FIGHTING ONLINE ANTISEMITISM

Report:

Addressing Anti-Zionism on Social Media:

Evidence-Based Recommendations for TikTok, Meta, X and YouTube

July 11, 2024

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About Fighting Online Antisemitism

Fighting Online Antisemitism is the front line against online antisemitism, using a holistic approach that combines antisemitic content monitoring and removal, educational programming, international cooperation, advocacy, and cutting-edge technology. As an Israeli-based NGO, we train volunteers, monitor social media, and raise awareness about the harm caused by antisemitism and online hate. Since 2020, our global team of volunteers has acted swiftly to remove tens of thousands of antisemitic content (according to the IHRA working definition of antisemitism) from major social networks, stopping the spread of violent, false, and hateful messages.

Since its inception, FOA has been actively monitoring antisemitic content on social media platforms. The task is carried out by volunteers who, upon joining our monitoring team, receive comprehensive training in identifying antisemitic content on social media. The training emphasizes the differences between hate content and legitimate discourse, as defined by the different social networks. We allocate significant resources to training our staff to distinguish legitimate criticism from hate content.

Executive Summary

Today we are witnessing a dangerous escalation in antisemitism, both online and offline. The October 7th Hamas attack on Israel has escalated already high tensions, leading to a significant increase in antisemitism. Given the rise in online hate, it is our firm belief that social media companies must adopt a more stringent stance against the evolving nature of antisemitism.

This report focuses on a single word, which has been increasingly used over the last years, and has, in increasingly wider contexts, become a code-word for Jew: that word is "Zionist" (or in other forms of the word, such as "Zio"). Using "Zionist" instead of the word "Jew" has a huge advantage: it can be argued that it is a political term or an argument on ideological grounds (like calling someone a communist or capitalist).

This argument fails when it is clear the term is used clearly as a substitution for Jews or, in some cases, Jewish Israelis. A simple rule of thumb is to substitute the word Jew or Israeli and see if that makes more sense in the context in which the term "Zionist" is being used. If it does, it is a clear indication that "Zionist" is being used as a substitute for Jew or Jewish Israeli. Jews and Israelis are protected categories under many social media companies' community rules as a religious or national group, respectively.

This report showcases examples of the word "Zionist" being used in such circumstances. Specifically, it gives examples of when "Zionist" is substituted for "Jew", in reference to Satan; when it is used in calls for violence (eg. #deathtozionists); when it is used in substitution for Israel or for Jews as dominating the global order; when it is used in substitution for Jews are controlling the media, banking, etc.; when it is used, in substitution for Jewish Israelis, as Nazi. In all of these contexts, the usage of the substitution of the word Zionist would be considered antisemitic under the IHRA Working Definition of antisemitism.

We view Meta's recent consideration of classifying certain instances of the use of the word Zionist (or its abbreviations) as hateful speech as a positive development, and have advised the social networks accordingly. Recognizing this change as a crucial step forward, we appreciate both Meta's efforts to uphold network standards against antisemitic and anti-zionist content.

Specifically, FOA recommends the following to add social media platforms:

- Including the term "Zionist" as a protected term in the following cases:
    - Calls for violence or harm to "Zionists", e.g. "Death to Zionists"
    - The use of Jewish and Zionist together in the same phrase eg. "Zionist Jews"

- Use the word Zionist in a dehumanization way, e.g. “Zionist pigs”, “Zionist animals”
- Classical antisemitic tropes where the word Zionists is used as a substitute for Jews; e.g. “Zionists steal money,” “Zionists want to control the world”
- Personal opinion - “I hate Zionists" when there is context indicating that it is a reference to Jews
- Comparing Zionists (the people, not the State of Israel or the ideological idea) to Nazis
- Calls for exclusion of Zionists as a group: “Zionists should not be allowed on campus”, “Zionists should not be allowed in hotels, theaters, etc.; "banning of Zionists" from events
- Disallow uses hateful anti-zionist hashtags, e.g .#DeathtoZionists, #FuckZionists.

- Adopt the IHRA working definition of antisemitism as part of hate speech policy.

Online Antisemitism and the Word "Zionist"

Background

Antisemitism has persisted throughout history and across societies, taking on various destructive manifestations. In the digital age, this age-old bigotry has transformed into online antisemitism, using the anonymity, reach, and speed of online social networks to disseminate hate speech, conspiracy theories, and disinformation about Jews at an exponential rate. The online world has become a fertile ground for antisemitic rhetoric, creating moderating challenges as well as highlighting the importance of understanding how hate is expressed and disseminated online.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, antisemitism took on a new form: targeting Jews via the Jewish State. This was spearheaded by the Soviet Union and its allies in the 1970s. In their view, they had nothing against Jews, only against the "colonialist, imperialist Zionist state." However, the critique went beyond Israel. Zionist became a convenient synonym for the word Jew.

The same is occurring today in the West. The use of "Zionist" as a lightly veiled word for "Jew." Today, antisemitic content is propagated by right-wing groups, who traditionally spread what is labeled as classic antisemitism, and those from left-wing groups, known for disseminating what is termed new antisemitism. Within this context, moderate right-wing individuals started to focus more on "Zions" rather than solely on Jews, while left-wing groups began to embrace aspects of classic antisemitism, such as the allegation that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus, who they claim was also Palestinian.

IHRA Definition of Antisemitism

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism[1] is the most universal and accepted definition of antisemitism today[2]. The IHRA currently has 35 Member Countries and 9 Observer Countries and over 1,100 institutions, including local government, universities, and sports teams have accepted the definition. The definition is widely used by governments, organizations, and individuals to identify and combat antisemitism.

[1] https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism
[2] https://combatantisemitism.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2022-IHRA-WDA-Adoption-_-Endorsement-Report_CAM.pdf

The IHRA definition includes a number of examples of antisemitic rhetoric: these include classic antisemitism (such as making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as a collective); Holocaust denial or distortion; and antisemitism in the Israeli context (such as applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation or drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis)[3].

A Study of Online Rhetoric on Real-World Violence

Researchers[4] have found a significant link between the online and offline spheres and real-world outcomes, demonstrating that, in extreme cases, online rhetoric can escalate into actual violence.

A study[5] from 2023 highlighted this connection, showing a marked increase in online hate speech following real-world incidents. In their view, this trend emphasizes the critical need for stringent content moderation in the wake of significant events and suggests that trends on fringe platforms may serve as early indicators of broader shifts across mainstream social media networks.

The research examines how hate speech promotes group unity while increasing prejudice against other groups. Through social media, individuals not only reinforce their personal and collective identities but also mobilize and coordinate collective actions using specific languages, symbols, and images. Such platforms potentially facilitate collective actions, thereby increasing the likelihood of violence.

FOA Manual and AI-Driven Monitoring and Reporting of Antisemitic Content

FOA's volunteers and AI system globally monitor, report and remove online antisemitic content based on the Working definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and the hate speech guidelines of the social networks. Developed in collaboration with Israeli high-tech companies Final, Cyabra, BrightData, the Israeli initiative Code For Israel and other companies, this cutting-edge system efficiently monitors content across diverse social media platforms. It streamlines the monitoring process, enabling swift identification and removal of antisemitic content within specific

[3]https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism

[4] Binder JF, Kenyon J. Terrorism and the internet: How dangerous is online radicalization? Front Psychol. 2022 Oct 13;13:997390. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.997390. PMID: 36312087; PMCID: PMC9606324.

[5] Lupu Y, Sear R, Velásquez N, Leahy R, Restrepo NJ, Goldberg B, Johnson NF. Offline events and online hate. PLoS One. 2023 Jan 25;18(1):e0278511. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0278511. PMID: 36696388; PMCID: PMC9876356.

social networks. This technology significantly enhances the capability of FOA-trained volunteers, enabling them to monitor, report, and remove larger volumes of antisemitic content compared to manual methods. Any new hashtag or trend the volunteers find is then also reported to our AI system.

FOA's unique system, automatically aggregates content through an external interface, leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assess each post based on the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and developing trends. Posts identified as highly antisemitic are promptly forwarded to FOA's volunteers for review. They assess and report the content to the respective social media platforms, urging its removal.

Categories of Antisemitic Content in 2023

FOA closely monitors the different antisemitic categories of content reported. The most common type of antisemitism category before and after October 7th was classic antisemitism, followed by antisemitic content related to Israel.

A significant portion of the content flagged by the FOA is antisemitism in the Israel context. For example, In 2022 almost 35% percent of the content reported to social networks was anti-Israel hate. Much of this content is not only hostile but also incites violence.

Following the Hamas attack on October 7th, the nature of reported antisemitic content changed dramatically. While instances of classic antisemitism and anti-Israel/anti-Zionist rhetoric decreased, more extreme forms of antisemitism saw a troubling rise. Content supporting terrorism surged from 1% to 8%, and incitement of violence increased significantly from 3.5% to 10%. This data indicates a worrying trend toward more severe and violent antisemitism in the aftermath of the attack.

Removal Rates of Anti-Zionist Content in 2023 on leading social media platforms

The term "Zionist" is sometimes used as a thinly veiled substitute for "Jew," perpetuating antisemitic stereotypes and narratives.

Despite efforts to flag and report such content, TikTok's classification often categorizes antisemitism in the Israel context as criticism or ideological expression, so it is not categorized as hate speech. This discrepancy in content moderation standards can lead to inconsistent outcomes in removing antisemitic content.

Similarly, on Meta platforms Facebook and Instagram, anti-Zionist content is not always categorized as hate speech unless specific criteria, such as using "Zionist" as a proxy for "Jew," are met[6,7]. Anti-Zionist content is only labeled antisemitic under specific circumstances, such as when the term "Zionists" is used as a proxy for Jews—a determination that is subjective and open to interpretation. Meta is reviewing its policy on this issue to ensure it effectively distinguishes between legitimate political discourse and hate speech, aiming to address concerns from various stakeholders about the balance between free expression and the prevention of harmful content.[8]

In July, following deliberations with stakeholders including FOA, Meta made an update to its policy regarding the term Zionist, announcing that it will “now remove speech targeting “Zionists” in several areas where our process showed that the speech tends to be used to refer to Jews and Israelis with dehumanizing comparisons, calls for harm, or denials of existence.”[9]

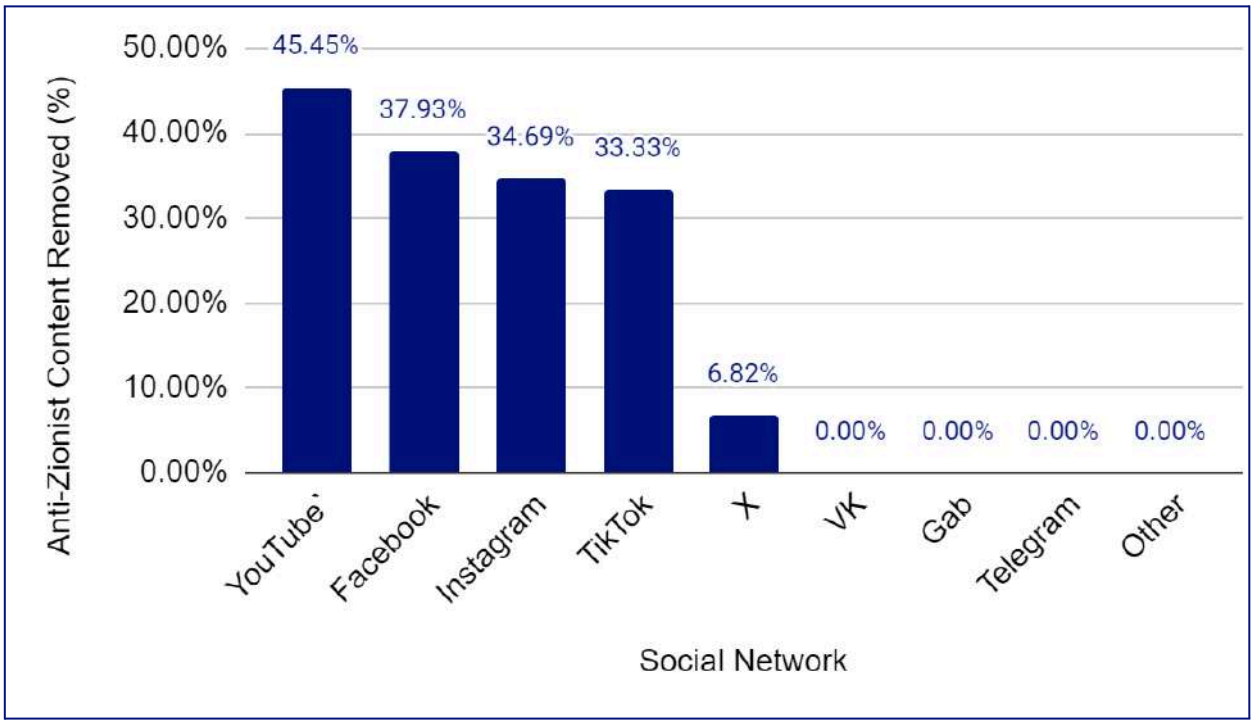
Even when FOA's trained volunteers worldwide identify and report antisemitic content in the Israeli context as a violation, such content in most cases is not removed, even when it’s a clear antisemitic case or violent content toward Jews and Israelis.

