

## Report

### *AEJM Membership Survey 2025*

The survey took place from September to February 2026 in cooperation with CAJM, the Council of American Jewish Museums in the United States. It was based on a joined questionnaire that was sent out to the leadership of all membership museums and distributed via the AEJM newsletter. The following analyses is based on the answers of 25 Jewish Museum directors in Europe and presents a clear and consistent image of heightened pressure and vulnerability in the aftermath of October 7.

### Summary

A particularly striking finding is the broad increase in antisemitic incidents, reported across multiple dimensions and affecting a substantial share of institutions.

Negative social media exposure emerges as the most widespread issue: 72% of museums report an increase, with an additional 4% encountering it for the first time. Similarly, 60% of institutions report a rise in digital hate speech, underscoring the intensity and scale of online antisemitism. Taken together, these figures point to a significant escalation in hostile public discourse directed at Jewish cultural institutions.

Beyond individual incidents, the data suggests a deeper structural impact. Most notably, 60% of museums report cancelled partnerships or opportunities, either increasing or occurring for the first time. This indicates not only reputational pressure but also a tangible contraction of institutional networks and collaboration opportunities.

In response, museums have acted decisively. 64% of institutions implemented increased security measures, making this the most common response. At the same time, many museums chose a strategy of engagement rather than withdrawal: 44% introduced staff training, 40% expanded educational outreach, and 32% issued public statements. These measures reflect an effort to strengthen institutional resilience while maintaining public presence.

Nevertheless, the general situation is reflected by changes in audience development. In 44% of the museum, visitor numbers have declined, whereas two institutions could report increases. In some museums the decline in attendance was exceeding 30-40% – the respective directors are explaining this development with visitors' reluctance to engage with Jewish topics due to perceived associations with the war in the Middle East.

Overall, the findings point to a complex environment marked by increased antisemitic pressure, disrupted partnerships, and declining audiences, while simultaneously investing in security, staff support, and public engagement.

## Four dominant themes emerge from the open-text responses:

### 1.) Institutional isolation: Partnerships suspended, grants cancelled, and schools withdrawing – a pattern described by one director as the museum being "pushed to the margins of the cultural field."

- *"Some institutions have suspended their collaborations with us. We could not use and cancelled some grants"*
- *"A publication was refused "because of Israel." Some schools cancelled out of parental concern."*
- *"The decision in Flanders to exclude Israeli cultural institutions risks fostering an atmosphere where Jewish museums are unjustly entangled in political conflicts. We are already experiencing the indirect consequences."*
- *"The Danish Jewish Museum experienced a decrease in visitors of more than 30% the last two years, directly linked to the conflict."*

### 2.) Escalating incidents: Respondents describe a shift from online hostility toward more concrete acts – vandalism, in-person confrontations, staff harassment – especially visible from mid-2024 onward.

- *"In June 2024 a visitor declared that "Hitler didn't finish his work." In October 2024 an email was received wishing that "the gas chamber" would still be used."*
- *"We are witnessing an increase of vandalism, digital and verbal hate speech, antisemitic symbols etc. by 100% within one year."*
- *"One of our centrally located buildings was defaced with antisemitic and anti-Zionist graffiti – for the first time in many years."*
- *"A student worker was assaulted verbally, violently, on the way home wearing the museum's working t-shirt."*

### 3.) Political pressure and self-censorship: Several institutions reported cancelling planned exhibitions or reducing public communications, citing an absence of a "politically appropriate environment."

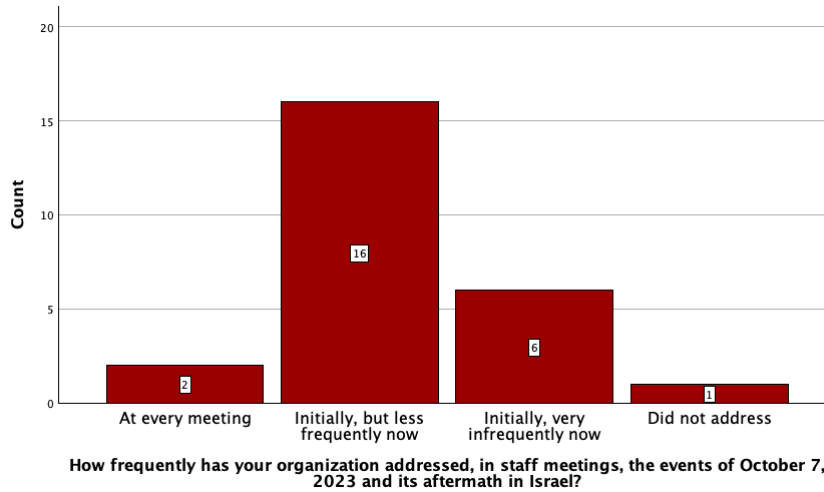
- *"There is no politically appropriate environment to organize exhibitions on this subject or speak out. After October 7, we had to become quieter."*
- *"One of our planned exhibitions was cancelled – we were concerned about its topic in the current political context."*
- *"While most of the reactions were positive, some negative voices were heard during public panels on Israel."*
- *"Jewish museums are coming under increasing pressure, simultaneously becoming increasingly important as safe spaces for nuanced discussions."*

