



B'NAI B'RITH
INTERNATIONAL



FIGHTING ONLINE
ANTISEMITISM

THE “ZOG” SURGE

A Data-Driven Analysis of Antisemitic Narrative
Shifts During the Iran War

JULY 2026

B'NAI B'RITH INTERNATIONAL • FIGHTING ONLINE ANTISEMITISM

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A joint publication of **B’nai B’rith International** and **Fighting Online Antisemitism (FOA)**.

About B’nai B’rith International. Established in 1843, B’nai B’rith International is committed to safeguarding Jewish life; tackling antisemitism; ensuring Holocaust remembrance, restitution and education and tackling denial and distortion; advancing relations with Israel; providing safe and affordable housing for low-income seniors; championing diversity and helping communities in crisis. As the oldest Jewish advocacy and service organization operating today, through engagement with the United Nations, European Union institutions, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States, governments, and other relevant stakeholders, we promote human dignity and combat all forms of discrimination. B’nai B’rith pursues both legislative and non-legislative tools to safeguard Jewish life and build more tolerant, inclusive societies. The B’nai B’rith Office of European Union Affairs advances these objectives in Brussels around the European Union institutions.

About Fighting Online Antisemitism (FOA). Founded in 2020, Fighting Online Antisemitism (FOA) is an international organization dedicated to combating antisemitism and other forms of hate in the digital sphere. Through monitoring, research, advocacy, education, and engagement with governments, international institutions, technology companies, and civil society partners, FOA works to identify and counter antisemitic narratives, online extremism, and disinformation. FOA empowers individuals and communities to report antisemitic content, promotes accountability among digital platforms, and advances policy solutions that protect democratic values and human dignity. By combining grassroots action with evidence-based advocacy, FOA helps build safer, more inclusive online and offline societies.

Data collection supported by TEV (Action and Protection Foundation) as external data partner.

Executive Summary

Major geopolitical crises reshape online discourse, creating opportunities for extremist actors to inject conspiracy theories, misinformation, and hate narratives into mainstream political conversations. The military confrontation between Israel, Iran, and the United States in early 2026 generated precisely such an environment. While the conflict has since been followed by diplomatic efforts and a preliminary U.S.-Iran agreement, the online dynamics that emerged during the crisis continue to fester. Understanding how antisemitic narratives evolved and spread during this period can help policymakers, platforms, and civil society organizations better respond to future crises.

This report builds upon the earlier FOA analysis, *How Antisemitic Conspiracies Are Hijacking the Iran War Narrative*, which documented the emergence of narratives alleging that the conflict was driven not by state interests or security considerations, but by hidden Jewish, Zionist, or Israeli influence. Across social media platforms, long-standing antisemitic tropes increasingly appeared within discussions that presented themselves as foreign policy analysis, anti-war activism, or criticism of political institutions.

To examine this phenomenon quantitatively, Fighting Online Antisemitism (FOA) and B’nai B’rith International conducted a **comparative analysis of online discourse** across two equivalent 38-day periods in 2026: a pre-conflict baseline period and the first 38 days following the outbreak of hostilities. The study examined thousands of posts across major social media platforms containing keywords, coded language, and conspiracy narratives alleging covert Jewish, Zionist, or Israeli influence over governments, political leaders, and international affairs.

The findings reveal a **substantial increase in both the volume and visibility of antisemitic conspiracy narratives during the conflict period**. Within the monitored dataset, content associated with these narratives increased by more than 217%, rising from 988 posts during the baseline period to 3,138 posts during the conflict period. **Public engagement also increased significantly**, with conspiracy-related content receiving more than twice the total volume of likes and approximately ten times the volume of shares compared to the pre-conflict period.

Beyond the increase in volume, the data demonstrates a notable **shift in the structure of the discourse** itself. Prior to the conflict, antisemitic conspiracy narratives were relatively fragmented, relying on a mixture of references to secret elites, “shadow governments,” global cabals, and anti-establishment themes. As the conflict unfolded, these narratives increasingly converged around more explicit claims that Jewish or Israeli actors exercised hidden control over Western governments and foreign policy.

The clearest indicator of this shift was the **rapid growth of the “Zionist Occupied Government” (ZOG) conspiracy theory**. Explicit references to ZOG increased more than fourfold during the conflict period, while the proportion of monitored content centered on the trope rose from 49% of the baseline sample to 63% of the wartime dataset. The findings suggest that broader conspiratorial grievances were increasingly reframed through an explicitly antisemitic lens, transforming a fringe extremist concept into a central organizing narrative across multiple online communities.

