FIGHTING ONLINE ANTISEMITISM

ONLINE ANTISEMITISM IN INDIA

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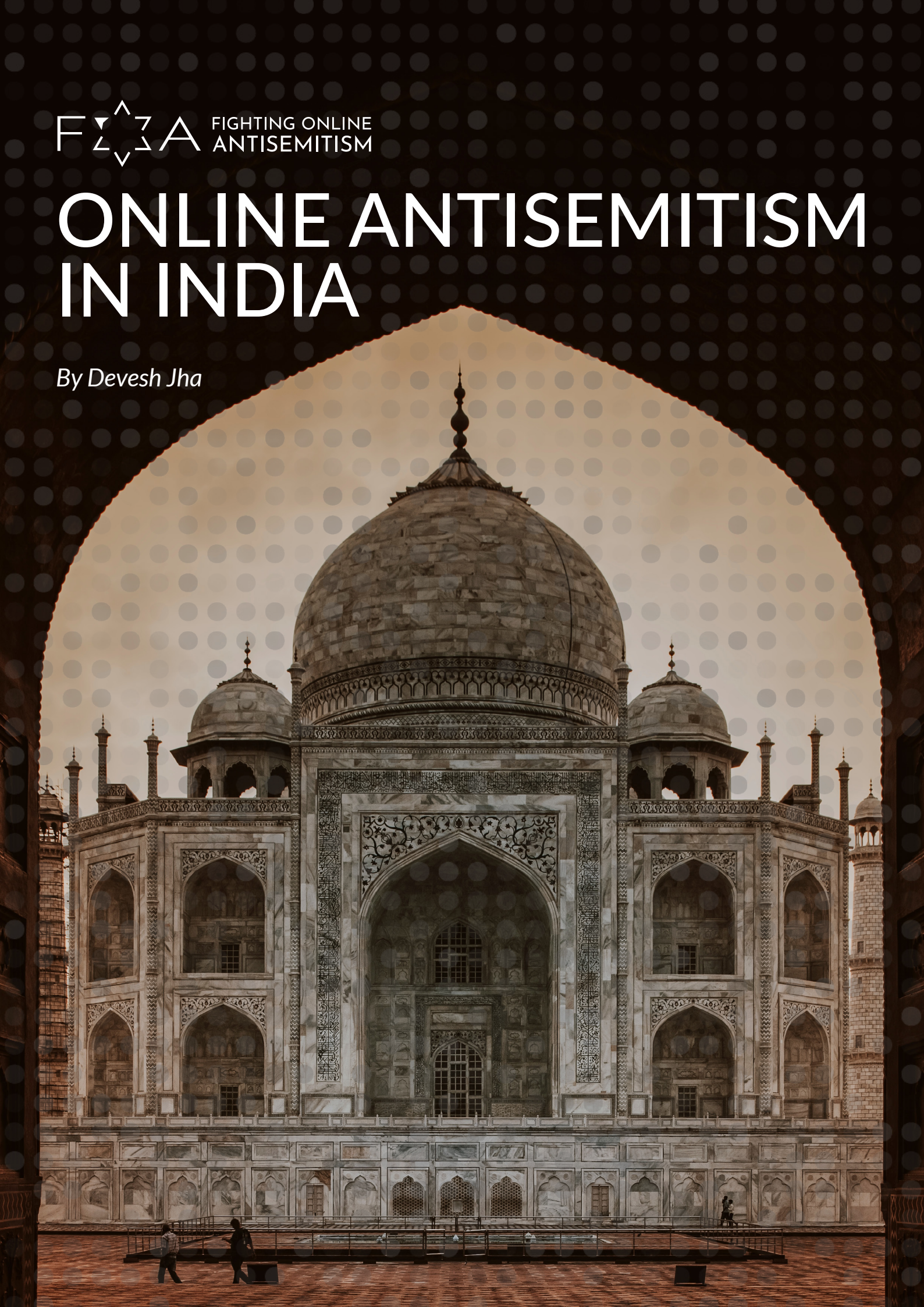


This report examines the landscape of online antisemitism in India, a country with a rich but small Jewish heritage spanning over 2,000 years.