### 4.) Resilience: Despite the pressures, many museums pivoted creatively – interfaith programming, media literacy workshops for students, commemorative exhibitions – and largely reported positive audience reception when they did engage directly.

- *"We kept posters of the hostages on display in public spaces from the very beginning of the campaign, despite periodic attacks. Nearly \$50,000 was collected in support of families."*
- *"Our learning staff introduced the topic of media consumption at the beginning of each school workshop to support a more critical attitude towards social media."  
"Starting December 2023, we offered Jewish-Muslim tours with two guides. They were very well received, especially by politicians."*

## The Questionnaire

**Q1 – How frequently has your organization addressed, in staff meetings, the events of October 7, 2023, and its aftermath in Israel?**



A strong majority of institutions (88%) addresses October 7 in staff meetings, though most reduced frequency over time. Only 2 institutions discussed it at every meeting, and just 1 did not address it at all.

**Q1A – 1A. Did these meetings lead to...**

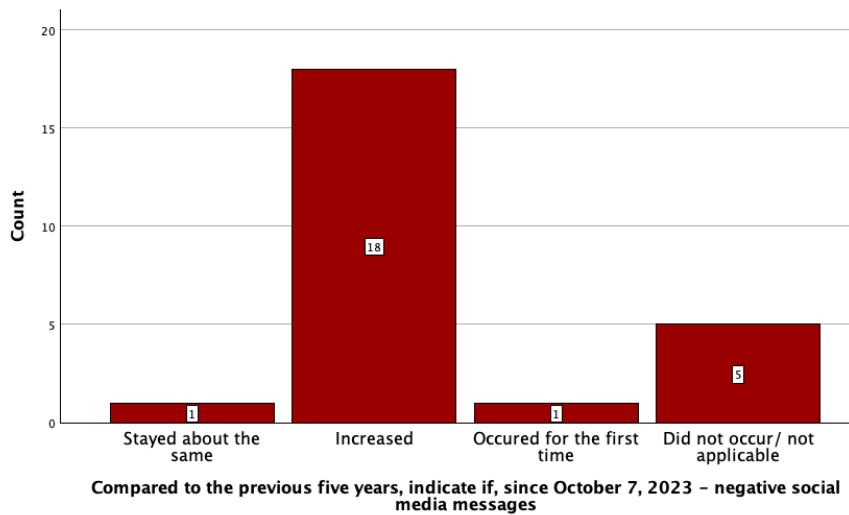
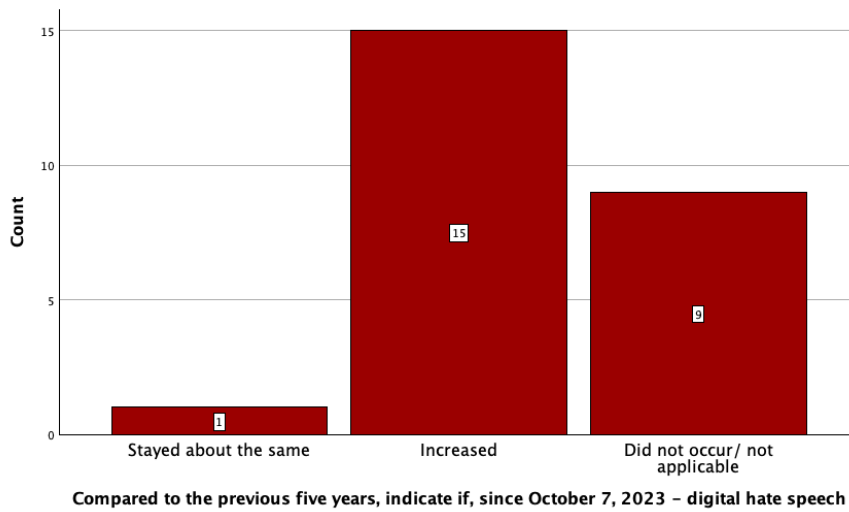
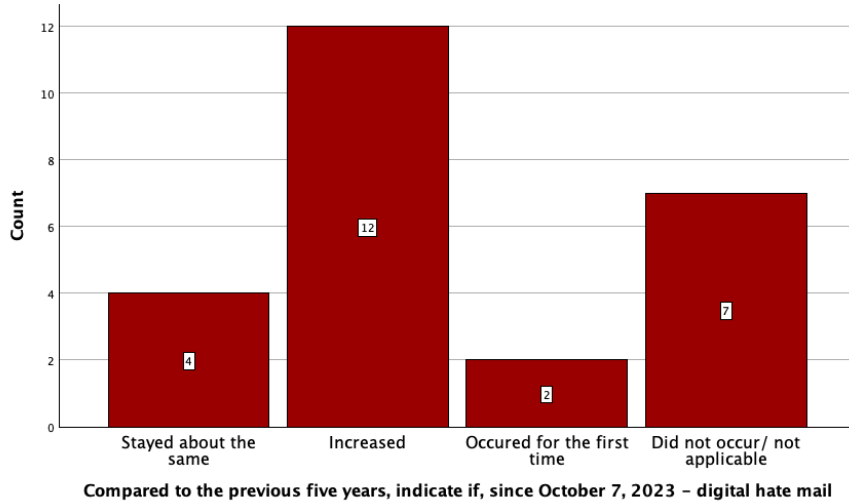
| Category                         | Count | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Common understanding             | 21    | 84%        |
| Code of conduct                  | 6     | 24%        |
| Decreased tensions               | 2     | 8%         |
| Increased tensions               | 1     | 4%         |
| Does not apply / did not address | 2     | 8%         |

