vashem Website.

#### Statement 9:

***"The strengthening of the radical Right in Europe shows that Europe has failed to draw conclusions from the Holocaust and implement them."***



### Discussion Topics

- How much influence does the extreme left have on antisemitism today, and how much influence does the extreme right have? What characterizes the arguments of each side?
- Has the world really drawn appropriate conclusions from the Holocaust? What are these conclusions? How do we know that these lessons have been learned?
- How do we understand or interpret the strengthening of the radical Right in Europe? How do we understand the fact that genocidal episodes have been carried out after the Holocaust?

### Statement 10:

***“Any criticism of the State of Israel today is antisemitic.”***

### Discussion Topics

- What are the differences between antisemitism and anti-Zionism? How can one discriminate between legitimate criticism of Israel, and antisemitic arguments that are cloaked in legitimate criticism?
- Is the entire world antisemitic and anti-Israel, as some Jews feel? Make sure to discuss antisemitism in its true context and present it in its true dimensions.

### Source

- "Is all criticism of Israel antisemitic?," Yad Vashem Website.
- Robert Wistrich, "Anti-Zionism as an expression of antisemitism in recent years," *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World*, Houndmills Hampshire: Macmillan, 1990.

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