



Swedish
Institute for
Human Rights

Exposure of Jewish congregations and associations to antisemitism





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The Swedish Institute for Human Rights was established on 1 January 2022 as Sweden's National Human Rights Institute. It is mandated to monitor, investigate, and report on the realisation and respect for human rights in Sweden in accordance with its establishing law and the Paris Principles.

Summary: A Serious Situation for Jews in Sweden

This report examines the exposure of Jewish congregations and associations in Sweden to antisemitism, hate and threats. It forms part of the Swedish Institute for Human Rights' submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination ahead of its 2025 review of Sweden.

A central aim of the report is to amplify the voices of Jewish individuals and communities, capturing their lived experiences and perspectives on the situation of Jewish congregations and associations in Sweden today. The report also explores their exposure to antisemitism, including hatred, threats, and discrimination.

Interviews were conducted with representatives of Jewish congregations and associations to assess their perceptions of public authorities' efforts to uphold the human rights of Jews in Sweden. Collectively, the interviews present a deeply concerning picture situation across several areas:

- Jews express limited trust in how police handle reports of antisemitic hate crimes. Many have stopped reporting such incidents, citing a lack of meaningful outcomes. This contributes to a climate of insecurity and disillusionment.
- Interviewees report a marked increase in antisemitism in schools, particularly after autumn 2023. The situation for Jewish children is described as extremely troubling and seen as a threat to the viability of Jewish life in Sweden. Some families are considering emigration, and many are questioning their future in the country. The situation appears particularly dire in smaller municipalities, where awareness and engagement from authorities are often lacking.
- Many Jews report that they hide their identity and avoid public spaces due to fear and vulnerability.
- While governmental declarations of support are appreciated, there is a perceived lack of concrete action. Several interviewees expressed concern that Jewish issues are being politicised, which risks exacerbating societal polarisation.

1. Introduction

This report focuses on the exposure of Jewish congregations and associations in Sweden to antisemitism, hate, and threats. It forms part of the Swedish Institute for Human Rights' submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination ahead of its review of Sweden scheduled for the autumn of 2025.

The aim of the report is to present the voices of Jewish individuals and communities, capturing their lived experiences and perspectives on the situation of Jewish congregations and associations in Sweden today. The report also explores their experiences of antisemitism, including hatred, threats, and discrimination.

The intention is not to determine which specific expressions or acts constitute antisemitism. Rather, the focus is on understanding how experiences of antisemitism affect Jewish individuals' and communities' ability to have their human rights respected and fulfilled.

In parallel with this report, we have investigated the exposure of Muslim congregations and associations to racism in Sweden.

1.1. Delimitations

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) defines antisemitism as "a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, and toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities." This definition is used by the Swedish government and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), among others.

This report does not aim to determine which expressions or actions qualify as antisemitic. Instead, it prioritises the consequences of antisemitism on the respect for, protection and fulfilment of human rights. An aim of the report is therefore to highlight the perspectives and lived experiences of Jewish individuals, recognising that they are best placed to describe the challenges they face in everyday life.

1.2. Interviews with Representatives of Jewish Communities and Organisations

There are currently four Jewish congregations in Sweden: in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, and north-western Skåne. Additionally, smaller Jewish associations operate in Uppsala, Västerås, Norrköping, Lund, and Borås. Orthodox branches under Chabad Lubavitch Sweden are also present in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö. Jews also live in areas without formal congregations or associations.

The Swedish Institute for Human Rights conducted interviews with representatives of Jewish congregations and associations in Sweden. The interviews explored

- the ability of Jewish congregations and associations to conduct their activities
- first-hand experiences and perceptions of antisemitism.

Between September and October 2024, we held nine interviews with twelve representatives (eight women and four men) from Jewish congregations and associations across Sweden. The interviews began with an open-ended question about how the interviewees perceived the situation of their congregation or association since 2018, i.e. in the period following Sweden's latest review by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Hamas attack on Israel of October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza deeply influenced many of the conversations. Interviewees described an intensification of antisemitism in Sweden's public sphere, characterised by more frequent, overt, and socially accepted expressions of hostility.

Each interview lasted between one and two hours. Most were held in person in the congregations' or associations' premises or in other selected premises, though some were conducted digitally.

All of the interviews addressed the following themes:

- Experiences of antisemitism, including hate crimes.
- Perceptions of interactions with public institutions such as the police, politicians, and civil society actors.
- Perceptions of governmental and institutional policy responses and support from responsible authorities.
- Access to remedies and protection when rights are violated.

Interviewees spoke both as organisational representatives and private individuals, bringing insight into both community-wide challenges and personal experiences of vulnerability to antisemitic threats and hate speech. However, they do not speak on behalf of the entire Jewish population in Sweden.

The Swedish Institute for Human Rights presents what was conveyed in the interviews without expressing our own assessment of the statements made, unless otherwise stated in the report.

We have also spoken with representatives of the Jewish congregations' and associations' own security organizations, and individuals responsible for coordinating with municipalities and police, in order to better understand the context of the interviewees' accounts. These supplementary conversations were conducted with the interviewees' consent.

To validate our findings, we followed up with several participants to discuss our preliminary conclusions. Although these follow-up discussions are only occasionally cited, they were instrumental in ensuring accurate interpretation of the material. The analysis and conclusions presented in this report are solely those of the Swedish Institute for Human Rights.

Alongside the interviews, we also reviewed recent reports on the situation for Jews in Sweden produced by other organisations. We have primarily focused on reports, analyses and articles that include information about antisemitism in Sweden and Europe published since 2018. These include: A Strong Jewish Life for Future Generations – a government report proposing a national strategy to strengthen Jewish life in Sweden, two reports from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå): Antisemitiska hatbrott under hösten 2023¹ and Antisemitiska hatbrott – samtida erfarenheter av judiska församlingar och organisationer;² and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights' 2024 report on discrimination and hate crimes against Jews in the EU.³

1 Brå, 2024, Police reported hate crimes with antisemitic motives during the autumn of 2023 A summary of the cases that were marked as hate crimes by the police from October 7 to December 31, 2023, and 2022 respectively.

2 Brå, Antisemitiska hatbrott – Samtida erfarenheter från judiska församlingar och organisationer, 2025, [Report by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention on Antisemitic Hate Crime].

3 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2024, Jewish people's experiences and perceptions of antisemitism.

2. Exposure to Antisemitism: Impact on Jewish Life in Sweden

*“They have totally hijacked my freedom.
They’ve just chopped it off.”*

A living congregation or association is more than the sum of its members—but it cannot exist without them. Antisemitic threats and hatred directed at these congregations and associations cannot be fully separated from the individual experiences of those who comprise them.

