
Fighting Online Antisemitism

The Sound of Hate: Antisemitism on Spotify



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Introduction

Spotify was founded in 2006 in Sweden. With more than 400 million active monthly users and 180 million premium subscribers, Spotify is considered the biggest music and podcast streaming service in the world.¹ The Swedish tech company has recently made the headlines because its most popular and exclusive podcast was accused of spreading conspiracy theories and fake news.²

FOA volunteers conducted the research using keywords such as Jew, Jewish, Hitler, Nazi, and so on, in a variety of languages. This research does not seek to be exhaustive, but rather to highlight the widespread availability of antisemitic content across platforms, as well as some of Spotify's shortcomings in reporting and removing hateful content.

¹ Marie Charlotte Götting, (2022), “Spotify - statistics & facts”, Statista, available at: https://www.statista.com/topics/2075/spotify/#topicHeader__wrapper

² Aja Romano, (2022), “How do you solve a problem like Joe Rogan?”, Vox, available at: <https://www.vox.com/culture/22945864/joe-rogan-politics-spotify-controversy>

Hateful Content Reporting on Spotify

Compared to most mainstream social networks, Spotify's reporting procedure is quite difficult and time consuming. One can report playlists and profile pictures (not username) through its mobile app or desktop program, but not through its browser version. At the present, it is not possible to report podcast episodes or songs/albums through its app. Spotify does not notify the user about the outcome of their report.

Very little information about how Spotify's review process is available. It is not known if the reviewing is done solely with A.I. or if human moderators are involved, and if so in which languages. "In response to a request from Belltower.News, a spokesman for the Swedish tech company emphasizes that Spotify bans content that 'explicitly and primarily incites, advocates or incites hatred or violence against a group or individual' - be it because of skin color, for example, religion, gender identity, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation or disability. 'If we identify content that violates this standard, it will be removed from the platform.' [...]"³ (Original in German, automatic translation).

On March 19, FOA contacted Spotify with a full list of these profiles and playlists, requesting that they should be removed or, at the very least, that the reason for their continued availability be clarified. Spotify has yet to respond.

³ Ivi

Findings

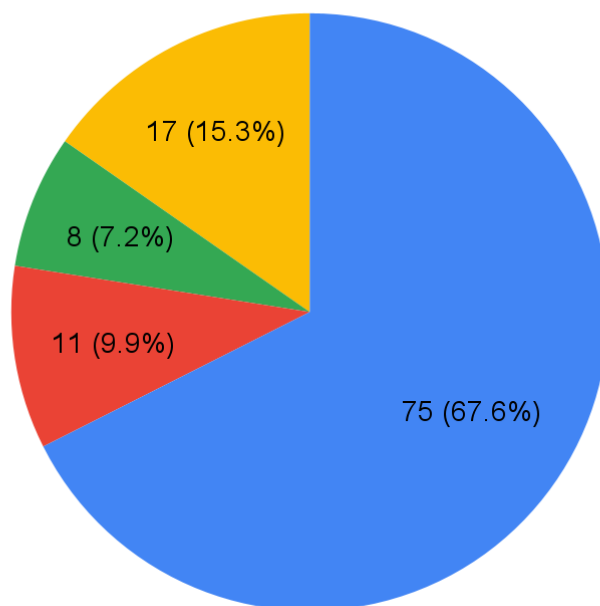
From February to March, we uncovered 111 antisemitic pieces of content. This number is not exhaustive, as it was limited by the number of keywords and languages used by FOA volunteers.

We have found large amounts of antisemitic content on the platforms, on several playlists, usernames, playlists, and podcast episodes in numerous languages: English, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, Turkish, Russian, etc. Some of the content was very extreme, calling to the death of Jews or making fun of Jews murdered in the Holocaust. While Spotify removed or asked users to change some of the hateful playlist names, many of them are still available as of this moment. Greater attention should also be paid by tech companies to hate symbols, such as swastikas, Hitler photos, and so on, which are still being used in playlist names, or as playlist/profile covers.