The report also identifies several mechanisms that facilitated this process. **Existing conspiracy ecosystems adapted rapidly** to unfolding events, incorporating themes related to alleged Israeli influence, claims of dual loyalty, accusations of foreign manipulation of U.S. policy, and narratives linking geopolitical developments to pre-existing conspiracy theories. In many cases, these narratives blurred the distinction between legitimate political criticism and conspiratorial claims rooted in antisemitic assumptions, enabling extremist ideas to circulate more widely among mainstream audiences.

Taken together, the findings indicate the ability of longstanding antisemitic frameworks to adapt to contemporary events and integrate themselves into broader public debates. As digital platforms continue to serve as primary arenas for political discussion, understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective responses to online hate and protecting democratic discourse during periods of international instability.

Methodology

The analysis assesses how antisemitic conspiracy narratives evolved during the 2026 US and Israel-Iran crisis and whether the conflict altered both the prevalence and structure of online antisemitic discourse.

To isolate the impact of the conflict, the research employed a comparative analysis of online content collected before and during the period of active hostilities. By examining equivalent timeframes and tracking specific conspiracy narratives across multiple platforms, the study sought to identify measurable changes in volume, engagement, and thematic focus:

- **Baseline Period (January 21 – February 27, 2026):** Establishing the normative distribution of narratives prior to the war.
- **War Period (February 28 – April 6, 2026):** Capturing immediate rhetorical adaptation following the onset of military operations.

The research was conducted in three core steps:

1. **Defining the Keyword List:** Developing a comprehensive list of targeted keywords, phrases, and dog-whistles representing or implying Jewish, Zionist, or Israeli covert control and manipulation of sovereign national governments and global foreign policy.
2. **Data Collection & Monitoring Partnership:** FOA and B'nai B'rith conducted the monitoring and analysis of content across major social media platforms. Data collection was supported by an external data partner, TEV – Action and Protection Foundation, which assisted in the identification and extraction of relevant content from large cross-platform datasets. This process enabled the collection of thousands of posts from platforms including X, Telegram, Reddit, TikTok, LinkedIn, and VK across both research periods.
3. **Comparative Frequency Data Analysis:** Measuring and comparing the frequency, distribution, and user engagement metrics of these specific terms across the baseline and wartime datasets to track structural mutations in online hate.

Scope and Limitations

The findings presented in this report should be understood as indicators of broader trends within the online information environment rather than a comprehensive measurement of all antisemitic content published during the conflict period. The research focuses on a defined set of keywords, narratives, and coded expressions associated with allegations of Jewish, Zionist, or Israeli control over governments and foreign policy.

As with all keyword-based monitoring, some relevant content may fall outside the monitored taxonomy, while some posts may require contextual interpretation. Nevertheless, the comparative approach employed in this study provides a reliable basis for assessing changes in the prevalence, engagement, and evolution of these narratives over time.

Quantitative Findings

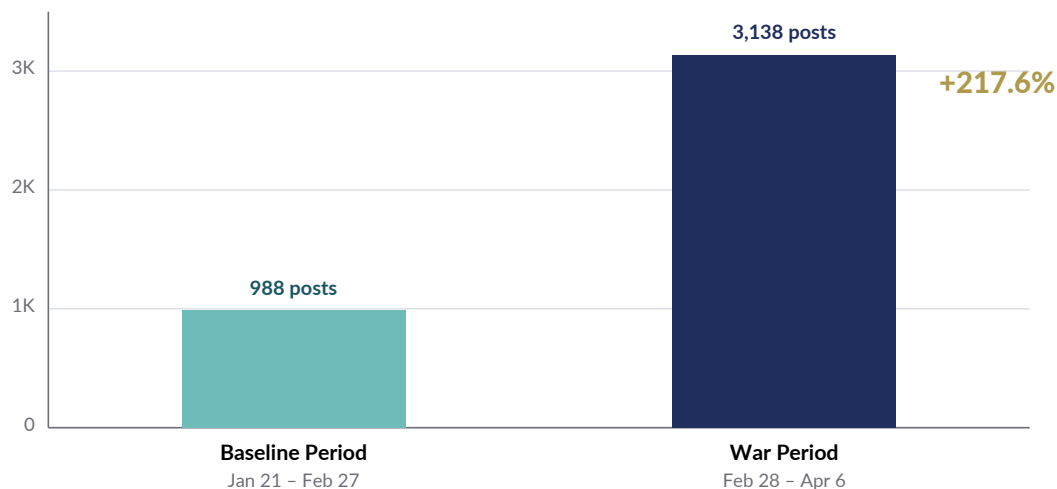
As documented in FOA's earlier report, *How Antisemitic Conspiracies Are Hijacking the Iran War Narrative*, the outbreak of hostilities was accompanied by the rapid spread of conspiracy narratives alleging that Western policy toward Iran was being shaped by hidden Jewish, Zionist, or Israeli influence. These narratives appeared in multiple forms, including claims that political leaders were acting on behalf of Israel, allegations of undue influence by the “Zionist lobby,” and conspiracy theories linking geopolitical developments to longstanding claims concerning Mossad activity and elite manipulation.

