



The Learning Guides

Nineteen plain-language references on symbols and codes, movements and ideologies, conspiracy claims and denial, and the historical record.

learn.wiesenthal.org



About this reference

These nineteen guides are plain-language references from the Simon Wiesenthal Center: what a symbol, number, movement or claim means, where it came from, how it is used now, and what context changes the reading. They are written for teachers, journalists, parents, campus staff, and anyone who has encountered something and wants an accurate answer rather than a guess.

A theme runs through all of them. A symbol, a number, or a phrase identifies a reference, not a person's belief or intent. Each guide is therefore as clear about what the evidence cannot establish as about what it can. The current version of every guide is published at learn.wiesenthal.org.

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PART 1 | 1 GUIDE

Jewish History and Heritage

Jewish History, Heritage, and the Enduring Connection to Israel

JEWISH HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Jewish History, Heritage, and the Enduring Connection to Israel

Jewish history spans thousands of years and many regions, languages, and traditions. This guide introduces that diversity and the continuing religious, cultural, and historical connection to the Land of Israel.

What does Jewish heritage include?

Jewish heritage includes religion, law, language, literature, music, food, family practice, communal institutions, memory, and ties to places across the world. Shared texts and history connect traditions that otherwise developed very differently.

The connection to the Land of Israel appears in ancient history, sacred texts, daily prayer, the calendar, pilgrimage, language, and continuous Jewish presence in the region.

Communities with distinct histories

Jewish communities developed under very different conditions. They produced distinct liturgies, languages, legal traditions, cuisines, and music while continuing to share core texts and a common calendar.

- Ashkenazi
- Sephardi
- Mizrahi
- Ethiopian
- Indian and Central Asian

A connection recorded in practice, not only sentiment

The relationship to the land is embedded in ordinary religious practice, not only stated as a political position. Prayer is oriented toward Jerusalem, festivals follow an agricultural calendar tied to the region, and liturgy returns to the land repeatedly.

This is why the connection persisted through centuries in which no political project existed. It was structural to the practice rather than dependent on circumstance.

Presence that continued and status that changed

Jewish communities remained in the region across every subsequent period, in Jerusalem, Safed, Hebron, Tiberias, and elsewhere, under a succession of rulers and with widely varying legal status.

Population size changed considerably over time. Continuous presence and continuous political power are different questions, and this section addresses only the first in the historical record.

Zionism contains many arguments

Zionism describes support for Jewish national life in the ancestral homeland, and it has always contained secular, religious, socialist, liberal, and conservative currents that disagreed with each other sharply.

Jewish communities have debated it continuously, including opposition on religious and political grounds. Treating it as a single fixed position misdescribes both the history and the present.

Reading claims about this history

Claims about Jewish history circulate widely in political debate, often with confident citations that do not hold up once the underlying source is checked carefully.

- Check the period
- Separate presence from sovereignty
- Find the primary source
- Identify the communities
- Question single-story accounts

Where erasure differs from criticism

Criticism of a government or policy is ordinary political speech. Erasure makes a different claim: that Jews have no historical connection to the region or are foreign to a place where Jewish communities have lived continuously.

The first is an argument about the present. The second is a claim about the documentary record, which can be tested against evidence from multiple periods.

Why specificity is the safeguard

Much of the distortion around this history depends on flattening it, reducing a varied population to one race, nationality, politics, or single story for modern argument.

Specific detail is the correction. A history that names periods, communities, and disagreements is much harder to turn into a stereotype or political shorthand in public life.



PART 2 | 4 GUIDES

The Historical Record

Holocaust History and Reference, Key Facts and Context

Nazi Hunters and Simon Wiesenthal's Legacy

Nazi Prosecutions and the Ongoing Pursuit of Justice

Nazi Ratlines, Escape Routes, and the Pursuit of Accountability

THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Holocaust History and Reference, Key Facts and Context

This guide offers a clear framework for the Holocaust, the systematic persecution and murder of six million Jews by Nazi Germany, its allies, and collaborators, with links to reliable historical resources.

What was the Holocaust?

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million European Jews by Nazi Germany, its allies, and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945.

Millions of others were persecuted and killed under Nazi rule. The genocide developed in stages, through exclusion, propaganda, theft, forced displacement, ghettos, mass shootings, deportation, forced labor, and purpose-built killing centers.

A chronology in five stages

Treating the period as one event hides how it developed. Each stage made the next easier, and ordinary institutions carried out much of the administrative work.

- Exclusion by law
- Organized violence
- Ghettos and mass shooting
- Deportation and killing centers
- Death marches and liberation

Exclusion came before killing

The first years were legal and bureaucratic. The regime stripped citizenship, closed professions, seized property, and criminalized social contact through published statutes administered by civil servants.

By the time deportations began, the targeted population had already been isolated, impoverished, and registered. That administrative groundwork made the later stages possible on such a large scale.

Evidence that documents the genocide

The record is unusually large because the perpetrators were bureaucrats who wrote things down, and because survivors, liberators, and courts assembled material for decades afterward.

- German state records
- Ghetto and camp documentation
- Survivor testimony
- Perpetrator statements
- Physical sites and forensics

Who was targeted and on what terms

Jews were targeted for total annihilation across every territory the regime reached, which is what defines the Holocaust specifically. Roma and Sinti were also subjected to genocidal policy.

Disabled people, Soviet prisoners of war, Polish civilians, political opponents, Jehovah's Witnesses, and gay men were persecuted and murdered under distinct programs with distinct logics.

Where the figures come from

The six million estimate draws on prewar and postwar census data, deportation and transport records, and the reconstruction of destroyed Jewish communities across Europe after the war.

Some regions have ranges because records were destroyed or never created. That is normal historical practice and does not put the overall scale in question.

Where to begin studying it

Institutional collections are the best starting point because they provide provenance, dates, and curation that an isolated document or image cannot supply on its own.

- National memorial museums
- Testimony archives
- Digitized document collections
- Trial transcripts
- Curated survivor accounts

Why reference material still changes

Archives continue to open, and researchers are still surveying camps and shooting sites while refining regional death tolls with newly available records and local documentation.

That kind of revision is normal historical work. It refines detail within the established record rather than arguing against the event itself or its scale.

THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Nazi Hunters and Simon Wiesenthal's Legacy

Nazi hunters gathered documents, traced fugitives, and pressed governments to act long after official interest faded. This guide explains that work and the legacy Simon Wiesenthal left behind.

What did Nazi hunters do?

Nazi hunters were survivors, investigators, journalists, lawyers, prosecutors, and volunteers who worked to identify and locate perpetrators and collaborators after the war, largely without official standing.