A total of 111 pieces of antisemitic content was found. The content consists of playlists, podcast episodes, songs/albums and profiles.

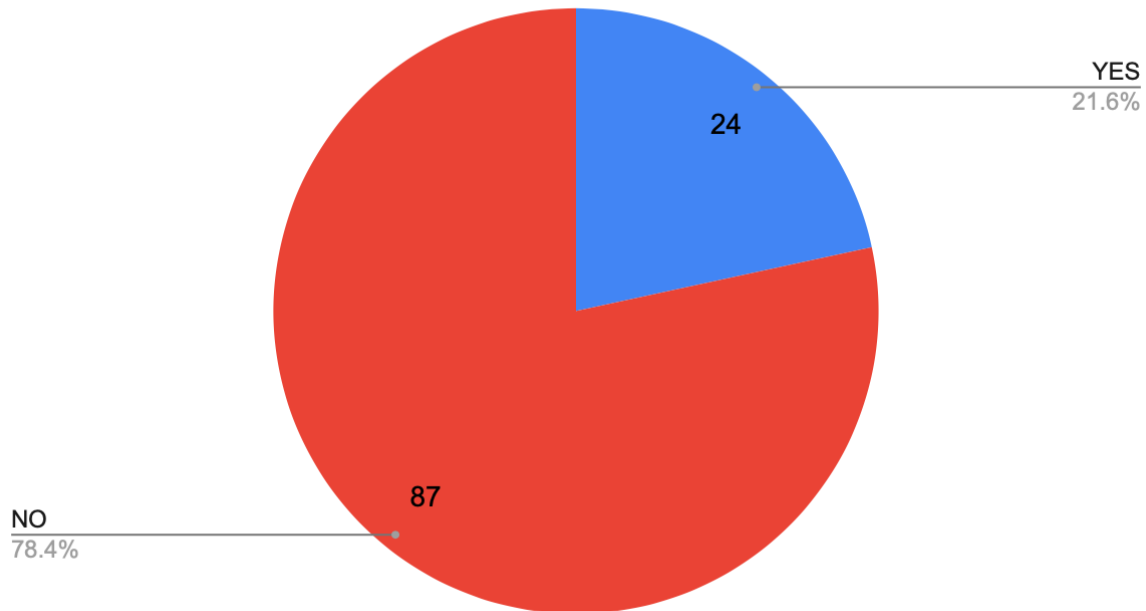
Type of content

- Playlists
- Songs/Albums
- Profiles
- Podcast Episodes



By March 19, 2022, 78% of the content was still available, while 21% was either removed or the name was changed.

Removed content (on 19/03/22)



Given that Spotify is only a streaming service, very little information is available about the creators of such playlists. In some instances, these playlists are an isolated case, i.e. the creator does not have other playlists with antisemitic or hateful titles. A possible explanation is that many of the creators are teenagers or young adults, who find it funny to name their playlists as “Stinky Jews” or “More gas than Hitler's chambers”, something that can be also seen on TikTok, for example, where teenagers have antisemitic or offensive usernames, but do not post antisemitic content.

On the other hand, FOA has found several playlist titles which incite violence or make fun of the Holocaust, “So fire the Jews wouldn’t survive this time”, “hitlerin 6 milyon yahudiyi oldururken dinledigi playlist” (“The playlist Hitler listened to while killing 6 million jews.” Turkish, automatic translation), “Tote diese Juden” (“Kill these Jews”. German), and so on. Through our research we were also able to find several playlists named after or in homage to

Hitler, Nazis, with Swastikas as the title, or under NSBM (National Socialist black metal). The songs present in the playlists with antisemitic titles are not always far-right, on the contrary, in most cases the playlists are filled with “regular” songs. After reporting the title of the playlists to Spotify some were deleted or renamed, but many are still available on Spotify as of this moment.

