

# **“The Painter Was Right”**

Antisemitic Content on Social Media Following the Release of  
the Epstein Files

January 30 – February 9, 2026

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**democ e. V.**

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## Imprint

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**democ e. V.** is a non-profit association of journalists, academics and media professionals who work together to observe, document and analyze anti-democratic movements. The organization analyzes how these forces operate, why they are gaining strength, and how they can be countered. Its observations and reflections are made accessible to the public through articles, videos, web documentaries, workshops, and lectures. Based in Germany, democ engages with German and European stakeholders to raise awareness and provide policymakers and civil society with firsthand, raw documentation.

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# Executive Summary

Following the U.S. Department of Justice's release of over 3 million pages of documents related to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein on January 30, 2026, democ observed a significant and sustained surge of antisemitic content across major social media platforms, particularly Instagram, YouTube and X (formerly Twitter). Based on systematic monitoring conducted between January 30 and February 9, 2026, this study provides the first structured documentation of the nature, scale, coding mechanisms, and platform moderation failures associated with this event-driven antisemitism. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combined quantitative engagement analysis with qualitative discourse analysis of Instagram content (55 videos, approximately 790 comments). Antisemitic content was identified and categorized using the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism, operationalized into five coding categories. Additionally, the study introduces a four-layer taxonomy of antisemitic expression that captures the spectrum from explicit hate speech to sophisticated conspiracy frameworks.

Our key findings include:

1. **Scale:** Across a corpus of 55 Instagram Reels about the Epstein files from 43 unique creator accounts, antisemitic content reached a combined viewership of 114.4 million views and accumulated 6.7 million likes and 82,102 comments within approximately 10 days (as of February 9, 2026) – demonstrating how a relatively small number of posts can achieve massive reach through algorithmic amplification. Antisemitic comments below these videos were among the most prominently displayed comments and attracted at least 800,000 likes. The single most-liked antisemitic comment – a coded Hitler endorsement ("If the Austrian painter won, we wouldn't be in this timeline") – received 126,000 likes. These engagement figures illustrate that even a limited sample captures a phenomenon with reach comparable to major media outlets, achieved within days rather than through sustained campaigns.
2. **Moderation failure:** Content containing open Hitler glorification, Mein Kampf quotations, Holocaust justification, SS officer imagery with visible swastika badges, explicit neo-Nazi codes, and genocidal calls remained live on Instagram for the full duration of our monitoring period. Of the 55 antisemitic videos documented, only 2 were removed by Instagram over a 10-day period. The two removed videos contained SS/swastika imagery and a photograph of Adolf Hitler with the text "A MAN WILL DIE BUT NOT HIS IDEAS". Content of comparable or greater severity, including a direct Mein Kampf quotation and other videos of Hitler speeches, remained live and continues accumulating millions of views. At least one antisemitic video in the corpus originated from an

AI-generated influencer account, indicating that the production of such content is becoming automated and scalable while moderation already fails against human-created content.

3. **Influencer amplification:** High-profile influencers including the right-wing political activist Candace Owens played a central role in translating Epstein file contents into antisemitic narratives. Owens' hour-long livestream "BAAL SO HARD: The Epstein Files," which constructed an elaborate antisemitic framework connecting Epstein's emails to claims of satanic Jewish power, reached 2.6 million YouTube views. Verified accounts on Instagram actively amplified antisemitic content with engagement in the tens of thousands.
4. **Algorithmic amplification:** Instagram's comment ranking algorithm consistently displayed antisemitic content in the most prominent positions, making such content among the first visible to users and creating a self-reinforcing cycle of further engagement. On the @ian\_byington Reel (14.1M views), the top-ranked comment – "If the Austrian painter won, we wouldn't be in this timeline," a coded Hitler endorsement – received over 126,000 likes. Five coded Hitler endorsements on this single Reel collected a combined 333,000 likes, all appearing in the top comment positions. Comments featuring an emoji with a raised arm, clearly referencing the Hitler salute, were repeatedly found among the default-displayed comments across multiple videos. The observable pattern – in which antisemitic comments constituting 8% of the default-displayed sample accumulated 33.1% of all comment likes – indicates that the comment-ranking system systematically surfaced high-engagement antisemitic content to prominent positions, presenting it to viewers as among the most relevant responses to Epstein-related content. This represents algorithmic amplification in two dimensions: first, through the Reels recommendation system that surfaces Epstein content to users; second, through the comment ranking system that prioritizes antisemitic responses within that content.
5. **Layers of expression:** Antisemitic responses operated across four distinct layers of expression: explicit hate speech, thinly coded references, encoded signals, and conspiracy framework naturalization. Ten or more distinct Hitler rehabilitation videos used varied creative approaches – from explicit text overlays ("Hitler was not the most evil man who ever lived") to coded references ("one historical figure," "the villain who was actually a hero," "bad guys in 1930/40s"). More explicit content came from an "America First"-branded podcast clip describing Epstein as "basically a Jewish operative" and accusing Jewish Americans of constituting "a fifth column".

6. **Source-to-rebroadcast chains:** A single 90-second compilation video served as source material for several derivative videos, including a Candace Owens podcast segment. The source video compiled Epstein's emails weaponized for collective Jewish guilt. Published by @ian\_byington, this compilation reached 14.1 million views and 1.01 million likes, making it the most-liked item in the entire corpus. Its comment section became a focal point for antisemitic engagement, accumulating more than 354,000 likes on antisemitic content alone. This demonstrates how a single creator's compilation can cascade through mainstream commentary channels, reaching audiences that would not typically encounter extremist content.
7. **Platform infrastructure as distribution mechanism:** A single audio clip of Hitler's 1933 speech was used by at least seven separate accounts within the Epstein-related corpus. The speech exists as a shared audio asset within Instagram's infrastructure – a reusable sound that any creator can attach to new videos with a single tap. At the time of writing, more than 500 Reels containing this audio were found on the platform, many predating the Epstein files release and individually accumulating hundreds of thousands of views.
8. **German legal context and DSA implications:** At least seven videos contained content likely meeting the threshold for criminal prosecution under German § 130 StGB ("Volksverhetzung", incitement to hatred including Holocaust denial). This includes explicit claims of a "Krieg zwischen Juden und Nichtjuden" (war between Jews and non-Jews), the Christ-killer/deicide trope applied to Epstein, coded endorsement of the Nazi regime using SS imagery, and a Hitler speech presented approvingly. One comment explicitly denied the Holocaust using food euphemisms for murdered Jews. The persistence of such content on Instagram raises questions not only under German criminal law but also under the EU Digital Services Act (DSA), which requires platforms to act expeditiously against illegal content and assess systemic risks related to the dissemination of illegal content and negative effects on civic discourse and fundamental rights.

# 1. Background

## 1.1 The Epstein Files Release

On November 19, 2025, President Trump signed the Epstein Files Transparency Act into law, mandating the Department of Justice (DOJ) to publicly release all unclassified records related to Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell. An initial release on December 19, 2025, drew bipartisan criticism for extensive redactions and failure to release all files by the statutory deadline. The DOJ itself acknowledged to a federal court that the process was “vulnerable to machine error” and “instances of human error.” On January 30, 2026, the DOJ released a substantially larger tranche: over 3 million pages, 180,000 images, and 2,000 videos. This release included FBI interview records, flight logs, email correspondence, and photographs involving numerous public figures.

## 1.2 The Antisemitic Instrumentalization of the Epstein Case

The instrumentalization of the Epstein case for antisemitic purposes follows established patterns in which real events involving individual Jewish persons are generalized into conspiratorial narratives about collective Jewish power, control, or malice. This mechanism maps directly onto several manifestations of antisemitism identified in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism<sup>1</sup>, particularly the attribution of wrongdoing by individual Jewish persons to Jewish people as a collective, and conspiracy theories about Jewish control of media, finance, and politics.

