

# Let's get to Work – Against Antisemitism! #3

CONNECT

## Antisemitism Day by Day: Right-Wing Extremist Continuities

In the spring of 2025, an online event series took place as part of the project "Connect – Diversity through Participation" at the DGB-Bildungswerk Thüringen e.V. The lectures from the series were transcribed and published in several languages.

This text is based on the lecture by [Julius Gruber \(Bundesverband der Recherche- und Informationsstellen Antisemitismus e.V. – RIAS\)](#).

At the time of the lecture the [RIAS annual report for 2024](#) had not yet been released, which is why the figures in the text mainly refer to the period 2019-2023. For further information on the topic, see the RIAS brochure „[Rechtsextremismus und Antisemitismus – Historische Entwicklung und aktuelle Ausdrucksformen](#)“ ("Right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism – historical development and current forms of expression").

Anti-Semitism and right-wing extremism move between terrorism and everyday culture – this is how the current situation in Germany can be described. The following text sheds light on the continuities of antisemitism within right-wing extremism in Germany since 1945 and their current socio-political relevance.

To understand the threat that antisemitism currently poses to (potential) victims, it helps to look at numbers: between 2019 and 2023, RIAS recorded a total of 13,654 antisemitic incidents in Germany. The political

background of the majority of RIAS-documented incidents is usually unknown. For the incidents whose background could be identified, right-wing extremism was dominant up to 2023. In terms of figures, approximately nine antisemitic incidents with a right-wing extremist background were documented by RIAS each week. The number of documented right-wing extremist antisemitic incidents continued to rise, reaching a new peak in 2024 with 544 incidents. As will become clear, the variant of antisemitism that is classified as right-wing extremist plays a significant role in the overall picture of antisemitic occurrences in Germany. The following provides a conceptual clarification of what is meant by right-wing extremism.

### **Definition: Right-Wing Extremism and Right-Wing-Extremist Antisemitism**

The ideology of right-wing extremism rests on a fundamental belief in the inequality of human groups. Individuals are expected to subordinate themselves completely to the collective and to live in ethnically homogeneous communities, called "peoples." Consequently, right-wing extremism expresses itself, among other things, through radical nationalism, racism, a patriarchal gender order, and social-Darwinist societal concepts. Antisemitism serves a unifying function for these ideas of inequality: by declaring "the Jewish" as the enemy of these orders, antisemitism integrates right-wing

extremism into a coherent worldview, because it creates “the Jews” as a counter-force that threatens the hierarchies and allegedly natural orders that extremists advocate.

**Social Darwinism** denotes the conviction that society contains “stronger” and “weaker” people and that the stronger will naturally prevail. Who is considered “strong” or “weak” is linked to an alleged economic usefulness of individuals for society. Consequently, social Darwinism is often directed against the unemployed, homeless, or people with disabilities.

### Current Relevance of the Extreme Right for German Antisemitism

For the cases documented by RIAS between 2019 and 2023, 56 % lack sufficient information to reliably assign them to a specific ideological background. During this period, right-wing extremism was the most frequently documented political background, accounting for 16.6 % of the cases. In annual comparison, the absolute number of right-wing-extremist incidents remains fairly constant, while its relative share of all incidents has slightly decreased over the years. This trend may also reflect changing political opportunity structures for antisemitism: especially the conspiracy-ideological spectrum gained importance with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Distinguishing right-wing extremism from conspiracy-theories can be difficult, because conspiracy myths often form part of right-wing extremist worldviews. Antisemitism with a right-wing-extremist background exhibits a particular propensity for violence. This ranges from deliberate damage to Jewish property and threats, through (attempted) physical attacks, up to extreme violence with (potentially) lethal outcomes—such as the 2019 right-wing terrorist attack on a synagogue in Halle on Yom Kippur. This pattern of violence is embedded in historical continuities that have shaped the history of the Federal Republic.

### Forms of Extreme-Right Antisemitism

All antisemitic forms recorded by RIAS are documented within German right-wing extremism. Sometimes, several forms may occur simultaneously. Overall, **post-Shoah antisemitism** is the most prevalent within right-wing extremism. The Shoah (the Hebrew term for the Holocaust, i.e., the systematic extermination of Jews during Nazism) provides the dominant thematic reference for right-wing antisemitic incidents. Right-wing references to the Shoah are not free of contradictions: they range from outright denial, through relativisation, to open glorification. Right-wing actors repeatedly portray themselves as “the Jews of today,” for example by wearing so-called “Judensterne” (Jewish stars) during protests against COVID-19 containment measures—actions carried out by various right-wing activists. In doing so, the Shoah is trivialised by equating pandemic measures with Nazi extermination practices.

**Antisemitic “othering”**—the portrayal of (actual or presumed) Jews as not belonging to the community - is another frequent form within right-wing extremism. This includes insults commonly heard in football chants that demean opposing fans or clubs. The label “Jewish” or “Jew” continues to be used as a tool for devaluation and enemy-marking, for example against political opponents, and accounts for a significant share of the recorded incidents.