Those we interviewed state that antisemitism has for a long time affected their activities and individual lives in Sweden. However, many describe how the situation has deteriorated significantly since 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza. They describe a society in which antisemitic views and expressions have become increasingly normalised—online, in public spaces, and within public discourse. Many perceive a growing reluctance among individuals and organisations to openly condemn antisemitic expressions. They also perceive support from duty bearers⁴ to be increasingly ambiguous or conditional.

Many of those we interviewed testify to how Swedish Jews are being held accountable for the Israeli government’s policies. While acknowledging the legitimacy of criticism regarding Israel’s policies and actions toward Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, they feel that such criticism all too often crosses into antisemitism. Individuals and organisations that do not consider themselves antisemitic may, through their use of languages and their actions, unwittingly contribute to narratives and actions that are either directly hostile towards Jews or contribute to fuelling antisemitism in society.

Many of those we spoke with now feel unable to openly express that Israel—as a Jewish state—is of significance for Jews in Sweden. They feel that they are met with suspicion, even for expressing a moderate position such as support for a peaceful two-state solution or for the protection of civilians on both sides in the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East.

Several interviewees recount situations where they have been subjected to violence, threats and harassment as a result of being Jewish. This leads to a more or less constant sense of fear and insecurity. They describe implementing private security measures, such as installing cameras and alarms, routines for avoiding risks such as opening the letter-

⁴ Every person in Sweden is a rights holder. The State is the duty bearer, often working through other public actors such as authorities, municipalities and regional governments. Their duty is to ensure that all rights holders can enjoy their human rights.

box, not travelling by taxi or not going out alone at night. Many express a desire to live more openly as Jews but are deterred by concern for their safety and that of their loved ones. Even when individuals choose to openly express their identity, doing so imposes significant emotional burdens on their friends and families.

Caution and self-censorship are described as something that many Jews have lived with for a long time, but which has been reinforced since October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza. Some interviewees who once wore visible Jewish symbols now refrain from doing so. On an individual level, many describe losing their freedom, being deprived of their basic right to move freely in society and the ability to freely express their identity.

2.1. Support is lacking for those who are not members of a congregation or association

In addition to offering a place of safety and fellowship, the congregations and associations we interviewed have various strategies and concrete activities to support members, and to some extent also non-members. This may involve contacting people to ask how they are doing or offering more professional support. One association told us that they have offered all members crisis and trauma support with a psychologist following the events of 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza, and another association has invited a psychologist to the local youth group. Several congregations and associations express concern that the support people can receive from congregations and associations does not reach Jews who are not members.

Several congregations and associations support their members in reporting hate crimes to the police. One congregation encourages all members to report if they experience a crime. Another congregation has a safety officer who helps members make the police report. For those outside of a congregation, there are few opportunities to get support with reporting hate crime.

The interviewees state that in times of increased antisemitism, the congregations and associations increases in importance. Several congregations and associations also state that since 7 October 2023, they have seen an influx of new members and an increased interest in participating in their activities. The support received from fellow Jews makes it possible to avoid giving up one's Jewish identity. In general, support is perceived to be stronger in larger communities, while it is seen to be increasingly difficult to live with an open Jewish identity in a town where there is no organised Jewish community.

2.2. Threats and hatred towards Jewish congregations and associations take different forms

“Those of us out here in the country are left to our own devices – both economically and mentally.”

The individuals we interviewed describe Jewish congregations and associations as frequent targets of antisemitic threats and hatred. They also report a growing sense that these threats, and the need among members for safe spaces where they can openly express their Jewish identity, are increasing in parallel. This places considerable pressure on congregations - not only to provide physical protection, but also to support members in coping with the antisemitism they encounter in the broader community.

The vulnerability of Jewish congregations and organisations is not a new phenomenon; it is rooted in a long history of lived experience. Many congregations and associations describe operating under very difficult conditions over an extended period. Despite extensive security measures, several have nonetheless been subjected to serious antisemitic incidents.⁵ One stark example is the closure of the local Jewish association in Umeå in 2017, following sustained antisemitic activity by the Nordic Resistance Movement.⁶

During the interviews, we heard about various forms of threats and expressions of hatred directed at congregations, associations, and their representatives. Many of these incidents occurred prior to the current war in Gaza, although interviewees noted both an increase in frequency and, in some cases, changes in the nature of the incidents since the outbreak of the conflict.

Over time, buildings belonging to Jewish congregations and associations have been subjected to a range of threatening acts. These include antisemitic messages conveyed through graffiti, stickers, or other objects. Some of these messages have explicit connections to Nazism or the Holocaust, while others reference Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories or express criticism of the Israeli state. In the latter cases, interviewees were clear that while the messages themselves may not be inherently threatening or antisemitic, the act of placing them on Jewish premises or cemeteries is a way of conflating Swedish Jews with the State of Israel.

5 See for example Göteborgs tingsrätt, case nr B 15944-17, 2018-06-25, where two persons were found guilty of grave unlawful threats and attempt to inflict gross damage, both crimes committed with hate motives. The judgement has been reviewed without a change in the verdict.

6 Minoritet – Sveriges nationella minoriteter och minoritetsspråk, Judiska föreningen stänger ner verksamhet, [Jewish association closes] 25 april 2017.

For example, we were told about members of the Left Party (Vänsterpartiet) who had put up pro-Palestinian stickers on Jewish cemeteries and synagogues. Beyond potentially constituting acts of vandalism against important religious and cultural symbols, such actions were experienced by those we interviewed as a form of collective blame where Swedish Jews are made to bear responsibility for the policies of the Israeli government and are thus perceived as legitimate targets by critics of those policies.

2.3. Anxiety and insecurity around Jewish premises during holidays

Another way in which Jewish associations and congregations are made to feel uneasy and insecure is through the presence of individuals with presumed antisemitic motives during times when members are gathered at synagogues or other premises, such as during festivals and events. Groups of individuals have been observed gathering near Jewish venues, seemingly with the aim of signalling antisemitism and intimidating members as they arrive or leave. Since 7 October 2023 and the outbreak of the war in Gaza, pro-Palestinian demonstrations have become more common in close proximity to these premises during times of congregation. These demonstrations are often perceived as directly and deliberately targeting those attending. In some cases, individual demonstrators have issued antisemitic threats in languages not understood by the police officers monitoring the events. Beyond the immediate distress caused, this also results in some individuals choosing not to visit the congregation or associations at all.