As Mike Rothschild, a researcher specializing in antisemitic conspiracy theories on the far right, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency: “Whatever your particular brand of conspiracy theory is, there’s something in the files for you. One of the problems that we’re having is that there is so much information and there’s no filter for it.”<sup>2</sup>

Joshua Shanes, professor of Jewish history at UC Davis and member of the Nexus Project’s antisemitism task force, warned of the danger posed by this collectivization: “Whenever you have this notion of collectivizing all Jews as this global nefarious force, that’s the most dangerous thing. It’s not about Israel, per se. It’s about this global Jewish conspiracy. And that is deadly, literally deadly.”<sup>3</sup>

This pattern of instrumentalizing real events for antisemitic purposes is not unique to the Epstein case. Similar dynamics have been observed during other major crises and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

<sup>2</sup> [Release of latest Epstein files unleashes online wave of antisemitic conspiracies](#), The Times of Israel, February 2, 2026.

<sup>3</sup> [Antisemitic conspiracies about Jeffrey Epstein go viral](#), The Jerusalem Post, August 2, 2025.

events in recent years, including the October 7, 2023, attacks and their aftermath, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the 2008 financial crisis, where antisemitic conspiracy theories proliferated alongside legitimate public discourse about these events.

### 1.3 Existing Coverage and Organizational Responses

As of February 7, 2026, reporting on the antisemitic response to the Epstein files has been confined almost exclusively to Jewish media outlets. The primary journalistic account is a Jewish Telegraphic Agency article published February 5, 2026, subsequently syndicated to at least ten Jewish publications including the Times of Israel, Jerusalem Post, The Forward, and regional Jewish newspapers in the United States and South Africa.

The Nexus Project, an antisemitism watchdog group, issued a statement on X on February 2, 2026, writing: "The Epstein files are real. The antisemitism they're fueling is also real. And right now, the second part is getting almost no attention." The statement added: "Turning his private emails into proof of a Jewish conspiracy is pure antisemitism. And it is spreading faster than anyone is willing to say."<sup>4</sup>

The Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism stated that it had "tracked a demonstrable increase in rhetoric that promotes antisemitic and anti-Israel conspiracy theories about Jeffrey Epstein in recent weeks," noting that the rhetoric had "surged in recent weeks across the political spectrum, on both fringe and mainstream social media, streaming platforms and shows."

While existing journalistic coverage has documented this phenomenon through examples and expert commentary, systematic analysis has been limited. This report fills that gap through quantitative engagement analysis, structured IHRA-based coding, tracking of moderation outcomes, and documentation of the mechanisms through which specific file contents are weaponized for antisemitic narratives.

As of the conclusion of our monitoring period, no major mainstream media outlet had published a dedicated analysis of the antisemitic response to the Epstein files.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://x.com/NexusProjectUS/status/2019124078712692807>, February 2, 2026.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design and Positioning

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative content documentation with qualitative discourse analysis. It was conducted as rapid-response monitoring in the 10-day period following the January 30, 2026, DOJ release (January 30 – February 9, 2026).

The study is positioned to complement existing journalistic coverage and organizational statements by providing: (a) systematic quantification of engagement with antisemitic content, including documented minimum reach; (b) structured IHRA-based coding of content types; (c) an original taxonomy of antisemitic expression layers that illuminates moderation evasion strategies; (d) documentation of German-language content with relevance to domestic legal frameworks; and (e) analysis of specific Epstein file contents being weaponized and their actual context.

### 2.2 Definition and Framework

Antisemitic content was identified and categorized using the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism. The IHRA definition was operationalized into five coding categories corresponding to the specific manifestations listed in the working definition, adapted to the context of the Epstein files discourse. The coding framework is detailed in Section 2.4.

In addition to the IHRA framework, this study introduces a four-layer taxonomy of antisemitic expression that emerged inductively from initial observation. This taxonomy proved essential for capturing the full range of antisemitic content, much of which operates below the threshold of explicit hate speech while remaining unmistakable to its audience. The taxonomy is detailed in Section 3.3 and Appendix B.

### 2.3 Data Collection

This study focused primarily on Instagram as the platform for systematic data collection, while conducting limited observational analysis of other platforms (X, YouTube) for comparative context. Instagram was selected as the primary focus due to data accessibility and the concentration of high-engagement antisemitic content observed during initial monitoring.

Data was collected from Instagram using two complementary methods. The data collection approach combined elements of the walkthrough method (Light, Burgess & Duguay, 2018) with systematic content analysis. Following Light et al., researchers engaged directly with Instagram's interface through its standard recommendation feed ("For You"), interacting with Epstein files-related content through watching, saving,

and opening comment sections, and documenting how the platform's algorithmic systems mediated the user experience of a major news event. Over two sessions totaling four hours, researchers identified and retained all Reels containing antisemitic content from the material surfaced by Instagram's recommendation algorithm, yielding a corpus of 55 Reels from 43 unique creator accounts which accumulated 114.4 million views, 6.7 million likes, and 82,102 comments. The corpus therefore does not represent the totality of Epstein-related content served by the algorithm, but documents the antisemitic content that emerged within the normal algorithmic experience of a user engaging with a major news story through the app's intended interface.

For each Reel, the approximately 15 comments that Instagram's comment-ranking algorithm displayed by default upon opening the video were then recorded, yielding a sample of 790 comments. According to Meta's transparency documentation, this default ranking is determined by an AI system using multiple signals including the general relevance and popularity of the comments and the viewer's recent activity on Instagram. Each of the 55 videos was then analyzed across three modalities: text overlays and captions, visual content, and audio. Audio analysis yielded 33 speech transcripts.

Limited observational analysis was conducted on X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube to contextualize Instagram's role within the broader antisemitic content ecosystem. This included documentation of high-profile content (such as Candace Owens' YouTube livestream) and observation of content distribution patterns, but did not include systematic data collection or quantitative analysis.

This report was produced with the assistance of automated tools and artificial intelligence, including web scraping, optical character recognition (OCR) and audio transcription. All outputs were reviewed and verified by human researchers.

## 2.4 Sampling and Coding

Each post was coded for: platform, date, content type, account metadata (handle, verification status, follower count, account type), engagement metrics (views, likes, comments, shares, saves), primary and secondary IHRA categories, antisemitism expression layer, specific tropes and coded language used, language, Epstein connection type, influencer amplification source and moderation status.

Content was additionally coded by the specific Epstein file element being weaponized: direct reference to the files release, the "goyim" emails, the "Baal" bank account claim, flight logs, photographs with public figures, Epstein's Jewish identity, alleged Mossad/Israel connections, general conspiracy framing, or indirect/ambient connection. This dimension enables analysis of which specific file contents proved most effective as antisemitic catalysts.

This study employed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism, adopted by the IHRA Plenary in Bucharest on May 26, 2016. The 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, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

In addition to this core definition, the IHRA Working Definition provides eleven illustrative examples of how antisemitism may manifest in contemporary contexts, explicitly noting that these examples are non-exhaustive ("could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to"). These examples serve as guidance rather than a closed list, allowing for application to diverse contexts while maintaining analytical rigor.

For this study, we developed five coding categories oriented around the IHRA framework. The consolidation from eleven illustrative examples to five operational codes reflects both the empirical patterns observed in the Epstein files discourse (certain manifestations appeared with low frequency or substantial overlap) and the need for a coding system that balances analytical precision with practical applicability. Specifically, the five Israel-related manifestations were consolidated into a single category due to their tendency to overlap in the sample, and conspiracy theories about Jewish power were integrated with demonizing allegations as these frequently appeared together.