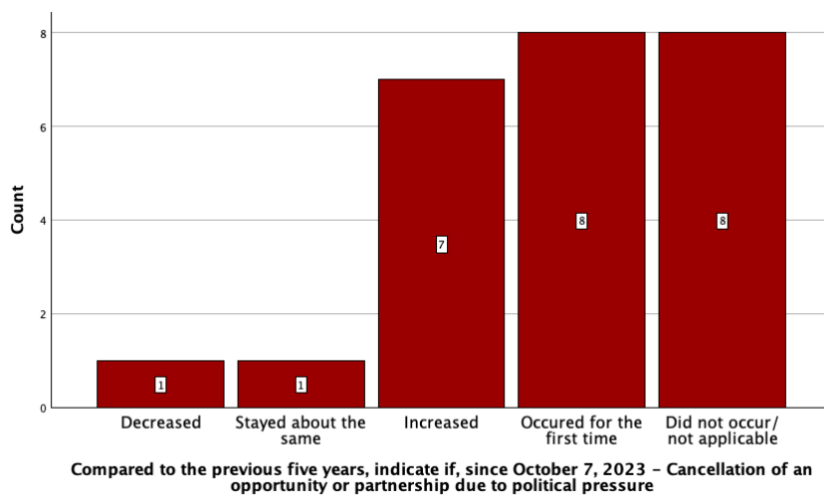
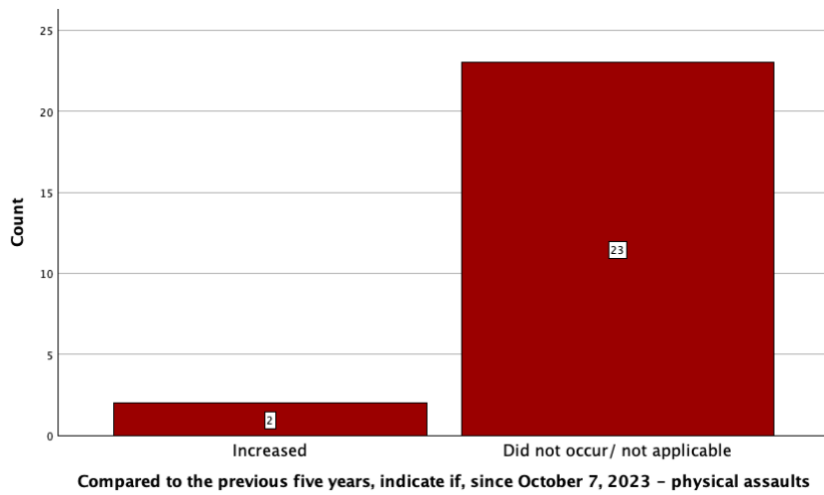
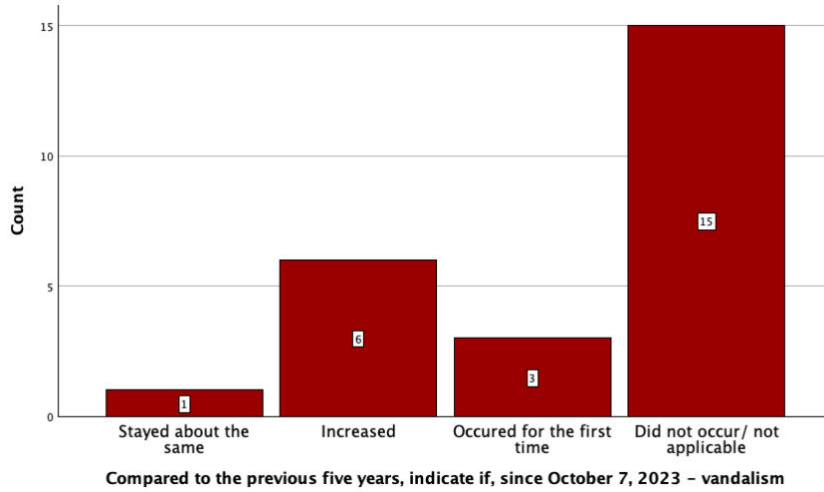
A strong majority (84%) report that the meetings led to a common understanding, making this the dominant outcome.