Simon Wiesenthal became the best known figure in that work. From an office in Vienna he gathered information, answered inquiries, and kept unresolved cases in public view for decades.

From survivor to investigator

Wiesenthal survived several camps and began assembling names soon after liberation, first for Allied war-crimes investigators and later on his own as official interest faded.

- Survival and liberation
- Early evidence gathering
- Independent documentation centre
- Decades of case files
- Public advocacy

What a private investigator could do that states would not

Governments lost interest in many cases long before the work was finished. Private investigators had no arrest powers and limited resources, but they were not tied to a political calendar or a prosecutor's changing priorities.

Persistence was the advantage. A file could remain open for thirty years, far longer than most prosecutors' offices were built to sustain at that time.

The materials the work depended on

The work was mostly clerical rather than glamorous. Investigators cross-referenced scattered sources until a name, date, and location aligned well enough to hand the file to an authority.

- Survivor accounts
- Public and civil records
- Press archives
- Correspondence networks
- Trial documents

Limits and later corrections

Nazi hunters could not make arrests. Their work ended with a file handed to a government that might act, ignore it, or misplace it, and refusal was common.

Historians have questioned or revised some accounts of individual cases, including details in Wiesenthal's own telling. Acknowledging those corrections strengthens the documented record rather than diminishing it.

What the method leaves behind

The individual cases mattered, but the method also endured. Long-term recordkeeping and corroboration are now familiar tools in human-rights documentation, even when the investigators have no power to prosecute.

- Keep files open indefinitely
- Corroborate before naming
- Publish to create pressure
- Treat refusal as temporary
- Preserve everything gathered

Why the work continued after the trials ended

As prosecutions became less likely, the record itself took on greater importance. Establishing what a person did and making it public remained possible after a courtroom outcome no longer was.

That is why the files still matter. They preserve conduct no court ever examined and evidence that might otherwise have disappeared from the historical record.

THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Nazi Prosecutions and the Ongoing Pursuit of Justice

Postwar trials established a legal record of Nazi crimes, but many perpetrators were never prosecuted. This guide covers the major proceedings, the limits of postwar justice, and cases brought decades later.

How were Nazi war criminals prosecuted?

The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg tried surviving members of the Nazi leadership. Later proceedings in Germany and elsewhere addressed camp personnel, mobile killing units, collaborators, and individual crimes.

Prosecution was uneven from the start. Missing evidence, assumed identities, restrictive legal tests, competing political priorities, and time allowed a large majority of suspects to avoid trial.

Nuremberg established a record as well as a verdict

The tribunal's lasting contribution was also evidentiary. Prosecutors built much of the case from the regime's own documents and placed a vast body of German records into a permanent public archive.

That choice shaped everything that followed. The material assembled for the proceedings supported later trials, historical scholarship, and responses to denial for decades afterward in many countries.

Why most perpetrators were never tried

The gap between participants and convictions is enormous. Practical and political barriers explain much of it, not a lack of evidence that the crimes occurred.

- Assumed identities
- Destroyed evidence
- Restrictive legal tests
- Cold War priorities
- Jurisdictional gaps

A legal test that limited German prosecutions

For decades, German courts generally required proof of a specific killing tied to a specific defendant. Applied to industrial extermination, that test excluded most people who helped operate the system.

The approach shifted in 2011, when a Munich court accepted that service within the machinery of a death camp could support accessory liability. Prosecutions of surviving personnel followed.

How a late case is built

Cases brought seventy years later depend heavily on documentary records because most witnesses who could once have testified are no longer alive or able to appear.

- Locate personnel records
- Establish posting and dates
- Corroborate with camp documents
- Confirm identity and capacity
- Assess trial fitness

Why very old defendants are still tried

The objection to trying very old defendants is understandable. The answer is not only punishment: a trial creates a judicial finding of fact, tested through evidence and open to challenge.

It also answers the claim that low-level service was not real participation, an assumption that kept many cases from being examined for decades by courts.

What a verdict does beyond sentencing

A conviction turns a historical claim into a legal finding, a different and more durable kind of record. The facts have been tested in an adversarial process rather than simply asserted.

For survivors and families, acknowledgment in open court may be the only formal recognition of what happened that they ever received from a justice system.

THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Nazi Ratlines, Escape Routes, and the Pursuit of Accountability

After World War II, overlapping escape networks helped Nazi officials, SS members, collaborators, and other suspects leave Europe. This guide explains how those routes worked, where they led, and why investigators are still looking.

What were the Nazi ratlines?

In postwar history, ratlines were clandestine routes and support networks that helped Nazi officials, SS members, collaborators, and other war-crime suspects leave Europe or hide their identities. An escape might involve shelter, false or improperly issued documents, border crossings, port access, money, and contacts for onward travel.

The record does not show one centrally controlled organization. SWC's timeline and route guide describe overlapping corridors that changed by person, year, and destination. Investigators reconstruct individual escapes from linked records rather than assume every fugitive used the same route or received help from the same institution.

A network made from separate forms of assistance

A fugitive did not need one sponsor to arrange an entire escape. One contact might provide shelter, another documents, and a third passage from a European port. Help could be deliberate, but weak screening, political protection, or official indifference also created openings. The route appears only when separate records are compared.

- Shelter
- Identity
- Passage
- Money
- Official discretion

How an escape could unfold

No sequence fits every case, but a common pattern appears. A wanted person left the area where authorities knew him, secured an identity that could survive inspection, reached a transit point, arranged onward travel, and established the new identity at a destination. Registration cards, visa files, manifests, and financial records may preserve each stage.

- Avoid initial capture
- Assume a usable identity
- Reach a transit hub
- Secure onward passage
- Resettle under cover

The routes crossed borders and institutions

SWC's route guide identifies two prominent corridors. One ran from Germany through Spain and across the Atlantic to Argentina and other South American destinations. Another passed through northern Italy toward Rome or Genoa, where fugitives sought documents and passage.

Switzerland and other neutral states appear as waypoints; some fugitives first traveled to the Middle East.

These were not fixed lines on a map. Border controls changed, and intermediaries appeared or disappeared. A place named in one case does not prove every official or institution there participated. Each route must be rebuilt from the records of the person under investigation.

What investigators look for in the record

A matching name is only the start. Researchers test dates, places, family details, photographs, signatures, occupations, and travel patterns, then compare independent files. A passenger manifest may support a visa record, while bank or property documents can show where someone went after arrival. Conflicts are recorded rather than ignored.

- Identity chain
- Travel trail
- Financial link
- Institutional contact
- Independent match

Why financial archives changed the inquiry

Escape was also a financial problem. Fugitives needed money for documents, intermediaries, tickets, and resettlement. Account files can link a person, alias, institution, and destination when the travel trail is incomplete.