Code	Definition	Examples from Sample
IHRA-1	Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews	"The Austrian painter was right" (4.9k likes); "He should've won"; "If the Austrian painter won, we wouldn't be in this timeline"; "The leader was always right"; Candace Owens invoking Leo Frank lynching; German "cookies" comment combining Holocaust denial with regret more Jews weren't killed, "JILL KEWS"
IHRA-2	Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as a collective, including conspiracy theories about Jewish power	Candace Owens: "pagan gypsies"; "This is Judaism"; "satanic pedophiles who work for Israel"; "synagogue of Satan"; Baphomet imagery with Star of David; Claims about Jewish-controlled media; Rothschild family references; Mossad blackmail operation narrative; "the human race against the billionaire pedophiles and Jewish saboteurs"; Cross-ideological "unity" framing

IHRA-3	Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust	"The painter was right" combined with Holocaust revisionism; Narratives positioning Nazi Germany as correct; German: "Hätte man damals bloß 6 Mio Cookies gebacken. Leider wurden es nur 271k" (Holocaust denial using food euphemisms)
IHRA-4	Israel-related antisemitism: dual loyalty, denying self-determination, double standards, Nazi comparisons, collective responsibility for Israeli actions, classic antisemitic tropes and blood libels transposed onto the State of Israel	Mossad blackmail conspiracy; "satanic pedophiles who work for Israel"; "Israhell"; Treating Ehud Barak connection as state conspiracy while other connections treated individually; Candace Owens: "tag a Christian who needs to wake up and leave the Zionist cause"; "Baal" and Moloch references
IHRA-5	Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group	"This is Judaism"; "He explains how Jews work under the covers"; Treatment of "goyim" emails as proof of collective Jewish attitudes; Candace Owens: "this is for them a religious philosophy";

The five coding categories frequently overlapped in individual pieces of content, as is typical in antisemitic discourse. Many statements were coded with multiple categories simultaneously, reflecting the layered nature of antisemitic narratives. The most common combinations were IHRA-5 (collective blame) with IHRA-2 (demonization/conspiracy theories), IHRA-1 (Holocaust justification) with IHRA-5 (collective blame), and IHRA-4 (Israel-related/blood libel) with IHRA-2 (conspiracy). This pattern reveals that antisemitic content in the Epstein files context rarely operated in a single register but instead combined multiple IHRA manifestations to construct complex, mutually reinforcing narratives. The IHRA framework proved essential for capturing this complexity while maintaining analytical rigor, allowing systematic identification of how different forms of antisemitism intersect and amplify one another within event-driven contexts.

## 2.5 Limitations

This study has several important limitations. First, the sample does not represent the total volume of antisemitic content generated in response to the Epstein files release. Without full API access, exhaustive collection was not possible. All quantitative findings represent documented minimums. Second, comparative observations of X and YouTube were unsystematic and are included only to contextualize Instagram's role within the broader content ecosystem. No quantitative claims are made about these platforms. Third, the 10-day monitoring window may not capture the full lifecycle

of the antisemitic response, including potential content removal, narrative evolution, or migration to other platforms over subsequent weeks. Fourth, the algorithmic audit provides evidence of recommendation patterns but cannot demonstrate the internal mechanisms driving those recommendations. Fifth, this study focuses on Instagram and X; it does not systematically cover YouTube, TikTok, Telegram, or other platforms where antisemitic Epstein content has also been documented. The multi-platform ecosystem described in section 3.6 is based on observation, not systematic data collection. Sixth, the comment sample reflects the approximately 15 comments Instagram's algorithm displayed by default to a single researcher's account on the date of data collection. Because Instagram's comment ranking is personalized based on viewer activity and other signals, other users may have been shown different comments in different positions. The engagement figures (like counts) are objective and verifiable, but the specific set of comments surfaced as default-displayed may vary across viewers and over time.

The inability of external researchers to systematically access and measure content on major social media platforms is itself a structural problem and a finding of this study.

Direct links to individual posts have been omitted from this report to avoid further dissemination of antisemitic content. All sources are documented in the accompanying coding sheet and are available to researchers upon request.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Scale and Reach

**Documented minimum exposure:** Across our monitoring sample, antisemitic content reached a combined viewership of 114,417,196 views with 6,656,322 likes and 82,102 comments. This encompasses only content directly observed and documented; the actual reach is substantially larger.

**Engagement with explicit antisemitism:** The scale of engagement with openly antisemitic content is exceptional. Individual comments praising Adolf Hitler received tens of thousands of likes on Instagram. The highest-engagement antisemitic comment in our sample – a coded reference stating “If the Austrian painter won, we wouldn’t be in this timeline” – received 126,000 likes. Multiple similar comments exceeded 20,000–30,000 likes. An AI video on X depicting Hitler as a UFC fighter captioned “Hitler ve Yahudi [Jewish] Epstein” received 17,400 likes and 2,040 reposts from a verified account.

**Influencer reach:** Candace Owens’ hour-long livestream “BAAL SO HARD: The Epstein Files” reached 2.6 million views on YouTube by February 10. In it, Owens characterized Jewish people as “pagan gypsies,” repeated the neo-Nazi conspiracy theory that B’nai B’rith was behind the lynching of Leo Frank, and stated that Epstein’s use of the word “goyim” proved that Jewish elites view non-Jews as “cattle.” On X, Owens posted: “Yes, we are ruled by satanic pedophiles who work for Israel” and “This is the synagogue of Satan we are up against.” The post was viewed 2.8 million times and received more than 128,000 likes by February 10, 2026.

### 3.2 Weaponization of Specific File Contents

Our analysis identified specific elements from the Epstein files that served as primary catalysts for antisemitic narratives. By “weaponization,” we refer to the process through which factual content from the files – individual emails, names, or financial details – was selectively extracted from its original context, stripped of nuance, and reframed within antisemitic interpretive frameworks to serve as “evidence” for pre-existing conspiracy theories about Jewish power, control, or malevolence. This process transforms legitimate documentary evidence into ammunition for antisemitic hate speech. Understanding this weaponization process is important because it reveals how legitimate documentary evidence is selectively extracted and reframed to construct antisemitic meaning.

### 3.2.1 The “Goyim” Emails

The most extensively weaponized content was a series of emails in which Epstein used the Hebrew/Yiddish term “goyim” (meaning non-Jewish people). In a 2009 email to cognitive psychologist Roger Schank, Epstein wrote about shipping futures using language that included the word “goyim.” In an August 2010 email to entertainment publicist Peggy Siegal about a party guest list, Epstein wrote: “No, goyim in abundance- jpmorgan execs brilliant wasps.”

These emails were seized upon by Candace Owens as the centerpiece of an elaborate antisemitic narrative. Owens urged her audience to search the Epstein files for “goy” or “goyim” and “be sure to tag a Christian who needs to wake up and leave the Zionist cause.” In her livestream, she characterized the term as proof that Jewish elites view non-Jewish people as cattle, stating: “I want to make it clear that this is for them a religious philosophy, a racist perspective that we are goyim, meaning cattle, that are meant to be herded and ruled over.” The narrative relies on a deliberate mistranslation. While “Goyim” is the standard Hebrew/Yiddish term for “nations” or “non-Jews” (analogous to “gentiles”), antisemitic influencers falsely insisted it literally translates to “cattle” to imply Jewish dehumanization of others.

The emails were simultaneously shared widely on Instagram, where comment sections on posts displaying the email text generated the highest-engagement antisemitic comments in our sample. The key analytical point is that the individual language choices of one person in private correspondence were generalized into an indictment of Jewish people as a whole – a textbook manifestation of IHRA category 3 (accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for wrongdoing by a single Jewish person).

### 3.2.2 The “Baal” Bank Account

A second major catalyst for mobilization was an email exchange in which Epstein requested money be wired to a bank account that some online commentators concluded was titled “Baal” – the name of an ancient Canaanite deity. This became the catalyst for an elaborate narrative linking Epstein, and by extension Judaism, to ancient pagan worship and Satanism. Candace Owens titled her entire livestream around this claim (“BAAL SO HARD: The Epstein Files”), and the Baal/Moloch/Satanism framing appeared extensively in our Instagram sample, often accompanied by imagery of Baphomet and pentagram symbols alongside the Star of David.

The actual context of the bank account name likely relates to a financial or legal entity rather than a deity, but the misinterpretation – whether genuine or deliberate – proved highly effective as an antisemitic narrative device.

### 3.2.3 Israeli Connections and the Mossad Narrative

Epstein's documented connections with Israeli figures, particularly former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, were framed as evidence that Epstein operated as a Mossad asset running a blackmail operation on behalf of the Israeli state. The DOJ's own July 2025 memo explicitly stated that no evidence existed that Epstein blackmailed anyone on behalf of a foreign power. Conservative pundit Ben Shapiro similarly noted that the files contained no such evidence. However, this factual context was largely absent from the antisemitic discourse, which treated the Israeli connection as self-evidently incriminating.