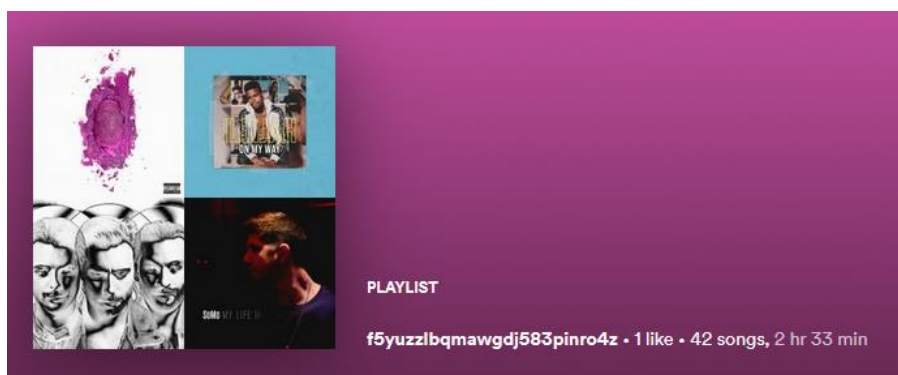
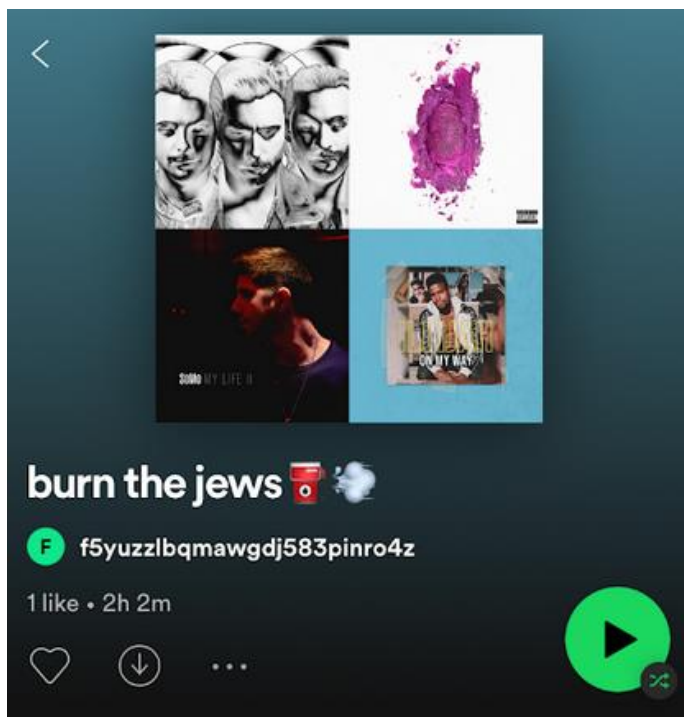
FOA has also uncovered several podcast episodes with antisemitic titles or which deal with conspiracy theories related to Jews: “Die Rothschild-dynasty will die kalergi-entvoelkerungsagenda erguellen - antiilluminaten tv podcast” (“The Rothschild dynasty wants to fulfil the kalergi depopulation agenda - anti-illuminati tv podcast”. German), “Misteri Rothschild: gurita bankir dan konspirasi yahudi global - pinter politik” (“The Rothschild Mystery: The Banker's Octopus and The Global Jewish Conspiracy - Pinter politik”. Indonesian, automatic translation), “EP23 - Los Rothschild: el inicio del control judio” (“The Rothschilds: The beginning of the Jewish control”. Spanish), and so on.

After the Unite the Right march in Charlottesville, streaming services committed to remove Nazi rock and white supremacist songs/groups from their platforms; yet far-right and racist musical content is still available on Spotify. FOA detected 11 antisemitic albums or songs on the Swedish streaming service; this number is not exhaustive, as songs were not the primary focus of this investigation. Some of the titles (in the original language) include "the Jews crucified Christ," "Rich Jew," "Kill Israel," and so on.

