

THREATS TO AMERICAN SYNAGOGUES SOAR IN FIRST TWO MONTHS OF 2023

HIGHLIGHTING THE GROWING
THREAT OF ANTISEMITISM

BY: COMBAT ANTISEMITISM MOVEMENT'S
ANTISEMITISM RESEARCH CENTER



COMBAT
ANTISEMITISM
MOVEMENT

Antisemitism is continually making headlines in the U.S., with Jews facing physical attacks and verbal harassment on the streets of their communities and a vitriolic torrent of bigoted online rhetoric, particularly on social media.

From the spray-painting of Nazi symbols on synagogues to violent assaults on Jews going about their daily lives, the contemporary landscape on antisemitism both in America and worldwide is one of increasing menace. In the first two months of 2023, the CAM Antisemitism Research Center monitored **33 media-reported antisemitic incidents in which Jewish institutions were targeted** globally.

Synagogues in America are the subject of growing threats from antisemitic groups and lone-wolf assailants. While federal and state financial grants have helped bolster security measures, Jewish houses of worship remain highly vulnerable to acts of hatred perpetrated by assailants from across the ideological spectrum, including far-right, far-left, and radical Islamist extremists.

This concerning phenomenon must be addressed with a non-partisan “all hands on deck” approach. When it comes to fighting and ultimately defeating antisemitism in the U.S., there is no room for political tribalism. This is not a “Republican” or “Democratic” cause, but rather a vital “American” endeavor.

12
AMERICAN
SYNAGOGUES
THREATENED
IN FIRST TWO
MONTHS OF 2023

In the first two months of 2023 alone, 33 media-reported incidents of antisemitism involved the targeting Jewish institutions around the world. Of these, **15 were directed at synagogues**, 12 (or 80%) of which were located in the U.S. Of these, 4 (or 33.3%) involved the threat of violence, 6 (or 50%) involved vandalism, and 2 (or 16.7%) involved hateful language or conduct.

71.4%
YEAR-TO-YEAR
RISE IN TARGETING
OF AMERICAN
SYNAGOGUES

The 12 incidents involving the targeting of U.S. synagogues in January and February of 2023 marked a 71.4% increase from the seven during the corresponding time period in 2022, the most prominent of which was the Jan. 15 hostage crisis at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas.

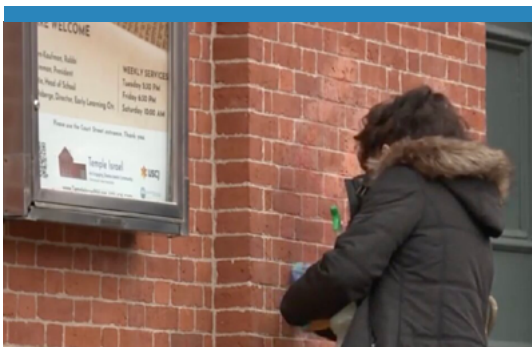
FEBRUARY 2023 U.S. SYNAGOGUE INCIDENTS



February 24: Orlando, Florida

Members of the neo-Nazi Goyim Defense League (GDL) stood outside a Chabad synagogue in Orlando, Florida, and verbally assaulted Jews who were exiting the building – ***“Go back to Israel”*** and ***“Dirty Jews”*** were just some of the vile comments caught by cameras on site. While the motivations for these GDL-related incidents seem to be largely of a far-right nature, there are also elements of far-left ideology, including denunciations of U.S. aid to Israel and condemnations of the alleged ***“bombing of Palestinian children.”***

[Read More](#)



February 21: Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Surveillance cameras showed a person wearing a red Maine sweatshirt and facemask spray-painting graffiti, including **Nazi swastikas**, on the external walls of Temple Israel Portsmouth, a Reform synagogue in New Hampshire.