## 3.3 Narrative Typology

The antisemitic response to the Epstein files was not monolithic. Our analysis identified several distinct but overlapping narrative threads, each drawing on different IHRA manifestations.

### 3.3.1 Jewish Power and Control Conspiracy

The most prevalent narrative thread framed the Epstein case as evidence of Jewish control over politics, finance, and media. This manifested in claims that Epstein's network constituted a Jewish-run blackmail operation controlling world leaders. Content drew on long-standing tropes including references to the Rothschild family, Zionist world domination, and the characterization of non-Jewish people as "Goyim." One comment – "Rothschilds (Jews) Rockefellers (Zionists)" – received 17,200 likes on Instagram. On X, an account with 300,000 followers responded to a New York Post article about Epstein's alleged Russian affiliations by claiming this was evidence of "Jewish controlled media." Numerous comments asserted that conspiracy theorists had been vindicated, claiming that QAnon and Pizzagate had been proven true – despite the fact that nothing in the released files substantiated these conspiracy theories. This framing positioned the Epstein files as retroactive validation of discredited conspiracy narratives, effectively using the release to rehabilitate previously debunked claims.

### 3.3.2 Hitler Glorification and Holocaust Justification

A striking finding was the volume and engagement with content glorifying Adolf Hitler and justifying the Holocaust. The most common formulation was the coded reference to Hitler as "the Austrian painter," with comments stating "the painter was right," "he should've won," or "if the Austrian painter won, we wouldn't be in this timeline." While coded, these references are universally understood by the audience and function as open Hitler endorsement. Another narrative thread contrasted Hitler's alleged love for

children with Epstein's crimes against minors, positioning Hitler as morally superior and using this comparison to rehabilitate his image.

This category also included direct Hitler quotes, Wehrmacht and SS soldier imagery posted in comment sections, and comments stating "The leader was always right" (2,256 likes). An Instagram account (12,200 followers) openly displayed Hitler imagery as video thumbnails with videos containing translated speeches of Hitler and had accumulated tens of thousands of views without apparent platform intervention.

The most consequential is a 5-second Reel by @afraidofnoliberals (10,669,967 views, 537,129 likes) consisting solely of a text overlay stating:

"The people who film themselves raping and torturing children spent the past 80 years trying to convince you Hitler was the most evil man who ever lived... Let that sink in."

The video exemplifies the core mechanism of the Epstein antisemitic response: Epstein's documented crimes are attributed to a collective, this collective is implicitly identified as Jewish, and the Holocaust is reframed as a deception perpetrated by the same group – transforming Hitler from perpetrator into a figure whose reputation was deliberately destroyed by his victims.

A separate video by @geo\_politics3 (167,466 views) presented Hitler's 1933 Berlin speech in full German audio with English subtitles. The speech contains the phrase "Es ist eine kleine, wurzellose, internationale Clique, die die Völker gegeneinander hetzt" ("It is a small, rootless, international clique that is turning the people against each other"). "Rootless international clique" is one of the oldest antisemitic code phrases, characterizing Jews as cosmopolitan parasites without national loyalty.

Another video, watermarked "Historical Movie Props" as a deliberate moderation evasion tactic, contains a direct quotation from Mein Kampf read aloud: "Only the Jew knew that by an able and persistent use of propaganda, heaven itself can be presented to the people as if it were hell, and vice versa." The watermark frames the dissemination of Nazi propaganda as historical education, illustrating the Layer 2 coding strategy of providing plausible deniability while leaving the content's purpose transparent to its audience.

A single Hitler speech clip was replicated across at least seven accounts within the Epstein-related corpus. The speech, from a 1933 rally, states: "A satanic power had taken over a whole country which had been able to occupy key positions in our intellectual and spiritual life and in our political and economic life. From these key positions, they were able to control and monitor the whole nation." This clip was



posted each with different visual treatments but identical audio. The speech never names Jews directly but was universally understood as referring to them in its original context. In the Epstein files context, this speech functions as a framework for interpreting the documents: the “satanic power” that “occupied key positions” is mapped onto the Jewish individuals named in Epstein’s correspondence.

The sound itself is hosted on the platform and can be added by anyone to their own videos. During the research more than 500 videos containing this audio were found – most of them being posted before the release of the Epstein files.

### 3.3.3 Collective Blame and Essentialism

The Epstein files were used to attribute the actions of individual persons to Jewish people collectively. Comments such as “This is Judaism” and “He explains how Jews work under the covers” exemplify this framing. An Eastern Orthodox Christianity influencer on X used sarcastic framing to portray Epstein’s Jewish identity as central to his crimes, generating significant engagement.

Two Reels contain references to the genocidal hadith (Sahih Muslim 2922) in which trees and stones reveal hiding Jews so they can be killed. One video includes the full quote: “Oh Muslim, he’s behind me, come and get him.” Both videos frame the Epstein revelations as fulfillment of this prophecy. The keyword matcher had no pattern for this because it is an indirect scriptural reference rather than an explicit antisemitic term.

### 3.3.4 Satanic and Occult Framing

A significant sub-narrative linked Judaism to Satanism and demonic worship. Visual imagery of Baphomet and pentagram symbols appeared alongside the Star of David in Instagram Reels that accumulated thousands of likes. Comments referred to Israel as a “satanic state” (2,414 likes). Candace Owens’ “BAAL SO HARD” livestream represented the most elaborate version of this narrative, connecting the “Baal” bank account claim to ancient deity worship, Satanism, and the antisemitic trope of “synagogue of Satan.” Owens’ invocation of the Leo Frank lynching – an event where a Jewish man was murdered by a mob on the basis of antisemitic conspiracy theories – to support her narrative about B’nai B’rith is particularly alarming given the historical resonance.

### 3.3.5 The Kanye West Vindication Narrative

A distinct narrative thread framed the Epstein files as retroactive proof that Kanye West’s widely condemned antisemitic statements in 2022 were accurate. Comments such as “line up here for apologies to Ye” (2,538 likes) and “Kanye always been right” used a mainstream celebrity figure to legitimize antisemitism, arguing that public

condemnation of West's statements was itself evidence of the cover-up now supposedly revealed.

### 3.3.6 Cross-Ideological "Unity" Framing

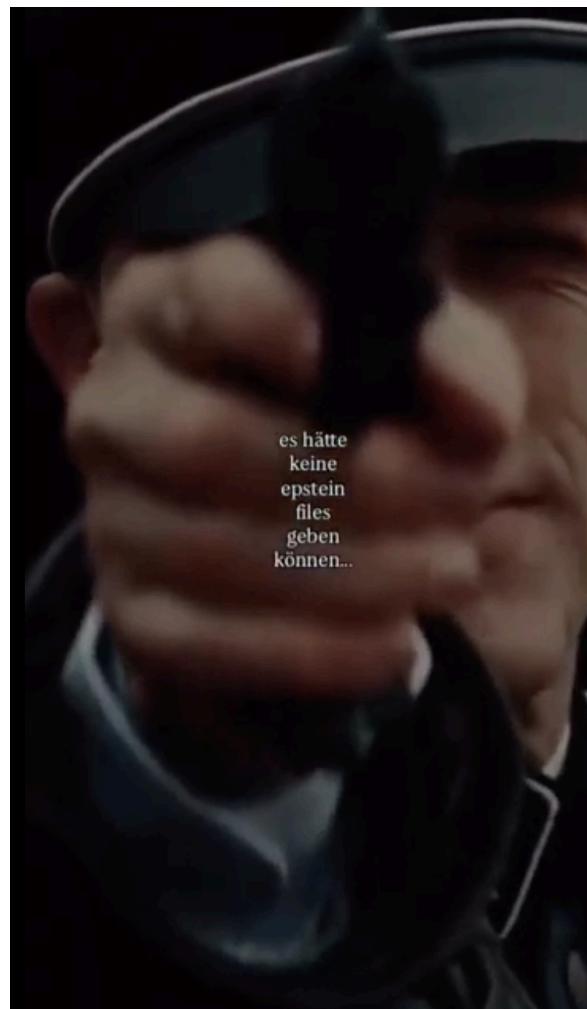
Several high-engagement posts explicitly framed the antisemitic response as a non-partisan awakening: "It's not left vs right in 2026. It's the human race against the billionaire pedophiles, and the Jewish saboteurs that blackmail them" (3,202 likes, 705 sends). Another comment stated "If this doesn't unite the Left and right, its over" (14,400 likes). This framing is strategically significant because it presents antisemitism not as a far-right position but as a common-sense conclusion transcending political divisions.