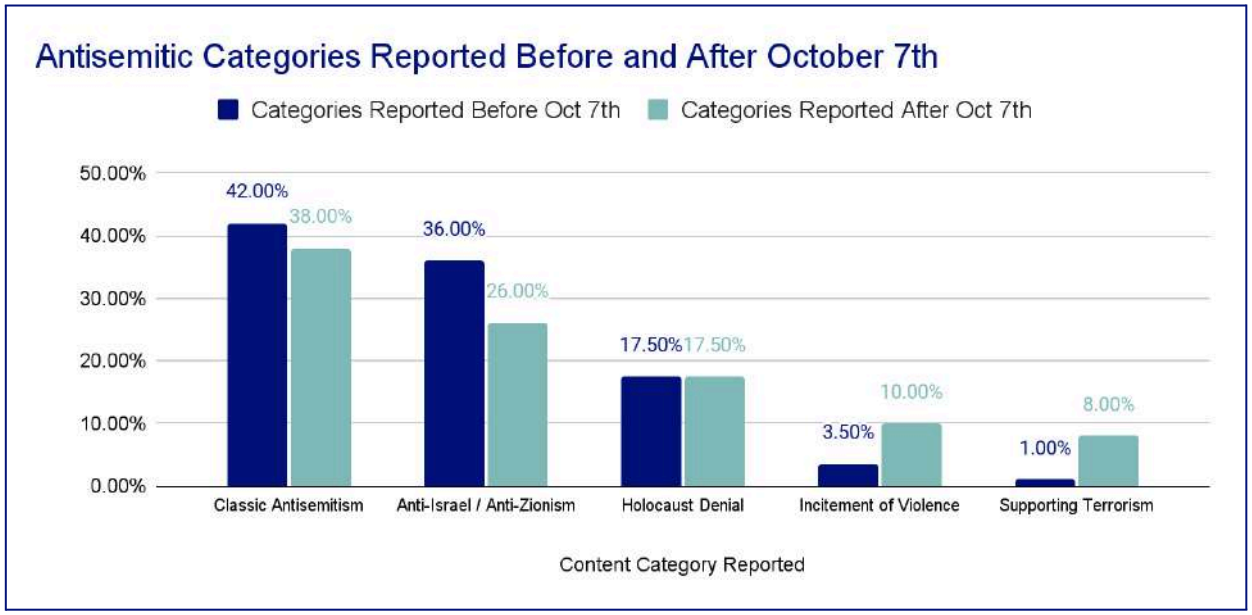
Social media platforms usually have community guidelines or content policies that they use to determine whether content should be removed. FOA as a “Trusted Flagger” directly reports these posts to the social platform where it goes under review again.

The table on the next page details the removal percentage of the antisemitic content in the Israeli context identified by FOA in 2023.

[6] https://theintercept.com/2021/05/14/facebook-israel-zionist-moderation/
[7] https://theintercept.com/2024/02/08/facebook-instagram-censor-zionist-israel/
[8] https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/02/09/meta-zionist-hate-speech/
[9] https://transparency.meta.com/Hate-Speech-Update-July2024

Antisemitic content removed in the Israel context

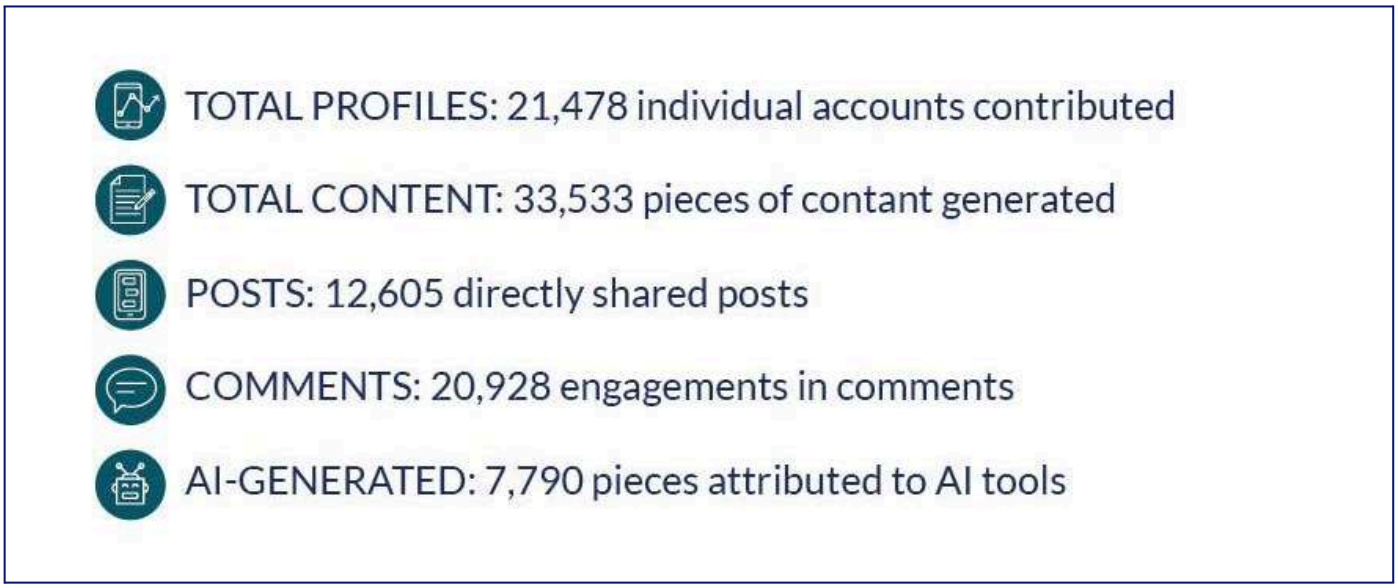




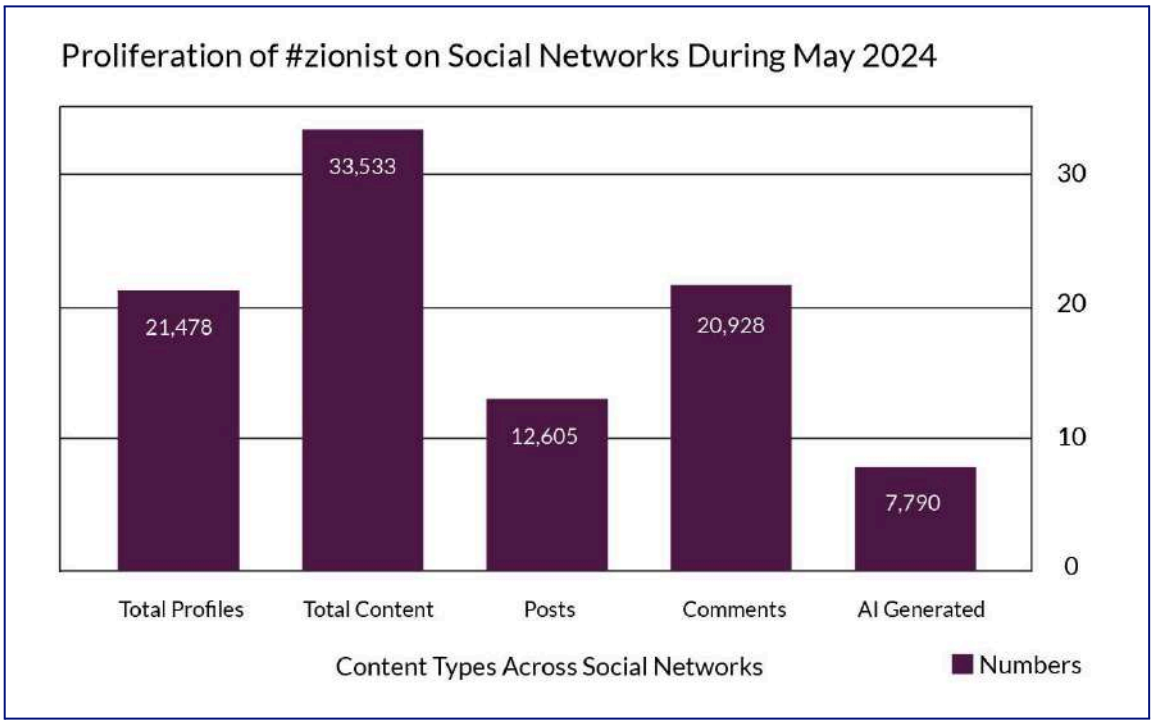
Prevalence

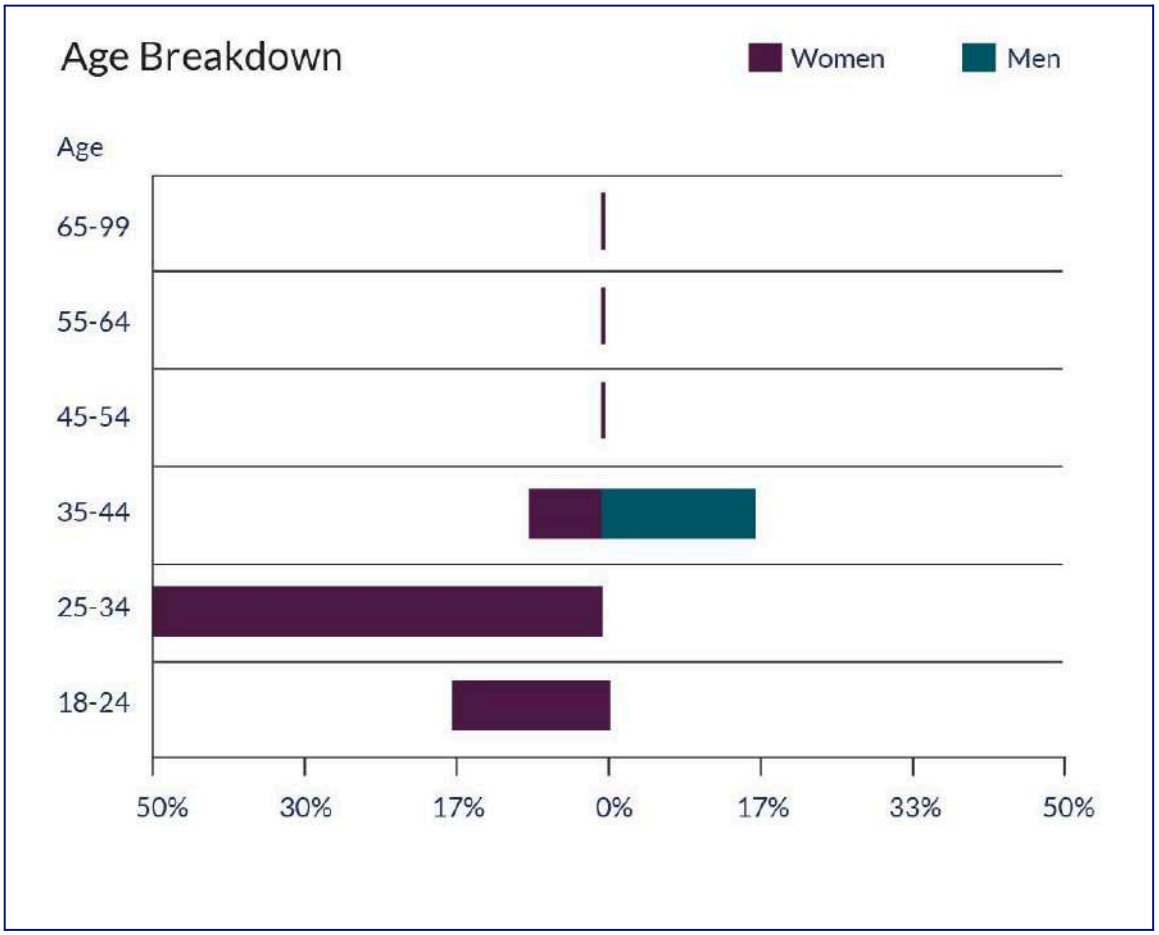
During the month of May 2024 (1 May, 2024 - 31 May, 2024), we found a total of 33,533 items of content using the hashtag #zionist on Meta (Facebook and Instagram), TikTok and X (formerly Twitter), Telegram, Youtube, . These items of content are found in 12,605 posts and 20,928 comments, from 21,478 user profiles - spread across the networks as follows:

A significant amount of these items of content, 7,790 (23%), were identified as AI-generated. In May 2024, there were 21,478 profiles and 33,533 pieces of content associated with the hashtag #zionist. The generated 478 content included 12,605 posts and 20,928 comments, with 7,790 identified as AI-generated.[10]



[10] The data was retrieved with the generous assistance of Cyabra.