The police have a responsibility to protect Jewish congregations and organisations. In addition to police efforts, all the congregations and associations we spoke with maintain varying degrees of internal security arrangements. These include surveillance cameras, fencing, and reinforced glass. Security guards are sometimes employed, particularly during major events. While some congregations and associations have built strong security frameworks around their activities, this evokes mixed feelings among members. Some feel that such measures enhance their safety; others experience them as a constant reminder of the threat they face. Some members report feeling more vulnerable and exposed within the premises of the congregation or association, including synagogues and particularly Jewish schools. They perceive the risk of being targeted by antisemitic attacks to be increasing. Others interpret the need for extensive security as an indication that Sweden is failing in its efforts to combat antisemitism, resorting instead to protective measures that may lead to further isolation and segregation.

2.4. Many adapt their activities to the threat

Those we interviewed describe how congregations and associations are forced to adapt their activities to the prevailing threatening environment. Communication about events is consistently cautious. Organisers often avoid announcing time and location together.

Members are also aware that, for security reasons, they should not speak openly about upcoming activities. Travelling to and from these events is considered a particularly vulnerable time. Many report feelings of fear and anxiety during these moments. Organisers often encourage attendees to leave promptly afterwards and avoid gathering outside the premises. As a precaution, many members conceal visible markers of their Jewish identity, choose alternative routes home, and prefer to travel by car rather than walking or using public transport.

2.5. Congregations and associations need support and resources

Several interviewees emphasised the importance of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities having adequate resources, particularly to fund necessary security measures. The Council, which represents the congregations in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, and Northwest Skåne,⁷ is seen as a key actor whose work benefits Jewish life across Sweden. While smaller Jewish organisations may be represented by the Council, they do not have seats on its board.⁸ Many of those we spoke to believe that the Council's current resources are insufficient.

Representatives of associations outside the major cities report a significant lack of resources for security despite a clear increase in antisemitic threats. These smaller associations, often with fewer members, do not have access to the same level of resources as those in larger urban centres. Many feel that government and police support is disproportionately focused on the big-city congregations. They also report receiving little to no benefit from the additional protection resources allocated in recent years.⁹ One association described support from the government, municipality, and other Jewish organisations as far from adequate. The relatively small size of these communities also leads to a heightened sense of visibility—everyone knows who they are—which in turn deepens their sense of insecurity. Some representatives from outside the big cities have even spoken of considering relocation, questioning whether it will be possible to live openly as a Jew in Sweden outside the major urban centres if current trends continue.

⁷ To become a member in the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities a congregation must have, inter alia, at least 100 paying adult members.

⁸ Webpage of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, accessed 2025-05-26 <https://www.judiskacentral-radet.se/om-oss>.

⁹ In October 2023 the government granted an extra 10 million Swedish kronor to the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities for security measures during 2023. This extra contribution was renewed in 2024. A contribution of 10 million was also granted for 2025, but it was not earmarked for the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities and could be used by other congregations too.

2.6. Jewish communities' and organisations' contacts with civil society have deteriorated

The Jewish congregations and associations we interviewed form part of Swedish civil society. Before 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza, many reported having well-established partnerships with other organisations and religious communities, both nationally and locally, at the organisational and practical levels.

While some described a short period of increased support from broader civil society immediately after 7 October, this changed dramatically with the war in Gaza. Since then, many have experienced a clear and growing divide between Jewish communities and the rest of Swedish civil society.

Organisations that had previously maintained strong cooperation with Jewish congregations have responded in different ways. The most common reaction has been to withdraw. Voices that had previously been vocal and consistent in their engagement against racism and discrimination are now seen as unclear - or entirely silent - on the issue of antisemitism. Several interviewees report that former partners have begun turning down invitations to joint projects or events. This is often perceived as stemming from a belief that associating with Jewish groups comes at too high a cost. There is a reluctance among some organisations to be publicly linked with Jewish communities, for fear of backlash or criticism. While expressions of support still occur, they are increasingly private - in the form of letters, emails, or phone calls - rather than public statements.

Distancing from Jewish congregations and associations has become common. In some cases, there are even reports of more overtly hostile behaviour. For example, some civil society organisations have actively attempted to exclude Jewish groups from partnerships and consultations, explicitly citing the conflict in the Middle East as justification.

Interviewees also report a breakdown in interfaith cooperation. Many describe how, in practice, nearly all interfaith dialogue and collaboration has either ceased or encountered major difficulties since 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza.

3. Jewish congregations and associations experiences of the work of duty bearers

“The government’s clear position
has got stuck in Stockholm.”

3.1. Congregations’ and associations’ experiences of political engagement

Several of the Jewish congregations and associations we interviewed welcomed that the current government is engaging with the situation of Jews in a clearer way than previous governments. At the same time, there is concern that politicians tend to set groups against each other. For example, by highlighting antisemitism as a problem while avoiding naming the vulnerability of other groups, such as Muslims, who also experience suspicion, discrimination, hatred and threats. According to the interviewees, this is both wrong in principle and something that risks leading to increased polarisation and antisemitism. They also feel that representatives of certain parties find it difficult to deal with antisemitism in their own ranks or that they only support Jews in Sweden in order to pursue other issues. Several of the interviewees feel that Jews in Sweden are being used as a cudgel against other groups.

Many politicians say they want to support Jews in Sweden, but many feel that the support is rarely based on a deeper commitment. For example, it is common for politicians to use the commemoration of the November pogrom (or Kristallnacht) on 9 November and Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January to distance themselves from historical antisemitism. Several people we spoke to think this is positive but insufficient. It is also seen as a sign that politicians do not care about the situation of Jews here and now. Several people point out that the increased support from the government risks being symbolic if it is not translated into clear measures that reach the entire country. The associations outside the big cities in particular feel that they are all too often left to fend for themselves.

Politicians, especially at the local level, are sometimes described as opportunists who only seek proximity to Jews in Sweden when it favours their political agenda. At the same time, some believe that the lack of action by politicians is not always intentional but may stem from ignorance of the situation of Jews in Sweden and an insecurity when it comes to dealing with politically sensitive issues. One example raised by several interviewees relates to the celebrations that broke out in several Swedish cities after Hamas’ attack on

Israel on 7 October 2023, by people who in many cases carried Palestinian flags. Several interviewees felt that local politicians, municipal administrations and the police reacted late or not at all to the celebrations. The lack of public condemnation was perceived by many as a betrayal of Jews in Sweden. Several expressed that these events show the need for better preparedness to respond to international events that have repercussions at the local level.

The interviews also reveal that politicians' positions against antisemitism all too rarely lead to action by authorities or regional and municipal administrations. Several testify that implementation is often dependent on the knowledge, will and influence of individual officials in the organisations in which they work. Interviewees point out that there is a lack of governance where the management of public administration takes clear responsibility. The clashes between different levels and different areas of activity make it difficult to maintain a consistent approach. People at the bottom of the hierarchy - such as individual administrators, police officers and teachers - tend to work in very different ways.