The U.S. Senate Budget Committee investigation and independent ombudsperson Neil Barofsky have examined Credit Suisse's World War II-era records and the bank's handling of Nazi-linked accounts. SWC's Ratlines research page collects related reports, testimony, and correspondence. Those materials expand the evidence available for comparison with immigration, intelligence,

restitution, and war-crimes files.

Accountability when prosecution is no longer possible

Many suspects died before trial, and some cases can no longer meet a courtroom standard. Historical accountability still matters. It can identify the person behind an alias, preserve an escape route, clarify who helped, trace assets tied to persecution or looting, and correct a public record that remained incomplete for decades.

The goal is not collective guilt for a country, church, bank, relief agency, or intelligence service. It is to establish what particular people and institutions did, what they knew, which records survive, and where further disclosure is justified.



PART 3 | 3 GUIDES

Conspiracy Claims and Denial

Historic Hate Tropes, How They Began and Reappear

Holocaust Denial and Distortion, What It Is and How It Spreads

September 11 Conspiracy Claims About Jews and Israel, Examined

CONSPIRACY CLAIMS AND DENIAL

Historic Hate Tropes, How They Began and Reappear

Blood libel, hidden-control myths, dual-loyalty accusations, and claims about Jewish money have shifted across centuries. This guide traces the core ideas and shows how they return in modern politics and media.

What is an antisemitic trope?

An antisemitic trope is a recurring false idea about Jews. It may cast a diverse population as secretly powerful, disloyal, greedy, manipulative, or responsible for whatever crisis is unfolding.

The details change from one era to another, but the structure remains. Once you recognize that structure, a modern version is easier to spot even before anyone names it.

Blood libel and ritual murder accusations

Medieval Europe produced the false charge that Jews murdered Christian children for ritual purposes. No case supported it, yet the accusation was repeatedly used to justify expulsions, trials, and massacres.

The accusation never disappeared completely. Modern versions move the same structure onto new subjects while preserving the old image of Jews harming children in secret. The setting changes; the accusation does not.

Hidden control and money

Restrictions that barred Jews from most occupations while permitting moneylending created an association that was then treated as an innate trait rather than as the product of the restriction.

The modern form drops the medieval detail but keeps the charge: finance, media, or government are supposedly directed by a small group whose influence is never actually documented.

Dual loyalty and collective blame

The dual loyalty charge holds that Jewish citizens serve a foreign interest rather than their own country. It has been leveled by governments across the political spectrum for well over a century.

Collective blame is its companion. It treats any Jewish person as answerable for the actions of a state, an individual, or an institution they had no part in.

The structures underneath the variations

Most versions reduce to a few recurring structures. Learning those structures lasts longer than memorizing examples, because the examples keep changing while the underlying claims do not.

- Secret coordinated power
- Hidden financial control
- Divided loyalty
- Blame for social crisis
- Harm concealed from view

How an old claim is modernized

Updating a trope takes little work. The underlying claim stays in place while the vocabulary changes, making an inherited accusation sound like commentary on a current event.

- Use a coded noun
- Tie to current events
- Frame as a question
- Cite a false source
- Add ironic distance

Why the same shape keeps returning

These claims persist because they are useful to the people spreading them. They turn complicated failures into one simple story and provide a group to blame.

That usefulness helps explain why they return during economic upheaval, war, and epidemics. They arrive ready-made because the basic story has already been told for generations.

Criticism, stereotype, and the line between

Criticizing a government, policy, or individual is ordinary political argument. The line is crossed when the criticism falls back on hidden coordination, collective blame, or another inherited structure.

Ask what claim is actually being made and whether the same standard would apply to anyone else in that position. The answer usually clarifies the line.

CONSPIRACY CLAIMS AND DENIAL

Holocaust Denial and Distortion, What It Is and How It Spreads

Holocaust denial rejects the established record. Distortion works differently, by minimizing victims, excusing perpetrators, shifting blame, or forcing false comparisons. This guide explains both tactics and the evidence that answers them.

What is Holocaust denial?

Holocaust denial falsely claims that the Nazi persecution and systematic murder of six million Jews did not occur as the evidence shows, or that the event was exaggerated beyond recognition.

Holocaust distortion accepts parts of the record but minimizes the crime, excuses collaborators, shifts responsibility to victims, or strips the history of meaning through false comparison.

The record a denial argument has to dismiss

Denial doesn't have to overcome one disputed document. It must dismiss converging evidence from sources that could not have coordinated with one another and often had no reason to agree.

- Perpetrator records
- Transport and camp documents
- Survivor testimony
- Perpetrator confessions
- Physical and forensic evidence

Denial works by isolating one detail

A common tactic is to isolate a disputed figure, a mistaken caption, or a memory that conflicts with a document, then act as though the entire record depends on it.

No historical account of any major event could survive that standard. Denial arguments apply it here while rarely demanding the same kind of proof elsewhere.

How a denial argument is usually assembled

The pattern is consistent enough to recognize in advance. Once the sequence is visible, a reader can answer the method rather than chase each new technical claim.

- Raise a technical dispute
- Demand impossible proof
- Dismiss testimony as unreliable
- Allege coordinated fabrication
- Present doubt as scholarship

Distortion does the same work in publishable form

Outright denial is criminalized in several countries and carries obvious reputational cost. Distortion accomplishes much of the same work while remaining publishable, which is what makes it harder to identify and easier to circulate.

Distortion accepts the history in broad terms, then drains it of meaning through false comparison, minimized scale, or an effort to shift responsibility away from the perpetrators.

The forms distortion takes

These forms can appear in otherwise ordinary political speech. That makes distortion harder to identify than outright denial and easier to introduce in mainstream settings.

- Minimizing scale
- False equivalence
- Excusing collaborators
- Blaming the victims
- Instrumentalizing memory

Responding without hosting the debate

A denial claim invites debate on terms designed to make a settled record look controversial. A long exchange can create that impression even when the evidence is one-sided.

A clear answer, a reliable source, and a refusal to relitigate a fabricated premise usually serve the audience better than a prolonged argument in public.

What a response is actually for

The committed denier is rarely the real audience. Other readers are deciding whether they are seeing a genuine historical dispute or a settled question presented as one.

Answer those readers directly, keep the response brief, and give them a source they can check for themselves. That is the practical goal for a public response.

CONSPIRACY CLAIMS AND DENIAL

September 11 Conspiracy Claims About Jews and Israel, Examined

False claims that Jews or Israel planned, enabled, or celebrated the September 11 attacks reuse older ideas about secret Jewish control. This page states the claims clearly, reviews the evidence, and explains why the narratives persist.