- Around one quarter (24%) indicate the development of a code of conduct.
- Effects on tensions are limited and mixed:
  - 8% decreased tensions
  - 4% increased tensions
  - A small share (8%) reported that the meetings did not address the issue.

**Q2 – Compared to the previous five years, indicate if, since October 7, 2023**

Negative social media was the most widespread incident type: 72% of museums reported increases and a further 4% experienced it for the first time. Digital hate speech increased at 60% of institutions. Cancellations of partnerships or opportunities were reported by 60% of museums – either increasing or occurring for the first time – indicating a structural shift beyond individual acts.





**Q3 – What strategies have been employed to address the issues identified in Q.2?**

| Category  | Count | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Increased security measures                                   | 16    | 64%        |
| Increased/new outreach to educational / cultural institutions | 10    | 40%        |
| Staff training  | 10    | 40%        |
| Specific statements to the press                              | 8     | 32%        |
| Counseling / support of staff                                 | 7     | 28%        |
| Revised exhibits / content changes                            | 6     | 24%        |
| Increased public visibility                                   | 4     | 16%        |
| Decreased public visibility                                   | 4     | 16%        |
| None / Did not occur / Not applicable                         | 5     | 20%        |

The most prominent response is increased security measures (64%), indicating a clear priority across institutions.

- Outreach activities and staff training (each 40%) represent the second most common responses, suggesting a focus on both external engagement and internal capacity building.
- Around one third (32%) engaged in public communication via press statements.
- Staff support measures (28%) and content adaptations (24%) are present but less widespread.
- Changes in public visibility are mixed:
  - 16% increased visibility
  - 16% decreased visibility
- 20% reported no actions taken/ not applicable