Two of those we spoke to expressed that work with national minorities at municipal level is underdeveloped. They believe that Swedish minority legislation carries with it an inherent but underutilised potential that could generate positive effects for the Jewish minority if the municipalities invested more in this work.

3.2. Police protection is not perceived as sufficient

“Guards are not the solution. Instead, we should be fighting antisemitism. Instead of fighting those who commit antisemitic hate crimes, they lock us up.”

In our interviews, our interviewees describe the work of the state, police and municipalities as mainly reactive and without sufficient preparation. As a result, when incidents targeting Jews occur, the response from duty bearers is often delayed and lacks clarity and coordination. This is worrying as interviewees feel that they need protection from the police and that greater understanding and anticipation from them would have made protection more effective. Interviewees are clear that Jewish communities and organisations are keen to access police protection as widely as possible.

Those we have spoken to describe that the police, specially in places outside metropolitan areas, lack the knowledge needed to understand the threat to Jews. One concrete example is that the police lack the necessary skills to navigate the complex borderland between antisemitism and legitimate criticism of Israel when demonstrations against the war in Gaza are held directly adjacent to the premises of the congregations.

Many emphasise that the shortcomings are not primarily about unwillingness or lack of resources. Often there is simply a lack of coordination and knowledge transfer between different levels and units within the police. Interviewees also feel that they are receiving less protection than they need, which means that congregations and associations spend a lot of money on their own protection. This also leads to increased concerns that protection is insufficient in relation to the threat. The gap between the need for protection and the availability of protection is problematic for congregations and associations throughout the country but appears to be more serious outside the major cities.

To deal with this, the police in several parts of the country have established special contact officers for Jews in Sweden. Having a contact officer is something that is generally appreciated by the representatives of the congregations we spoke to. In the larger cities, many report valuable co-operation with the police, although there are still shortcomings. The contact officer's knowledge of antisemitism and the situation of Jews in Sweden, as well as their personal qualities, are described as crucial to how the dialogue works in practice.

3.3. Many find it pointless to report antisemitic hate crimes

“It feels pointless to report because you get no follow-up. The report is just made, then you never hear anything again”

It is not uncommon for Jewish congregational premises to be targeted through arson, vandalism, antisemitic graffiti, or the placement of Holocaust-related symbols nearby. Events and gatherings are also frequently disrupted—often in threatening ways and occasionally involving explicit death threats against congregation members or Jews in Sweden more broadly. This causes considerable concern and, according to interviewees, discourages many from participating in congregational life. To protect members and minimise risk, congregations often avoid publicly advertising events, and event locations are kept confidential. Several interviewees also noted that they screen social media contacts to reduce exposure to online antisemitism.

Many perceive reporting antisemitic incidents to the police as futile due to the lack of follow-up. In some cases, interviewees had photo or video evidence identifying perpetrators, but received no further contact from the police, which prevented them from submitting this evidence. Others described instances where the police failed to act despite the perpetrators being clearly identifiable. Those we interviewed generally feel that while the police are effective at protecting premises and events, they are less responsive when it comes to investigating and resolving hate crimes.

Individual members of Jewish communities are also targeted by antisemitic hate crimes. Congregations encourage members to report incidents, but most are believed to go unreported. Those who do report hate crimes describe the process as time-consuming and emotionally difficult, often involving repeated retelling of traumatic events. Some pursue reporting to contribute to a more accurate picture of antisemitic crime, but with little expectation of redress. The perceived suspicion from police officers toward victims, combined with the lack of follow-up, is often experienced as a sign that society tolerates antisemitic hate crime.

Many hate crimes occur online, leading some individuals to withdraw from social media altogether. Jewish organisations report that their ability to communicate publicly is hampered by frequent hate and threats.

Several interviewees emphasised the need for stronger protection for Jews. Society must both shield Jewish schools and synagogues from antisemitic attacks and take a firm public stance against such crimes, both online and offline. Some interviewees also felt that penalties for hate crimes are too lenient. One suggestion was for municipalities to provide easily accessible checklists with emergency contact details for the police and other services that can provide support when someone is exposed to hate crime.

3.4. Schools are not doing enough for Jewish children

In nearly every interview, the situation for Jewish children in schools was raised early on, often seen as pivotal for the long-term sustainability of Jewish congregations and organisations.

The situation is described as particularly serious for children attending non-Jewish schools. In cities with Jewish primary schools—available only in Stockholm and Gothenburg¹⁰—these institutions are considered vital havens. The broader sustainability of Jewish communities in Sweden is closely tied to the safety of children at school. The situation is especially acute outside the major cities, where infrastructure for Jewish life

¹⁰ In Stockholm, Hillelskolan is an independent school (F–6) with a Jewish profile. Vasa Real has a Jewish profile for years 7–9. In Gothenburg, Alexandraskolan is an independent school (F–6) with a Jewish profile.

is weaker. Some families have started commuting long distances to ensure their children can attend a Jewish school. Others feel they have no choice but to relocate, either to a larger Swedish city or abroad.

Jewish schools create safety—and segregation

“[Jewish schools] are a sanctuary for Jewish pupils,
a guarantee that Jewish life will continue in Sweden.”

Many interviewees highlighted the significant difference between Jewish and non-Jewish schools¹¹ in terms of safety and how well schools take responsibility. At present, Jewish schools are perceived as much safer due to fears of antisemitism in mixed environments.¹² Parents with children in Jewish schools strongly value these schools but also recognise their vulnerability.

There are downsides. For example, some parents noted how unsettling it is for children to encounter armed guards daily, and how difficult it is to explain this reality. Since 7 October 2023, Jewish schools have increased surveillance, both through police presence and private security funded by the schools themselves. Despite these measures, many children were kept home following the outbreak of war in Gaza, due to heightened fears of antisemitic attacks.

The interaction between Jewish schools and the outside world has become increasingly fraught. On outings, children are instructed to conceal Jewish symbols and avoid identifying themselves as Jewish. The contrast between the safe school environment and the external world can feel stark, though this is attributed to societal conditions rather than the schools themselves.

Lack of knowledge and support in non-Jewish schools

For children not enrolled in Jewish schools, experiences vary. Some schools are relatively safe, but many are described as high-risk environments where antisemitic hate, threats, and violence are common. Interviewees described a history of such problems, now exacerbated by the events following 7 October 2023.

11 In Malmö there is a preschool, Chinuch, with a Jewish profile.

12 The Jewish schools are open to everybody. You don't have to be Jewish to enroll in them.

“How will the children cope? If I say to the teacher ‘I was victimised,’ and the teacher says, ‘No, you weren’t’ ...”