What do the major investigations establish?

The 9/11 Commission documented al-Qaeda's development and execution of the September 11 plot. The FBI's PENTTBOM investigation examined the nineteen hijackers, their sponsors, travel, contacts, and finances. NIST separately investigated the aircraft impacts, fires, evacuation, emergency response, and building collapses.

Those investigations did not identify evidence that Jews or Israel planned or carried out the attacks. The recurring claims attach conclusions the named investigations did not reach.

Different investigations answered different questions

The 9/11 Commission examined al-Qaeda's development, the plot, hijackers, financing, travel, aviation security, intelligence, government response, and the events of the day. The FBI's PENTTBOM case investigated the hijackers, sponsors, contacts, and possible additional participants. NIST had a separate technical mandate covering aircraft impacts, fires, evacuation, emergency response, and building collapses.

Use the investigation that matches the allegation. Structural claims belong with NIST's findings. Claims about planning, travel, financing, or responsibility belong with the Commission, the FBI, and related records.

Three allegation types recur

Three allegation types recur. One claims Jewish workers received a coordinated warning. Another treats an Israeli warning, detention, or observation as proof that Israel planned or enabled the attacks. A third points to insurance, market activity, media ownership, or political outcomes as proof of advance knowledge. Combining them can make weak inferences appear mutually reinforcing.

- Coordinated-warning claim
- Israeli-responsibility claim
- Financial-benefit claim

What the published record says about those allegations

SWC's September 11 Conspiracies: 20 Years Later addresses the rumor that Jewish employees were warned away from the World Trade Center. The report notes that Jewish people were among those killed. The 9/11 Commission and FBI records do not document a coordinated warning.

The Commission examined fragmentary and general threat reporting from several sources before September 11. That record supports scrutiny of institutional failures. It does not establish that Israel directed the plot or that Jews as a group had operational knowledge.

Claims involving Israelis detained after the attacks can be examined as a discrete episode. The Commission and FBI accounts attributing planning and execution to al-Qaeda did not identify Israel or those detainees as the authors of the attacks.

Profit claims take a different shortcut. Benefit after an event is not proof of causation or advance knowledge. A foreknowledge claim needs a documented information path, a reliable date, action based on that information, and independent corroboration.

How a real detail is made to carry an unsupported conclusion

A conspiracy narrative may start with something partly true: a photograph exists, someone was detained, an agency received a warning, a trade was profitable, or a building owner carried insurance. A careful review restores scope, date, uncertainty, and alternative explanations, then separates what the source shows from the conclusion attached to it.

- Locate the original source
- Establish date and scope
- Separate fact from inference
- Compare named investigations
- Test other explanations

Use the record that matches the question

No single report answers every question. A source is useful when its mandate and evidence match the claim. Commentary that cites a document without showing where it supports the assertion should be checked against the underlying record.

- Plot planning
- Hijacker identity
- Financing and travel
- Building failures
- Intelligence warnings

Why general warning is not the same as responsibility

The 9/11 Commission documented heightened concern about al-Qaeda and failures to connect available information. General threat reporting may reveal preparedness problems, but it is not precise knowledge of a date, target, participants, and method.

Responsibility requires a documented chain showing who had operational information, how it was obtained, what action followed, and how that chain connects to the plot. The named investigations did not establish that chain for Jews or Israel.

How collective blame changes the story

The conspiracy version treats Jews as a coordinated hidden network and turns unrelated people, institutions, and transactions into parts of one plan. That structure predates September 11 and has been applied to other crises.

Recognizing the pattern does not end legitimate inquiry. It requires specific conduct to be attributed to specific actors, with no conclusion broader than the evidence supports.



PART 4 | 4 GUIDES

Movements and Ideologies

Black Hebrew Israelite Movements, Beliefs, and Context

Nation of Islam Teachings, Leadership, and Anti-Jewish Claims

White Nationalist Groups, Symbols, and Ideology

White Supremacist Symbols and Terminology Explained

MOVEMENTS AND IDEOLOGIES

Black Hebrew Israelite Movements, Beliefs, and Context

Black Hebrew Israelite communities differ widely in belief and practice. This guide explains those differences and why concern focuses on particular factions and documented anti-Jewish rhetoric, not the label itself.

What is the Black Hebrew Israelite movement?

Many Black Hebrew Israelite communities teach that Black Americans, and in some traditions other people of color, descend from the ancient Israelites. The label includes congregations, structured orders, and independent teachers whose beliefs and daily practices differ widely.

It is inaccurate to describe every Black Hebrew Israelite as extremist. Documented concern focuses on particular factions that promote supremacy, dehumanize outsiders, or spread conspiracy claims about Jews and other groups.

One label covering very different communities

The label is an umbrella, sometimes claimed from within and often applied from outside. Communities differ in scripture, leadership, dress, dietary practice, and how they relate to people beyond the group.

- Settled congregations
- Street-preaching camps
- Structured orders
- Independent teachers
- Unaffiliated adherents

Shared teaching and where it diverges

Belief in Israelite descent is the common thread. From there, communities diverge quickly over which texts carry authority, how they read history, and what duties they believe members have toward people outside the group.

Some communities are quiet and inward-looking, centered on worship, study, and family life. Others make public confrontation central to their work, so they are much more visible than their numbers would suggest.

Where teaching becomes targeted hostility

The issue is not a belief about ancestry. Concern begins when a faction calls other groups illegitimate or subhuman, blames Jews collectively for historical crimes, or presents hostility as a religious duty.

The clearest evidence comes from the factions' own recordings, publications, and public preaching. Descriptions should stay tied to that material rather than assume the same beliefs across the wider movement.

Signals that a faction has crossed the line

These signals concern conduct and published statements, not identity. Each can be checked against material the faction released itself, which keeps the assessment narrow and verifiable.

- Dehumanizing language
- Collective blame
- Conspiracy framing
- Harassment of passersby
- Praise for violence

Why the distinction has practical weight

Treating the entire umbrella as extremist pulls ordinary congregants into a charge they haven't earned. It also gives confrontational factions a grievance they can use in recruitment.

Broad labeling also weakens accurate warnings. Once an institution sees the term used carelessly, it has reason to discount it later, including when the evidence is serious.

Describing a group accurately

The main safeguard is specificity. Name the faction, cite its own material, and keep the description tied to the people and statements actually in question.

- Name the specific faction
- Quote published material
- Date the statement
- Note who is speaking
- Avoid the umbrella term

MOVEMENTS AND IDEOLOGIES

Nation of Islam Teachings, Leadership, and Anti-Jewish Claims

This guide covers the Nation of Islam's history and teachings, Louis Farrakhan's leadership, and public statements about Jews. It separates the movement's broader record from specific rhetoric that has drawn concern.