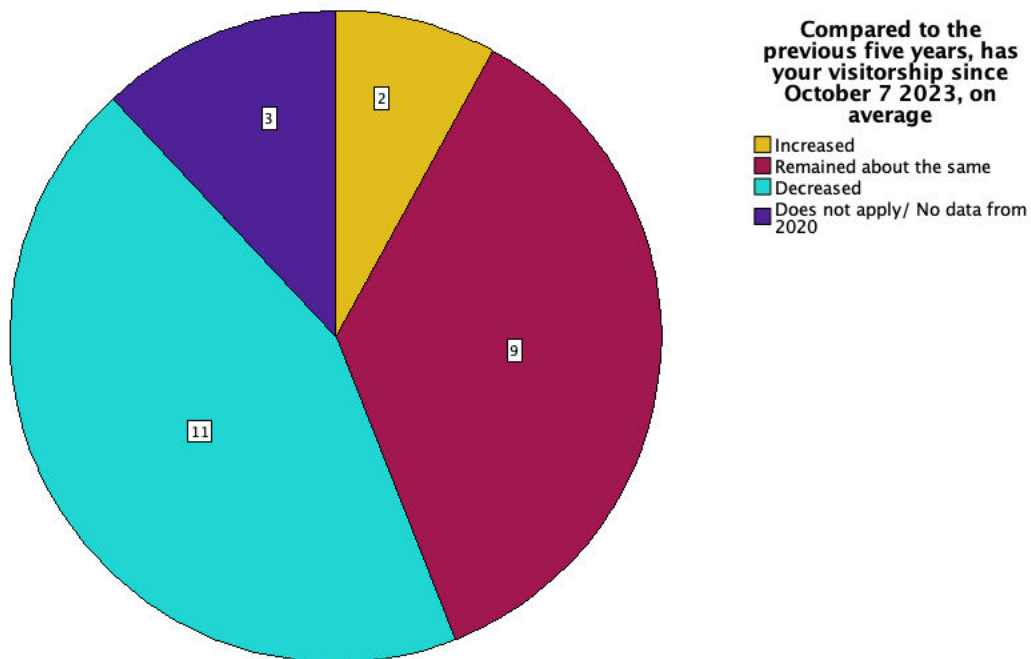
**Q4 – Have the events of October 7, 2023, and its aftermath in Israel necessitated any of the following...**

| Category                              | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Increased/ new security               | 17    | 68%        |
| Increased/ changes personnel          | 11    | 44%        |
| Personnel counseling/ support         | 9     | 36%        |
| Increased/ new marketing and outreach | 1     | 4%         |
| None of the above                     | 6     | 24%        |

**Q5 – Below are activities that museums may have held dedicated to October 7th and its aftermath in Israel. For EACH activity that your museum has held, indicate the RESPONSE of the audience.**

|                     | Positive | Mixed | Neutral | N/A |
|---------------------|----------|-------|---------|-----|
| Educational program | 10       | 2     | 0       | 13  |
| Public discussion   | 6        | 4     | 3       | 12  |
| Part of exhibition  | 6        | 1     | 2       | 15  |
| Complete exhibition | 7        | 1     | 0       | 15  |

**Q6 – Compared to the previous five years, has your visitorship since October 7 2023, on average**



## Appendix I – Narrative Responses

### Q2A: Please explain your answers in Q.2 (impact of hate) in more detail

“Some of the activities that needed to be done could not be carried out.”

“We could not use and cancelled some grants.”

“We started to have restrictions on X due to the negative social media hate speech answers.”

“The number of schools booking museum visits remained the same, interrupting the increasing tendency that characterized the last years.”

“Anti-Israel comments online, in social media, questions about Gaza, genocide accusations.”

“Emails and hate speech with specific contents linked to October 7.”

“1. Initially frequent comments under our social media content (now happening from time to time – but still much more often than ever before). Especially applicable to promoted content that reaches wider audiences than only the followers of our channels.

2. Multiple instances of antisemitic graffiti (referencing Gaza) outside the entrance to the museum - never happened before. Museum was one of few local places targeted by such graffiti.

3. One of our planned exhibitions was cancelled - we were concerned of its topic in the current political context (I'd call it indirect political pressure).

4. Additionally, two non-violence pro-Palestinian protests were held by the local activists in front of the museum's building, both in connection to visits of Israeli officials.”

“For the first time in many years, one of our centrally located buildings was defaced with antisemitic and anti-Zionist graffiti.”

“We did not have hate messages before October 7 but some found their way into our website afterwards.”

“Some of these are less relevant for us at the Israel Museum, since all of our staff, Jewish and non-Jewish, are Israeli. We did see an increase in cancelled partnerships with previous partners abroad.”