Proliferation of #zionist on Social Networks During May 2024
33,533
21,478
12,605
20,928
7,790
30
20
10
0
Total Profiles
Total Content
Posts
Comments
AI Generated
Content Types Across Social Networks
Numbers


Age Breakdown
Women
Men
Age
65-99
55-64
45-54
35-44
25-34
18-24
50%
30%
17%
0%
17%
33%
50%

Zionist as an Antisemitic Term: Content Monitored and Reported by FOA on TikTok, Meta and X

In order to illustrate this phenomenon, included below are examples of posts where the word "Zionist" has been substituted for the word Jew (or Israeli). At the time of publication of this report, all of these examples were online on TikTok, Facebook or Instagram.

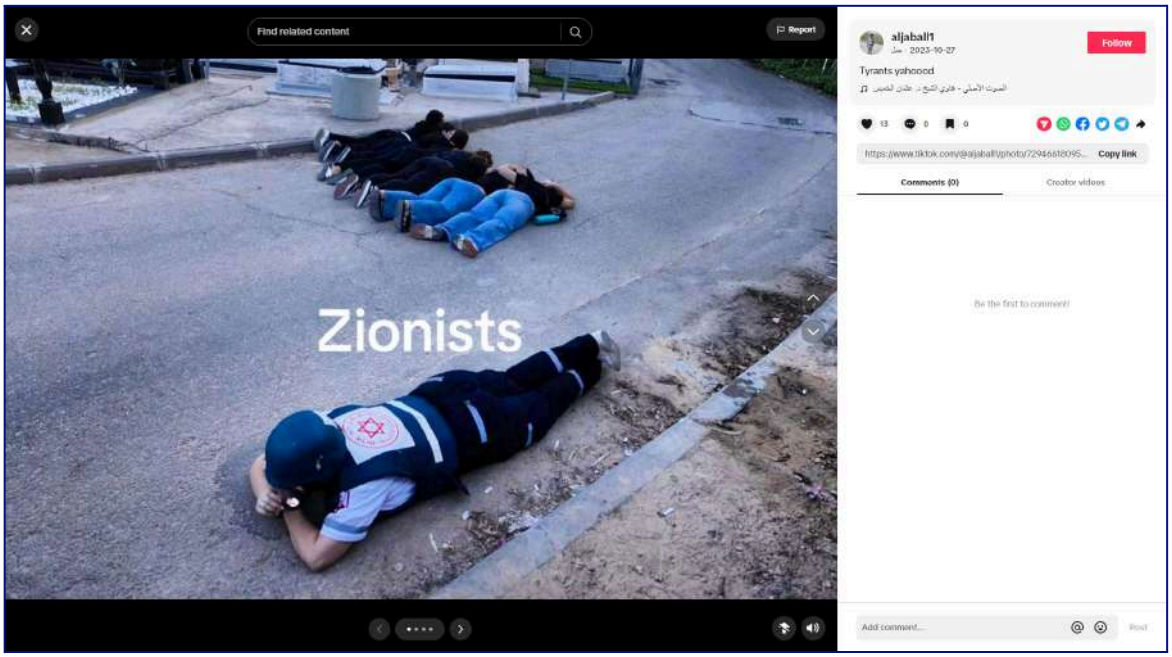
The examples are divided into the following categories:

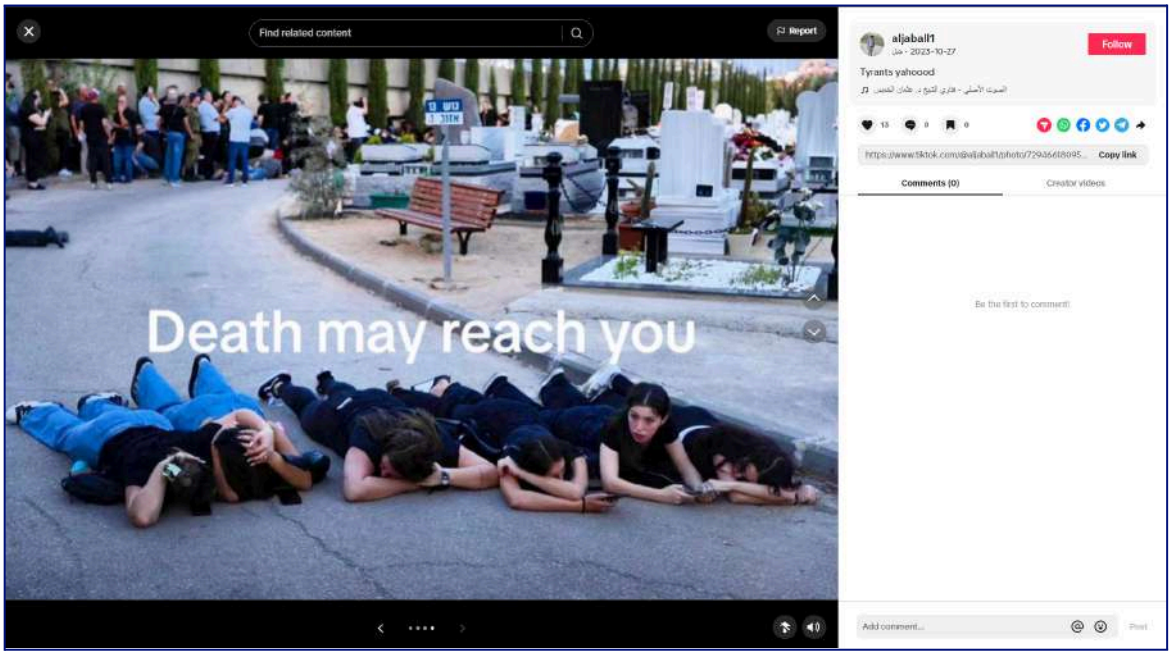
- Use of the word Zionist, in substitution for Jew, in reference to Satan, the devil, Lucifer, etc.
- Comparing Zionists with animals such as pigs or dogs in order to dehumanize them.
- Calls for violence against Zionists (eg. #deathtozionists). Such content should be removed under Meta's or TikTok's policy relative to Violence and Incitement which states: "Threats of violence are statements… or call for violence against a target…"[11]
- Zionist or Zionism when used, in substitution for Israel or for Jews, as dominating the global order.
- Zionists when it is used in substitution for Jews are controlling the media, banking, etc.
- Zionists when it is used, in substitution for Israelis, as Nazis.

In all of these contexts the usage of the substitution of the word Zionist would be considered antisemitic under the IHRA Working Definition of antisemitism.

[11] https://transparency.fb.com/policies/community-standards/violence-incitement/

Calls to Violence - TikTok

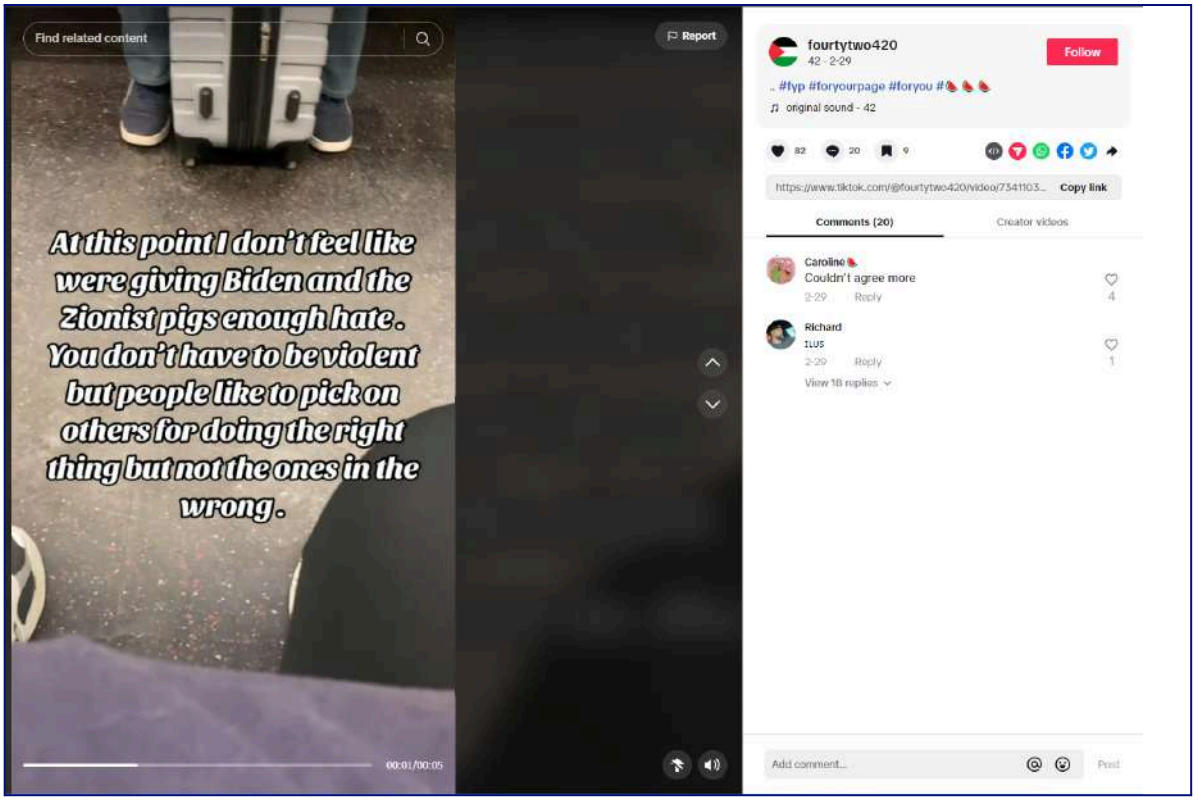




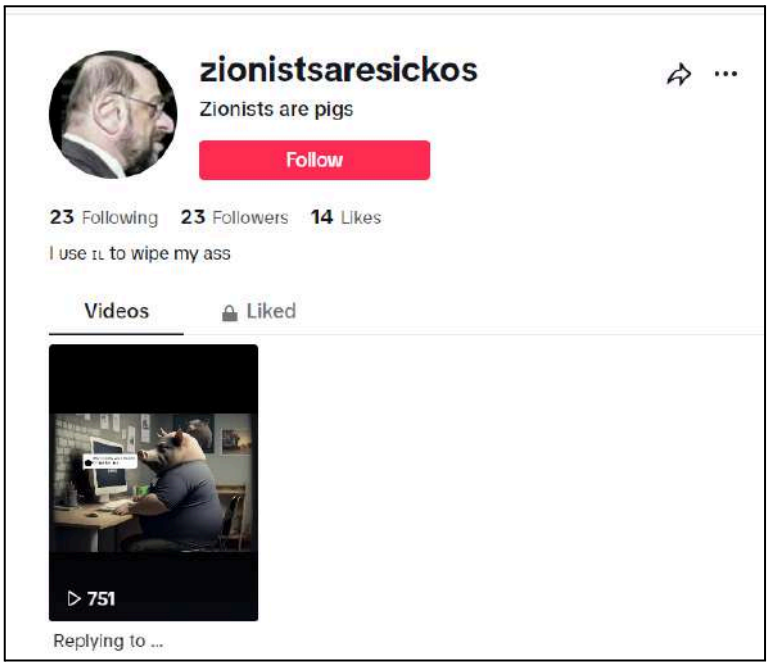
https://www.tiktok.com/@aljaball1/photo/7294661809573858565

Use of the word Zionist, in substitution for Jew, in reference to Satan, the devil, or Lucifer - TikTok

Dehumanization and calling “Zionist pigs” or “Zionist parasites” - TikTok



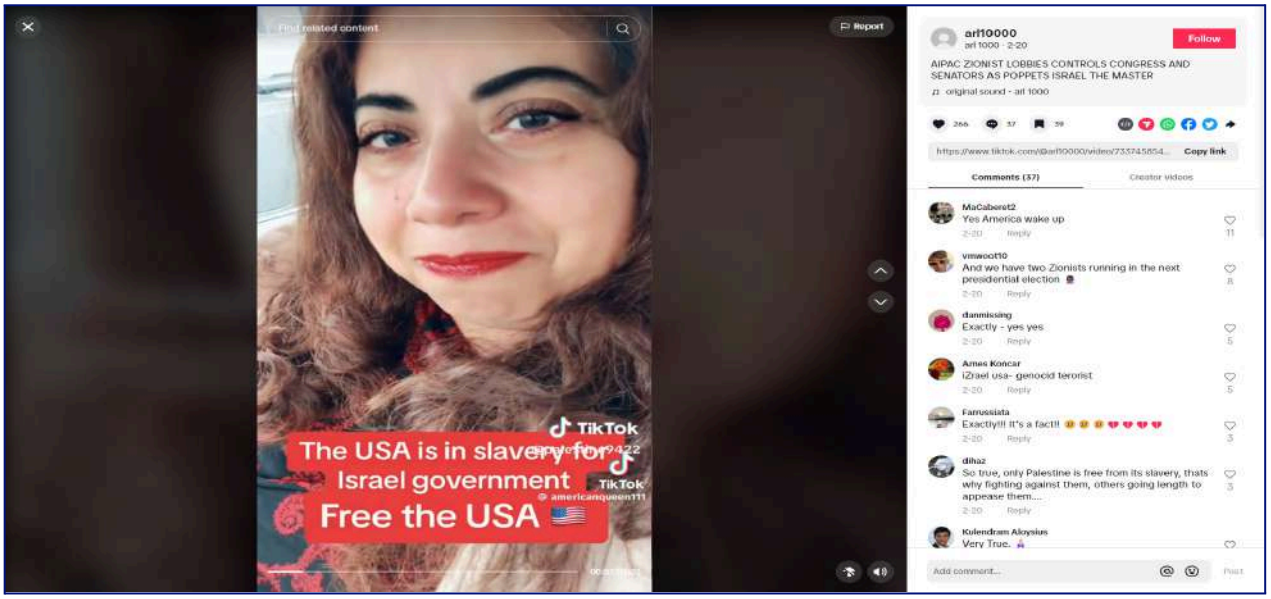
https://www.tiktok.com/@fourtytwo420/video/7341103851489217838?q=%23zionists%20%23pigs&t=1710053912615



https://www.tiktok.com/@donnybudianto1976/video/7300798487224945926?q=%23zionists%20%23dogs&t=1710064165155