While these narratives initially appeared fragmented and often relied on coded language, they shared a common premise: that democratic decision-making had been supplanted by covert actors pursuing specifically Jewish or Israeli interests. As the conflict evolved, these themes increasingly converged around more explicit formulations of this worldview.

Prior to the conflict, shadow-government and anti-regime conspiracy narratives maintained a steady, fragmented baseline. Within our monitoring parameters, which filtered a specific keyword taxonomy out of an estimated macro pool of 10,000 general geopolitical posts across the web, the 38-day Baseline Period yielded a targeted sample of **988 posts**.

The outbreak of military operations on February 28 acted as a massive accelerant for this discourse across the digital ecosystem. During the 38-day War Period, the volume of conspiracy posts captured within our sample **exploded by 217.6%, reaching a total of 3,138 posts** (bringing the combined sample dataset to 4,126 posts across both periods). This increase highlights how the geopolitical crisis functioned as a direct volume multiplier specifically for ZOG-related content across the monitored networks.

Shadow-Government & ZOG Post Volume: Pre-War vs. Wartime



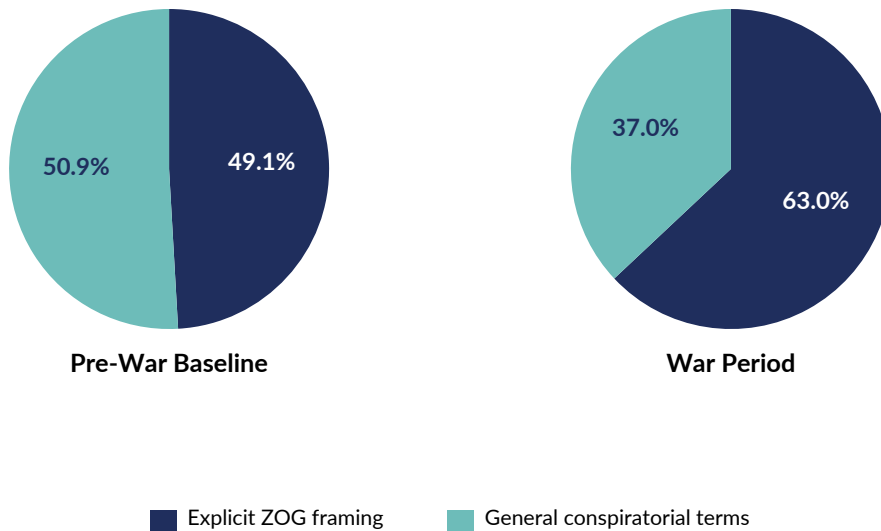
This graph compares the absolute volume of posts within the monitored sample that contain the designated shadow-government and ZOG keyword taxonomy.

Focusing the Narrative

The sampled data indicates that this increase was accompanied by a process of thematic consolidation. The fragmented “shadow government” terminology within the sample rapidly converged around a single, explicit narrative: the “Zionist Occupied Government” (ZOG) trope.

- **In the Baseline Sample:** Explicit ZOG and targeted antisemitic framing were relatively contained, appearing in **485 posts** and accounting for **49.1%** of the baseline sample traffic, heavily localized within fringe far-right nodes.
- **In the War Period Sample:** Explicit ZOG framing completely dominated the captured data, more than quadrupling to **1,977 mentions** and capturing a dominant **63.0%** share of the entire wartime sample dataset.