A recurring theme in our interviews was the limited knowledge of antisemitism among school staff. Interviewees noted a reluctance by school leadership to address antisemitism, with some municipalities and school boards appearing to avoid responsibility altogether. Support from principals and school leadership is crucial, yet inconsistent. In the absence of institutional structures, clear strategies and instruction from school leadership, responsibility often falls to individual teachers.

Many interviewees claim that knowledge about antisemitism is generally low among teaching staff. Teachers lack both the awareness and tools to identify and address antisemitic behaviour. We also heard about incidents being ignored or mischaracterised by teachers. Interviewees stated that a clear stance against antisemitism on the part of teachers would make their work harder. They also believed that teachers were afraid of the consequences if they did act.

We were also informed about incidents in schools which included violence and exposure to antisemitism in schools. Even clearly antisemitic actions—such as Nazi salutes or physical assaults—are sometimes dismissed as standard conflicts, with blame placed on both parties.

Interviewees argue that schools must act decisively in such cases and involve the police far more frequently. When teachers and principals fail to respond, affected children are left to manage the consequences alone. This dynamic contributes to the growing trend of Jewish families leaving smaller towns. While this threatens the long-term viability of congregations outside the largest cities, interviewees expressed empathy with families who feel they must move for their children’s safety. There is a growing sense of abandonment—an implicit understanding that, in today’s Sweden, Jewish life can only be lived openly, and children provided with safe schooling, in the largest urban centres.

4. Conclusions – A serious situation requires a strong response

4.1. Jewish congregations and associations hit hard by antisemitism—worst outside big cities

Freedom of association and freedom of religion are fundamental human rights protected by the Swedish Constitution and several international conventions to which Sweden is a party. These freedoms apply to individuals, but also include the right to freely associate with others to express one's religion, cultural identity or beliefs. The right to freedom of religion entails protection for practices based on belief or opinion and for places of worship, including synagogues.

For a long time, Jewish congregations and associations have served as sanctuaries for Jewish life in Sweden, places where it is possible to openly express one's Jewish identity. The interviews we conducted show that increasing antisemitism not only affects individuals but also severely restricts the ability of Jewish congregations and associations to operate freely in Sweden. This situation has developed at a time when access to the activities and fellowship of congregations and associations is most in demand.

The Government's Action Plan to combat Racism and Hate Crime¹³ and the National strategy to strengthen Jewish life and combat antisemitism¹⁴ address the problem of hatred and threats affecting religious communities and other organisations, and their ability to carry out their activities. The government has therefore increased the government grant for security measures for civil society organisations.¹⁵ Although the increased government grant is a positive step, those the Institute has spoken to feel that it is not enough to address the obstacles to freedom of association and freedom of religion faced by congregations and associations. Brå reports information that the costs for security are very burdensome for Jewish organizations and that they do not receive sufficient funding,¹⁶ which supports the view of a lack of financial support for the organizations' security efforts. Financial resources also need to be supplemented with other measures to improve security, such as awareness-raising, coordination and cooperation with the police.

13 Ministry of Labour, 2024, Action plan to combat racism and hate crime, p 42.

14 Ministry of Culture, 2025, Strategy to strengthen Jewish life and combat antisemitism, Ku2024/00578, p 9 and 11.

15 Jewish congregations and associations have been able to receive support for security measures under the Ordinance (2018:1533) on government grants for security-enhancing measures for civil society organisations, a grant that civil society organisations can apply for. The general appropriation for government grants for security-enhancing measures has been increased from SEK 44 million to SEK 74 million in 2024. A change in the regulation on government grants for security-enhancing measures has also increased access to resources for certain Jewish organisations, as applications are subject to a needs assessment.

16 Brottsförebyggande rådet, Antisemitiska hatbrott – Samtida erfarenheter från judiska församlingar och organisationer, 2025, p 56–57, [Report by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention on Antisemitic Hate Crime].

In a study conducted by the Segerstedt Institute in autumn 2024, representatives of Jews in Sweden who took part in the survey expressed the view that politicians, institutions and local authorities do too little to create security for Jews in Sweden and that the authorities are slow to address antisemitism in the public sphere.¹⁷ According to a report by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), only 13 per cent of Jewish respondents in Sweden are satisfied with the government's efforts to combat antisemitism. This compares to an average of 18 per cent across the 13 EU countries covered by the FRA survey. The same study found that only 15 per cent of Jews in Sweden are satisfied with government efforts to protect Jews in Sweden. This is the lowest figure among the EU countries surveyed by FRA, where the average is 32 per cent.¹⁸

The situation is different in different parts of the country, but the biggest difference is between the big cities of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, and other towns in the country. In the three major cities, there is a more developed infrastructure around the Jewish congregations. The difference between these and other locations may be due to various factors. Among other things, congregations and associations throughout Sweden feel that the level of knowledge and commitment from officials and politicians is often lacking and believe that this problem may be greater outside Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. In some places, the pressure from antisemitic forces has become so great that it is no longer possible to conduct any real activities. Representatives from congregations and associations believe that there is a risk that more Jewish associations will be forced to close outside of the largest cities, and that Jews will move to the larger cities or abroad.

As this report shows, support for Jewish communities and organisations is insufficient, despite the government allocating extra funds for security measures. There are indications that the need for increased support is greatest outside the major cities. The report *A strong Jewish life for future generations - National strategy for strengthening Jewish life in Sweden 2025–2034* (SOU 2024:3) proposes the establishment of a special government grant to support Jewish civil society in Sweden.¹⁹ The purpose of this support would be to improve the conditions for Jewish organisations to operate at local and regional level, in addition to the funds allocated for security-enhancing measures. The National Strategy to strengthen Jewish life and to combat antisemitism adopted in May 2025 does not include such measures.

17 Mirjam Katzin and Pontus Rudberg, Segerstedt Institute, Report 13. Antisemitism in Sweden after 7 October, Consequences of 7 October for Jews in Sweden: thoughts, emotions and reflections, pp. 18–42.

18 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Jewish People's Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism*, 2024, p. 96. This is the third survey of this kind. The previous two were conducted in 2013 and 2018. The survey in this study was conducted from January to June 2023, and thus does not cover the situation that arose after 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza.

19 SOU 2024:3, *Strengthened Jewish life for future generations – the national strategy to strengthen Jewish life in Sweden 2025–2034*, p 142.