Based on open-source review, policy analysis, and secondary data, including the ADL Global 100 index, the study maps the predominant forms of online antisemitic expression within India's digital ecosystem. The analysis identifies moderate but rising levels of online antisemitism concentrated on open platforms *(X, YouTube)* and closed networks (*WhatsApp*, *Telegram*).

Assessed risk remains low-to-moderate overall, owing to India's strong ties with Israel and its historically small Jewish population. Early warning signs include event-driven spikes, particularly following the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks. Policy implications call for stronger platform accountability, adoption of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism, and targeted monitoring without overreach on free speech.

[1]The ADL Global 100 Index measures the percentage of adults who agree with at least six of eleven established antisemitic stereotypes relating to Jewish power, loyalty, and influence. It measures prevalence of attitudes, not incidents or behavior. For full methodology, see: ADL (2014), ADL Global 100: An Index of Antisemitism, https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/Press-Conference-Deck-v4-May-12-2014.pdf

1. Introduction

India has maintained a history of tolerance toward its tiny Jewish community, which traces its roots back over 2,000 years. Jewish communities have been present in India for many centuries, long before the arrival of Islam and likely before the establishment of Christianity in the region. Indian Jewish communities include the Bene Israel, Cochin Jews, Baghdadi Jews, Bene Ephraim, and Bnei Menashe. At its mid-20th-century peak, the community numbered approximately 20,000–50,000; today, it stands at roughly 4,000–5,000 people, with many having emigrated to Israel. Despite this small presence, online antisemitism has grown in visibility, particularly since October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks and subsequent global events. This report maps the predominant forms of online antisemitism in India's digital ecosystem, primarily imported global tropes adapted to local political and religious contexts.

Key Research Questions

- What are the predominant forms of online antisemitism observed in the Indian digital ecosystem?
- What leading political and religious ideological influences shape online narratives regarding Jews and Israel in Indian society?
- Who are the leading online influencers in hate speech against Jews or Israel? On which platforms? Who are their followers? Which individuals or groups have gained the most traction in the last year, and why?
- What role do legal and regulatory frameworks play in addressing hate speech and antisemitism in India?

The analysis identifies moderate but rising levels of online antisemitism, concentrated on open platforms (*X*, *YouTube)* and closed networks (*WhatsApp*, *Telegram)*. Assessed risk remains low to moderate overall due to India's strong ties to Israel and small Jewish population, but early warning signs include event-driven spikes. Policy implications call for stronger platform accountability and targeted monitoring without overreach on free speech.

2. Political and Idealogical Influences

Discussion of Jews and Israel in India is shaped less by the country's small Jewish population than by broader political, religious, and geopolitical narratives. Historically, India's official position was more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, and Zionism was often viewed through an anti-colonial framework. In recent decades, however, India has significantly strengthened its political, military, and diplomatic relationship with Israel, especially under governments that frame Israel as a strategic partner in security, technology, and counterterrorism. As a result, public discourse in India today includes both strong pro-Israel sentiment and sharp anti-Israel criticism. Much of this criticism falls within the bounds of political speech. However, some online discourse crosses the line into antisemitism when it moves beyond criticism of Israeli policies and instead relies on classic anti-Jewish tropes, collective blame, conspiracy narratives, or denial of Jewish self-determination. Several overlapping ideological ecosystems shape this discourse online. In some left-leaning activist and academic spaces, anti-Zionist language is framed through anti-colonial and human-rights narratives.

In some Islamist online networks, narratives about Israel are influenced by religious framing and imported rhetoric from the wider Middle East, at times collapsing the distinction between

[2] (Philip, 2024)

Jews, Zionism, and the Israeli state. Fringe conspiratorial spaces, meanwhile, often recycle global antisemitic themes such as alleged Jewish control of media, finance, or politics, often adapted from foreign content rather than rooted in specifically Indian traditions. These narratives do not carry equal weight in Indian public life. Mainstream political discourse in India remains more favorable to Israel than in many other democracies, and overt antisemitism is not a dominant feature of national politics. At the same time, digital platforms make it easier for imported narratives to circulate quickly, especially during moments of geopolitical crisis, communal tension, or heightened polarization.