What is the Nation of Islam?

The Nation of Islam is a twentieth-century American religious and political movement built around Black self-reliance, discipline, and institution building. Its theology and racial teachings differ from mainstream Islam.

Public concern has focused on statements by Louis Farrakhan and on movement publications that promote conspiracy claims about Jews or assign collective responsibility to them.

From a Depression-era founding to national presence

The movement emerged in Detroit in the 1930s and expanded under Elijah Muhammad. Mosques, schools, businesses, and a disciplined organization offered structure in communities where little support was available.

- Detroit founding
- National expansion
- Leadership succession
- Division and reconstitution
- Farrakhan era

Teaching that separates it from mainstream Islam

Mainstream Sunni and Shia Islam hold that prophecy ended with Muhammad and reject racial theology. The Nation of Islam's teachings about its founder and racial origins are rejected on both grounds.

This is more than a technical difference. After Elijah Muhammad's death, much of the membership moved into mainstream Sunni practice, while the Nation of Islam was reconstituted separately.

Community work and public profile

The movement has operated schools, businesses, security patrols, and prison outreach. That record helps explain why it retains standing in communities that have often seen little outside investment.

Acknowledging that record does not excuse the rhetoric. It explains why criticism aimed at an entire community, rather than at specific statements, tends to fail with the people it hopes to persuade.

The rhetoric that has been documented

The documented concern is specific. It includes claims of hidden Jewish control, assertions of disproportionate Jewish responsibility for the Atlantic slave trade, which the American Historical Association condemned in a 1995 statement, and dehumanizing language delivered in public addresses.

These claims should be quoted from dated speeches or publications. That keeps the description tied to the record rather than to a summary that may reach further than the evidence.

What documentation should record

A claim about public rhetoric is only as strong as the record behind it. The details below make the statement checkable rather than a matter of competing summaries.

- Exact wording
- Speaker and date
- Venue or publication
- Surrounding context
- Whether it was repeated

Criticism of statements is not collective blame

Documenting what a leader said is not a judgment about Black Muslims, Islam, or everyone who has attended a mosque. Treating it that way would repeat the collective error being criticized.

Keep the finding attached to named speakers, dated material, and the words actually used. That is what keeps the boundary clear and the claim defensible.

MOVEMENTS AND IDEOLOGIES

White Nationalist Groups, Symbols, and Ideology

White nationalist activity spans formal organizations, loose networks, local clubs, online communities, and unaffiliated individuals. This guide explains their shared ideas, major differences, and common recruitment methods.

What is a white nationalist group?

A white nationalist group organizes around the claim that political power, territory, or national identity should be reserved mainly for white people. Groups differ sharply in tactics, public presentation, and attitudes toward violence.

The movement often works through decentralized structures. People may move among named organizations, informal networks, media projects, encrypted chats, and local events without holding formal membership anywhere.

The forms the movement actually takes

Treating the movement as a set of organizations with rosters misses much of its activity. Many participants operate in structures that have no membership to join and nothing formal to resign from.

- Formal organizations
- Local clubs and crews
- Online networks
- Media and publishing projects
- Unaffiliated individuals

Claims that recur across very different groups

Beneath tactical differences are several recurring claims: demographic change is deliberate, a group's decline is someone else's project, and ordinary politics cannot address the threat as they define it.

Groups seeking respectability and groups that celebrate violence may share those premises. Their disagreement is often about method and timing rather than the underlying story.

How recruitment usually works

Recruitment rarely begins with a full ideology. It starts with a grievance someone already holds, offers company and explanation, then introduces the political frame after the social connection exists.

That gradual process makes relationships more important than simple exposure to the material. Isolation can make the offer of belonging especially powerful to someone seeking connection.

Why organizations keep changing names

Rebranding is a routine response to exposure. The name is disposable; the people, underlying claims, and often the same channels continue under a new label with little interruption.

- Coverage and exposure
- Litigation or liability
- Platform removal
- Internal splits
- Reputational reset

Evaluating a claim about a group

Group names spread faster than reliable information about them. Working from the organization's own material keeps a description tied to what it has said and done.

- Find original material
- Check dates and status
- Separate leaders and followers
- Look for documented conduct
- Note earlier names

Membership is the wrong measure

Membership counts can badly understate a decentralized movement. Audience, reach, and how far a narrative travels often describe influence better than a roster does over time.

Counts also miss people who absorb the material and act alone. They may belong to no organization and appear on no membership list of any kind.

What group research can and cannot establish

Research can document what an organization publishes, who leads it, and what members have done. It cannot establish what every associate believes from one interaction.

Keeping that boundary visible makes the documented findings more reliable and much harder for an organization to dismiss when challenged in public or in court.

MOVEMENTS AND IDEOLOGIES

White Supremacist Symbols and Terminology Explained

White supremacist, white nationalist, neo-Nazi, and accelerationist are related terms, but they aren't interchangeable. This guide defines them and explains the coded phrases and symbols that often travel with them.

Why does terminology matter?

White supremacist, white nationalist, neo-Nazi, and accelerationist describe related but distinct positions. A precise label identifies the ideology, organization, or strategy actually under discussion.

These communities also use coded phrases, memes, and ironic framing that may look harmless outside the group. Recognizing a code is separate from deciding what label a person has earned.

Terms that are used interchangeably and should not be

These terms are often used interchangeably, but each has a narrower meaning. The differences matter when the description will be published, used in policy, or acted on.

- White supremacy
- White nationalism
- Neo-Nazism
- Accelerationism
- Identitarianism

Why the narrowest accurate term is stronger

A broad label invites an easy denial. Calling an organization neo-Nazi when identitarian is more accurate lets the group correct the record and present itself as the wronged party.

The narrower term also holds up better. It states something specific enough to test against the group's own material, which makes the description easier to defend.

Coded speech and prepared deniability

Dog whistles are built to carry two readings. The in-group hears the reference while everyone else hears an ordinary phrase, and that gap is the purpose of the construction.

Irony offers similar cover. A claim framed as a joke can be advanced sincerely and abandoned at once, so the surrounding pattern matters more than one post.

How coded language is constructed

The methods are limited and recur across movements. Recognizing the construction is more useful than tracking individual phrases, which are replaced as soon as they become widely known.

- Numeric substitution
- Altered spelling
- Repurposed symbols
- Ironical framing
- In-group shorthand

Choosing a label you can defend

Work from the evidence to the term, not the other way around. That keeps a description tied to what the group has actually said and done.

