Antisemitic incidents hit new high in 2019, according to study

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A record number of antisemitic incidents were recorded in the UK in 2019 for the fourth year in a row, according to figures compiled by the Community Security Trust (CST).

The CST, which monitors antisemitism and provides protection for the Jewish community, recorded 1,805 incidents last year, the highest number ever logged in a calendar year and a 7% increase on 2018.

The vast majority of incidents – 80% – involved abusive behaviour, such as verbal abuse, graffiti, or abuse via social media.

The increase was described as appalling and sickening by Priti Patel, the home secretary, who said she was “pushing for greater collaboration … to remove this shameful stain on our society”.

Robert Jenrick, the communities secretary, said the rise in antisemitism in the UK 75 years after the end of the Holocaust was a “scourge on us all”.

The CST, which has been recording antisemitic incidents since 1984, said the largest single contributor to the overall increase was an 82% rise in online antisemitic incidents, from 384 in 2018 to 697 last year.

There were 158 violent assaults, a 25% increase on the previous year, and 88 incidents of damage and desecration to Jewish property recorded.

Almost half of the violent assaults were in three areas: Barnet and Hackney in London, and Salford in the north-west.

In 330 of the incidents, “the offender or offenders made reference to Hitler, the Nazis, the Holocaust, employed discourse based on the Nazi period, and/or punctuated their abuse with a Nazi salute or the depiction of a swastika.

“Of these, 126 were adjudged to contain evidence of far-right political motivation, wherein alignment with far-right extremist ideology or beliefs was expressed beyond the simple and superficial appropriation of Nazi-era references.”

In 505 incidents, allusions were made to Israel, the Middle East or Zionism, “of which 63 directly compared or equated Israel with the Nazis, compared to 49 such incidents reported in 2018”.

More than 100 incidents were recorded for every month of 2019. February and December had the highest number of incidents: 182 and 184 respectively, which the CST attributes to “prominent and intense debate over allegations of antisemitism in the Labour party”.

Although two-thirds of incidents took place in London and Manchester, the places with the biggest concentration of Jews, there were 635 in other parts of the UK – a 25% increase on 2018.

“2019 was another difficult year for British Jews and it is no surprise that recorded antisemitic incidents reached yet another high,” said David Delew, the CST’s chief executive. “ It is clear that both social media and mainstream politics are places where antisemitism and racism need to be driven out, if things are to improve in the future.”

Patel said: “It’s appalling that we have seen another increase of sickening abuse against the Jewish community. We need to do much more to tackle antisemitism and the intolerance this creates across society. As home secretary, I am pushing for greater collaboration, both across government, policing, the courts and community groups, to remove this shameful stain on our society.”

Describing the data as “depressing reading”, Louise Hay, the shadow policing minister and vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group against antisemitism, said: “It is shameful the Jewish community has been subjected to another year of racist abuse. We are beyond a stage of saying that more has to be done. We require immediate action.”