As a result, the challenge in India is not simply the presence of anti-Israel speech online, but the way global ideological conflicts are increasingly refracted through domestic political identities. This can create an environment in which antisemitic narratives remain secondary, but still gain traction during major events and become embedded in broader debates about nationalism, religion, and global power.

3. The Indian Digital Ecosystem

India's social media landscape is vast and diverse, with major platforms including *X*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *YouTube*, *WhatsApp*, *Telegram*. Open platforms (*X*, *YouTube*, *Instagram*) enable high visibility and rapid amplification of content. Closed or encrypted networks (*WhatsApp* groups, *Telegram* channels) allow private circulation with lower monitoring. These differences matter: open platforms drive public spikes during events, while closed networks sustain longer-term echo chambers.

Monitoring is challenged by scale, encryption, and varying platform compliance with Indian regulations. The review indicates that spikes are most visible on public platforms, while private and encrypted networks remain harder to assess systematically.

4. Prevalence and Patterns of Online Antisemitism

Online antisemitism in India manifests in three main imported narrative categories, each with varying levels of visibility:

Global Conspiracy Tropes

These include claims of "Jewish control" over media, finance, or governments, as well as Soros-related conspiracies and "New World Order" narratives. Such content appears in both English and regional languages and is often linked to broader anti-Western sentiment.

Islamist-Influenced Narratives

These narratives often frame Jews or Israel as enemies of Islam, drawing on rhetoric imported from the wider Middle East. In some cases, they include explicit calls for violence or organized boycotts. These narratives tend to become more visible in some Islamist-aligned online spaces and during periods of heightened attention to Gaza-related events.

Far Right or Conspiratorial Narratives

This category includes Holocaust distortion or denial, the use of Nazi symbolism (rare but present), and alignment with Western extremist ideologies. Compared to other categories, these narratives remain relatively marginal in the Indian context.

Overall visibility remains moderate compared to regions such as the Middle East and parts of Europe. According to the Anti-Defamation League Global 100 Index, antisemitic attitudes in India increased from approximately 20% in 2014 to around 39% in 2024.

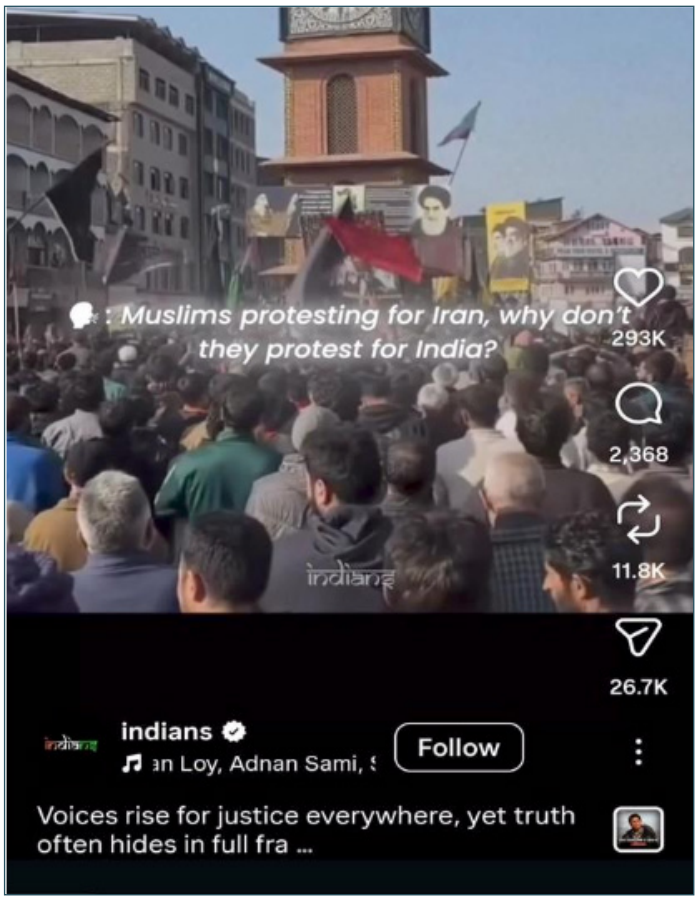
Antisemitic content is not concentrated within a single community. Instead, it appears across Islamist, left-activist, and fringe far-right spaces. Spikes tend to correlate with global events (such as October 7, 2023), campus protests, COVID-era conspiracy narratives, and domestic political developments.