- Gather actual statements
- Identify the stated goal
- Check organizational ties
- Choose the narrowest term
- State the limits

Offensive is not the same as organized

A bigoted remark is not proof of movement membership. Treating it as such misdescribes both the speaker and the movement supposedly represented by that remark alone.

Organized extremism involves shared goals, coordination, recruitment, and sometimes a strategy involving violence. That is a different finding and requires different evidence from investigators and researchers.

Why vocabulary discipline protects the work

Every loose label spends credibility the next accurate one will need. When institutions see a term used too broadly, they begin to discount it later.

Precision is not caution for its own sake. It is what makes a serious finding credible when the evidence supports one and the claim is challenged.



PART 5 | 4 GUIDES

Symbols, Codes and Insignia

Extremist Symbols and Hate Symbols, What They Mean

How to Recognize Extremist Tattoos and Markings

Runes, SS Bolts, and Extremist Insignia Explained

What 88, 14/88, and Other Numeric Hate Codes Mean

SYMBOLS, CODES AND INSIGNIA

Extremist Symbols and Hate Symbols, What They Mean

Symbols don't carry one fixed meaning. This guide covers common extremist symbols, coded numbers, insignia, and tattoos, with the context needed to separate a documented signal from an innocent use.

What is a hate symbol?

A hate symbol can be an image, number, gesture, or mark used to target a group, intimidate someone, or signal an extremist affiliation. Some were created for that purpose. Others were borrowed from older traditions with unrelated meanings.

Visual resemblance isn't enough. Exact design, paired words or numbers, source, setting, audience, and repeated use can change the reading. SWC's Decoding Hate guide makes the same point: a code may be significant in one setting and innocent in another.

Start with the category, not the conclusion

People often arrive with a cropped screenshot, tattoo detail, number, or unfamiliar insignia. Start by identifying the category. Compare a rune with historical and current forms, read a number as part of a sequence, and treat a tattoo as a combination whose parts may mean little alone.

- Runes and insignia
- Numeric codes
- Tattoos and markings
- Movement-specific emblems

Five context checks before assigning meaning

Start with the object, then widen the frame. A small design change may separate one reference from another, while the account, event, or location can show whether the use is historical, ironic, threatening, or tied to a movement. Several aligned indicators carry more weight than one.

- Exact form
- Paired elements
- Original source
- Setting and audience
- Pattern of use

Borrowed imagery can carry several histories

Extremist movements borrow familiar images because they're easy to reproduce and can communicate without a full statement. A cross, rune, flag element, gesture, or number may carry an older cultural meaning as well as a later extremist one.

The question isn't whether a shape is always hateful. Ask whether this version, pairing, and setting support that reading. Over-labeling harms people and weakens trust; under-labeling can leave intimidation or recruitment activity unrecognized.

How to evaluate a symbol responsibly

Use a repeatable process rather than memory or one reverse-image result. Save the original material, identify the closest exact form, check more than one independent reference, and return to the setting where it appeared. The last step is choosing a response, not defining a person's identity.

- Capture the full scene
- Identify the exact design
- Check independent references
- Review the surrounding use
- Choose a proportionate response

Signals that make an interpretation more serious

A symbol matters more when conduct surrounds it. Targeted placement, repeated posting, praise for violence, recruitment material, or language aimed at a community can turn an ambiguous image into part of a pattern. A familiar shape also changes when paired with a code, slogan, username, or movement reference.

- Targeted use
- Recruitment context
- Repeated pattern
- Threatening language

What a useful report should preserve

A tight crop may help with recognition, but it is rarely enough for review. When it's safe, preserve the full post, object, wall, message, or profile. Record where and when it appeared, who could see it, and whether it was removed or repeated.

Don't edit material in a way that changes its sequence or meaning. When sharing evidence, remove private information that has nothing to do with the incident and use the reporting channel that fits the setting.

- Full frame
- Surrounding words
- Date and location
- Account or object
- Repeated behavior
- Direct threat

What a reference guide cannot decide

A symbol guide can identify documented uses and help a reader ask better questions. It cannot determine a person's motive, legal liability, or organizational membership from one image. Those conclusions require additional evidence and, in some settings, a formal investigation.

If the material remains ambiguous, describe what is visible and what is known. Don't fill the gap with a label. Precision is part of useful hate education.

SYMBOLS, CODES AND INSIGNIA

How to Recognize Extremist Tattoos and Markings

Tattoos can combine numbers, runes, military insignia, and movement slogans. This guide explains combinations seen in extremist settings and why one ambiguous design can't establish intent.

What makes a tattoo an extremist marking?

A tattoo can support an affiliation finding when it contains a specific ideological emblem, a known code, an explicit slogan, or several elements that reinforce one another within the same design.

Skulls, crosses, eagles, and lightning shapes are also common in military, memorial, religious, and popular imagery with no extremist meaning. Exact styling and combination make the difference.

Permanence changes what a marking indicates

Posting an image online is easy and may be careless. A tattoo takes money, time, and a permanent commitment, so it can signal a more deliberate choice than most other displays.

That same permanence cuts the other way. It records a decision made at one point in a life and stays visible long after the person may have moved away from it.

Categories that recur in extremist body art

Most extremist body art draws from a limited set of sources. One element is weak evidence on its own; several reinforcing elements in the same piece carry a different weight.

- Numeric codes
- Runic and Nazi-era forms
- Unit and rank insignia
- Movement slogans
- Group-specific marks

Custodial settings complicate the reading

Markings acquired in prison can reflect ideology, but they can also reflect protection, group survival, coercion, or the local structure of an institution rather than personal belief.

Racial separation inside some facilities means a marking may function as a survival arrangement. That context does not excuse a symbol, but it changes what the symbol reliably tells you.

Combinations that strengthen a reading

Confidence rises when several details reinforce one another. Multiple elements pointing the same direction, especially when placed for visibility, are different from one ambiguous design in a hidden location.

- Multiple reinforcing elements
- Explicit wording
- Deliberate visibility
- Matching group marks
- Recent work

Before an institution acts on an image

A school, employer, or agency is making a decision about a person, not merely cataloging an image. The steps below keep that decision tied to conduct.

- Document visible details
- Identify the design
- Check related conduct
- Ask for context
- Decide on conduct

People leave movements and the ink remains

Removal and cover-up programs exist because former members carry visible marks they no longer support, and those marks can make the practical work of leaving much harder.

Treating old tattoo work as proof of current belief, without checking, can close the path out that these programs are trying to keep open for good.

What a single image cannot decide

One tattoo cannot establish membership, intent, or dangerousness. It can establish that a person once chose a reference, which is a reason to look at behavior rather than a substitute for doing so.