## 3.4 Case Studies

### 3.4.1 German-Language Nazi Imagery and Holocaust Denial

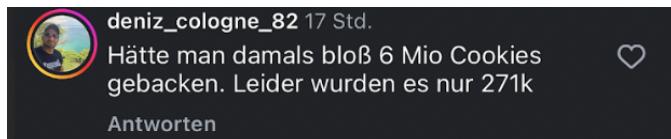
A 33-second Reel by @ozzybossborn (a German-Turkish fitness influencer; 13,542 views) demonstrates the multilingual reach and German § 130 StGB relevance of this content. The video uses clips from the opening scene of the film Inglourious Basterds, in which the character Colonel Hans Landa, known in the film as the "Jew Hunter", discovers a Jewish family hiding beneath the floorboards of a French farmhouse and orders his soldiers to shoot through the floor as they attempt to flee. The clip features characters in full SS uniforms with visible Nazi insignia, including a scene of the SS officer pointing a pistol at the camera. The selection of this specific scene is not incidental: a Nazi hunting and killing hiding Jews, overlaid with text implying the Holocaust should have succeeded, transforms a fictional depiction into an endorsement of the historical act it portrays.

The audio track is Soap&Skin's "Me and the Devil." The artist name itself – combining two materials indelibly associated with the Nazi industrial murder of Jews, the production of soap from human fat and the use of human skin – acquires a grotesque secondary meaning



when paired with footage of SS officers killing Jews and text implying the Holocaust should have been completed.

The German-language text overlay reads: "es hätte keine Epstein files geben können..." ("There would have been no Epstein files...") – with the ellipsis implying "if the Nazis had won." The caption states: "Die Menschheit hat die Wahl. Die da oben gehören nicht zu uns." ("Humanity has a choice. Those up there don't belong to us.")



At least one comment below the video constitutes explicit Holocaust denial: "Hätte man damals bloß 6 Mio Cookies gebacken. Leider wurden es nur 271k." This translates to "If only they had baked 6 million cookies back then. Unfortunately it was only 271k." The "cookies" euphemism for murdered Jews is a moderation evasion technique designed to bypass keyword filters while communicating Holocaust denial to the audience. The presence of this comment beneath a video already saturated with Holocaust-related coding illustrates how video content, audio selection, text overlay, and user comments form a mutually reinforcing system of antisemitic expression operating across all four layers simultaneously. This comment likely violates § 130 StGB (Volksverhetzung).

### 3.4.2 Transnational Hitler Glorification in Comment Sections

A single Instagram Reel by the account `its_me_robiyed` with 263,573 views, 26,755 likes and 398 comments illustrates the depth of moderation failure and the degree to which Instagram comment sections function as an open display of Hitler glorification and Nazi symbolism. The video itself combines documentary-style Epstein imagery with a Baphomet/pentagram symbol overlaid with a Star of David – a visual synthesis of the satanic-Jewish conspiracy framing documented throughout the corpus.

The audio of the video with the caption "Once a legend said" is the translated version of Hitler's speech, mentioned in section 3.3.2 ("A satanic power ..."), as having been reposted by at least seven separate accounts in our Epstein-related corpus. The sound exists as a shared audio asset within Instagram's infrastructure – a reusable element that any creator can attach to their own video. At the time of writing, the audio had been used in at least 500 Videos on Instagram, many of which had accumulated more than 300,000 views each. The speech never names Jews directly but was universally understood as referring to them in its original context.

Each of the more than 500 Reels using this audio represents a separate instance (not part of this study) in which Instagram's infrastructure transformed a historical act of Nazi incitement into new, algorithmically distributed content. In the Epstein files context specifically, the speech functions as an interpretive framework: the "satanic

power" that "occupied key positions" is mapped onto the Jewish individuals named in Epstein's correspondence. The video thus fuses three distinct antisemitic registers into a single artifact: Nazi propaganda audio (Layer 2), occult-Jewish conspiracy imagery (Layer 4), and documentary Epstein footage that anchors both in a current news event.

The account run by a Bengali-speaking user itself underscores the transnational dimension (section 3.8). The comment section includes users with names and language markers from South Asian, Arab, German, Turkish, Portuguese, and Eastern European backgrounds. A Bengali-speaking account posting a video overlaying Baphomet and Star of David imagery onto Epstein documentary footage, set to a translated Hitler speech hosted as reusable audio on Instagram's own platform, generating a comment section where Pakistani, Spanish, German, Arab, and Bulgarian users compete in Hitler endorsement, illustrates how antisemitism functions as a transnational lingua franca of hate.

The comment section included the full spectrum of explicit fascist and genocidal expression: "Sieg Heil" misspelled variants to evade filters; the neo-Nazi code "14.88,"; the abbreviation "HH" (Heil Hitler); "JILL KEWS" (1,669 likes) – a moderation evasion spelling of "kill Jews"; and direct quotations attributed to Hitler. Users constructed swastika and Hitler symbols from ASCII art and emoji combinations – a technique that demonstrates awareness of and deliberate circumvention of image-based moderation systems that might detect a standard swastika image but apparently cannot parse a symbol assembled character by character in a text field. One large ASCII art composition received 280 likes, indicating not only that it was seen by a substantial audience, but that hundreds of users actively endorsed it.

Most alarming is the comment "Weimar problem require weimar solution." This is a coded genocide call that operates through historical analogy: the "Weimar problem" refers to Jewish cultural and economic participation in the Weimar Republic – a standard far-right grievance narrative – and the "Weimar solution" refers to what followed Weimar, namely the Nazi seizure of power and the Holocaust. The comment is a call for the repetition of



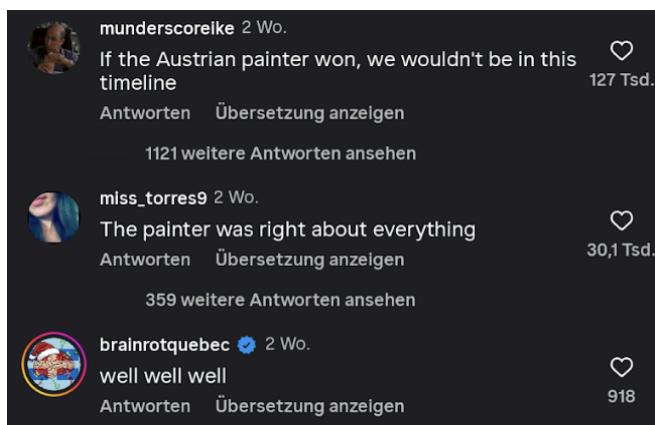
genocide, phrased with just enough historical abstraction to avoid literal keyword detection while remaining entirely transparent to its intended audience.

### 3.4.3 The Source-to-Mainstream Pipeline

The dataset reveals a critical content distribution chain that illustrates how antisemitic content migrates from individual creation to mass consumption through a series of amplification stages, each adding legitimacy while preserving the antisemitic payload.

The chain begins with a 90-second compilation video produced by creator @ian\_byington. The compilation selectively extracted and sequenced emails from the Epstein files to construct a narrative of collective Jewish guilt. The initial video reached 14.1 million views and 1.01 million likes, making it the most-liked item in the entire corpus. The @ian\_byington account is verified by Meta – meaning the platform has actively reviewed and authenticated the account that became the single largest concentration point for antisemitic engagement in the entire corpus. Verification signals to users that Meta has reviewed and authenticated the account, conferring an institutional endorsement of legitimacy, as the badge shapes how millions of viewers evaluate the content they encounter.

The video's comment section became a secondary site of radicalization in its own right: six of the fifteen most-liked comments beneath the video are antisemitic, accumulating a combined 354,187 likes. The single most-liked antisemitic comment across the entire corpus ("If the Austrian painter won, we wouldn't be in this timeline", 126,268 likes) appeared beneath this video.