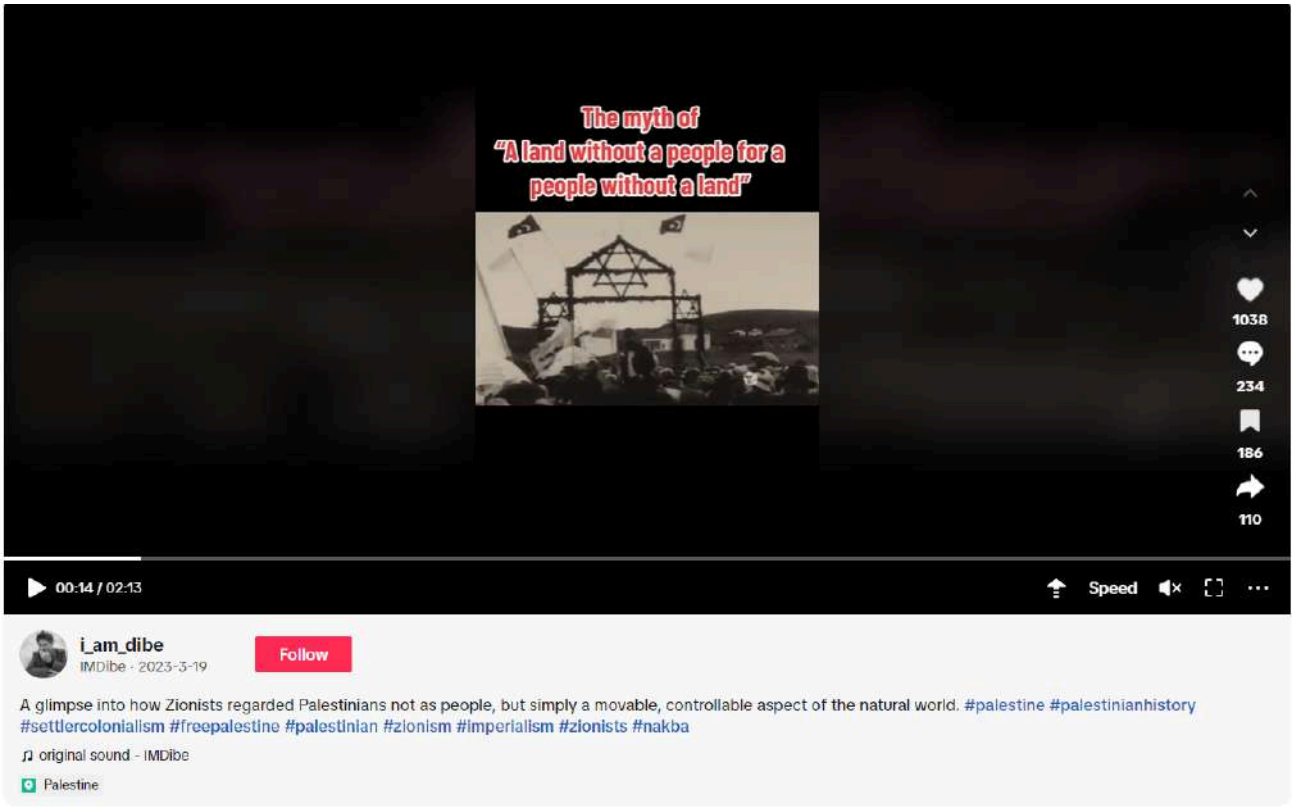
https://www.tiktok.com/@zionistsaresickos
https://www.tiktok.com/@rifisanslimiteone/video/7346591505781493024?q=sioniste&t=1711079800980

Global Domination on TikTok



https://www.tiktok.com/@arl10000/video/7337458545870261537

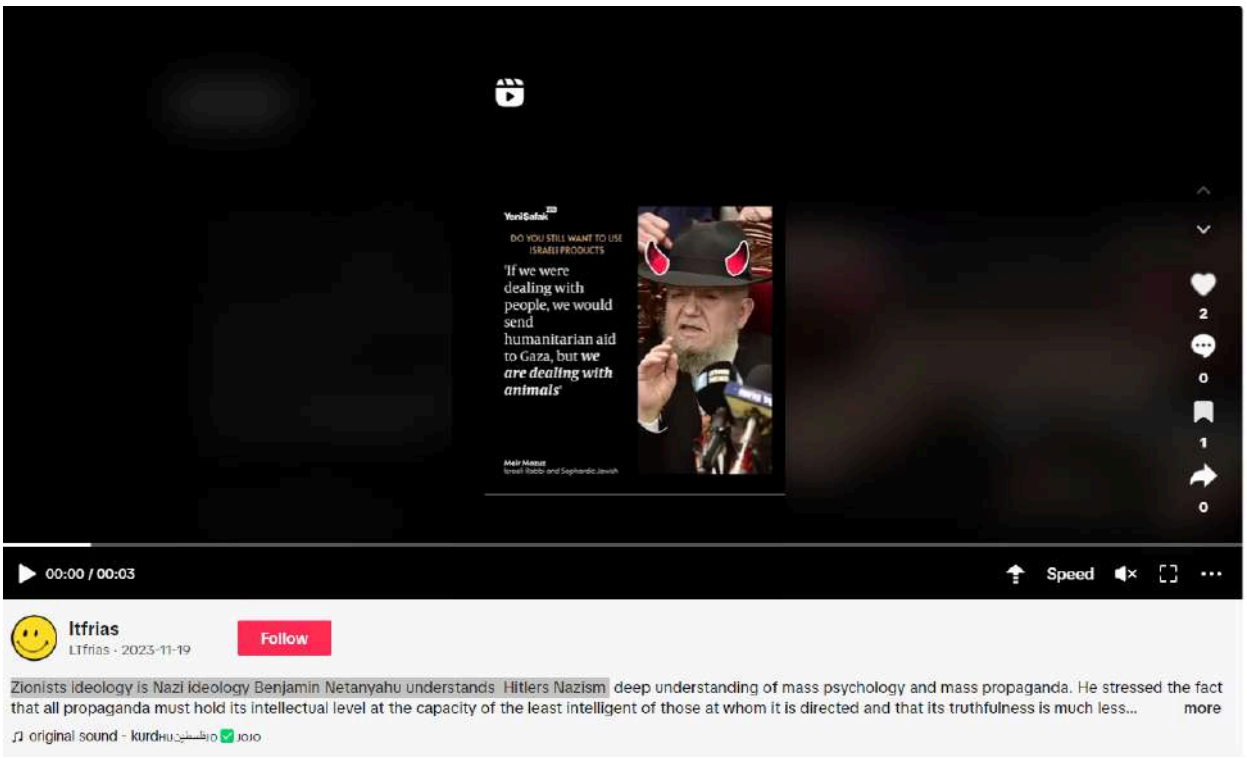
Zionists as a substitution for Israel - TikTok



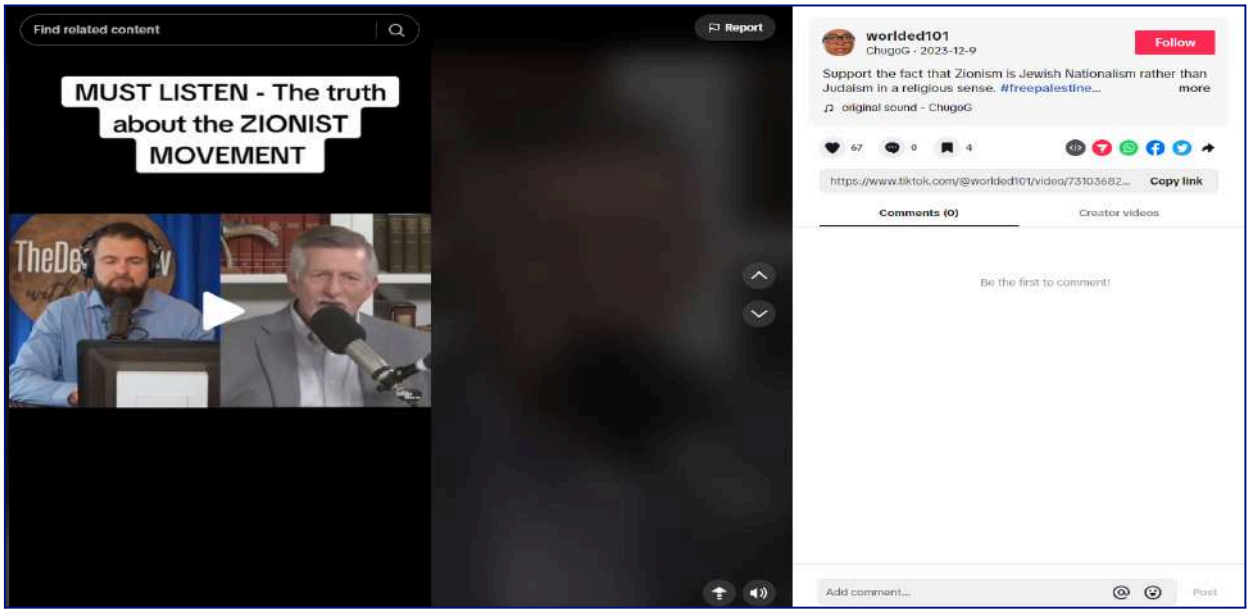
https://www.tiktok.com/@garda7869/video/7339798786442628385

https://www.tiktok.com/@i_am_dibe/video/7212375549552135470?q=zionists%20palestine&t=1710351094244

