



**Jewish Community
Relations Council**
MILWAUKEE
JEWISH FEDERATION

2015 Audit Anti-Semitic Incidents Dramatic Rise in Anti-Semitic Incidents

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Contact: Elana Kahn-Oren, JCRC Director, 414-390-5736

The Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation has just completed its 2014 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents. Mirroring the situation across the globe, last year brought a dramatic rise in anti-Semitic incidents. "With reported incidents more than double what they have been for at least the last two decades, we are concerned about the rise in anti-Semitic expression, vandalism, and harassment," said JCRC Director Elana Kahn-Oren.

"All citizens should be concerned about this increase in hateful expression. We know that wherever Jews are a target so are people of other minority groups. It's incumbent upon all community members to stand together against expressions of hatred, extremism and bigotry," Kahn-Oren said.

While we know that many incidents go unreported, we have observed a Jewish community that feels increasingly targeted through harassment, vandalism, and expression, both written and verbal. A few trends are worth noting:

- Last year, we recorded an unprecedented number of swastikas on public and private property. These are often used to target particular Jewish individuals.
- Some anti-Semitic expression focuses on Israel and Zionism as a socially acceptable expression of bigotry against Jews and Judaism. "We remain focused on distinguishing legitimate expression of free speech and political expression," said Kahn-Oren. "But we must recognize that sometimes, such criticism of the State of Israel – or activism against its legitimacy -- is a cloak for age-old Jew hatred."
- We note continued anti-Semitic harassment and verbal expressions among middle and high school students, which often takes the form of jokes, pranks, teasing and bullying. "Unfortunately, anti-Semitism continues to be handed down to our young people," said Ann Jacobs, chair of the JCRC's Anti-Semitism Task Force. "Sadly we've seen a steady stream of anti-Semitic behaviors in our high schools and middle schools."
- Anecdotal evidence also points to underreported incidents of discrimination, as many students and employees are unable to miss school or work for Jewish holidays with being penalized. The JCRC can help community members communicate around such issues.

The JCRC strongly encourages individuals and institutions to report all incidents. We ensure full confidentiality.

- Email elanao@milwaukeejewish.org
- Call 414-390-5736

Each reported incident is corroborated and reviewed before any action is taken. The audit is reviewed by the JCRC's Anti-Semitism & Constitutional Law Task Force and the JCRC Steering Committee before the final approval process of the entire JCRC Board.

We are particularly pleased that working collaboratively with schools, law enforcement and national agencies, many of this year's reported incidents were addressed or resolved with positive outcomes.

If you have any questions about the audit, or would like additional resources, please contact Elana Kahn-Oren at elanao@milwaukeejewish.org or 414-390-5736.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation envisions a just community that reflects American and Jewish values. The mission is to speak as the representative of the Jewish community on issues of public affairs and public policy by convening and mobilizing the Jewish community through education, advocacy, social justice, and support for Israel.