The next amplification stage moved the content off Instagram entirely. Candace Owens used the compilation as source material for a podcast segment, introducing it to a mainstream audience that extends far beyond the original video's Instagram reach. Owens' rebroadcast added commentary that made the antisemitic framing explicit: "Epstein who worked on behalf of the Rothschilds... the Rothschilds who credit themselves with having created which nation state? Oh, right. Israel." Where the original compilation implied collective Jewish responsibility through selective document presentation, Owens stated it directly, connecting Epstein to the Rothschild

conspiracy and to Israel as a state project of Jewish financial power. This commentary transformed an implicit antisemitic narrative into an explicit one.

At least two additional derivative videos were produced from the same source material, each adapting the compilation for different audiences and platform formats, extending the distribution chain further.

The pipeline thus operates across distinct stages: creation (a single creator produces a selectively edited compilation and distributes it through a dual-account strategy, one of which is verified by Meta), algorithmic amplification (Instagram's recommendation system surfaces the video to millions and promotes antisemitic comments to the top of the comment section), influencer legitimization (a mainstream political commentator rebroadcasts the material with explicit antisemitic framing), and derivative production (new content is created from the now-legitimized material). At each stage, the audience grows, the perceived credibility increases, and the antisemitic content becomes more normalized – not because it changes, but because it accumulates markers of legitimacy: view counts, likes, Meta's verification badge, a public figure's endorsement.

#### **3.4.4 Comment Engagement Analysis: The Four-Fold Amplification Effect**

Analysis of 790 comments across the corpus – the approximately 15 comments per Reel that Instagram's comment-ranking algorithm displayed by default upon opening each video – reveals a pattern of disproportionate engagement with antisemitic content. These are not comments selected by the researchers by engagement or other criteria, but the comments Instagram's system presented to viewers first. According to Meta's own transparency documentation, this default ranking is determined by multiple signals including "the general relevance and popularity of the comments, as well as [the viewer's] recent activities on Instagram."<sup>5</sup> The default-displayed comments accumulated 802,101 likes, representing 33.1% of all 2,425,831 comment likes in the sample. Antisemitic comments constitute 8% of the default-displayed sample but account for a third of all comment likes – a four-fold disproportion indicating that high-engagement antisemitic comments were systematically surfaced to the most visible positions in comment sections.

The ten most-liked antisemitic comments across the corpus were:

1. "If the Austrian painter won, we wouldn't be in this timeline" – 126,268 likes (coded Hitler endorsement, @ian\_byington Reel, 14.1M views)
2. "So the Jewish are supremacists? Isn't that just so very interesting" – 95,164 likes (explicit Jewish supremacy accusation, @ian\_byington Reel)

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<sup>5</sup> <https://transparency.meta.com/features/explaining-ranking/ig-comments/>

3. "These ppl are zios... They believe in this satanic ritual" – 59,904 likes (Zionist conspiracy + blood libel, @maziii\_313 Reel, 17.5M views)
4. "There were child brothels in Berlin before the Reich" – 46,390 likes (Nazi rehabilitation, @afraidofonlygod Reel, 11.1M views)
5. "We lost ww2" – 42,879 likes (Axis identification, @ian\_byington Reel)
6. "30 millions Germans just went crazy huh?" – 38,807 likes (Holocaust justification, @ian\_byington Reel)
7. "Painter was right about 🎨" – 36,250 likes (coded Hitler vindication + juice-box emoji, @unw1nted\_thoughts Reel, 4.6M views)
8. "We made a big mistake in the past. Mr Painter was right" – 35,946 likes (coded Hitler vindication, @tathyaa.world Reel, 6.4M views)
9. "The austrian painter 🇦🇹 was right" – 33,847 likes (coded Hitler vindication with salute emoji, @annikauncensored Reel, 6.7M views)
10. "I've never switched up on Ye" – 32,900 likes (Kanye vindication in Epstein context, @notthatfilm Reel, 2.4M views)

The pattern distribution of antisemitic comments by type reveals: coded Hitler references ("the painter," "Austrian painter") appeared 12 times; goyim references 17 times; juice-box emoji substitution (🎨 for "Jew") 10 times; "noticing" discourse 4 times; blood libel/satanic framing 4 times; Zionist conspiracy 4 times; Axis identification ("we lost WW2," "wrong side") 2 times; Nazi rehabilitation ("child brothels in Berlin") 3 times; and Rothschild conspiracy 3 times.

### 3.5 The Four Layers of Antisemitic Expression

Our analysis identified four distinct but co-occurring layers of antisemitic expression. Understanding this layered structure is essential for both content moderation and public education.

Layer	Description	Function	Examples from Sample
1: Explicit	Open antisemitic language with no obfuscation	Direct hate speech. Easily identifiable by moderation systems but often left unactioned.	"Jewish saboteurs"; Owens: "satanic pedophiles who work for Israel"; "satanic state"; "how jews work"

2: Thinly coded	References immediately recognizable to audience but avoiding literal naming	Performative coding: exists to evade automated moderation, not to obscure meaning. Highest engagement category.	Use of juice box emoji (🥤) to replace the word "Jews"; "Austrian painter was right"; "The leader was always right"; "He should've won"; "Kanye was right"
3: Encoded	Phonetic, symbolic, or insider-knowledge references	Designed to evade both automated and manual moderation. Requires decoding knowledge.	"JILL KEWS"; "Jill All Kews"; Star of David emoji as accusation
4: Conspiracy framework	Antisemitism embedded in broader conspiratorial narratives	Naturalizes antisemitism for mainstream audiences. Makes antisemitic conclusions accessible beyond self-identified extremists.	Rothschild/bloodlines (17.2K likes); Baphomet imagery; Owens' "BAAL SO HARD" (2M views); Mossad narrative; "synagogue of Satan"

The critical finding is that Layer 2 content achieved by far the highest engagement. This has direct implications for content moderation: the most widely consumed antisemitic content operates in a register that automated systems are poorly equipped to detect while remaining completely transparent to human audiences.

A further observation underscores how platform design itself can become complicit in encoded antisemitic expression: In at least one instance, the emoji suggestion feature of Instagram's mobile app, displayed beneath an antisemitic video, proposed an emoji depicting a person raising their arm. This emoji was repeatedly used in the comments as a coded Hitler salute. The observation illustrates how context-blind platform features can inadvertently facilitate antisemitic communication.

## 3.6 Platform Comparison

This study focused primarily on Instagram, where systematic data collection was feasible and where the phenomenon manifested with particular intensity. However, to contextualize Instagram's role within the broader ecosystem of antisemitic content distribution, we conducted limited comparative observations of other major platforms.

### 3.6.1 Instagram

Instagram served as the primary platform for this study due to data accessibility and the concentration of high-engagement antisemitic content observed during initial monitoring. Instagram's Reel format proved particularly effective for the dissemination of antisemitic Epstein content. Short-form video allowed creators to combine documentary-style presentation of Epstein documents with conspiratorial framing, visual antisemitic imagery (Baphomet, Star of David, satanic symbols), and emotional appeals.

Comment sections beneath these Reels functioned as spaces for mass antisemitic engagement, with individual comments receiving tens to hundreds of thousands of likes. The algorithmic recommendation system surfaced antisemitic Reels to users searching for Epstein-related content, creating a pathway from general interest in the news story to explicitly antisemitic interpretations.

### 3.6.2 Comparative Platform Observations: X, YouTube

While systematic data collection was limited to Instagram, observational analysis of other platforms revealed distinct patterns of content distribution and narrative construction:

**X (formerly Twitter):** Antisemitic content spread through both high-follower accounts (including verified accounts such as @malikejder) and through quote-tweet chains that amplified individual posts. The platform's text-based format facilitated rapid sharing of Layer 2 coded references ("Austrian painter", "Kanye was right") and cross-ideological framing. The Community Notes feature was inconsistently applied to antisemitic Epstein content. The platform appeared to serve primarily as a distribution mechanism for content and narratives originating elsewhere.