The reverse is also true. Many committed extremists have no markings at all, so the absence of visible imagery should not be treated as reassurance.

SYMBOLS, CODES AND INSIGNIA

Runes, SS Bolts, and Extremist Insignia Explained

Learn how Nazi organizations and later extremist movements used SS bolts, runes, death-head imagery, and military-style insignia, while keeping the historical context needed to avoid false conclusions.

What do SS bolts and related runes mean?

The paired angular lightning form commonly called SS bolts was adopted by the Schutzstaffel as an organizational emblem in the 1930s. It remains in use in neo-Nazi settings today.

Runic characters are much older and belong to early Germanic writing systems. Extremist meaning comes from a particular style, pairing, and use, not from every appearance of a rune.

How an old alphabet became a party emblem

Runes were writing before they became political symbols. Early Germanic communities carved them on stone, wood, and metal for names, ownership, and memorial text. Those original uses have no connection to a modern movement.

- Ancient script
- Romantic revival
- Party adoption
- Postwar reuse

A revival that invented what it claimed to recover

In the early twentieth century, occult and nationalist writers in Austria and Germany published rune systems they presented as ancestral knowledge. Much of that material was newly invented, and it supplied the mystical frame later used by Nazi organizations.

That history matters when reading a modern design. Groups using these forms usually draw from the invented revival, not from the older script they claim to recover.

Emblems that are most often confused

Several designs have both an ordinary lineage and a specific Nazi-era form. Ordinary versions remain common in heraldry, military tradition, and popular culture. The Nazi-era version is narrower, and the difference is often visible in the details.

- Skull versus Totenkopf
- Iron cross versus Nazi variant
- Sun wheel versus black sun
- Heraldic hook versus unit insignia

Details that change a reading

Small features carry much of the meaning. Proportion, the number and angle of arms, added serifs, color, and nearby unit numbers or slogans can separate a historical reproduction from a deliberate modern signal.

- Exact proportions
- Added serifs
- Color scheme
- Accompanying text
- Placement and repetition

Where the law already draws a line

German law restricts the public display of symbols associated with unconstitutional organizations, including Nazi-era insignia, and provides written exceptions for education, research, journalism, and art. Those exceptions exist because teaching this material requires showing it.

Several other European countries impose comparable restrictions. Elsewhere the same image may raise a platform moderation question rather than a legal one, so what applies depends on where the display happens.

Where a design can be checked

Museums, archives, and monitoring organizations maintain reference collections with provenance and dates. Those entries are more reliable than a search-result image because they show where a design was used and by whom.

- Museum collections
- Archival holdings
- Monitoring databases
- Court and hearing records

What an emblem cannot establish on its own

An insignia identifies a reference, not a person or a fixed belief. Someone may use a design as history, provocation, affiliation, or without knowing its lineage.

Conduct settles what the image only suggests. Repeated use, stated views, chosen associations, and targeted behavior turn a design into evidence of something more in context.

SYMBOLS, CODES AND INSIGNIA

What 88, 14/88, and Other Numeric Hate Codes Mean

Numbers can be ordinary, personal, or coded. This guide explains why 88, 14, 14/88, and 1488 appear in extremist communication and what surrounding symbols, language, and conduct add to the reading.

What do 88 and 1488 mean in extremist settings?

In white supremacist and neo-Nazi communication, 88 can stand in for a Nazi salute because H is the eighth letter of the alphabet. The number 14 refers to a fourteen-word white supremacist slogan.

When combined as 14/88 or 1488, the reference becomes more specific and harder to explain as coincidence. The same digits still appear throughout ordinary life, so a number alone settles nothing.

Why numbers took the place of words

A number can survive where a phrase cannot. It passes filters built to catch words, fits easily in a username or jersey, and can be explained as something ordinary when challenged.

That deniability is the point. A code reaches people who recognize it while giving the user a ready answer for everyone else who asks about it.

The forms these references usually take

Most numeric codes rely on a few recurring methods. Understanding the method lasts longer than memorizing a list, because the list changes while the basic construction does not.

- Letter substitution
- Slogan shorthand
- Combined pairing
- Initials as digits
- Date references

The same digits appear everywhere innocently

Eighty-eight can be a birth year, highway, model number, sports number, or street address, and it is considered auspicious in several East Asian cultures. Fourteen is even more common.

Any method that treats the bare number as evidence will produce many false readings. The surrounding material carries most of the weight in any review.

What lifts a number above coincidence

A numeric code becomes meaningful when it stops being isolated. The strongest signal is not the digit itself but what appears beside it and how often it returns across separate settings.

- Paired emblem
- Explicit slogan
- Repetition across accounts
- Movement vocabulary
- Deliberate placement

Checking a number before acting on it

The order matters. Start with the ordinary explanation so the reading is not decided before the evidence is examined, then look for a wider pattern.

- Check ordinary meaning
- Review nearby content
- Check other posts
- Look for repetition
- Weigh the conduct

Codes change once they are recognized

Exposure weakens a code. Once a number is documented and moderated, communities may shift to a variant, different arithmetic, or a new reference that has not yet been cataloged.

A reference list is a snapshot, not a permanent authority. An outdated list can miss current use while continuing to flag numbers a community has already abandoned.

What a number cannot establish

A code identifies a reference, not a belief or intention. People repeat numbers without understanding them, and others use them simply to provoke a reaction.

Conduct is what turns a recognized reference into evidence. The number is a reason to look further, not a conclusion to act on by itself.



PART 6 | 3 GUIDES

Defining and Measuring Hate

Hate Incident Data, Reporting, and How Harm Is Measured

Online Hate and Media Literacy, How to Recognize Harmful Content

The IHRA Definition, A Practical Framework for Recognizing Hate

DEFINING AND MEASURING HATE

Hate Incident Data, Reporting, and How Harm Is Measured

Hate-crime statistics, civil-rights complaints, community logs, platform reports, and surveys each measure something different. This guide shows what the numbers can tell us, what they miss, and how reporting affects the record.

What counts as a hate incident?

A hate crime is a criminal offense where evidence points to bias motivation. A hate incident may include noncriminal harassment, threats, exclusion, or conduct logged by a school, employer, agency, community group, or platform.

Different systems use different definitions and thresholds. A lower total may mean fewer incidents, but it can also reflect less reporting, narrower coverage, or a later publication date.

Different sources answer different questions

No single dataset captures the whole problem. Comparing figures across sources without accounting for what each one measures can produce conclusions the data does not support.

- Police statistics
- Victimization surveys
- Community incident logs
- Platform transparency reports
- Civil rights complaints

Why an increase can be good news

A rise in recorded incidents can mean more incidents occurred. It can equally mean a jurisdiction started participating, a definition widened, an outreach campaign worked, or victims gained confidence in reporting.