Zionist (substitution for Jews) - TikTok

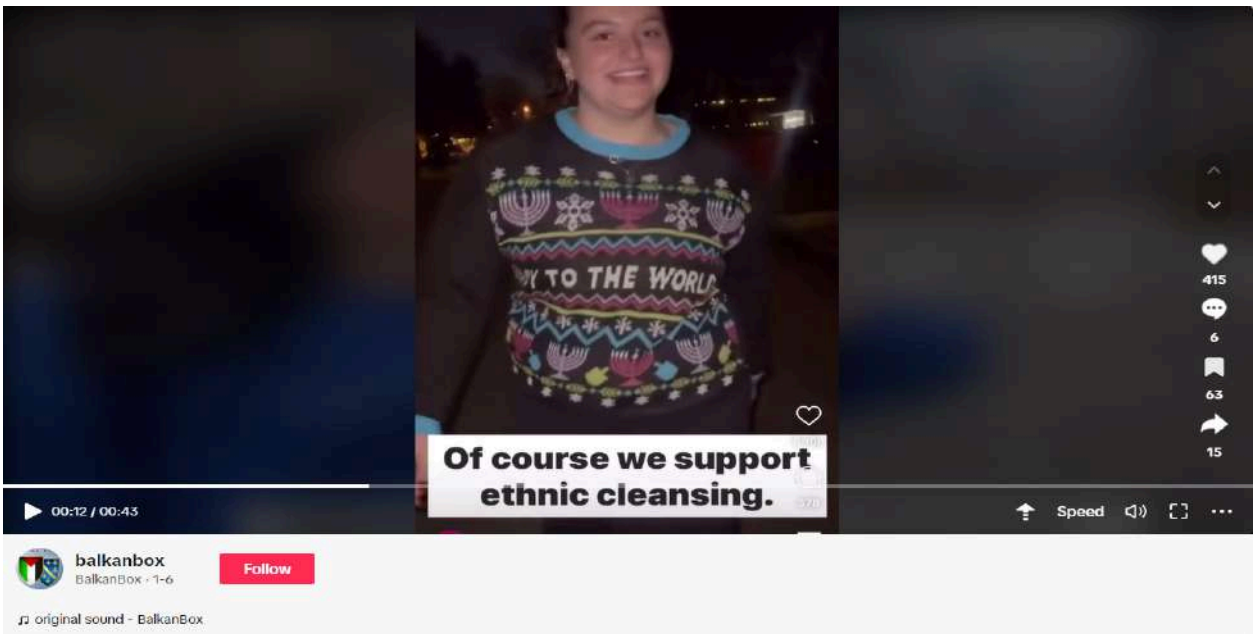


https://www.tiktok.com/@ltfrias/video/7303278973465808134



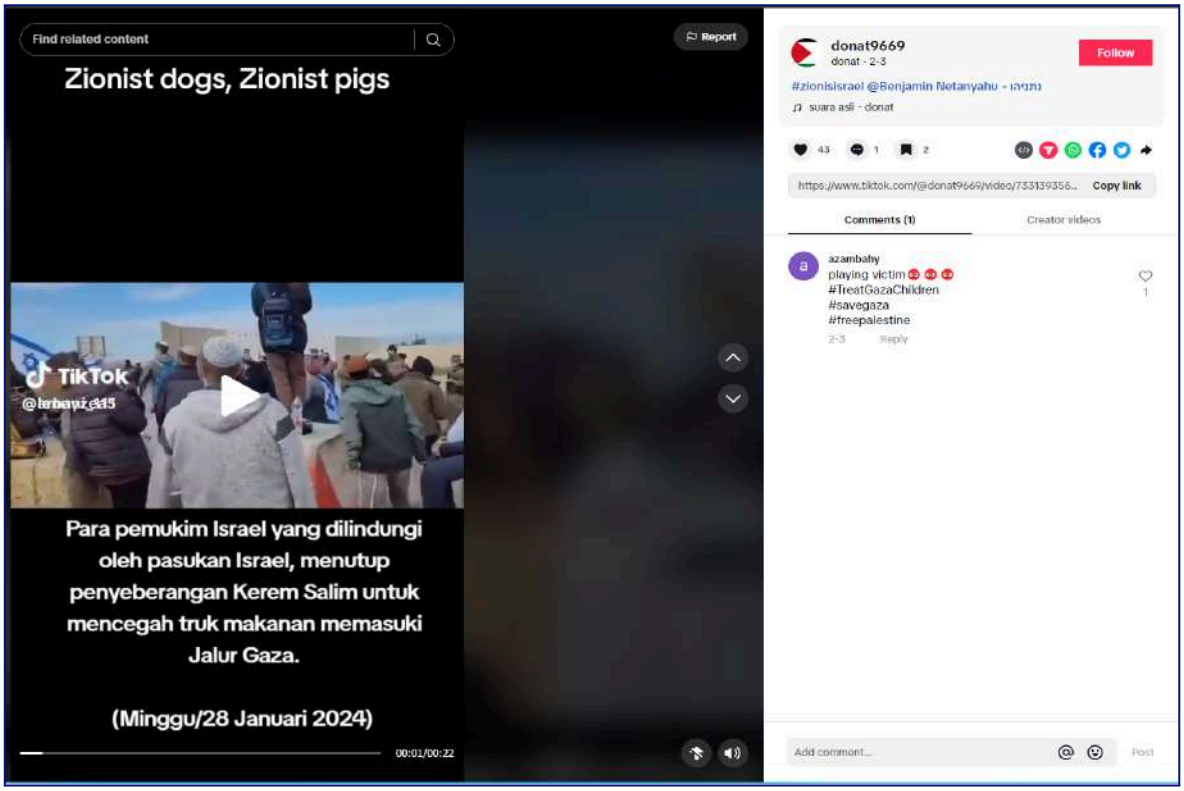
https://www.tiktok.com/@worlded101/video/7310368265610562849

https://www.tiktok.com/@profesorcristero/video/7234674384722611462?q=sioniste&t=1710912865525

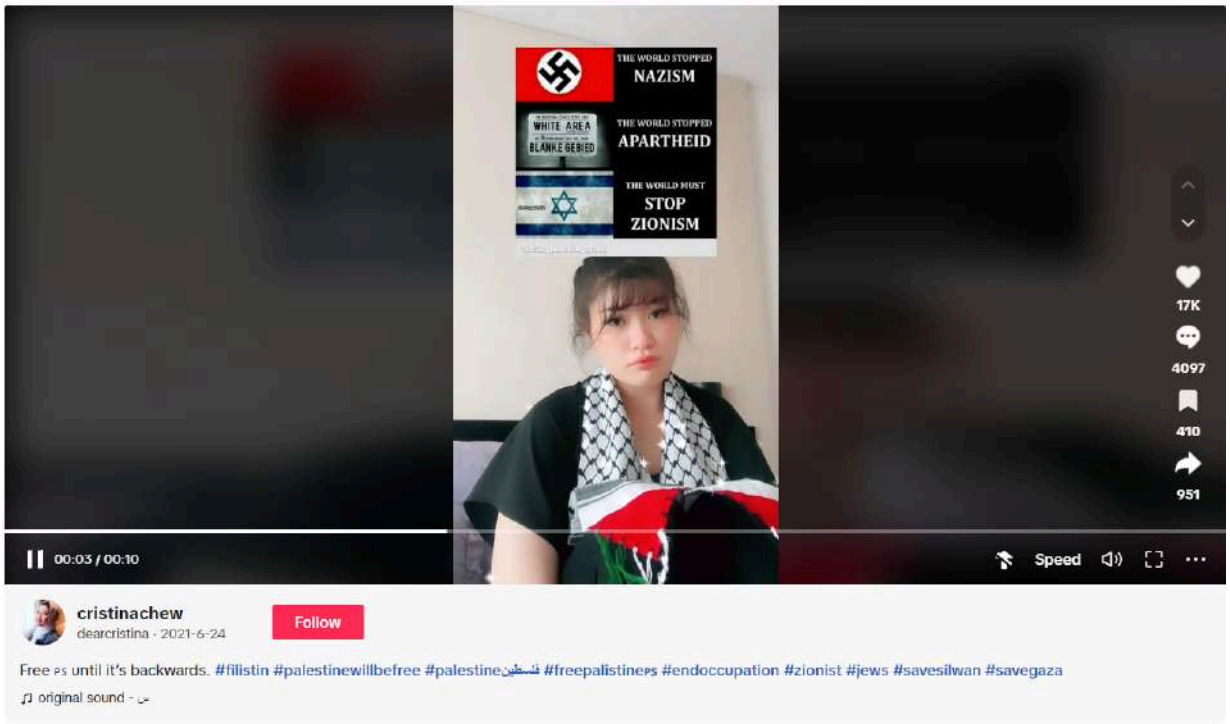


https://www.tiktok.com/@balkanbox/video/7320753697259195694?q=zionist%20propaganda&t=1710911661839

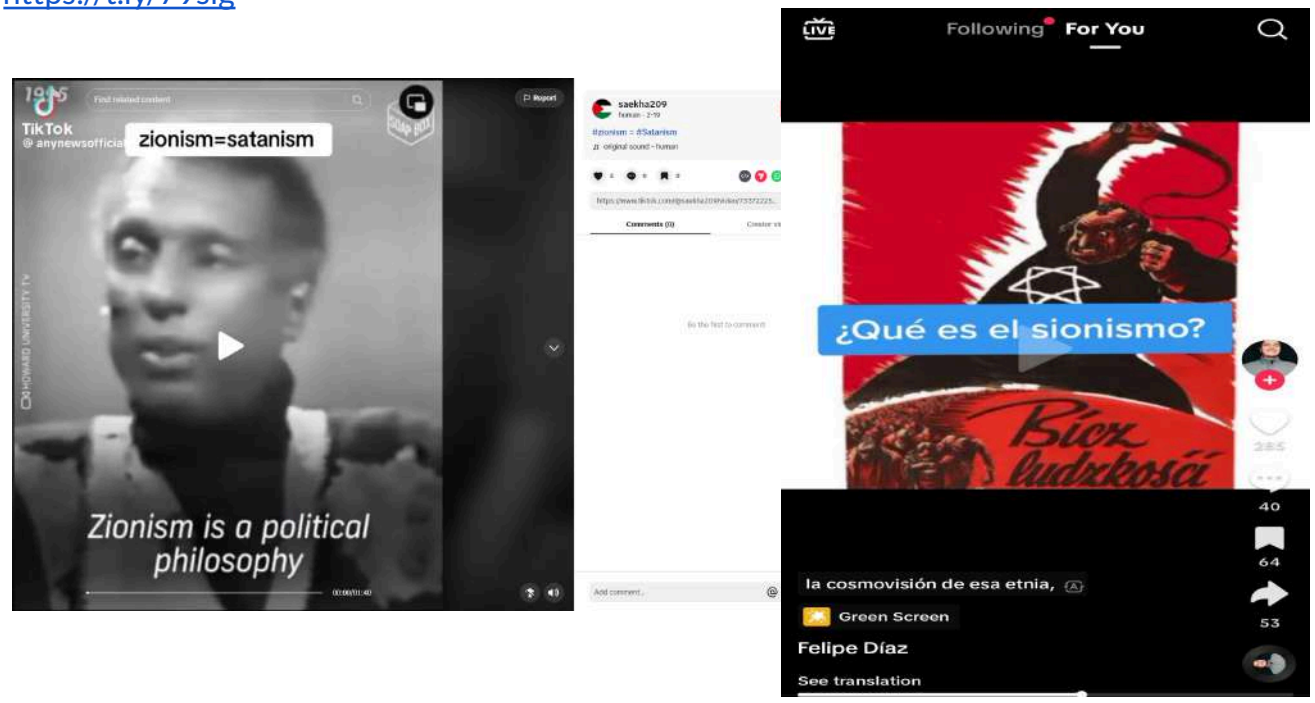
Comparison to Nazi regime - TikTok



The video below says “Comparing Zionists to Nazis is ACCURATE”. Here, from the photo, The reference to Israelis or Jews, who are protected under “national origin” is unmistakable, According to TikTok’s policy; “We define hate speech as direct attacks against people — rather than concepts or institutions— on the basis of what we call protected characteristics (PCs): race, ethnicity, national origin” Thus, saying Israelis are Nazis would not be acceptable; therefore, saying Zionists – here a clear substitution for Israelis - should likewise be unacceptable.



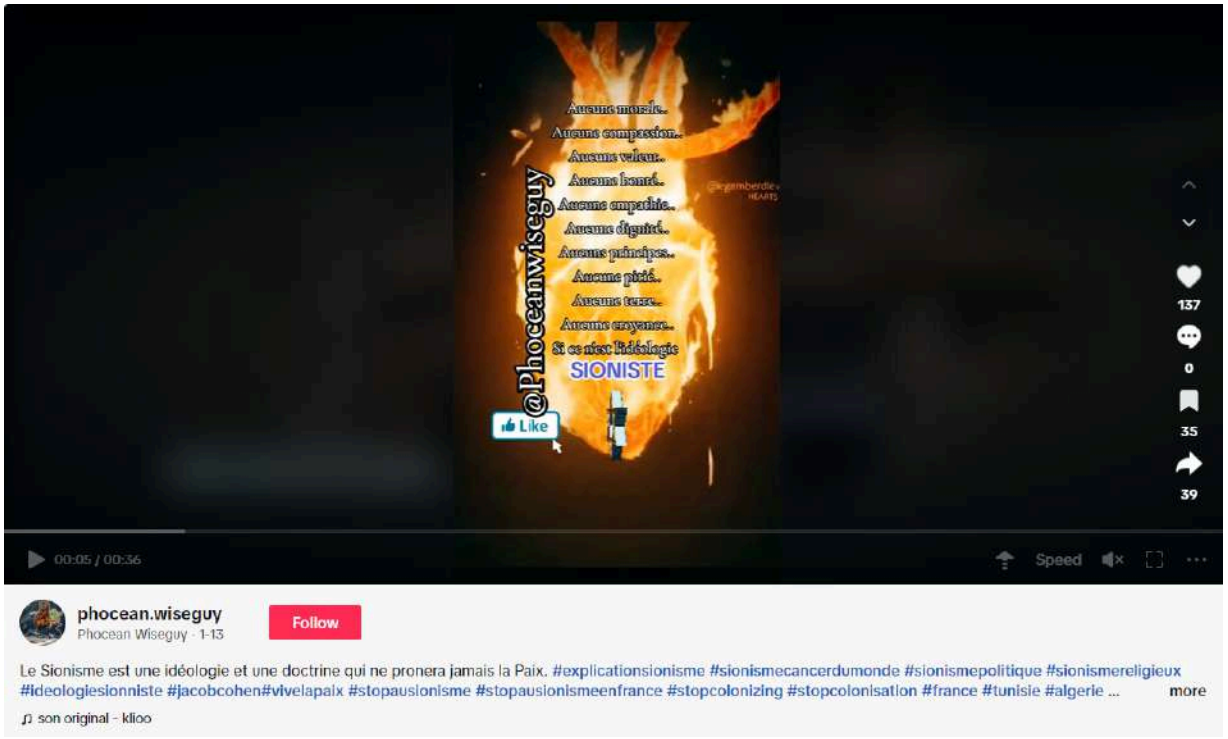
https://t.ly/79slg



"Expose the evil behind the Zionism Movement".

https://www.tiktok.com/@saekha209/video/7337222582027980062

https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSFHHr4sL/



https://www.tiktok.com/@phocean.wiseguy/video/7323684919987768608?q=sioniste&t=1710912865525
French translation: Zionism is an ideology and a doctrine that will never promote peace.

Content on Meta

Calls to Violence - Meta

This [Instagram page name is "deathtozionists"] - which in itself is a clear call to violence.