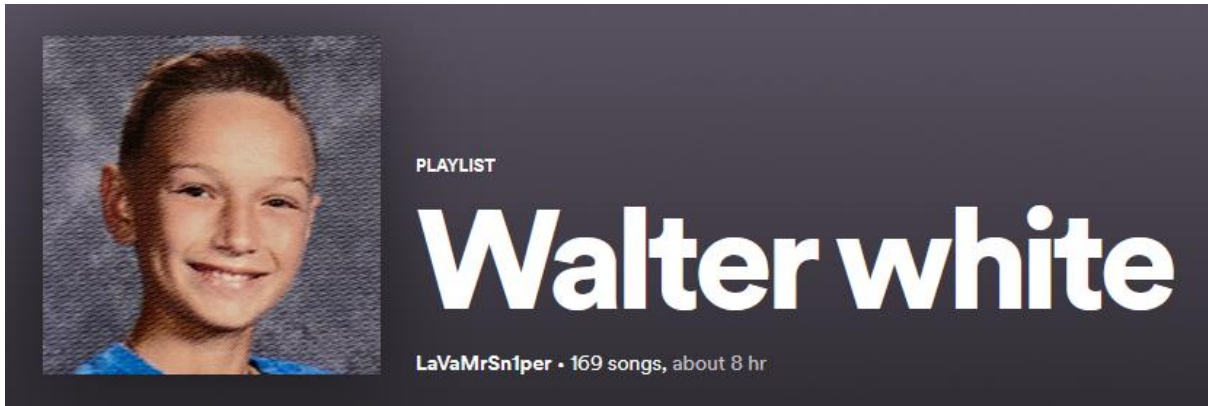
Manifestations of Antisemitism on Spotify

The following are some examples of the content found on Spotify by FOA volunteers reported during February-March 2022:

Spotify Profiles:



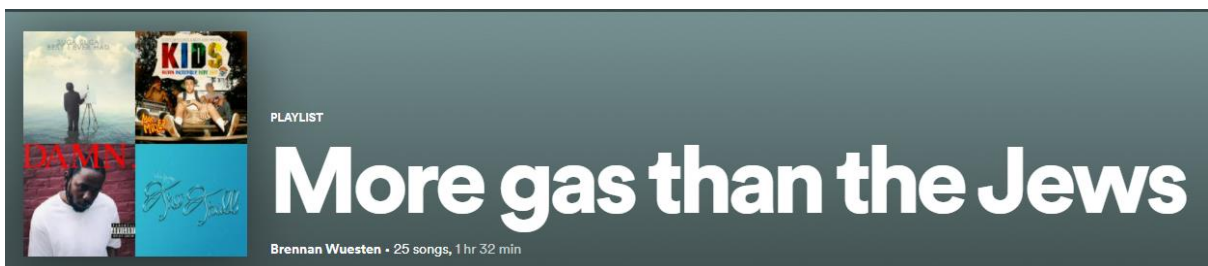
(L6) Antisemitic profile from Spotify. Before and after: The user changed the name after FOA volunteers reported this profile



Antisemitic profile from Spotify. Before and after: The user changed the name after FOA volunteers reported this profile



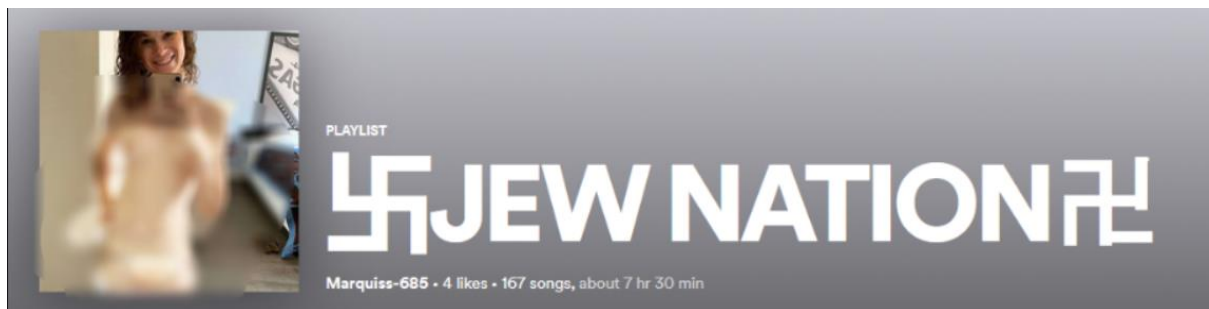
(L9) This profile is still available with the same name