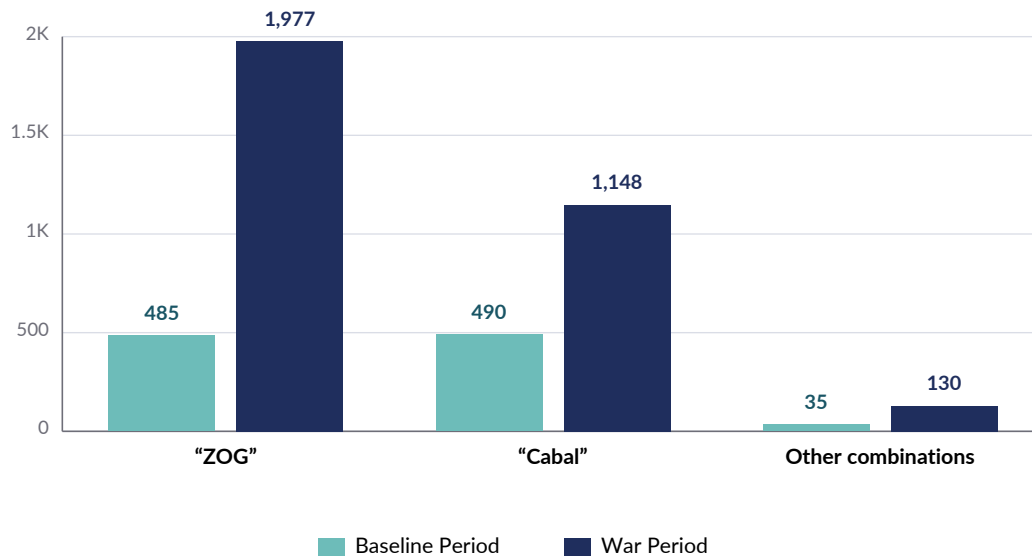
Narrative Share: Explicit ZOG Framing



Share of explicit ZOG framing within the monitored sample, before and during the war.

This structural realignment within the sample demonstrates that generalized terms like “Cabal” (which rose to **1,148 mentions** within the wartime sample) did not operate independently. Instead, they functioned as a rhetorical funnel. Populist anti-regime grievances and standard anti-war isolationism captured in the sample were systematically retrofitted into the ZOG framework. This allowed a highly specific antisemitic libel – that Western democratic sovereignty has been compromised by Jewish and Israeli interests – to masquerade as legitimate foreign policy debate or conventional anti-war sentiment.

Keyword Frequency Distribution: Baseline vs. War Period



This graph tracks the shift in specific conspiracy keywords within the monitored sample. During the baseline period, generalized terms like "cabal" were more prominent. However, following the outbreak of hostilities, the explicit antisemitic term "ZOG" experienced a massive surge, becoming the dominant keyword and accounting for over 61% of the wartime dataset.

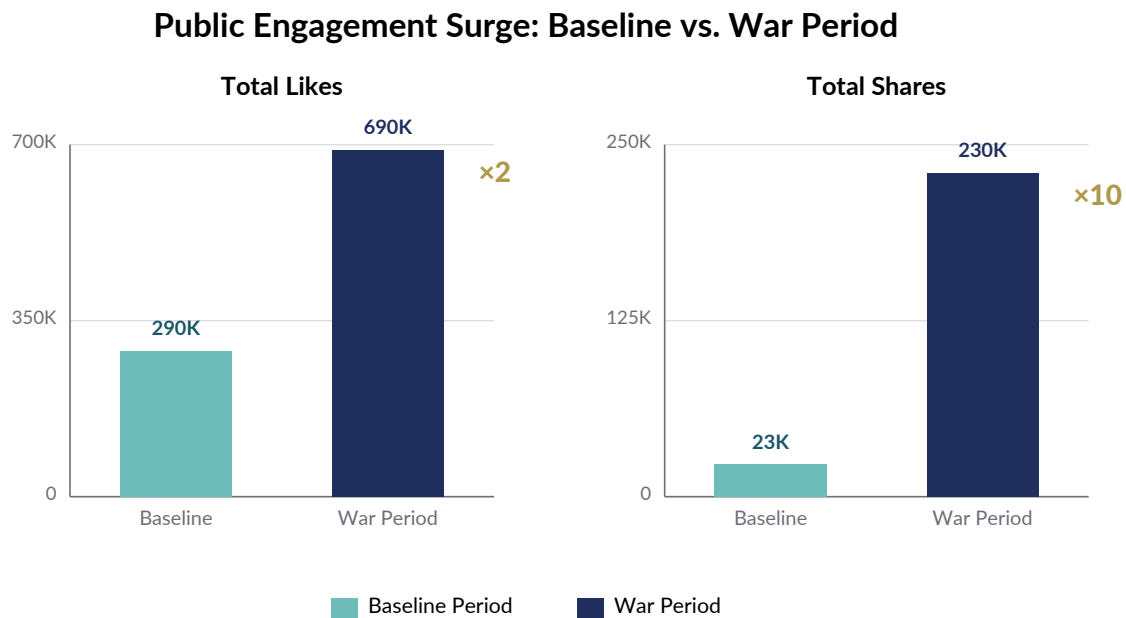
The outbreak of the US-Israel-Iran war instantly focused broad online anger into a single direction. Within 48 hours of initial military strikes, broad anti-establishment targets were systematically replaced by localized labels: "Zionists," "Mossad," and "Jewish control". Extremist networks executed this tactical shift using two primary rhetorical themes:

- **Israeli Blackmail:** Propagandists quickly weaponized the existing fixation on Jeffrey Epstein to explain the conflict. They claimed the U.S. attacked Iran only because **Israel was blackmailing American leaders**, rather than for actual foreign policy reasons. These claims drove a massive 350% spike in posts combining Epstein and the Mossad.
- **"America Last":** Standard isolationist arguments were weaponized by funneling populist anti-war sentiment into the slogan "Israel First means America Last". Traditional political critiques mutated into explicit claims of treason, asserting U.S. sovereignty was surrendered to the "Zionist Lobby".

Platform Dynamics & Public Engagement

During the war, the ZOG conspiracy theory quickly spread into much broader digital spaces. Posts pushing this narrative saw a major surge in public interaction compared to the pre-war period. Following the outbreak of the conflict, the rhetoric became highly viral, with **more than double the total volume of likes and a tenfold (10x) increase in shares** compared to the baseline period. This sharp increase highlights how the geopolitical crisis functioned as a direct multiplier for the reach and velocity of antisemitic content online.

Likewise, the average number of likes per post grew by 21% (from 1,858 to 2,246), while average shares rose by 29% (from 284 to 367). This measurable growth demonstrates that the conflict heavily amplified public engagement, causing antisemitic rhetoric to spread much faster across social media.



This graph illustrates the dramatic surge in public interaction with posts promoting shadow-government and “ZOG” conspiracy narratives. Following the outbreak of the conflict, the rhetoric became highly viral, yielding more than double the total volume of likes and a tenfold (10x) explosion in shares compared to the baseline period. This sharp increase highlights how the geopolitical crisis functioned as a direct multiplier for the reach and velocity of antisemitic content online.

The Enforcement Failure: Post-Report Platform Outreach

Social media platforms rely on basic keyword filtering that fails when extremist networks disguise classic antisemitic tropes as legitimate foreign policy debate. Following FOA’s March 10, 2026 report, we flagged explicit violations – including the use of “ZOG” and additional conspiracy theories – to platform trust and safety teams. The official responses and enforcement actions were highly deficient:

- Meta:** In its formal response, Meta relied on generic policy recitations rather than addressing FOA’s specific data. Its enforcement remains ineffective due to a major loophole: Meta conditions its ban on “ZOG” to instances where it is “clearly” used as a proxy for Jewish people. Extremists easily exploit this ambiguity by framing antisemitic tropes as political debate. This structural flaw explains why **Meta’s automated systems failed to remove 70% of the reported content**, exposing a severe gap between corporate rhetoric and actual enforcement.
- Twitter (X):** The platform failed to provide a response or official explanation regarding the report’s findings. To date, the only correspondence received is an automated system confirmation acknowledging that the report was received.

This widespread failure to effectively intervene – evidenced by Meta’s systemic lack of enforcement despite clear policy definitions, and Twitter’s complete lack of engagement – underscores a critical disconnect between stated platform policies and actual moderation practices during live geopolitical crises.

Social Media Platforms’ Responses

Following the compilation of this report, we reached out to major social media platforms to share our findings and urge them to improve their content moderation. Below is an analysis of their responses and current status:

Meta: Meta provided a structured but largely boilerplate response that focuses on theoretical policy frameworks rather than addressing the concrete enforcement gaps highlighted in our findings.