The notion of an alleged Jewish world conspiracy appears in what is termed **“modern antisemitism”**. It ascribes to Jews a vast, hidden power in political, economic, and media spheres and is especially activated during societal crises. For instance, extreme-right actors on demonstrations related to the Ukraine war spread the antisemitic narrative that “the Jews” or “Israel” act as “eternal profiteers” of wars and crises.

## Historical-Societal Development: From Neo-Nazism to the “Mosaic Right”

Antisemitism has always been a central constant of German right-wing extremism. As already emphasized, it functions as a common denominator that integrates the various ideological fragments into a closed worldview through the shared opposite – “the Jewish”. In the 1970s German right-wing extremism, which had previously been strongly shaped by the justification of Nazism, acquired a new quality through the circulation of publications (e.g., the Holocaust-denying pamphlet “The Auschwitz Lie”). In the 1980s it broadened its social base: beyond the middle class, the working class and economically disadvantaged people were increasingly addressed, which led to a marked growth of the neo-Nazi scene. This development laid the groundwork in the 2000s for the electoral successes of the NPD in eastern Germany and, eventually, for the later successes of the AfD.

The classic neo-Nazism today represents only a part of the overall picture. Since the 2010s the scene has increasingly been shaped by a new constellation known as the “Mosaic Right”. This denotes a strategy that deliberately forgoes ideological uniformity and seeks to establish a diverse far-right that lives from the interaction of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forces. Its roots lie in the so-called “New Right”. The New Right also formed in the 1970s, but it strategically distanced itself from overt Nazism. Publicly it aligned itself with the political current of the “Conservative Revolution” that existed between the two world wars; many of its actors, however, were themselves shaped by antisemitism and later became entangled in the Nazi regime. In the 1990s the New Right consolidated around the magazine Junge Freiheit (“Young Freedom”) as its leading medium. Its main topics are: Racist debates on migration and criticism of an alleged “cult of guilt”, i.e., the claim that remembrance of the crimes of Nazism in Germany is exaggerated in a quasi-religious way, thereby making a positive reference to German history and the nation as a whole impossible.

In this constellation neo-Nazi movements and parties lost importance. Faced with a lack of electoral success, the neo-Nazi scene focused on a core of violence-prone groups with a firmly entrenched far-right orientation – a core that is currently expanding especially among very young people. The Mosaic Right, on the other hand, has been practising successful far-right politics since the 2010s, outperforming all its predecessors since 1945.

The various actors and spectrums of the extreme right interact in four fields of society:

- **Violence** (right-wing terrorism, combat sports, etc.)
- **Media** (from traditional outlets to social media)
- **Street activism** (e.g., rallies/demonstrations, graffiti, stickers)
- **Party-based right-wing extremism** (AfD, Die Heimat (formerly NPD), III. Weg, Freie Sachsen, etc.)

The AfD today provides the party-political anchoring of the Mosaic Right. It has so far been the most successful at mobilising existing societal resentments (e.g., antisemitism, racism, LGBTIQ hostility) for electoral gain. Within the many dehumanizing statements made by AfD politicians three forms of antisemitism can be identified that shape the party most strongly:

- **National-conservative understanding of history, historical revisionism, and post-Shoah antisemitism:** The AfD seeks a predominantly positive reference to German history in order to create a positive national feeling. A critical analysis of Nazism is perceived as an obstacle, which leads to distortions of history. These distortions produce a post-Shoah antisemitism that relativises the Shoah and incorporates it into nationalist thinking.
- **Reactionary criticism of the elite, conspiracy myths, and “modern” antisemitism:** Criticism of international organisations such

as the WHO or the UN, or of politics and the media, is linked to a rejection of modern values and to conspiracy narratives that reuse classic antisemitic patterns: shifting responsibility for complex problems onto representatives of a particular group, the notion of secret elites, and a one-sided opposition between “the people” (= the good) and “the elites” (= the bad). In this context AfD politicians, for example, invoke Holocaust survivor George Soros, claiming that his foundation undermines the sovereignty of nation-states.

- **Anti-American resentments:** Since the war of aggression against Ukraine, the pro-Russian stance within the AfD has received increasing media attention. One reason is the long-standing anti-American sentiment in German right-wing extremism. The US presence serves as a reminder of the defeat of Nazism in World War II and thus remains a persistent humiliation for the extreme right. Both Jews and the USA are often portrayed in far-right discourse as embodiments of liberal modernity. Open anti-Semitism may recede into the background in public discourse behind anti-American prejudices, but these appeal to the same sentiments. Among AfD politicians, anti-American statements frequently accompany antisemitic conspiracy myths.

## Further multilingual texts on the topic of antisemitism

You can find all other topics of our event and publication series on our website:

[www.dgb-bwt.de/wissen-fuer-alle](http://www.dgb-bwt.de/wissen-fuer-alle)

All texts are available in the **following languages:** Arabic, Dari, German, English, French, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese.

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