Open platforms offer the highest visibility, while closed networks enable more sustained, less visible distribution. Overall levels remain lower than in global hotspots, reflecting India's historical tolerance and current relationship with Israel. However, the continued importation of foreign narratives represents a growing concern.

5. Actors and Amplifiers

The main actors involved in the spread of online antisemitic narratives in India include:

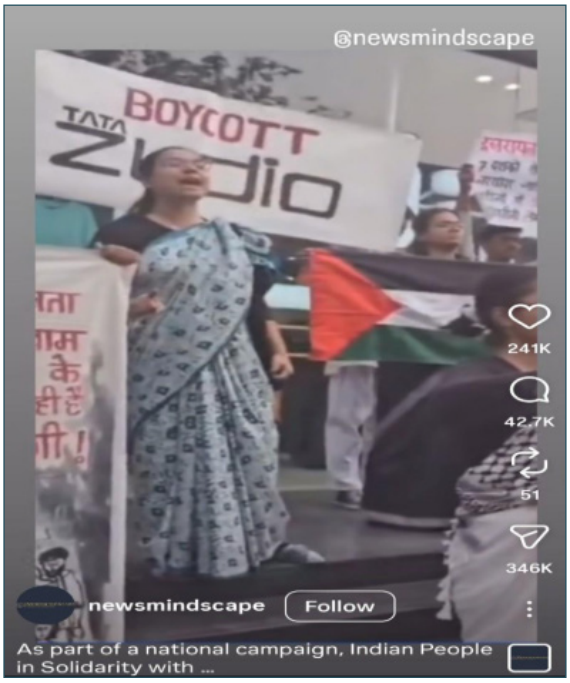
i) **Islamist networks and religious figures who frame discourse around Palestine solidarity in ways that may incorporate antisemitic themes.**



A gathering in Lal Chowk where flags associated with Palestine and Iran are displayed, reflecting solidarity with the broader West Asian political causes. In the Indian context, such expressions are sometimes linked to transnational Islamist narratives that frame conflicts in religious terms. While the post does not explicitly target Jewish communities, these narratives can, in certain cases, blur the line between political opposition to Israel and broader generalizations about Jews. Instagram.

ii) **Left-leaning political activists, student organizations, and intellectuals who promote anti-Zionist critiques that, in some cases, extend into antisemitic tropes. Academic institutions such as Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), and Jadavpur University have become focal points where the distinction between anti-Zionist activism and antisemitism is often blurred. This reflects a broader global trend in which campus discourse increasingly includes the delegitimization of Jewish national identity and self-determination.**

Mahindra, an Indian automobile manufacturing company with operations in Israel. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/reel/DMqMTwihCax/?igsh=eWR4YTdyMWtjeW56



Members of BDS protesting in front of Zudio, a fashion brand with ties to Israel. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/reel/DKQ__fNIUv6/?igsh=NnppYzM2bmhud3p4

Professor at JNU, Nivedita Menon speaking at a public gathering. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/reel/DN2nUn74vpv/?igsh=MTU0MWU5cnllbndrMA==

iii) **Fringe, far-right, or conspiracy-oriented accounts, which are less organized but still contribute to the spread of global antisemitic narratives.**

Post refers to a historical meeting between Subhas Chandra Bose and Adolf Hitler, romanticizing or normalizing association with Nazi Germany. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/reel/DV3K5G6D55Y/?igsh=d21qdDN3NGg1dmll

Organized groups appear to be relatively limited. Instead, amplification occurs through loosely connected online networks. Most narratives are imported—via Middle Eastern media, global activist discourse, or Western conspiracy content—and are then adapted within Indian digital spaces rather than originating locally.

At the same time, pro-Israel Hindu-nationalist voices frequently respond to these narratives, contributing to a polarized online environment.

