

Can Anti-Semitism in Türkiye Be Considered a Crime, Holocaust Denial, and Anti-Semitism?

The statement on the AKP's Ankara Provincial Directorate's website, "The claims that Hitler baked Jews and killed them in large numbers do not conform to historical facts," is a development in line with the Holocaust denial news frequently appearing in Islamist media outlets.

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The word "Semitism" originates from Shem, the eldest of Noah's three sons. Shem became Shem in Latin and Greek translations of the Bible. It is believed that Shem later became the ancestor of the Hebrews.

Anti-Semitism, on the other hand, is hatred of all Jews simply because they are Jews. The term was first used as a political agenda in 1879 in Vienna, the capital of the Habsburg monarchy.

In fact, hatred of Jews is an ancient reality, dating back to the emergence of Christianity. While the roots of this hatred are ancient, medieval anti-Semitism was primarily defined by religious concepts, as Jews had killed Jesus. From the 15th century onward, anti-Semitism was redefined and now based on racial principles.

Derogatory depictions of Jews can be seen in the reliefs on the façade of St. Sebald

Church in Nuremberg, Germany, where the Nazis drafted their infamous "Racial Laws" and which, in this sense, was the center of Nazi ideology, estimated to date from the 1320s. Similar reliefs still exist throughout Central Europe, including in Brandenburg Cathedral, Cologne, Ratisbonne, and Upsala. In Nuremberg, pogroms were carried out in 1298, 1349, and 1499, with thousands of Jews killed and the survivors deported.

This hatred, rooted in religion, was adapted by the Nazis into the 20th century. Consequently, anti-Semitism is not a concept invented by the Nazis and unique to Germany; it is a thoroughly European idea, one that has always existed on this continent and has become monstrous over time.

The Ottoman Empire, however, was never anti-Semitic. On the contrary, it was against the Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492.

They were welcomed and lived in the "millet" system together with the Jews, Greeks and Armenians until its collapse and remained the most loyal minority that never caused any problems to the Ottomans.

Problems for Jews, albeit minor, began with the Republic. In the early years of the Republic, as the Armenian and Greek populations in the country declined, Jews became targets of criticism against minorities. As a result of the cultural Turkification policy, Jews were expected to integrate into Turkish society and culture and speak Turkish. However, while efforts were made in Germany to remove Germanized Jews from German society, in Türkiye the goal was to Turkify the Jews.

The murder of dentist Yasef Yahya, who was killed simply because he was Jewish, and the printing of Hitler's "Mein Kampf" in over one hundred thousand copies by 11 publishing houses in 2005, when considered together with recent events, reveal the existence of potential and active anti-Semitism in society.

Meanwhile, in July 1934, under the influence of the propaganda of a pro-Nazi racist magazine and the Compulsory Settlement Law issued at the time, threats and boycotts against

Jews in many cities of Thrace such as Kırklareli, Edirne, Çorlu, Tekirdağ, Uzunköprü, Çanakkale, etc. eventually turned into physical attacks, rapes, and acts of looting and destruction.¹

Following these events, over ten thousand Jewish homes were looted.

They left and took refuge in Istanbul.

The Nazi seizure of power around this time (1933) had little impact in Türkiye, except for a few isolated incidents. On the contrary, Turkey welcomed Jewish scientists expelled from Germany. In fact, in 1935, for the first time in the Republican era, Jewish candidates participated in the Turkish Grand National Assembly elections, and a Jew, Samuel Abravaya (from Marmara), was elected as the first minority member of parliament in the Republic's history.

However, the start of World War II and Nazi Germany's rapid occupation of France and Western Europe, followed by its entry into Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and its attack on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) soon led to the