German far-right engagement on X: In Germany, accounts associated with the extreme right adopted and amplified the antisemitic narratives. Multiple accounts called for Germans to explicitly name what they characterized as the central issue, a coded demand to center Epstein's Jewish identity in discussion of the case. Notably, actors in the New Right milieu acknowledged that such statements could be illegal, thereby positioning their own discourse in proximity to § 130 StGB (Volksverhetzung/incipitement to hatred). Politicians from the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) party also engaged with these narratives: Frank Pasemann, former member of the Bundestag, emphasized Epstein's Jewish identity and alleged Jewish networks in his commentary on the files. This pattern illustrates how the Epstein files were instrumentalized within German far-right discourse to advance antisemitic framings while operating at the boundary of legal speech.

**YouTube:** The analyzed YouTube content hosted the most elaborate Layer 4 conspiracy framework content. Candace Owens' "BAAL SO HARD" livestream, which

reached 2 million views, exemplifies this pattern: an hour-long, pseudo-scholarly presentation connecting Epstein's emails to claims about Jewish religious philosophy. This long-form content constructs the narrative infrastructure that short-form platforms (Instagram Reels, X posts) then distill and amplify to mass audiences.

**Platform Ecosystem Dynamics:** The comparative observations suggest a division of labor across platforms: YouTube hosts long-form conspiracy frameworks (Layer 4), Instagram and X distribute distilled versions through Reels and posts (Layers 1-2), and comment sections across all platforms serve as spaces for explicit engagement (Layers 1-3). This multi-platform ecosystem enables antisemitic narratives to reach audiences with varying levels of engagement and prior familiarity with antisemitic tropes.

### 3.7 Content Moderation Failure

Of all videos containing antisemitic content in the video itself, only two had been removed by Instagram's content moderation systems at the time of our final data collection (February 10, 2026). The two removed videos contained SS/swastika imagery and a Hitler photograph. The remaining antisemitic videos remained online. The moderation failure extends to comment sections: the top antisemitic comment ("If the Austrian painter won, we wouldn't be in this timeline," 126,268 likes) and other high-engagement coded Hitler endorsements, Holocaust justifications ("We lost ww2," 42,879 likes; "30 millions Germans just went crazy huh?" 38,807 likes), and claims of Jewish supremacism (95,164 likes) all remained visible and algorithmically promoted.

Particularly notable failures include the Instagram account `rehans.thoughts` (12,200 followers, 107 posts), which openly displays Hitler imagery as video thumbnails, contains speeches of Hitler and had accumulated 59,600+ views on individual Reels. This account's continued existence represents not a failure to detect coded antisemitism but a failure to enforce the most basic content policies against Nazi imagery.



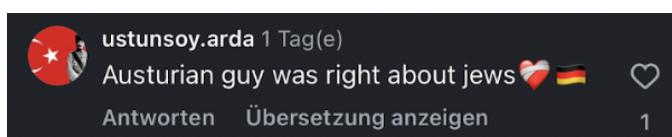
Similarly, verified accounts on both X and Instagram posted content that unambiguously violates stated platform policies regarding hate speech, Holocaust denial, and glorification of violence.

One case within the corpus points to an emerging dimension of the problem. At least one antisemitic video originated from an AI-generated influencer account. This observation indicates that the production of antisemitic content is becoming increasingly automated and scalable at the very moment when moderation already fails to address human-created content. As generative AI lowers the cost of producing convincing video content to near zero, the current moderation framework faces a challenge that is growing exponentially.

Out of the 55 documented antisemitic videos, Instagram's moderation led to the removal of only two instances within a 10-day timeframe.

### 3.8 Multilingual and International Dimension

The antisemitic response was observed across multiple languages including English, German, Turkish, Spanish, Farsi, and Arabic. Hitler glorification crossed cultural boundaries: Iranian-identified users, South Asian accounts, Latin American users, and European far-right accounts all participated in Hitler praise – unified not by ideology or nationality but by antisemitism. The “trees and stones” hadith references represent Islamic eschatological antisemitism applied to a current Western news event. German-language deicide tropes and Turkish-language deepfake content demonstrate that Epstein-related antisemitism functions as a transnational lingua franca of hate.



### 3.9 Legal Implications for Germany

A significant portion of the antisemitic content in the sample was produced in German, originating from accounts likely based in Germany or targeting German-speaking audiences. This content warrants separate analysis due to its relevance to German criminal law and EU regulatory frameworks.

At least seven videos in the corpus contained content that likely meets the threshold for criminal prosecution under § 130 StGB (Volksverhetzung – incitement to hatred). This statute criminalizes content that incites hatred against segments of the population, violates their human dignity through defamation or malicious contempt, and includes specific provisions against Holocaust denial and the approval of Nazi crimes.

One video contained the statement "Krieg zwischen Juden und Nichtjuden" (war between Jews and non-Jews), explicitly framing Jewish-non-Jewish relations as a state of warfare. This positions Jewish people as collective enemies and incites conflict between population groups – a core element of § 130 StGB. Content applied the deicide/Christ-killer accusation to Epstein, invoking a centuries-old antisemitic trope that has historically been used to incite violence against Jewish communities. Multiple pieces of content featured SS imagery presented in approving or neutral contexts rather than historical documentation. One video presented a Hitler speech approvingly, without critical framing or historical contextualization. This constitutes approval of the Nazi regime's actions, which is explicitly criminalized under § 130 StGB paragraph 3.

One comment employed the coded language of Holocaust denial, stating: "Hätte man damals bloß 6 Mio Cookies gebacken. Leider wurden es nur 271k" ("If only they had baked 6 million cookies back then. Unfortunately it was only 271k"). This uses food euphemisms to deny the scale of the Holocaust (claiming only 271,000 rather than 6 million victims) while simultaneously expressing regret that more Jews were not murdered, combining Holocaust denial with endorsement of genocide.

Beyond national criminal law, the persistence of this content raises questions under the EU Digital Services Act (DSA), which entered into application for very large online platforms in August 2023. The DSA requires platforms to act expeditiously against illegal content upon obtaining actual knowledge or awareness (Article 16). The § 130 StGB content documented in this study constitutes illegal content under German law, which is EU member state law and thus falls within the DSA's scope. Very large online platforms must also identify and assess systemic risks (Article 34), including risks related to the dissemination of illegal content, negative effects on the exercise of

fundamental rights including human dignity, and intentional manipulation of the platform's service with negative effect on civic discourse. The pattern documented in this study – where event-driven antisemitic content achieves massive reach through algorithmic amplification, includes content violating national criminal law, and persists despite platform policies prohibiting such content – suggests potential systemic risks requiring assessment and mitigation under DSA Article 35.

The German-language content documented in this study was accessible not only to German users but to the platform's global user base. This creates a tension between territorial criminal jurisdiction (German law applies in Germany) and the borderless nature of social media platforms. The DSA's country-of-origin principle and coordination mechanisms between Digital Services Coordinators are designed to address this tension, but effective enforcement requires both detection (identifying illegal content) and action (removing or restricting access to it). The multilingual nature of the antisemitic response – with parallel content in English, German, and Turkish – suggests coordinated or mutually reinforcing cross-border activity. Users in different linguistic communities appear to be drawing on similar source material and employing similar antisemitic frameworks, suggesting either direct coordination or exposure to common influencer content that is then translated and adapted for local audiences.

The presence of content likely violating § 130 StGB in a sample of only 55 Reels suggests that such content is not exceptional but represents a pattern. This has implications for law enforcement (whether reported content was appropriately handled and whether prosecution of content creators is warranted), platform accountability (why illegal content persisted and what systemic changes are needed), regulatory oversight (whether this pattern indicates systemic risk requiring formal investigation under DSA procedures), and civil society monitoring (the detection relied on manual monitoring while platforms simultaneously restrict the data access that would enable systematic monitoring).

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Event-Driven Antisemitism and the Conspiracy Pipeline

The findings illustrate the instrumentalization of real-world events for antisemitic mobilization. The Epstein files represent a particularly effective vehicle because they combine genuine wrongdoing, a persistent public perception that powerful individuals are being protected, and a media environment primed for conspiratorial interpretation. As the ADL noted, the surge in Epstein conspiracy theories “feed on many other conspiracies and on this disturbingly normalized antisemitism”<sup>6</sup> that has escalated since October 7, 2023.