“Since the end of 2023 and throughout 2024–2025, the museum has been the target of an increasing number of antisemitic acts, ranging from hateful comments on social media to direct verbal assaults, insulting phone calls, hostile letters, vandalism (such as torn-out cameras and graffiti), and even personal attacks against volunteers. For example, in June 2024 a visitor declared that “Hitler didn't finish his work,” while Instagram posts associated the museum's new identity with propaganda or massacres, and in October 2024 an email was received wishing that “the gas chamber” would still be used. In March 2025, a young volunteer was insulted and harassed at school, called a “dirty Jew” simply because he had worked for the institution. Beyond these direct attacks, the museum has also suffered indirect consequences, such as calls for boycott, a decline in public attendance, and the loss of institutional partners, which weaken its role as a cultural and educational space. Hostile discourse often relies on conflating Judaism with Israeli politics, twisting the memory of past persecutions to accuse Jews of becoming persecutors themselves, or reviving old antisemitic tropes (such as accusations of child murder, supremacy, or insults related to the Shoah). The year 2024 saw a notable increase in incidents, particularly on social media, followed in 2025 by a shift toward more concrete acts such as vandalism and school harassment. Overall, the trend points to a rise and diversification of antisemitic acts targeting the museum, along with growing isolation through boycotts and weakened partnerships, revealing an intensification of the climate of hate rather than a decline.”

“We are witnessing an increase of vandalism, digital and verbal hate speech, antisemitic symbols etc. by 100% within one year.”

“We had one case of vandalism (small graffiti in the museum staircase) and one case in which a school did not want to visit anymore. The real change was the behavior of older school children in our

workshops. They were often negative or at least skeptical regarding what our staff told them. There were also cases of antisemitic speech in the workshops.”

“Social media is a force for antisemitism and anti-Israel resentments and the JM Vienna had to cancel the cooperation for the speech of Europe on Judenplatz.”

“Fortunately, the museum does not receive many hate emails. However, certain posts on social media have received more negative comments and there have been cases of graffiti and stickers of antisemitic nature related to the conflict. One of our student workers was assaulted verbally, but violently, on his way home while wearing his working T-shirt with the name and logo of the museum. Due to the action plan to combat antisemitism from 2022, the museum has experienced an increase in partnerships as a result of political support and funding.”

“Vile emails have come through. Some schools cancelled out of parental concern/interests. A publication was refused because “of Israel”.”

“Since the beginning of the conflict in Israel, we have recorded numerous cases of hate on social media, and some institutions have suspended their collaborations with us.”

“Since October 7, the JMB’s social media channels have seen a noticeable increase in hateful comments. Moderating and contextualizing these posts has since required significantly more time and care. In addition to openly antisemitic remarks, there is a growing tendency among actors in right-wing online spheres to instrumentalize antisemitism in order to promote right-wing and racist narratives. Overall, the tone in the comment sections has become more aggressive and heated, further complicating community management.”

“The Jewish Cultural Museum Veitshöchheim is located in the outskirts of relatively wealthy Würzburg. The demography is mostly Christian young families with a stable income. They visit the museum on holidays and see cultural activities as a welcomed alternation to everyday work life. Other very frequent visitors are academics after retirement, who are very engaged in Christian-Jewish dialogue. Most of both groups vote for the Christian Democratic Party, which are vocal about their support of Jewish life in Germany.

The University of Würzburg has some student groups which are so-called pro-Palestinian. They didn’t get in contact with the Jewish Museum though or boycott any events. Also, the university has a quite vocal right-wing history professor that hires vocal right-wing student assistants. The student union fought against them and he restricted his public statements. Also, I just started the position as head of the museum in June 2025 so I cannot give a five-year review. All in all, we have low to no security because it is not needed. We are experiencing exclusively negative effects from October 7th when it comes to collaborations with artists.”

“Fortunately, we don’t usually receive hate mail or messages.”

#### **Q5A – Please explain your answers in Q.5 (activities) in more detail.**

“We did not have any activities dedicated to October 7th.”

“After October 7th, we had to become quieter; there is no politically appropriate environment to organize exhibitions on this subject or speak out on this issue.”

“As one of the few Jewish cultural institutions in Europe, we were able to keep posters of the hostages on display in public spaces from the very beginning of the Bring Them Home Now campaign, despite periodic attacks by anonymous protesters. Using the campaign’s logo, we also raised significant funds for the Hostages and Missing Families Forum through donation boxes placed in two of our core exhibitions. Thanks to our visitors’ generosity, nearly \$50,000 was collected in support of the families.”

“Also, I just started the position as head of the museum in June 2025, so I cannot give a five-year review. All in all, we have low to no security because it is not needed. We are experiencing exclusively negative effects from October 7th when it comes to collaborations with artists.”