4.2. Exposure to antisemitism in schools affects the activities of congregations and associations, especially outside the big cities

Freedom of association and freedom of religion are closely linked to the right to education, according to the findings of this report. This right is protected by, among others, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Article 5 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28. The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has affirmed that the right to education includes the right to learn in an environment where each child's dignity is respected and where they are free from hatred, intimidation, and violence.²⁰

It is clear from our interviews that the situation of Jewish children in schools is an important issue for Jewish communities and organisations. In addition, Brå highlights Jewish children and young people as a vulnerable group that is frequently subjected to antisemitic hate crimes and violations, primarily in schools. They describe that the incidents range from harassment to threats, molestation, and violence.²¹ Children's vulnerability is not only a violation of the individual child's human rights but also affects the entire Jewish community. If children are not safe at school, the incentive to move increases. Many of the people we spoke to say that they are considering or planning to move from where they live, either from a smaller town to a larger one or from Sweden to other countries. Katzin and Rudberg write in their report, which is based on a survey conducted in 2024, that many Jews have been considering moving from Sweden for a long time. They liken these thoughts to a mental suitcase in the wardrobe. The study also shows that the situation has deteriorated significantly since 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza, and that the thoughts of moving are now more about "when" and "where".²² A survey conducted by the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities shows that as many as half of the respondents were discussing leaving Sweden.²³ Brå reports that some Jews are considering moving with the aim of being able to live an open Jewish life, free from insecurity and the fear of being subjected to antisemitic hate crimes or abuse. They also say that thoughts of emigration may have been strengthened after 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza.²⁴

There are many indications that schools are crucial to the ability of congregations and organisations to operate outside of the main cities. If children are not safe in schools, families feel compelled to move to larger cities, or abroad, where there are Jewish schools. The knowledge and commitment of school principals, school management and teachers

20 Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comments No. 1, 2001, p. 8.

21 Brottsförebyggande rådet, Antisemitiska hatbrott - Samtida erfarenheter från judiska församlingar och organisationer, 2025, p 37.

22 Mirjam Katzin and Pontus Rudberg, Segerstedt Institute, p. 31, Report 13, Antisemitism in Sweden after 7 October, Consequences of 7 October for Jews in Sweden: thoughts, emotions and reflections, pp. 18–42.

23 Jewish Central Council and Infostat, Antisemitism in Sweden - In the wake of 7 October, 2023.

24 Brottsförebyggande rådet, Antisemitiska hatbrott - Samtida erfarenheter från judiska församlingar och organisationer, 2025, p 63, [Report by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention on Antisemitic Hate Crime].

has been shown to be crucial in the fight against antisemitism in schools, and here too the conditions may be less favourable outside of the largest cities. There also seems to be a difference between cities where there are Jewish schools and cities where there are not. Interviewees perceive the existence of Jewish schools to function as a valve reducing stress for both parents and children as they know that it is possible to attend a Jewish school.

We have not carried out any interviews with school children in the course of this study. All interviewees are adults. However, the prevalence of antisemitism in schools is a long-standing problem. The 2024 report on Jewish life describes antisemitism in schools as one of the main contributors to insecurity.²⁵ Two studies have been conducted on antisemitism in the education system, one of which examined the situation in schools in Malmö in 2021²⁶ and the other schools in Stockholm in 2022.²⁷ The Malmö study shows that there is a clear prevalence of hate crimes against Jews, both verbal and physical, in several schools. School staff find it difficult to deal with issues related to antisemitism and have requested structures, frameworks and clarity on how to work against antisemitism. The study also shows that there is a lack of support and prioritisation from school leadership.²⁸ The study from Stockholm shows, among other things, that Jewish pupils feel that school staff do not always take antisemitic expressions seriously.²⁹ Furthermore, those interviewed for Brå's report from 2025 describe an escalation of the situation for Jewish children in schools after 7 October and the subsequent war in Gaza.³⁰

There is an awareness among duty bearers that minorities are at risk of harm in Swedish schools. This is reflected in the government's action plan against racism and hate crime from December 2024, where schools are highlighted as a priority area. The National Agency for Education, the Equality Ombudsman and the Living History Forum are identified as key actors in this work.³¹ The strategy to strengthen Jewish life and counteract antisemitism brings together initiatives aimed at increasing knowledge about Jewish life and counteracting antisemitism in the school environment. Among other things, the National Agency for Education and the Living History Forum will continue to be tasked with working on democracy-strengthening initiatives. The Living History Forum also has a mandate to carry out awareness-raising initiatives against antisemitism,

25 SOU 2024:3, National strategy for strengthening Jewish life in Sweden 2025-2034, p 127.

26 Mirjam Katzin, City of Malmö, Schoolyard racism, antisemitism and exclusion – A report on antisemitism and the Jewish minority in Malmö's preschools, schools, upper secondary schools and adult education, 2021

27 Kristin Wagrell, City of Stockholm, Antisemitism in Stockholm's schools -- A report on school staff and students' experiences and thoughts about antisemitic expressions in their school environment, 2022.

28 Mirjam Katzin, City of Malmö, Schoolyard racism, antisemitism and exclusion – A report on antisemitism and the Jewish minority in Malmö's preschools, schools, upper secondary schools and adult education, 2021, p. 31.

29 Kristin Wagrell, City of Stockholm, Antisemitism in Stockholm's schools – A report on school staff and students' experiences and thoughts about antisemitic expressions in their school environment, 2022, p. 1.

30 Brottsförebyggande rådet, Antisemitiska hatbrott – Samtida erfarenheter från judiska församlingar och organisationer, 2025, p 40 and p 65, [Report by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention on Antisemitic Hate Crime].

31 Ministry of Labour, 2024, Action Plan against Racism and Hate Crime, p 47 ff.

aimed at teachers and other staff in the education system.³² However, these initiatives are limited in scope and, in light of the challenges that exist further initiatives may be necessary.

We would like to emphasise that long-term efforts are necessary to combat antisemitism in schools. In addition, there is ample evidence to suggest that there is a need for further immediate action with a shorter-term impact, particularly outside the three largest cities.

4.3. Police resources and competences play a major role for Jews in Sweden

The State has a clear and legally grounded duty to uphold public order and protect individuals when their human rights are threatened.³³ Law enforcement authorities play a central role in safeguarding the right to life³⁴ and the right to bodily and personal integrity³⁵ for all. Victims of antisemitic hate crimes—including expressions of hatred, harassment, and violence—must be afforded meaningful opportunities to seek redress.³⁶ The State also bears a specific obligation to criminalise acts of violence or incitement to violence directed at particular ethnic groups³⁷, and the police and other law enforcement agencies are essential actors in fulfilling this duty.

While many interviewees describe the police's physical presence and protection efforts as generally professional and reassuring, access to such protection is perceived as limited. At the same time, the quality of the police's investigative work in hate crime cases is widely criticised.