The speed and scale of the response suggests that the narrative infrastructure – the tropes, coded language, and conspiracy frameworks – was already in place, waiting for a triggering event. The specific Epstein file contents (goyim emails, Baal account, Israeli connections) provided raw material that was immediately processed through pre-existing antisemitic frameworks.

### 4.2 The Role of Influencers as Narrative Architects

Our findings reveal a tiered amplification structure in which high-profile influencers construct elaborate antisemitic narrative frameworks that are then distilled, simplified, and mass-distributed through platform ecosystems. Candace Owens’ livestream exemplifies this: an hour-long, pseudo-scholarly presentation that connected individual Epstein emails to sweeping claims about Jewish religious philosophy, Satanism, and global control. This narrative was then simplified into shareable statements (“synagogue of Satan,” “satanic pedophiles who work for Israel”) that spread across platforms.

On Instagram, conspiracy-focused accounts performed a similar function: packaging antisemitic interpretations of Epstein documents into short-form video formats optimized for algorithmic distribution. The comment sections beneath their content then became spaces for mass engagement with increasingly explicit antisemitism, including Hitler glorification.

### 4.3 The Moderation Gap

The persistence of openly antisemitic content with massive engagement represents a systemic failure. The four-layer coding system documented in this report explains part of the gap: automated detection systems are poorly equipped for Layer 2 references like “the Austrian painter.” However, the gap extends far beyond coded content.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-862998>, The Jerusalem Post, August 2, 2025.

Videos with unambiguous Nazi imagery, explicit text overlays, and straightforward antisemitic language remained live for days without action. This suggests a failure of both capacity and prioritization.

#### **4.4 The Role of Platform Algorithms**

The engagement figures documented in this report provide direct evidence of algorithmic amplification. Platform recommendation algorithms actively distributed antisemitic content to users engaging with Epstein-related topics. The four-fold disproportionate engagement on antisemitic comments demonstrates that Instagram's comment-ranking algorithm systematically surfaces antisemitic content to the most visible position in comment sections. A single coded Hitler endorsement ("If the Austrian painter won, we wouldn't be in this timeline") received 126,268 likes – making it one of the most-endorsed comments in the entire corpus. On the @ian\_byington Reel alone, 354,187 likes accrued on antisemitic comments. The algorithm cannot distinguish between engagement driven by agreement and engagement driven by outrage, and in both cases, it rewards antisemitic content with greater visibility.

## 5. Recommendations

### 5.1 To Social Media Platforms

5.1.1 Improve detection of coded antisemitism. The four-layer taxonomy documented in this report, and the accompanying glossary of coded terms, should be integrated into content moderation training and detection systems. Layer 2 content ("Austrian painter" references, etc.) and Layer 3 content ("JILL ALL KEWS") is reliably identifiable and should be flagged.

5.1.2 Implement event-triggered moderation surge capacity. Major news events predictably generate spikes in hate speech. Platforms should pre-position additional moderation resources when events with known antisemitic potential – such as releases of documents involving prominent Jewish individuals – are anticipated.

5.1.3 Enforce existing policies against Nazi imagery and Hitler glorification. The continued existence of accounts openly displaying Hitler thumbnails, using Hitler speeches as a background audio and the persistence of Hitler-praising comments with tens of thousands of likes represent failures to enforce policies.

5.1.4 Audit algorithmic amplification during triggering events. Platforms should examine whether their recommendation systems disproportionately surfaced antisemitic content during the Epstein files period and implement safeguards against such amplification.

5.1.5 Address verification accountability. Verified accounts were among the most prominent amplifiers of antisemitic content. Verification implies a degree of platform endorsement; platforms should review whether verified accounts posting antisemitic content face appropriate consequences.

### 5.2 To Policymakers and Regulators

5.2.1 Ensure researcher access to platform data. The inability to quantify the full extent of the antisemitic response is a direct consequence of platform data restrictions. The EU Digital Services Act (Article 40) provides a framework for researcher access that should be actively enforced.

5.2.2 Enforce existing hate speech laws for cross-border content. German-language antisemitic content documented in this study likely meets the threshold for prosecution under § 130 StGB. Cross-border enforcement mechanisms should be strengthened.

5.2.3 Extend regulatory frameworks to address coded antisemitism. Current regulatory approaches focused on explicit hate speech miss the majority of antisemitic content documented in this study. The four-layer taxonomy may inform more nuanced regulatory approaches.

5.2.4 Hold platforms accountable for algorithmic amplification. Regulatory frameworks should address not only the existence of hate content but the active role of platform algorithms in distributing it to mass audiences.

### **5.3 To Civil Society and Educational Institutions**

5.3.1 Develop media literacy programs addressing the conspiracy-to-antisemitism pipeline. As the Epstein files demonstrate, antisemitic content often enters public discourse through conspiracy frameworks that do not initially present as antisemitic. Educators and civil society organizations should develop materials that help audiences recognize this pattern.

5.3.2 Distribute updated glossaries of coded antisemitic language. The coded language system documented in this report evolves rapidly. Monitoring organizations should collaborate on maintaining and distributing updated glossaries of terms, symbols, and visual codes.

5.3.3 Coordinate rapid-response monitoring for triggering events. The observation that the antisemitic response was receiving “almost no attention” in its first days underscores the need for coordinated monitoring capacity that can be mobilized quickly when predictable triggering events occur.

## 6. Conclusion

The release of the Epstein files on January 30, 2026, triggered a wave of antisemitic content on social media that is unprecedented in its engagement metrics, sophisticated in its coding and evasion strategies, and international in scope. Within ten days, 55 Instagram Reels accumulated 114.4 million views; individual comments glorifying Adolf Hitler received more engagement than many mainstream news articles about the same event; and the most basic content moderation policies – against Nazi imagery, Hitler glorification, and genocidal incitement – were not enforced for days and weeks, even as the content they failed to address accumulated millions of views.

The existing response – a handful of articles in Jewish media outlets and statements from monitoring organizations – has been grossly disproportionate to the scale of the problem. As the Nexus Project warned, the antisemitism fueled by the Epstein files is "spreading faster than anyone is willing to say." This report aims to provide the evidence base that allows us to say it with specificity and precision.

The four-layer taxonomy of antisemitic expression developed in this study demonstrates that the challenge extends well beyond explicit hate speech. The most widely engaged antisemitic content uses coded references – such as "The Austrian Painter" – that are universally understood by their audience but invisible to automated detection systems. Addressing this challenge requires investment in moderation capacity, regulatory frameworks that account for coded hate speech, and sustained public education about how antisemitism is expressed and consumed in digital environments.

Crucially, this report demonstrates that platform infrastructure itself functions as a distribution architecture for antisemitic content. A single Hitler speech clip exists as a reusable audio asset within Instagram's infrastructure, attachable to new videos with a single tap, used by at least seven accounts in the corpus alone and present in more than 500 Reels platform-wide. Meta's verification badge was conferred on the account that became the single largest concentration point for antisemitic engagement in the entire corpus. Comment-ranking algorithms systematically surfaced antisemitic comments – constituting 8% of the default-displayed sample – to positions where they accumulated 33.1% of all comment engagement. These are not failures of individual moderation decisions. Furthermore, the identification of an AI-generated influencer disseminating antisemitic content signals a dangerous evolution toward automated, scalable extremism. They are structural features of platform design that transform individual acts of antisemitic expression into mass-distributed content.

The documented content includes material likely meeting the threshold for criminal prosecution under German § 130 StGB, persisting on a platform subject to obligations under the EU Digital Services Act. The persistence of such content – including explicit Holocaust denial, SS imagery, and genocidal incitement – raises questions about

platform compliance with the DSA's requirements to act expeditiously against illegal content and to assess and mitigate systemic risks.

All quantitative findings in this report represent documented minimums. The actual scale of the antisemitic response to the Epstein files is larger than any external researcher can currently measure. That structural inability to measure is itself a finding, and its resolution – through meaningful researcher access to platform data as provided for under DSA Article 40 – should be a priority for policymakers and platforms alike. This report demonstrates what rapid-response civil society monitoring can document even without API access; with it, the picture would be both more complete and harder to ignore.