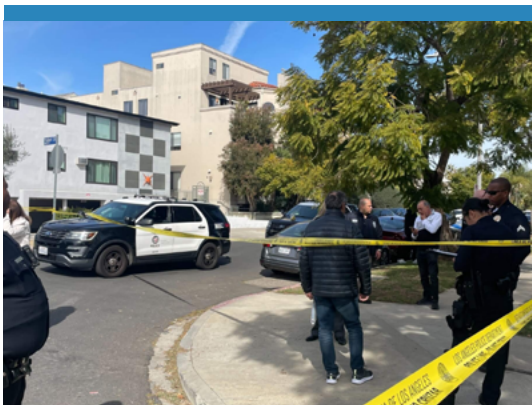
[Read More](#)



February 15-16: Los Angeles, California

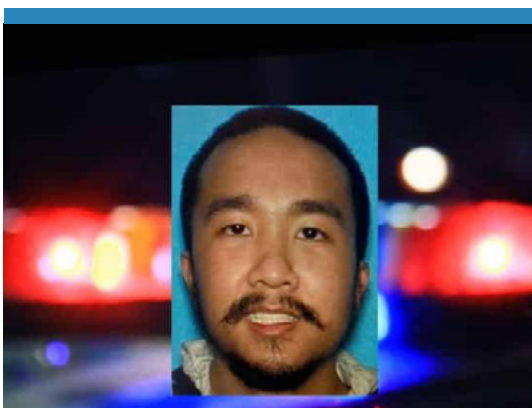
A **Jewish man was shot twice** while walking to his car following morning services at an Orthodox synagogue in Los Angeles, California. The victim – who was wearing a kippah at the time of the incident – was transported to a hospital, where he was treated and released later in the day. The suspect was reported to be a middle-aged Asian male with a goatee, who opened fire while driving a vehicle.

[Read More](#)



Approximately 24 hours later, **a second Jewish man was shot in the arm by the same suspect**, who was later arrested. After the arrest, police said detectives had also recovered “several items of evidence,” including a rifle and handgun, and that their investigation alongside state and federal authorities is ongoing. In addition to both victims being seen leaving religious services, they were “dressed in clothing that visibly identified their Jewish faith, including black jackets and head coverings.”

[Read More](#)



According to charges filed by the federal prosecutors, the suspect, 28-year-old Jamie Tran, told officers that he had **chosen the location of the shootings by searching for “kosher markets” on Yelp and selected the victims on the basis of their “head gear.”** He had previously sent antisemitic messages to former classmates in December 2022 and cited a flier, apparently of the type routinely distributed by the GDL, that blamed Jews for the COVID-19 pandemic. Tran has been charged with two counts of hate crimes, and he could face life in prison without parole.

[Read More](#)



February 15: Boone, North Carolina

At around 7:30 PM, several drivers on King Street reported an individual **waving a Nazi flag** in front of the Temple of the High Country, a Reform synagogue. Shortly after, two individuals riding a bus observed that flag draped over the temple’s sign. They got off the bus, removed the flag, and reported the incident.

[Read More](#)



February 6: San Francisco, California

A neo-Nazi entered an Orthodox synagogue in San Francisco, California, and said, "Hello my Jewish friends. I want to show you something," before firing blank rounds into the air. The suspect — identified as 51-year-old Dmitri Mishin — was initially indicted for "disturbing any religious assembly," "brandishing an imitation firearm," and "causing another to refrain from engaging in a religious service," and could face more [charges](#). He has a history of antisemitic activity on social media, including posts promoting Nazi ideology. Mishin has been charged with two felony counts of making threats to obstruct the exercise of religion, along with six misdemeanor counts for allegedly brandishing a replica firearm and disturbing a religious meeting, the San Francisco district attorney's office said.

[Read More](#)



January 31: Las Vegas, Nevada

A man in Las Vegas, Nevada, made a series of threatening calls to a Chabad synagogue, threatening to **"come shoot the synagogue."**

[Read More](#)



January 30: Bloomfield, New Jersey

A **molotov cocktail was thrown at the front door of Temple Ner Tamid**, a Reform synagogue in Bloomfield, New Jersey. A review of surveillance footage revealed that an unidentified ski-mask wearing individual – believed to be a Caucasian male – had approached the synagogue and lit and threw the incendiary device, before escaping.