[Mel Gacis post from February 19th 2023]. Notice also the hashtags in the post call for violence as well (#deathtozionists)

Calling violence to all Zionists - "Die F— Zionist Pigs" or "Zionists must be eliminated"

Dehumanization and calling “Zionist pigs” or “Zionist parasites”

Dehumanization

Instagram, February 2024, Dehumanization

Facebook, March 1st, 2024. Dehumanization

https://www.facebook.com/share/p/yZXax3UCWAVHcTtZ/

Global Domination

Facebook, July 2023, Zionism=Global domination (No link available)

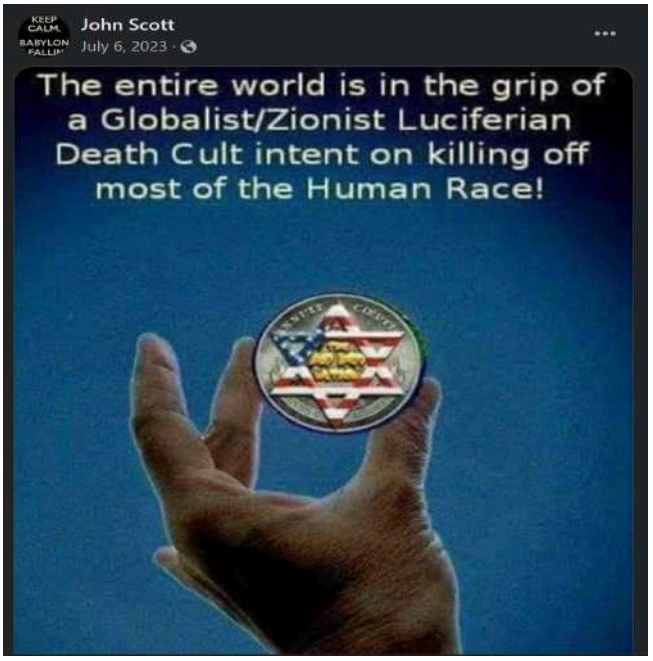
Zionists as a substitution for Jews

The word Zionist used as a substitution for Israel, in claims that "Zionists are taking over the world", or used in classic antisemitic tropes: "Capitalist Pig"

Instagram post of Classic Antisemitic trope depicting Jews as pigs.

Caption reads: This post was posted by an enlightenment page, but Instagram deleted it. Revolutionaries publish this post to support Dr. Abbasi and the truth of Israel's Saftia pig.

This post was removed November 2023.

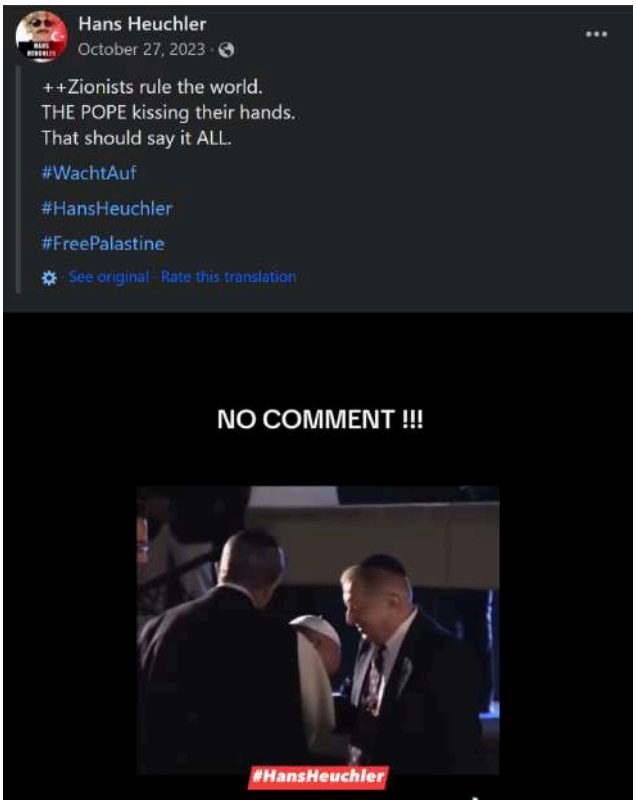


John Scott post - published July 6 2023: "The entire world is in the grip of the Zionist/Luciferian Death Cult intent on killing off most of the human race!"

Post from John Scott - July 6 2023: "the purpose of Zionism is to colonize the Middle East, subvert Islam and control the oilfields".

Post from Mel Gacis: "Zionism is NOT only about a Jewish State . It is about a Jewish World Order

[Post from Hans Heuchler on October 27, 2023]



[Post from Ben Stepner in August 2023]

Zionists (AKA Jews) control banking, media, etc.

@christians_of_palestine Instagram post: "How are Zionists oppressed when they overwhelmingly own the banks, media, entertainment industry…"

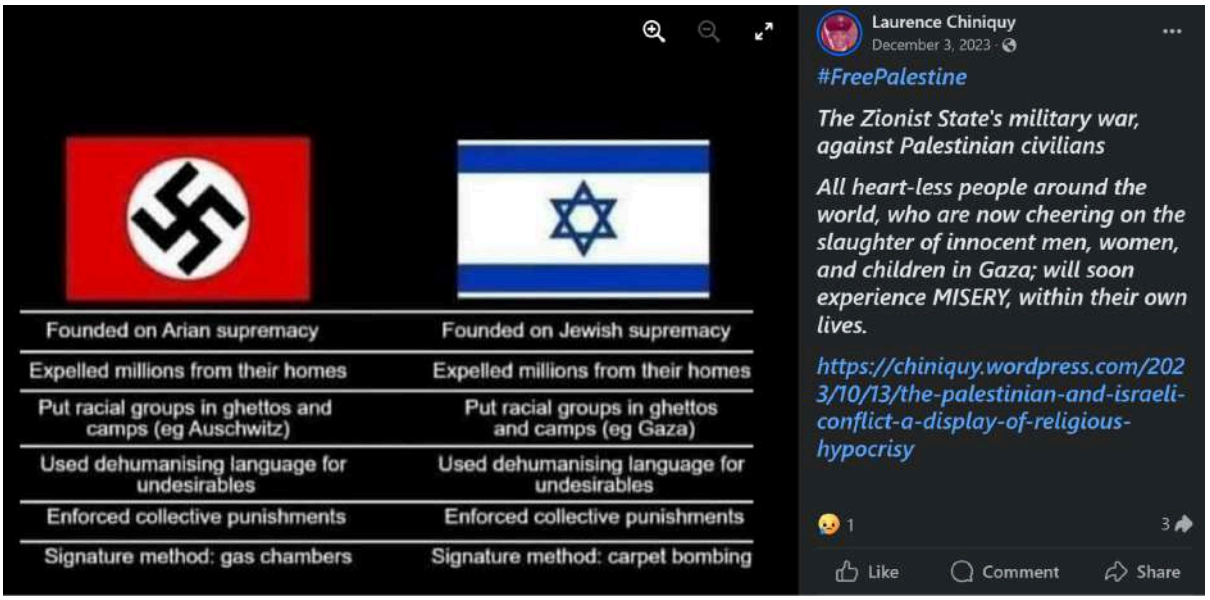
@ntc_reacts Instagram post - Oct 22 2019: "A ELITE DAS TREVAS, MAÇONS E SIONISTAS, ELITE JUDAÍCA SIONISTA". Translation: The dark elite, Zionists, Jewish Zionist Elite"

Comparison to Nazi regime

The post on the right begins with the words (translated from French) “The Zionists are the Nazis of today”. Here, from the photo, The reference to Israelis, who are protected under “national origin.” is unmistakable, According to Meta policy; “We define hate speech as direct attacks against people — rather than concepts or institutions— on the basis of what we call protected characteristics (PCs): race, ethnicity, national origin.” Thus, saying Israelis are Nazis would not be acceptable, and thus saying Zionists – here a clear substitution for Israelis - should likewise not be acceptable.

Facebook Post with caption about how “Zionists are today’s Nazis”

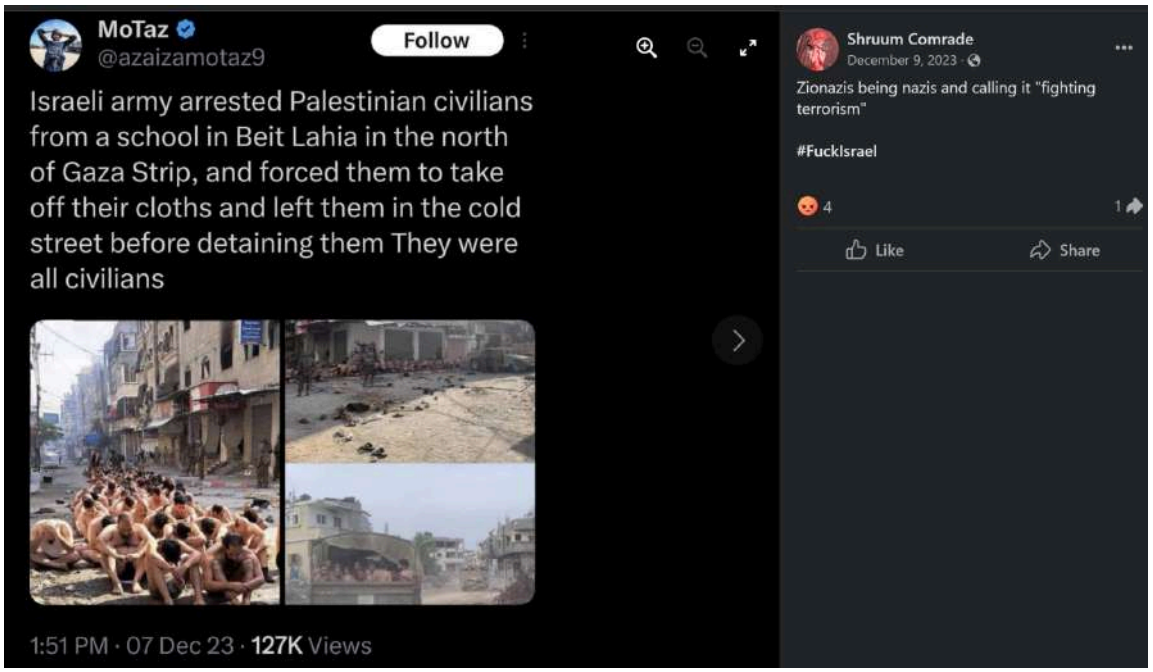
Laurence Chiniquy post on December 3, 2023



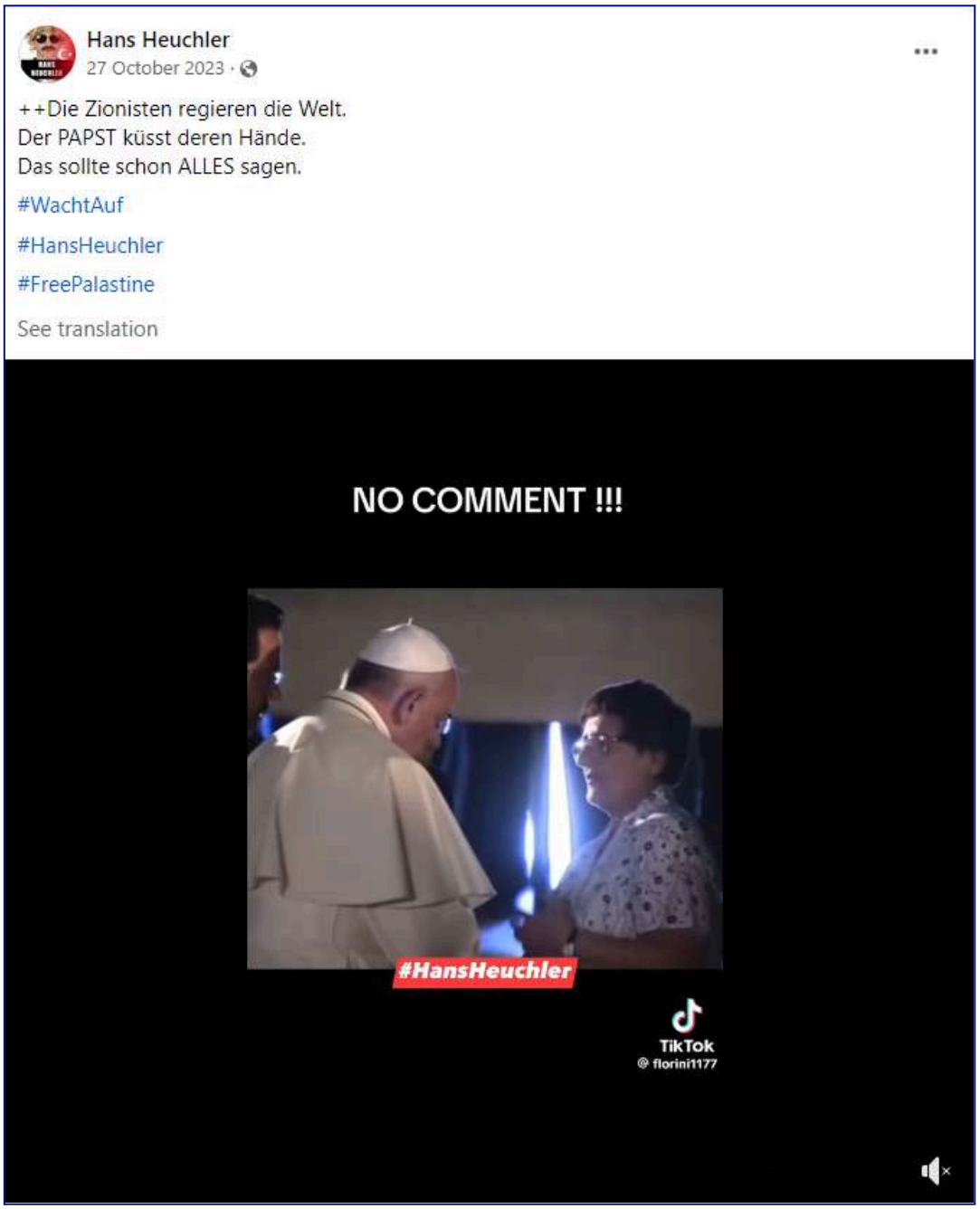
Conspiracy Truther post from March 2, 2024 in a Facebook group called "Zionism Exposed" which is "dedicated to expose the evil behind the Zionism Movement".