Sweden's handling of antisemitic hate crimes has long faced scrutiny. According to Brå, representatives of Jewish congregations and organizations describe an experience of feeling that nothing ever happens with the reports that are made.³⁸ In the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' (FRA) most recent survey, a majority of Jewish respondents—both across Europe and specifically in Sweden—expressed dissatisfaction with the way police handle reports of antisemitic incidents.³⁹ Both the UN Committee

32 Ministry of Culture, 2025, Strategy for strengthening Jewish life and countering antisemitism, Ku2024/00578, p 24.

33 See, inter alia, Article 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

34 Article 2 of the European Convention.

35 Article 8 of the European Convention.

36 Article 2(d) and Article 6 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

37 Article 4 of the UN Convention on Racial Discrimination.

38 Among others Brottsförebyggande rådet, Antisemitiska hatbrott - Samtida erfarenheter från judiska församlingar och organisationer, 2025, p 66.

39 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Jewish People's Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism, 2024, p. 86.

on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Council of Europe have issued repeated recommendations urging Sweden to address the structural deficiencies in the handling of hate crimes.⁴⁰

Interviewees highlight a widespread perception that the police lack the necessary knowledge and training to effectively address hate crimes. In addition, several interviewees point to systemic failings in how police reports are processed and followed up. As a result, many victims choose not to report antisemitic incidents at all. They describe how Jewish individuals often forgo claiming their rights because they no longer expect the Swedish justice system to protect them. This erosion of trust has emerged in parallel with a noticeable increase in antisemitic hate crimes⁴¹, contributing to growing anxiety—particularly among younger members of the Jewish community.⁴²

4.4. Prevention and Protection Efforts Are Inadequate

The responses gathered in our interviews suggest that many members of the Jewish minority feel let down by broader Swedish society. Dissatisfaction is growing, and a sense of alienation and mistrust is emerging. Many speak of an expanding divide between “us and them” and of not being taken seriously. Confidence in the public sector is weakening.

The failure to protect Jews from antisemitic hate crimes and to provide effective redress for victims constitutes a breach of the State’s obligations under international human rights law, including the duty to prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination.⁴³ To fulfil these obligations, Sweden must intensify its efforts to investigate and, where possible, prosecute antisemitic crimes—consistent with recent recommendations from both the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination⁴⁴ and the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Nazila Ghanea, following her 2024 visit to Sweden.⁴⁵

40 Council of Europe, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fifth Opinion on Sweden – Summary, 2024, p. 6 and UN Committee on Racial Discrimination, Concluding observations and recommendations on Sweden’s 22nd and 23rd periodic reports. 6 June 2018, Un Doc. RACIAL DISCRIMINATION CONVENTION/C/SWE/CO/22-23, paragraph 11(a).

41 BRÅ, Police-reported hate crimes with anti-Semitic motives in autumn 2023 – A compilation of the cases marked as hate crimes by the police 7 October - 31 December 2023 and 2022, 2024, p. 7.

42 Infostat on behalf of the Jewish Central Council, Antisemitism in Sweden – In the wake of 7 October, 2023.

43 Article 2(d) of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

44 UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding observations and recommendations on Sweden’s 22nd and 23rd periodic reports. 6 June 2018, Un Doc. RACIAL DISCRIMINATION CONVENTION/C/SWE/CO/22-23, paragraphs 10–11.

45 Report of the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion to Sweden, 2 April 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/55/47/Add.2, p. 18.

In December 2024, the Government adopted a national action plan against racism and hate crime. The plan signals awareness of the problem and a willingness to improve the situation for victims.⁴⁶ In May 2025, the Government adopted a separate strategy to strengthen Jewish life, which includes the mandate for the Swedish Police Authority to coordinate inter-agency efforts to combat hate crime.⁴⁷ Much more needs to be done however to live up to the above-mentioned recommendations.

4.5. Protection Alone Is Not Enough—Jewish Life Must Be Strengthened

Our interviews suggest that a process of social segregation is underway. Many of those we spoke to describe the Jewish congregation or association as one of the only places where Jews feel safe and able to express their identity openly. Life outside the Jewish community is increasingly perceived as unsafe. In areas without an active Jewish community, many describe a sense of loneliness and vulnerability.

Similar patterns of insecurity and vulnerability in everyday contexts are reflected in research by Katzin and Rudeberg, who describe a trend toward “group isolation,” where many Jews feel compelled to withdraw from public life.⁴⁸ Brå also describes that the Jewish group has isolated itself after 7 October, 2023.⁴⁹ This phenomenon must be viewed in the context of the State’s duty under international human rights law to prevent and address de facto or indirect segregation, even when it results from societal factors or historical patterns.

A fundamental objective of the UN Convention on Racial Discrimination is to combat all forms of segregation between groups. All conditions that lead to segregation in society are condemned by the Convention, even where they are the result of unintentional processes.⁵⁰ The situation described by our interviewees is both unintentional and unwanted, yet it highlights the extent of the societal pressures facing Jews in Sweden. Strengthening the rights of Jews in Sweden must therefore involve more than simply increasing security. It must also address the root causes of segregation and support efforts to ensure that Jewish life can thrive openly and sustainably.

⁴⁶ Ministry of Labour, 2024, Action Plan against Racism and Hate Crime, p 50 ff.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Culture, 2025, Strategy to strengthen Jewish life and counteract antisemitism, Ku2024/00578, p 29.

⁴⁸ Mirjam Katzin and Pontus Rudberg, Segerstedt Institute, Report 13, Antisemitism in Sweden after 7 October, Consequences of 7 October for Jews in Sweden: thoughts, emotions and reflections, pp. 18–42.

⁴⁹ Brottsförebyggande rådet, Antisemitiska hatbrott – Samtida erfarenheter från judiska församlingar och organisationer, 2025, p 62, [Report by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention on Antisemitic Hate Crime].

⁵⁰ UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding observations and recommendations on the 8th to 16th periodic reports of Barbados, 27 March 2007, UN Doc. CERD/C/BRB/CO/16, paragraph 13.

Many interviewees stressed the importance of implementing the proposals contained in the 2024 report *A Strong Jewish Life for Future Generations*.⁵¹ The report outlined a comprehensive strategy for safeguarding and promoting Jewish life in Sweden, including five priority areas:

1. Action against antisemitism and hate crime.
2. Improving conditions for passing on Jewish culture and traditions to younger generations.
3. Strengthening knowledge, education and research in Jewish studies.
4. Increasing the visibility of Jewish culture and heritage in Swedish society.
5. Enhancing public sector efforts related to the Yiddish language.⁵²

The Swedish Institute for Human Rights expressed its strong support for the full implementation of these proposals in its 2024 consultation response.⁵³ The same view is consistently shared by the individuals and organisations we have interviewed for this study.