(L14) This profile is still available with the same name



(L83) A Spanish profile ‘fucking Nazi communist jews of shit’



Antisemitic Profile. Content still available



Turkish: The playlist Hitler listened to while killing 6 million Jews.

The cover image depicts Hitler and a barbecue place. “Ocakbaşı” in Turkish means Grillroom, and it is a kind of restaurant where you sit by the grill and cook your own meat.

Antisemitic Playlists

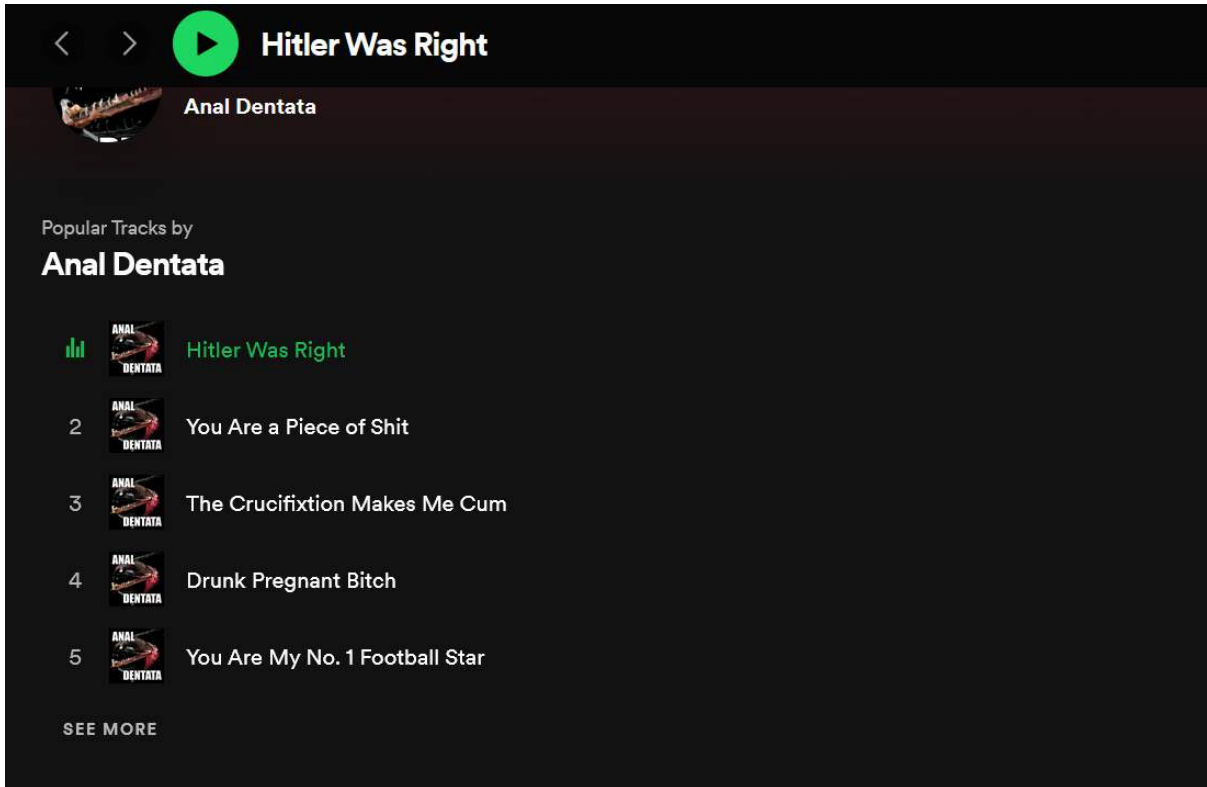


L19, Playlist in Spanish: let's kill Jews



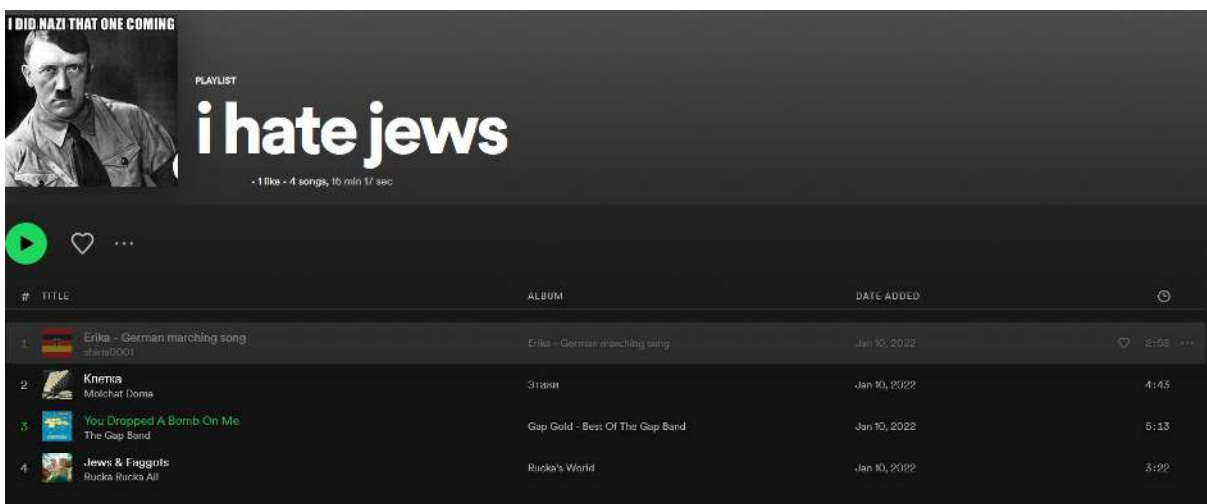
L21, Playlist in Turkish: Songs Hitler listened to While Burning Jews





L27An antisemitic profile with antisemitic playlist. Songs with words such as ‘all Jews should die’ and ‘Hitler was right’. The content is still available. Link to one of the songs: ‘Hitler was right’

<https://open.spotify.com/track/2h3F2XTJihAlAo66dhET0g?si=e3624adbad1a43e5>



L33 Antisemitic profile with antisemitic playlist



L86

A Podcast in Spanish. The podcast is about Holocaust denial and conspiracy theory about Jews control and ruin the economy



L95

A Russian playlist with antisemitic songs calling to expel the Jews from Russia, Jews control Russia and Putin is a Jew and that the Jews plan to take over Russia



A playlist in Portuguese: Jews have to die

Conclusions

Antisemitic and hateful content can be found almost anywhere on the internet, so it is no surprise that this kind of content would be available on Spotify. While great effort has been made for the monitoring and flagging of hateful content on mainstream social networks, little attention has been given to the availability of such content on Spotify and other audio streaming services. FOA and other organisations alike should dedicate more resources to monitor and report hateful content (songs, albums, playlists, symbols, etc) in “less obvious” platforms, such as Spotify, in the coming years.

FOA urges Spotify to **remove** the flagged content as soon as possible, and to **improve** their automatic detection system of hateful content (names, symbols, pictures), and finally to **simplify** and **extend** (songs, albums, podcast episodes) the reporting procedure by users.

Removing the content will assure that Spotify is a cleaner and a safer net for its users and managers.