“Events of October 7th and its aftermath were discussed during several public panels, mostly during discussions concerning Israel. While most of the reactions were positive and neutral, some negative voices were also heard.”

“For example: Lost in Nahost – educational tour for schools (free of charge), Project Space exhibition on the aftermath of Oct 7th, Bring Them Home, Ronen Steinke, etc.”

“Independent of our museum-related offerings, we are repeatedly asked about our position on current political developments in the context of the conflict between Gaza and Israel. We do not comment on these matters, as it is not the role of our museum to take a stance on day-to-day political issues.”

“Our learning staff introduced the topic of media consumption at the beginning of each school workshop to make the children aware of fake news and hate speech and to support a more critical attitude towards, in particular, social media.”

“Our museum is about to start its construction phase. Therefore, we didn’t hold initiatives dedicated to October 7th and its aftermath in Israel.”

“Our October 7 capsule exhibition from ANU Museum Israel has been really appreciated.”

“The Danish Jewish Museum deals with 400 years of Jewish life in Denmark, and has as such not having educational material or exhibitions directly linked to the situation in Israel. But the subject of how Jewish life in Denmark is affected by the situation has been addressed in both media (both written and in interviews), exhibitions, and lectures/talks.”

“The formats we offered – including guided tours, an installation in the permanent exhibition, and moderated events that addressed the events of October 7th and their aftermath either directly or indirectly – were all very well received. The positive feedback from our audiences relates in particular to the nuanced historical contextualization that we, as a museum, provide.”

“The topic of the war in Israel has not been part of a public program.”

“We created an art/culture exhibition about October 7 and the reactions of the public were very positive.”

“We have expanded our educational trainings against antisemitism in order to meet the increased needs of teachers, facilitated several discussions on the effects of October 7th (like cancel culture, polarization of public discourse on Israel after October 7th / rising antisemitism) with great public attention and devoted parts of our changing exhibitions ‘In the Face of Death’ and ‘What a Family! Ruthe Zuntz: 500 Years in Focus’ to the commemoration of October 7th. In December 2023 we opened a cabinet exhibition with the film installation ‘The Line and the Circle’ by Sharone Lifschitz dedicated to the history of Kibbutz Nir Oz.”

**Q7 – Please use the space below to offer any explanations or comments about these questions, or provide a quote or statement about Jewish museums at this moment (that we can share with colleague or in our report).**

“It is necessary to provide training to museum staff on mental health to make them more resilient.”

“The most visible difference is the refusal of some members of German youth groups to enter the synagogue and/or to wear a kippah.”

“Starting in December 2023, our museum has offered Jewish-Muslim tours with two guides, a Muslim guide and a Jewish guide. The tours speak about 1. the similarities and differences between Judaism and Islam (for pupils up to the age of 13) and 2. Middle East history (for students starting at 13 years of age). They were very well received, especially by politicians.”

“Appreciate this survey. Thanks.”

“As mentioned above, as an Israeli institute we face some of these issues but to a lesser degree, and face other issues/pressures that are specific to us.”

“In Belgium, several leading cultural institutions — including Bozar, S.M.A.K., La Monnaie, and many others — have displayed messages on social media and on their façades in support of Palestine. Their aim is to call on the Belgian government to take stronger action against what they describe as grave human rights violations by Israel in Gaza and the West Bank. At the same time, the decision in Flanders to exclude Israeli cultural institutions risks fostering an atmosphere in which Jewish cultural institutions, such as ours, are unjustly entangled in political conflicts. We are already experiencing the indirect consequences of this cultural boycott.

Although presented as humanitarian gestures, these public statements contribute to an environment where Jewish cultural institutions are increasingly singled out and unfairly associated with international disputes.

At the Jewish Museum of Belgium, our mission remains unchanged: to safeguard Jewish heritage as an integral part of Belgian and European history, and to provide a space for dialogue, memory, and cultural exchange. Yet in the current climate, we find ourselves increasingly isolated, facing calls for boycotts, declining audiences, and the withdrawal of partners.

This unbearable situation forces my team and me to confront a pressing question every day: how can we prevent Jewish museums from being pushed to the margins of the cultural field, silenced, cancelled, and erased from the conversation?”