In May 2025, the Government adopted a national strategy to strengthen Jewish life and combat antisemitism.⁵⁴ While this strategy draws on some of the proposals from the 2024 report, it omits others. The strategy is linked to the broader action plan against racism and hate crime and is intended to provide a long-term framework for the period 2025–2034. An allocation of SEK 10.5 million has been earmarked in the 2025 budget, with similar funding planned for future years.⁵⁵

The strategy centres on three pillars:

1. Knowledge, education and research on Jewish life.
2. Swedish-Jewish cultural heritage and Jewish culture.
3. Safety and transparency—working against antisemitism.

While these components are welcome, our assessment is that the level of ambition is insufficient. Several of the proposed actions are already underway, and given the urgency and scale of the challenges, it is uncertain how much concrete impact the strategy will achieve.

We welcome the government's intention to appoint a national coordinator for the implementation of the strategy. The current work to promote Jewish life and combat antisemitism is fragmented across many actors, and the need for coordination is widely

51 SOU 2024:3.

52 SOU 2024:3.

53 Swedish Institute for Human Rights, 2024, Consultation response to the report *A strong Jewish life in Sweden 2025-2034* (SOU 2024:3).

54 Ministry of Culture, 2025, Strategy to strengthen Jewish life and counteract antisemitism, Ku2024/00578.

55 Web source: The Government Offices of Sweden. *Judiskt liv ska stärkas i Sverige*, 16 September 2024.

acknowledged. This recommendation was also made in a 2024 needs assessment by the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities⁵⁶ and is included in the official inquiry SOU 2024:3,⁵⁷ which underpins the strategy.

For this work to succeed, it is essential that duty bearers engage in an inclusive dialogue with Jewish communities across the country, ensuring that measures are prioritised in a way that allows Jews to live openly and safely throughout Sweden.

4.6. Political support is important and appreciated, but many politicians instrumentalise Jews creating polarisation between groups

The interviewees emphasised the importance of political engagement and public support from elected officials in the fight against antisemitism. Many expressed appreciation for the government's involvement and attention to the situation of Jews in Sweden. However, they also raised concerns that this support may be fragile or politically motivated.⁵⁸

A recurring theme in the interviews is the perception that politicians—across the political spectrum—sometimes instrumentalise the Jewish minority to criticise their opponents or score political points. This undermines genuine solidarity and may deepen societal divisions.

Several interviewees also criticised the tendency of some politicians to speak exclusively about antisemitism without acknowledging that other groups in Sweden also face discrimination and hate crimes. This one-sidedness is seen as counterproductive and perceived as negative in that several groups in Sweden are in need of government support. It also risks setting vulnerable communities against one another, fuelling further antisemitism and reducing the overall legitimacy of anti-racism efforts.

⁵⁶ Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, 7 February 2024, Areas of development and need for action in the future national work against racism and antisemitism from the perspective of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities.

⁵⁷ SOU 2024:3, National strategy for strengthening Jewish life in Sweden 2025-2034, p 116 ff.

⁵⁸ Compare with Brå, Antisemitiska hatbrott – Samtida erfarenheter från judiska församlingar och organisationer, 2025, p 45, [Report by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention on Antisemitic Hate Crime]. This survey describes the occurrence of antisemitic expressions within the political environment. Those whom Brå has spoken to refer to public statements made by municipal councilors and local politicians that have been perceived as antisemitic.

5. Annexes

5.1. Background to the report

At the end of 2023, we started work on two reports focusing on the vulnerability of Jewish and Muslim congregations and associations to hate and intimidation in Sweden.

The background to this initiative was, among other things, a survey we conducted in 2022 showing that freedom from hatred, threats and discrimination are human rights that many people in Sweden feel are under threat. We also found that Muslims and Jews are among the groups that many feel are particularly vulnerable to discrimination.⁵⁹

In October 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion, Nazila Ghanea, visited Sweden. In her report to the UN Human Rights Council from March 2024, she expressed concern about religious intolerance and discrimination in Sweden, mentioning in particular the situation of Jews and Muslims.⁶⁰

The mandate of a National Human Rights Institution includes providing assistance to UN committees and review bodies in their follow-up of Sweden's commitment under international human rights law. In the autumn of 2025, the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination will review Sweden's compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In its most recent review, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about the persistence of racist hatred and violence in Sweden, directed against Muslims and Jews, among others.

In 2023, we interviewed representatives of Jewish congregations and associations in Sweden. Our findings during the interviews led to a decision to focus this study on:

- the ability of Jewish congregations and associations to operate
- Jews' own experiences of antisemitism.

We also decided that the results of the survey would be included in our reporting to the UN Committee on Racial Discrimination in 2025.

⁵⁹ Swedish Institute for Human Rights, Knowledge of human rights experiences in Sweden 2022–2023, p. 12.

⁶⁰ Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief Nazila Ghanea visit to Sweden, 1 March 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/55/47/Add.2, paragraphs 96–97.

5.2. International Human Rights Obligations and the State's Duty to Act

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination forms a cornerstone of the international human rights framework. Its core purpose is to clarify and reinforce the responsibility of States to prevent any form of distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference that impairs individuals' access to their rights on the basis of race, ethnicity, or national or ethnic origin.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has repeatedly emphasised that discrimination based on ethnicity or origin is often difficult to distinguish from discrimination on other grounds, such as religion or belief.⁶¹

The right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief is enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and includes both the internal freedom to hold any belief or identity, and the external freedom to manifest those beliefs individually or collectively. This may occur through worship, teaching, observance, or practice, and includes the right to form or participate in religious communities and associations.

These rights are simultaneously protected under several overlapping legal instruments including chapter 2, section 1 of the Swedish Instrument of Government, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The right to freedom of conscience, religion and belief includes not only the freedom to hold any faith, belief or identity (including the right to change religion), but also the right to express one's identity or beliefs, both individually and in community with others. This can be done through worship, teaching and practice. It also includes the right to form and participate in religious congregations and associations.

Human rights apply primarily to individuals as rights holders. However, they also include the collective right to associate freely and equally with others without fear of hatred, intimidation or reprisals.

Under international human rights law, the State is the primary duty bearer. This includes the responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of all persons within its jurisdiction. These obligations are not merely aspirational—they require proactive and concrete measures to ensure that all individuals, including members of religious and ethnic minorities, can live free from discrimination and persecution.

⁶¹ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, General Comment No 32, CRD/C/GC32, paragraph 7.

A central element of these obligations is the right to redress. When a person's rights have been violated, the State must provide access to effective protection and remedies.⁶² This includes ensuring accountability and support for victims of hate crimes and discrimination, and taking steps to prevent such violations from recurring.

⁶² Article 2 d and 6 in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination.