[Read More](#)



**January 24:
St. Louis, Missouri**

A sign outside Congregation Temple Israel, a Reform synagogue in St. Louis, Missouri, was **vandalized with red spray-paint graffiti**.

[Read Here](#)



**January 22:
Staten Island, New York**

An Orthodox synagogue on Staten Island, New York, had its **perimeter fence breached** by a suspect who quickly fled the scene.

[Read More](#)



**January 20:
Brooklyn, New York**

An Orthodox synagogue in Brooklyn, New York, received a **suspicious package containing antisemitic propaganda and an unidentifiable black-gray powder**.

[Read More](#)



**January 14:
Houston, Texas**

Ezra Law [broke into](#) Congregation Emanu El, Reform synagogue in Houston, Texas, **causing damage to both the building and a sacred Torah scroll**. After spending six hours in the building – including drinking wine and spilling it on one of the Torah scrolls – she was discovered by security personnel before Shabbat services and subsequently arrested.

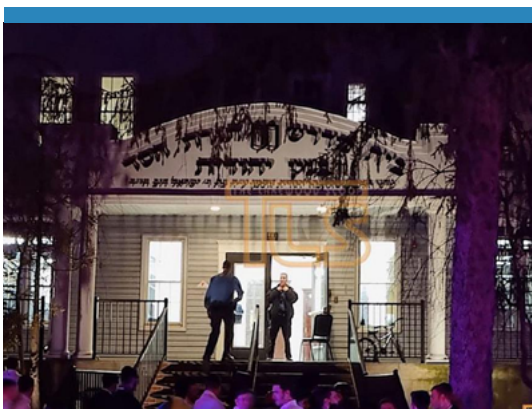
[Read More](#)

OUTSIDE THE U.S.



Threats against synagogues were also made in the United Kingdom, Israel, and Turkey during the first two months of 2023. In London, a man entered a synagogue and school in Stamford Hill and [screamed](#), ***"I am going to blow the place up."*** In Jerusalem, **seven people were killed**, and at least three more injured, in the deadliest attack of its kind in years in Israel, outside a synagogue on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Police identified the [assailant](#) as a Palestinian from East Jerusalem. In Istanbul, police [arrested](#) 15 suspects connected to the **Islamic State terror group who were allegedly plotting to target synagogues.**

OTHER JEWISH INSTITUTIONS ALSO TARGETED



Other Jewish institutions were also targeted during the first two months of 2023. On January 5, a man wielding a machete [yelled](#) profanities at a group of Jewish students outside of a Jewish day school in New Jersey, and on January 26, a [bomb threat](#) was called into Kehillah Jewish High School in Palo Alto, California, while the Jewish Community High School of the Bay in San Francisco also received a call from the same phone number threatening the school and mentioning a firearm. That same day, a Jewish



Community Center in Staten Island, New York, received [threatening messages](#). In the second week of February, a Jewish day school in Los Angeles, California, had its menorah vandalized, and on February 7, the Hillel at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, had its pane glass windows [broken](#) when an object was hurled at the building.



Similar incidents occurred in France, Canada, and Argentina. In Buenos Aires, the IL Peretz Cultural and Sports Association had swastikas and the name "Hitler" graffitied in front of the building. In Toulouse, French authorities placed under judicial supervision a man who made [threatening phone calls](#) to a Jewish school that was the site of a deadly terror attack in 2012. In Ottawa, police say arson may have been behind two fires at a Jewish summer camp.

A [newly-released survey](#) by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) on the state of contemporary antisemitism in the U.S. found that 26% of American Jews said they were a target of an antisemitic incident – i.e. a physical attack, in-person remark, or online comment –in 2022. Moreover, the findings indicated that 23% of American Jews mentioned that Jewish institutions with which they are affiliated had been targeted by antisemitism over the past five years. Lastly, and perhaps most disturbingly, the findings also showed that 38% of American Jews changed their behavior in the past 12 months out of fear of antisemitism. Currently, the number of targeted Jewish institutions in the first two months of 2023 confirms the perilous landscape of antisemitism outlined in AJC's findings.