Post in 2015 from the Facebook group United Against Zionism that claims in their bio: "Zionism is a misfortune for the Jewish people and a cancer on the rest of the world."

Shruum Comrade post on December 9, 2023. Caption: "Zionists being nazis…"



Expose the evil behind the Zionism Movement



From German: Zionists rule the world.

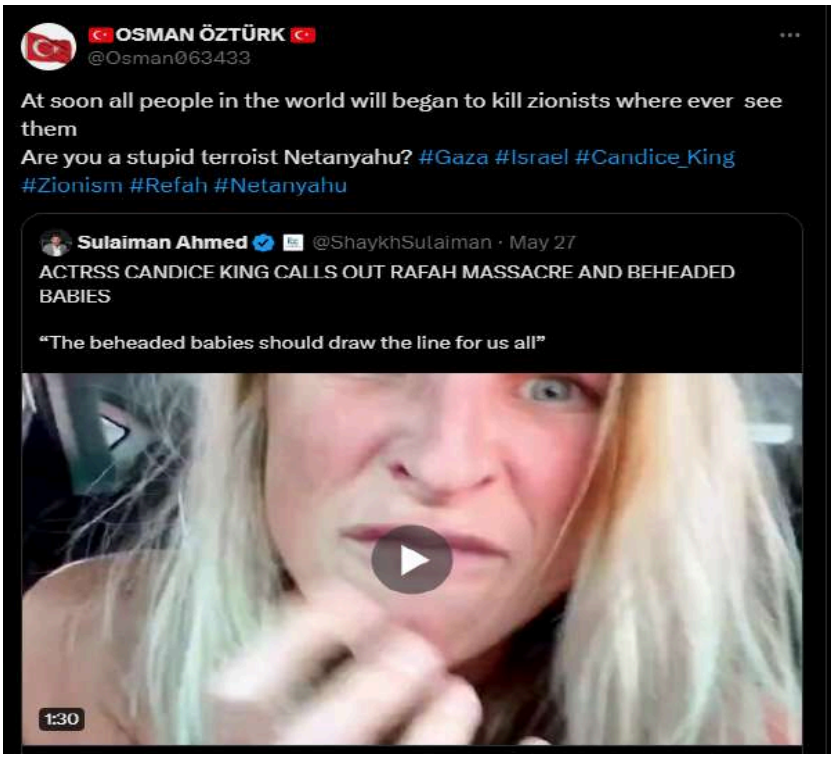
THE POPE kissing their hands.

That should say it ALL

Content on X

Use of the word Zionist, in substitution for Jew, in reference to Satan, the devil, or Lucifer-X

Calls to Violence - X



X, May 2024. A call for violence

https://x.com/Osman063433/status/1795105207489077463

X, May 2024. A call for violence. From Turkish :'The only solution now is to kill Zionists all over the world to break the blockade'

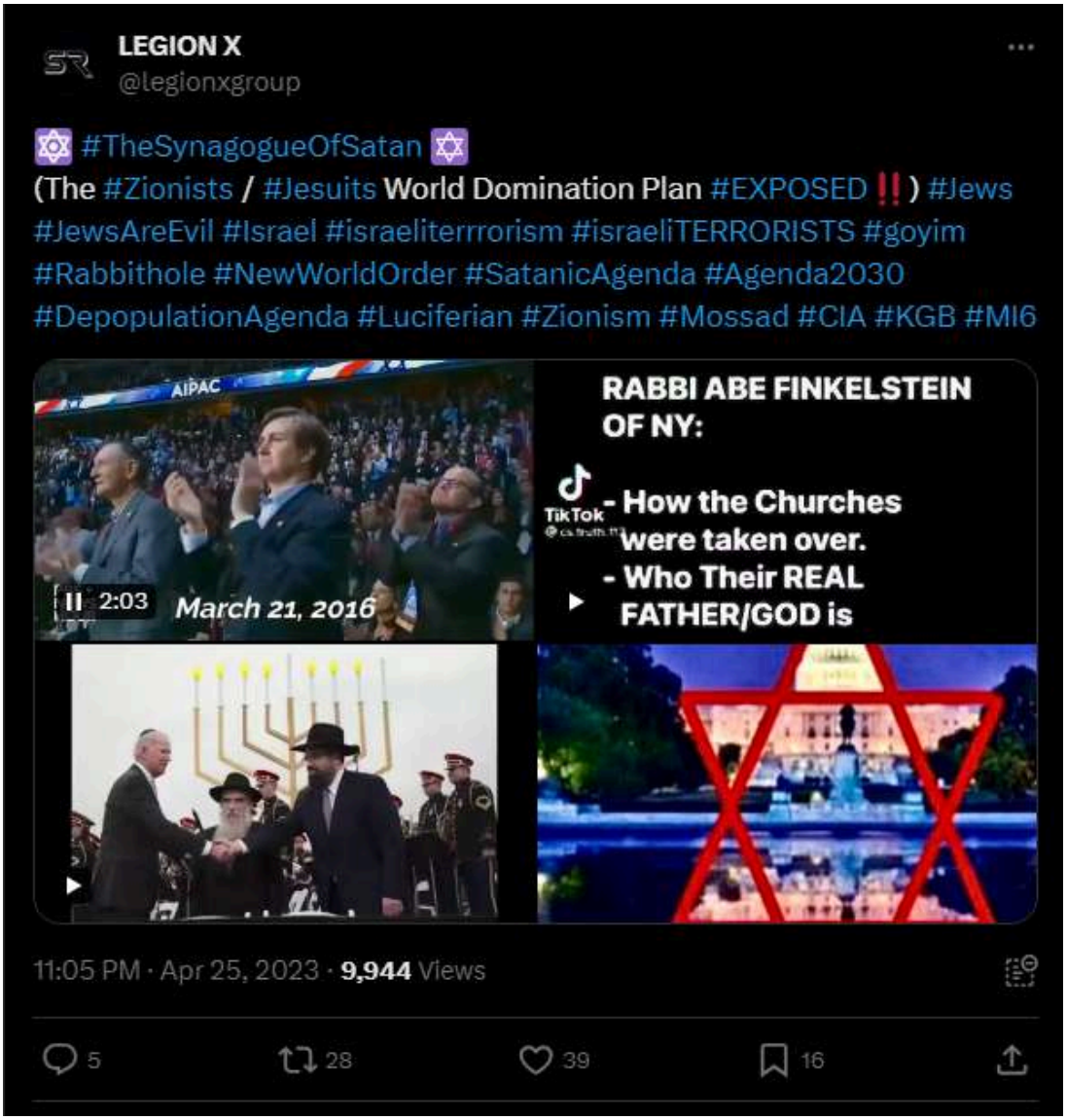
https://x.com/MuratDorm/status/1794937222158004363

Dehumanization and calling “Zionist pigs” or “Zionist parasites”

X, june 2024, Dehumanization

https://x.com/abdmady113452/status/1797911022248034363/photo/1

Zionists Global Domination on X



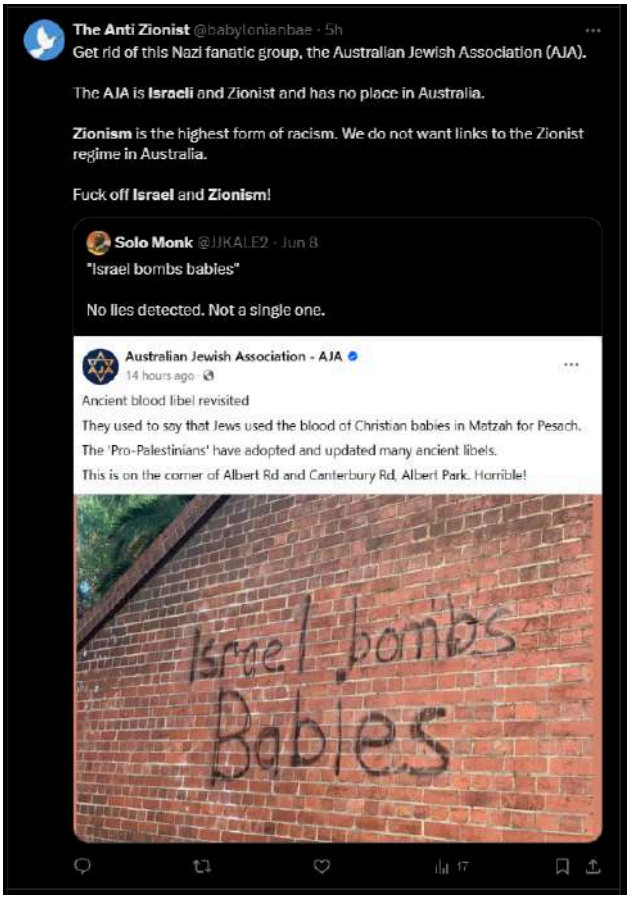
X, April 2023. Zionists and Global Domination

https://x.com/legionxgroup/status/1650954282152108032

Zionists as a substitution for Israel-X

X, June 2024. Zionism=Israel

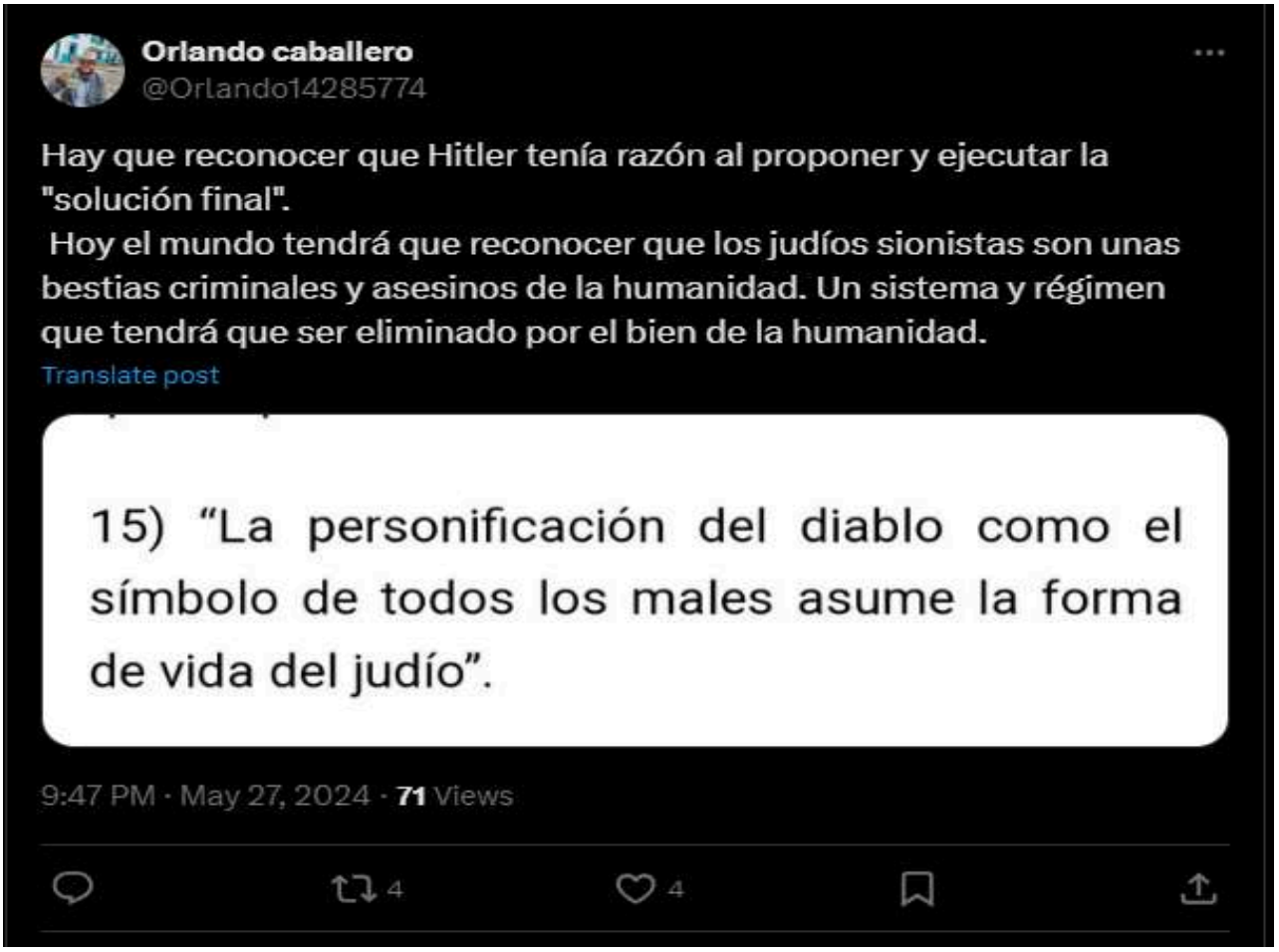
https://x.com/Christo63776245/status/1798408831308812463



X, June 2024. Zionism=Israel/Jews

https://x.com/babylonianbae/status/1799594433081680298

Zionists as a substitution for Jews-X



X, June 2024 , Spanish, Israeli Zionist Jews. Content removed by x.