“Due to the rise of antisemitism and polarization within society, particularly with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and migration, the political pressure on Jewish museums is increasing. Simultaneously, Jewish museums are becoming increasingly relevant as safe spaces for knowledge-based and nuanced discussions of multifaceted issues with regard to contemporary Jewish life — beyond identity politics and ethno-nationalism.”

“The situation is very problematic. The Danish Jewish Museum has experienced a decrease in the number of visitors of more than 30 percent over the last two years (almost 40 percent in 2024), directly linked to the conflict. Fear of security, fear of taking sides in the conflict, or deliberately taking a side against Israel by staying away. The argument being that a visit to the museum, because it deals with Jewish history, is the same as support for Israel. We have experienced a cancelling culture, where especially fear of security has made it more difficult to communicate Danish Jewish history, as well as both implicit and explicit antisemitic incidents and comments. However, the support of colleagues from other institutions (museums, archives, libraries, etc.) as well as from the political level is very strong, both locally and nationally.”

“We are a very small, all-volunteer, mutually supportive staff, so counseling is informal.”

“Despite everything, the museum continued its work this year, and even though our main audience – schools – has decreased, we were still able to cope.”

“Like many museums, we see our role as providing knowledge, offering historical context, and creating spaces for dialogue, without commenting on current political developments. At the same time, museums can take a clear stance against all forms of antisemitism and discrimination. The rise in antisemitic incidents since October 7 underscores how important historical education continues to be and that it remains one of the core responsibilities of cultural institutions.”

“These principles – low-threshold programming, respectful dialogue, clear historical contextualization – can help museums navigate this challenging moment and offer orientation.”

“Below you will find a quote from our director Hetty Berg, taken from a press release marking one year since October 7.

“The JMB is a place where people with very different positions and perspectives can meet and exchange ideas in a respectful manner. We oppose misanthropy in all its forms. We welcome all visitors who come to our exhibitions and events and seek dialogue.”

Further: “Antisemitism can also be found in the middle of society. This is made clear by the discussions that have been going on since 7 October 2023,” says Hetty Berg. “Much of the historical knowledge that we assumed was widespread is lacking in parts of the population – across generations and regardless of whether someone is an immigrant or not.””

“Visitor numbers at the Jewish Museum have declined since October 7, but the decrease is noticeably smaller compared to other Jewish museums across Europe. At the same time, museum attendance in Berlin in general has been dropping, regardless of theme or institution. Against this backdrop, no direct correlation can be established between the events of October 7 and the visitor numbers at the Jewish Museum.”

“Coming from a strong exchange with art institutions and artists, I support the statement that since October 7th, the exchange became very hesitant. Most of the artists feel a strong need to position themselves on one side. Curators from art museums also became much more hesitant to collaborate with Jewish museums. In a less formal environment, I also feel a need to position myself. The division between the politics of the State of Israel and a Jewish museum telling the history of Jews in Germany is mostly not made. This leads to a very cornered engagement with fewer collaborations and partners.”

## **Appendix II – Participants**

ANU – Museum of the Jewish People  
Center of Jewish Cultural Heritage, Synagogue Maribor  
Danish Jewish Museum  
Galicia Jewish Museum  
Irish Jewish Museum  
Israel Museum, Jerusalem  
Jewish Museum of Belgium  
Jewish Museum of Switzerland  
Jewish Museum Frankfurt  
Jewish Museum in Prague  
Jewish Museum Vienna  
Jewish Museum Westphalia  
Jewish Museum, Casale Monferrato  
Jüdisches Kulturmuseum Veitshöchheim  
Jüdisches Museum Berlin  
MEIS – Museo Nazionale dell’Ebraismo Italiano e della Shoah  
Museo Ebraico di Roma  
Museu d’Història dels Jueus  
Musée Judéo-Alsacien de Bouxwiller  
Museum SchPIRA – Judenhof, Speyer  
Oshpitzin Jewish Museum, Oświęcim/Auschwitz  
The Jewish Museum of Greece  
The Quincentennial Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews  
Tikvá Museu Judaico Lisboa  
Trondheim Jewish Museum

This report was prepared by Jonathan Günther, Senior Manager of the Association of European Jewish Museums (AEJM), and Mirjam Wenzel, Chair of the AEJM Board.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all participating institutions for their valuable contributions and openness in sharing their experiences. We also extend our sincere thanks to CAJM for their support and collaboration in the development and distribution of this survey. Their insights and cooperation have been instrumental in making this report possible.

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