Identifying specific influencers fell outside the scope of this study and would require targeted platform-level analysis. In the Indian context, discourse about Jews and Israel is often less about Jewish communities themselves and more about their symbolic role within broader Hindu–Muslim tensions. As a result, global conflicts are frequently reframed through domestic identity politics across digital platforms.

For example, global Jewish conspiracy narratives have circulated in Indian far-right spaces on Telegram and X, particularly during periods of global crisis such as COVID-19 or escalations in the Israel–Palestine conflict.

6. Legal and regulatory Context

India does not possess legal provisions that address antisemitism as a distinct or specialized category of hate speech. Instead, harmful expressions targeting Jewish individuals or the community are addressed through broader legal frameworks governing religious sentiments, public order, and intercommunal relations. In practice, this means antisemitic discourse becomes actionable primarily when it constitutes incitement to violence, promotes communal hostility, or deliberately insults religious beliefs.

6.1 / The 2026 Regulatory Pivot: IT Rules Amendments

While India's broader regulatory framework has historically provided authorities with significant tools to respond to harmful content, the landscape shifted fundamentally in early 2026.

The Three-Hour Mandate: Following the 2026 amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, social media platforms are now required to remove content deemed unlawful by the government or courts within a mandatory three-hour window.

Safe Harbor Vulnerability: Failure to comply with these expedited timelines results in the automatic loss of "safe harbor" protection under Section 79 of the IT Act. This shifts the platform's status from an intermediary to a publisher, making them legally liable for antisemitic content posted by users.

Influencer and User Oversight: As of April 2026, regulatory authority has expanded beyond large platforms to include individual social media users and influencers. Under new directives, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) can issue direct blocking orders for content produced by independent creators without prior judicial authorization.

6.2 / Data Privacy and Encryption (DPDP 2025)

The operationalization of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules 2025 has significantly altered the monitoring of closed and encrypted networks.

Rule 23 and Unmasking: New provisions allow the state to demand private users' data from services such as WhatsApp and Telegram to investigate "threats to public order". This enables authorities to unmask the originators of viral antisemitic disinformation or organized hate campaigns within semi-closed ecosystems.

Synthetic Content Regulation: Platforms are now legally mandated to identify and watermark AI-generated "Synthetically Generated Information" (SGI). This specifically targets the rapid spread of deepfake-driven global conspiracy tropes.

6.3 / Enforcement Challenges and Institutional Gaps

Despite these robust new tools, enforcement remains uneven and is frequently driven by broader concerns regarding domestic communal tension rather than a granular focus on antisemitism. Given the small size of the Jewish population, antisemitism is rarely prioritized as a standalone issue in platform governance or state law enforcement.

Risk Assessment and Strategic Implications

Overall risk of online antisemitism in India is low-to-moderate. The tiny Jewish community faces limited offline threats, and mainstream politics remain pro-Israel. Early warning indicators include event-driven spikes (e.g., post-October 7 surges), rising importation of global tropes, and polarization in closed networks.

Implications for platforms include greater transparency, faster removal of explicit incitement, and use of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism for consistent policy application.

Research gaps remain in the quantitative monitoring of Indian-language content and closed platforms. Strategic focus should prioritize education, cross-community dialogue, and targeted enforcement rather than broad censorship. For example, during the 2023 Israel-Hamas conflict, some online content in and around India drew comparisons between Gaza and Kashmir, while broader social media discourse became sharply polarized between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian camps; in some cases, this polarization overlapped with disinformation, anti-Muslim rhetoric, and imported antisemitic tropes.

Conclusion

This analysis shows that online antisemitism in India is real but contained—primarily imported, event-driven, and secondary to broader geopolitical alignments. The Indian case illustrates broader global trends: digital media accelerates the spread of foreign antisemitic narratives, even in historically tolerant societies with strong Israel ties. It also highlights how left-Islamist alliances and conspiracy ecosystems can sustain hate despite official policies.

Future research should track Indian-language content, platform-specific trends, and the interplay between Hindutva pro-Israel stances and minority narratives. By strengthening regulatory enforcement, platform accountability, and public awareness, India can continue its tradition of coexistence while addressing this emerging digital challenge.

Fighting Online Antisemitism remains committed to evidence-based monitoring and advocacy.

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