X, May 2024. Spanish. " It must be recognized that Hitler was right in proposing and executing the "final solution." Today the world will have to recognize that Zionist Jews are criminal beasts and murderers of humanity. A system and regime that will have to be eliminated for the good of humanity."

https://x.com/Orlando14285774/status/1795164928711565586

X, May 2024. Spanish Jews=Zionists

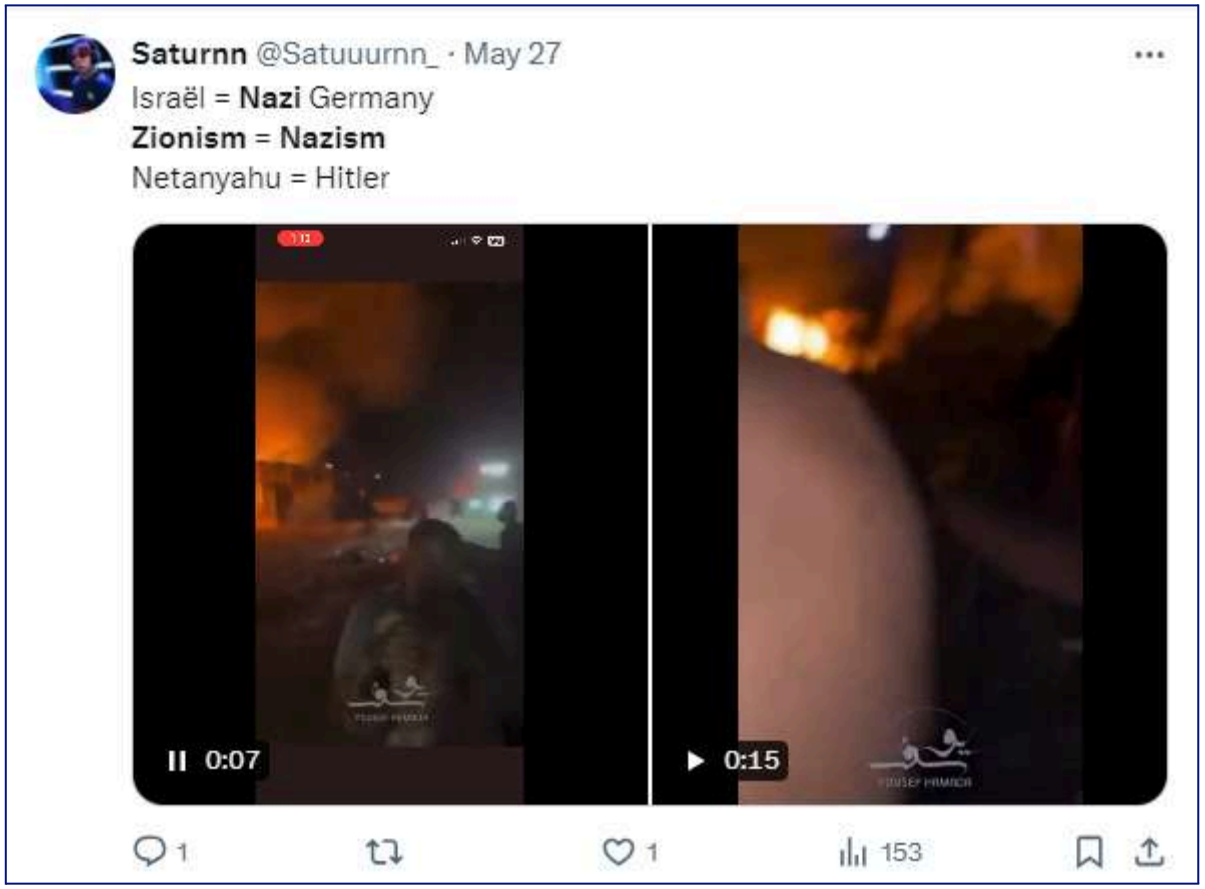
This tweet quotes Joseph Goebbels about the Jews and equates Zionists with them.

https://x.com/avalencia2o/status/1792367562845737077

Comparison to Nazi regime-X

X, March 2024, Zionism=Nazism

https://x.com/SilentlySirs/status/1770406249420492929



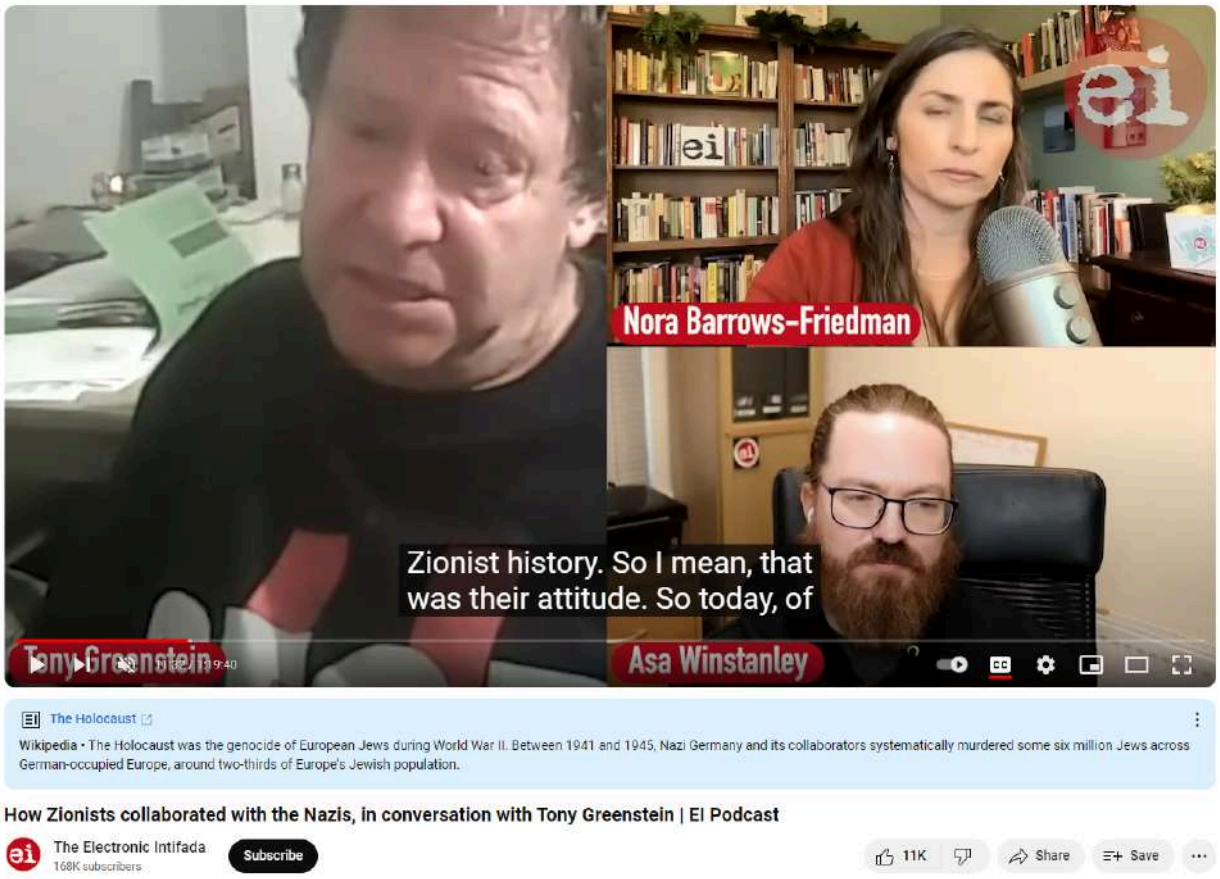
X, May 24 , Zionism=Nazism

https://x.com/Satuuurnn_/status/1795051942856544662

X. A profile named "Zionists are Nazis" was suspended by X after posting a large amount of antisemitic content

Content on YouTube

Conspiracy Theory

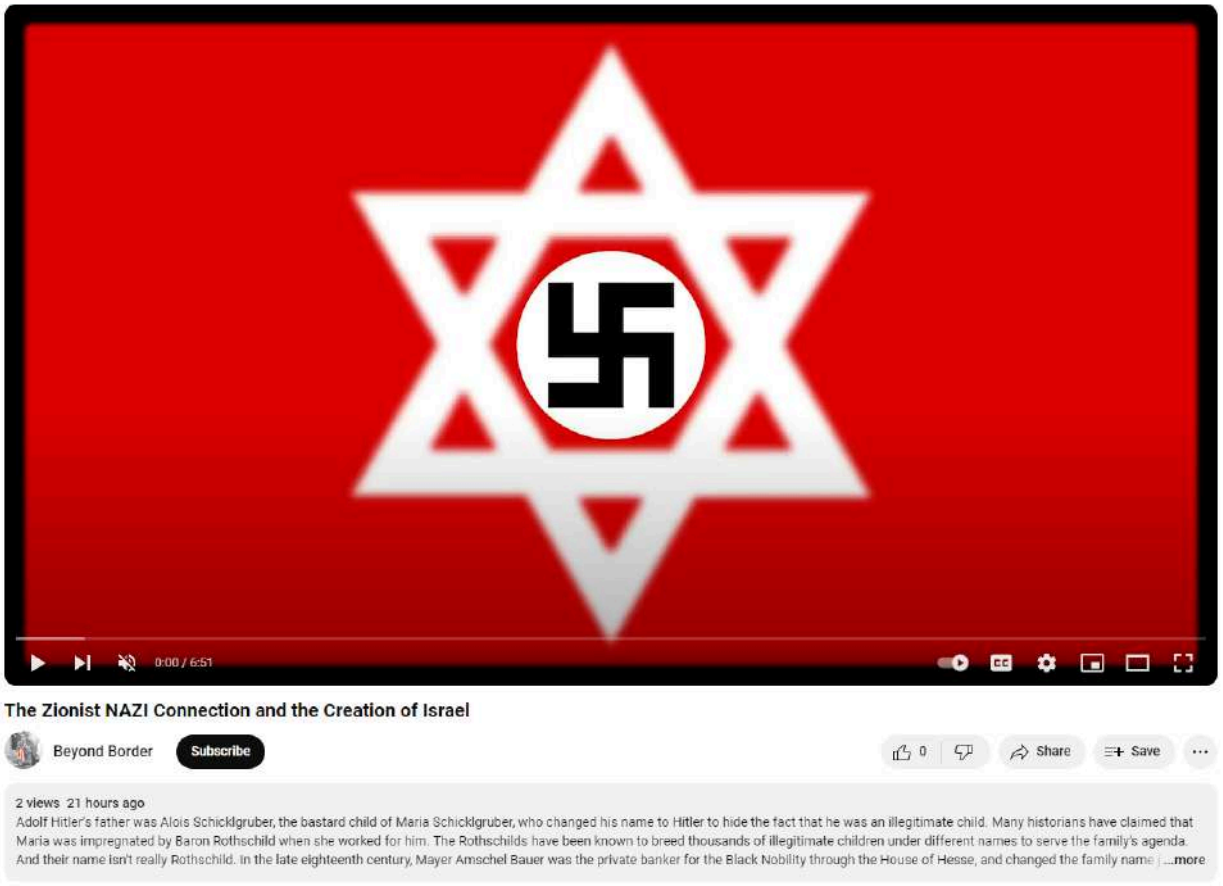


YouTube, Nov. 2022. A conspiracy theory suggests that Zionists cooperated with the Nazis and orchestrated the Holocaust to create the Jewish state. This is a pro palestinian channel.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9evhLCuA_k

YouTube, June 2024. A conspiracy theory suggests that Zionists cooperated with the Nazis and orchestrated the Holocaust to create the Jewish state.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ST7wiAGGHFE



YouTube- Reels

YouTube, December 2023. Zionism=Satanism

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akyF9Ip8IaM&t=15s