In their response, Meta stated that *“there is no place for antisemitism or any other form of hateful conduct on Meta’s platforms,”* pointing to existing rules against Holocaust denial, modern blood libels, and *“harmful stereotypes about the collective power of Jewish people.”* They also highlighted their policy regarding *“proxy attacks using ‘Zionist’”* and claimed to invest *“billions of dollars in safety and security”* to enable *“proactive detection at scale”* via AI systems.

However, this response underscores a significant disconnect between official guidelines and actual platform reality. While Meta acknowledged that the main enforcement challenge lies in implicit attacks using *“coded language and proxy terms,”* their existing tools remain highly ineffective. Despite the company’s stated commitments and massive resources, the widespread presence of the antisemitic conspiracies documented in this report proves that their automated and human moderation systems routinely fail to capture and mitigate these evolving threats on the ground.

TikTok: We shared our recommendations with TikTok and subsequently held a joint meeting with their team to discuss our findings and brainstorm potential solutions.

X (formerly Twitter): X did not respond to our inquiry or provide any feedback regarding the findings and recommendations.

YouTube: YouTube was not contacted during this specific round of outreach.

Conclusion

The findings of this report suggest that the principal impact of the conflict on the online information environment was not merely an increase in antisemitic content, but a shift in the way antisemitic narratives were articulated and disseminated.

Prior to the conflict, narratives alleging hidden Jewish, Zionist, or Israeli influence existed largely as a fragmented collection of conspiracy theories circulating across different online communities. During the conflict period, these narratives increasingly converged around common explanatory frameworks, creating a more coherent and easily transmissible ecosystem of antisemitic discourse.

This process demonstrates the adaptability of contemporary antisemitism. Rather than relying exclusively on traditional forms of hate speech, antisemitic narratives increasingly embed themselves within broader political debates, attaching themselves to discussions of foreign policy, national sovereignty, institutional trust, and international conflict. Geopolitical crises appear particularly conducive to this process, providing both heightened public attention and a continuous flow of events that can be incorporated into pre-existing conspiratorial worldviews.

Understanding these dynamics is essential not only for addressing antisemitism, but also for safeguarding informed democratic debate during periods of international instability.

Recommendations: Targeted Action Items for Digital Safety

To address these systemic vulnerabilities, FOA and B'nai B'rith International recommend the following structural interventions:

- **Establish Crisis Fast-Tracks for Trusted Flaggers:** Platforms must provide priority queues for verified civil society organizations during active geopolitical crises. When a recognized watchdog flags a high-reach post combining crisis terminology with antisemitic tropes (like “ZOG”), the report must bypass automated bots and go directly to a human moderator for rapid review within a strict 24-hour window.
- **Demonetize Trending Conspiracy Rhetoric:** Platforms must cut off the financial incentives that drive viral hate. Accounts participating in creator revenue-sharing programs (specifically on X and YouTube) should be instantly demonetized if they leverage explicit or coded antisemitic frameworks to drive engagement during international conflicts.
- **Deploy UX “Friction” and Contextual Labels:** Instead of relying solely on binary “remove or ignore” choices, platforms should introduce user-interface friction. Trending posts that cross-reference mainstream events with conspiracy topics (e.g., the Epstein narrative combined with military recruitment) should automatically trigger informational overlays or warning labels, pointing users to verified, neutral reporting.
- **Update Reporting Categories for Coded Hate:** Current user-reporting menus are too generic (e.g., “Hate Speech”). Platforms should add specific sub-categories or contextual reporting tags during crises, allowing users to explicitly flag “Coded Antisemitism” or “Conspiracy-Driven Harassment.” This provides cleaner data for trust and safety teams to act upon.
- **Increase Transparency Around Crisis-Related Enforcement:** Platforms should publish periodic transparency updates during major geopolitical crises, including information on the volume of hate-related reports received, enforcement actions taken, and the treatment of coded forms of antisemitism. Greater transparency would enable independent assessment of whether existing policies are being effectively implemented.
- **Address Crisis-Driven Antisemitism Within Existing Online Safety Frameworks:** European policymakers, regulators, platforms, and civil society actors should therefore explore ways to ensure that crisis-related risks, including the amplification of coded antisemitic narratives, receive appropriate attention within existing online safety and risk-management frameworks, including in the context of the DSA.