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Swiss Jews Increasingly Concerned by Antisemitic Conspiracy Theories Driven by Coronavirus Fears

by Algemeiner Staff

The Swiss city of Zurich. Photo: MadGeographer via Wikimedia Commons.

The Jewish community in Switzerland is increasingly concerned by the spread of antisemitic conspiracy theories connected to the coronavirus pandemic, according to new research by the Zurich-based Foundation Against Racism and Antisemitism.

The foundation highlighted the presence on social media of memes linking Jewish influence with the spread of the virus, as well as the presence — also seen in Germany, France and other European countries — of Nazi and Holocaust-related images at demonstrations against social distancing organized by extremist groups.

In an interview with the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* newspaper on Monday, Dina Wyler — the foundation's managing director — said a general feeling of insecurity

boosted the need to look for a scapegoat for society's ills.

"Unfortunately, this scapegoat is often Jewish," Wyler noted. "Antisemitism never went away, but it became less socially acceptable. Now the boundaries of what one can say have shifted."

Wyler said that Jews in Switzerland perceived antisemitism as a major problem, with most reports to the foundation involving damage to property and insulting statements.

"Physical violence such as that in Germany is very rare in Switzerland," Wyler said.

Wyler said that greater education was needed to counter the manipulation of the Holocaust by coronavirus protesters.

"When people with yellow Jewish badges appeared at anti-coronavirus rallies in Zurich, Basel and Lachen in recent weeks, the other demonstrators should have reacted," she said. "They should have made it clear that comparing state-orchestrated genocide to restaurant closures and people wearing masks is going too far."

The foundation has set up a website — "Stopantisemitismus" — for the reporting of antisemitic incidents.