Antisemitic incidents in UK at record high for third year in a row

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By [Harriet Sherwood](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/harrietsherwood)

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<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/feb/07/antisemitic-incidents-uk-record-high-third-year-in-row-community-security-trust>

Jewish community leaders and politicians have condemned a third successive year with a record number of antisemitic incidents.

Last year, 1,652 incidents, a [16% increase on 2017](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/feb/01/antisemitic-incidents-in-uk-at-all-time-high), were logged by the Community Security Trust, which has monitored antisemitism for 35 years and provides security to the UK Jewish community.

The CST said the spread of incidents throughout the year, with more than 100 a month, indicated a general atmosphere of intolerance and prejudice. However, there were also spikes related to events in Gaza and the [argument over antisemitism](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/feb/01/labour-leadership-urged-to-adequately-tackle-antisemitism) in the Labour party.

The biggest number of incidents were in April and May (151 and 182 respectively), when [scores of Palestinians](https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/.premium-mass-gaza-border-clashes-52-killed-by-israeli-gunfire-2-410-wounded-1.6091548) were killed and hundreds injured in protests at the border fence between Gaza and Israel. May was the highest monthly total recorded since August 2014, when there was a major conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

In total, there were 173 incidents recorded that explicitly showed anti-Israel motivation alongside antisemitism, the CST said.

It also recorded 148 incidents over the year that were explicitly related to arguments over alleged antisemitism in Labour, with 49 in August when there was significant media and political attention on the issue.

Last year, there was a big increase in the proportion of antisemitic incidents that used political or extremist imagery, from 30% to 45%. More than 450 incidents involved language or imagery relating to the far right or the Nazis.

Incidents involving social media made up 23% of the total, up from 18% the previous year. But the CST said the figures understated the scale of the problem as targeted campaigns, often involving hundreds or even thousands of tweets or posts, were logged as a single incident.

The most common type of incident involved verbal antisemitic abuse directed at Jewish people, with 724 incidents. There was a fall of 17% in the number of violent antisemitic assaults, from 149 in 2017 to 123 last year, including one classified by the CST as “extreme violence”. There were 78 incidents of damage or desecration to Jewish property.

Three-quarters of the total number of incidents were recorded in Greater London and Greater Manchester, home to the two largest Jewish communities in the UK.

Marie van der Zyl, the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said the figures were very worrying for Jews living in the UK. “Overall, the UK remains a happy place for its Jewish community, but this reports shows that there is no room for complacency,” she said.

“Defeating the evil of antisemitism will take a concerted effort by the country’s political leadership, in all parties, and civil society.”

David Delew, the CST’s chief executive, said the figures reflected “deepening divides in our country and our politics. Jewish people are on the receiving end of this hatred, but it must not be left to us to tackle alone.”

A meeting with Jewish community leaders and the Home Office, chaired by the home secretary, Sajid Javid, is to discuss how to tackle antisemitism.

Javid said: “All acts of antisemitism are utterly despicable and have no place in society … We are doing all we can to rid society of these poisonous views.”

John Mann, the Labour chairman of the all-party parliamentary group against antisemitism, said: “Sadly, these figures are not surprising; indeed, they are predictable … It is now time for everyone in parliament to stand up, be counted and to stand alongside the CST in the fight against antisemitism.”