A decline is just as ambiguous. Neither direction can be read responsibly without knowing whether participation, definitions, or collection practices changed during that reporting year.

Definitions decide the count

Whether an incident is recorded depends on the threshold for showing bias, whether noncriminal conduct is captured at all, and whether the people taking reports are trained to classify it.

Two places with similar underlying conditions can publish very different totals because of those choices. Every figure needs the definition and collection rules beside it.

How to read a published figure

Each question below can change the meaning of a published figure. Most news coverage of hate-crime totals answers few of them, if any, for readers.

- Definition used
- Population covered
- Collection method
- Reporting period
- Year-over-year changes

What a usable reporting system needs

Reporting systems tend to fail at predictable points. Most problems involve access, trust, and follow-through after a report is submitted, rather than the form itself.

- Accessible reporting route
- Clear reporter definitions
- Trained intake staff
- Receipt confirmation
- Published totals

Where these numbers should not be used

Incident data can support advocacy, resource decisions, and efforts to find gaps in reporting. It cannot rank communities reliably or establish what happened in a particular case.

Publishing a total without its collection method invites those misuses. The limits belong beside the figure, not buried in a footnote that many readers will miss.

DEFINING AND MEASURING HATE

Online Hate and Media Literacy, How to Recognize Harmful Content

Online hate can appear as direct abuse, coded symbols, manipulated media, conspiracy claims, or coordinated harassment. This guide offers a practical way to check the content, the source, and the risks of sharing it.

How can people recognize online hate?

Start with the target, the claim, and the surrounding context. Direct abuse is usually obvious. Coded hate relies on symbols, altered spellings, stereotypes, or an in-group reference that looks ordinary from outside.

Then check the source. A screenshot without a link, date, full clip, or original account may hide editing, missing context, or a fabrication.

A five-part check before sharing anything

These checks take less than a minute and can prevent a common mistake: spreading false or misleading material to a wider audience while trying to condemn it.

- Identify the target
- State the claim
- Find the original
- Check date and context
- Decide whether to share

Coded language moves faster than moderation

Automated systems match known patterns, so communities alter spellings, replace words with symbols, and build references that make sense only to people inside the conversation.

Enforcement therefore tends to lag. By the time a term reaches a filter, the people using it may already be using a different reference elsewhere.

Manipulated media and missing context

The most effective manipulations are often based on real material. A genuine clip cut at the right moment, a photograph from another event, or an accurate quote stripped of context can outperform a complete fabrication.

Synthetic media adds another problem, but selective editing remains cheaper, faster, and often harder to disprove in the moment when attention is moving quickly online.

What to capture before content disappears

Hateful material is often deleted once it draws attention. Without the details below, a platform or investigator may be unable to act on the report.

- Full URL
- Timestamp and timezone
- Account handle and ID
- Unedited capture
- Surrounding thread

Responding without increasing reach

Engagement drives reach. Quoting hateful content to condemn it can still deliver that content to people who otherwise would never have encountered it in the first place.

- Report through the platform
- Document before responding
- Describe rather than repost
- Support the target directly
- Escalate real threats offline

Reach is the variable that matters

A hateful post seen by nine people and the same post seen by nine million require different responses, even when the wording is identical in both cases.

Wording alone does not determine severity. Reach, coordination, and whether a real person is being targeted are often more useful measures when deciding how to respond.

What media literacy cannot fix

Verification skills can help one person avoid being deceived. They do not solve coordinated campaigns, recommendation systems that reward outrage, or the harm already done to a target.

Treating media literacy as the whole solution shifts the burden to users while leaving the systems that distribute and profit from the material largely untouched.

DEFINING AND MEASURING HATE

The IHRA Definition, A Practical Framework for Recognizing Hate

The IHRA working definition gives institutions a shared way to examine anti-Jewish hostility. Its examples guide review, but context, evidence, applicable law, and due process still shape each decision.

What is the IHRA working definition?

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition describes antisemitism as a certain perception of Jews that may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Its examples help users examine anti-Jewish stereotypes, collective blame, Holocaust denial, discrimination, and some rhetoric about Israel.

IHRA calls the text a non-legally binding working definition. It does not create a law, disciplinary rule, or legal finding on its own. Each government, university, employer, court, or civic body decides whether to adopt it and what procedures and safeguards govern its use.

A working definition creates a shared reference point

Institutions may describe the same incident as harassment, bias, harmful speech, or discrimination. A shared reference point helps staff identify what needs review without deciding the outcome in advance. The definition supplies vocabulary; facts, law, institutional rules, and individual rights still control the response.

What the examples help institutions examine

The examples are not an automatic checklist. They point reviewers toward recurring patterns and questions about the target, intent, surrounding language, unequal treatment, and real-world effect. A reviewer should explain which example may apply and what context supports or limits the comparison.

- Anti-Jewish stereotyping
- Collective blame
- Holocaust denial
- Israel-related rhetoric
- Discriminatory conduct

How to apply the framework with context

Start with the actual words or conduct, not a label offered by either side. Establish who spoke, who was targeted, what happened around the event, whether comparable conduct was treated differently, and where the IHRA framework gives way to another rule or legal standard.

- Identify the conduct
- Establish speaker and target
- Review surrounding facts
- Compare treatment
- Record the rationale

Criticism of Israel and the boundary question

The IHRA text states that criticism of Israel similar to criticism directed at any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Disagreement with an Israeli government, military action, political movement, or proposed policy does not become antisemitism merely because it is forceful or unpopular.

The examples become relevant when conduct targets Jews collectively, uses established anti-Jewish myths, assigns Jewish people responsibility for actions they did not take, or applies a discriminatory standard. Context may show ordinary political criticism, or a different message about Jews carried through political language.

Adoption and implementation are separate choices

Adoption accepts the definition as a useful reference. Implementation decides how it will be used in training, incident review, data collection, public communication, or policy. A sound plan sets the purpose, who may apply it, the evidence required, safeguards for affected parties, and a way to check consistency.

- Purpose
- Scope
- Training
- Procedure
- Review

What implementation can support

Careful implementation can improve training, incident descriptions, data comparisons, and public explanations. It can also help educators show how older conspiracy ideas return in current language. The definition does not replace criminal law, civil-rights law, employment rules, academic standards, or constitutional protections.

Safeguards are part of responsible use

Institutions should train reviewers, preserve the conduct at issue, separate education from discipline, and avoid announcing conclusions before the facts are collected. Periodic review can reveal inconsistent outcomes or uses that drift beyond the stated purpose.