

COUNTRY REPORT ON ROMANIA

Disinformation Targeting the Israel-Hamas Conflict: Insights from Romania

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

- Overview of Disinformation Targeting the Israel-Hamas Conflict
- Central and Eastern Europe: A Vulnerable Region

2. About this report

- Project Background and Objectives
- The Importance of Addressing Disinformation in the Black Sea Region

3. Country-Specific Context: Romania

- Latent or Growing Antisemitism in Romania
- Perceptions of Antisemitism
- Radicalization of Online Speech
- Low Societal Resilience Towards Disinformation

4. Coverage of the Israel-Hamas Conflict in Romania

- Media Analysis: Key Findings
- Dominant Narratives and Framing
- Role of Social Media and Disinformation Trends

5. Disinformation Analysis

- Notable Cases of Disinformation
- Connections Between Israel-Hamas and Ukraine Conflicts

6. Public Perceptions of the Israel-Hamas War

- Survey Findings: Exposure to Disinformation
- Polarization in Public Opinion
- Influence of Pro-Kremlin Narratives

7. Key Recommendations

- Strategies for Countering Disinformation
- Enhancing Media Literacy in Romania
- Strengthening Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea Region

INTRODUCTION

Since the onset of the Israel-Gaza war in October 2023, social media has become a hotbed for **misleading stories, manipulated visuals, and distorted narratives**. Both state and non-state actors, either acting tacitly or in coordination, have exploited the conflict as a platform for their **proxy wars** on a global scale. Social media platforms, unprepared for the unprecedented deluge of disinformation following Hamas' attack on Israel, allowed false narratives to proliferate unchecked. As a result, regular media and social media users—especially those with limited knowledge of the Middle East—were exposed to unprecedented levels of distorted content. These actors strategically leveraged the conflict to propagate **divisive narratives**, deepen societal divisions within democratic countries, and erode public trust in democratic institutions worldwide.

Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries are particularly vulnerable to such disinformation campaigns, owing to **high levels of cognitive capture** among their populations, political elites, and media. In Romania and neighboring countries, the oligarchization of traditional media, combined with the rise of online outlets and social media platforms, has created fertile ground for the **production and dissemination of propaganda**. These vulnerabilities have positioned the region as a prime target for malign influence operations led by Russia, China, and other state or non-state actors, exploiting fears, biases, and **antisemitic sentiments**.

This report examines how **disinformation related to the Israel-Hamas war** intersects with ongoing campaigns targeting the CEE region, including Romania. These campaigns draw from a disinformation toolkit honed during previous events, such as the war in Ukraine, the 2015 refugee crisis, the Brexit referendum, and the COVID-19 pandemic. By amplifying **traditional fears, antisemitism**, and divisive narratives, these actors aim to destabilize democratic societies, sway public opinion toward authoritarian models, and undermine societal resilience against disinformation.

Despite journalists' efforts to share fact-checked reports, "X readers had to parse through a significant amount of misinformation, conspiracy theories, and nonsensical spam to find them."¹The problem was exacerbated by bots, which "made it harder to discern legitimate on-the-ground sources from unsubstantiated or debunked ones."² Meanwhile, Hamas exploited the chaos by planting "violent and graphic images on X and Telegram"³, further fueling the spread of harmful content.

¹ Caitlin Chin-Rothmann (12 oct. 2023) Social Media Platforms Were Not Ready for Hamas Misinformation, Center for Strategic and International Studies, link [here](#)

² Ibid.1

³ Ibid.1

Social media platforms' inability to handle the Hamas-Israel conflict effectively highlights how unprepared they were for such crises: the spread of misinformation reached "extreme heights on X"⁴ exacerbated by major policy changes under Elon Musk's leadership, when he "terminated a large share of content moderation employees, shut down the advisory Trust and Safety Council, and reinstated a number of accounts that were previously banned for spreading hate speech."⁵

Other big platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, claim to ban Hamas accounts, but they have "generally struggled to handle real-time crises in practice"⁶ Automated moderation systems, which rely on flagging harmful words or phrases, often fail because they "lack a human understanding of the cultural contexts, nuances, and meanings behind word patterns or associations."⁷ The issue is worse for non-English content, as "Meta spent 87 percent of misinformation resources on English-language content, even though only 9 percent of its user base primarily speaks English."⁸

The EU, on the other side, has tried to take action: by 'investigating Elon Musk's X over the possible spread of terrorist and violent content, and hate speech'⁹, while 'TikTok and Meta have also been warned by the EU for not doing enough to tackle disinformation'¹⁰.

About this report

Building on the growing concern over disinformation targeting the Israel-Hamas war, this report delves into a region particularly vulnerable to such malign influence—the **Black Sea Region**, where exposure to **Kremlin propaganda and Ukraine war-related narratives** remains alarmingly high. The intertwining of these two major conflicts has created a unique challenge for the region, as disinformation campaigns exploit existing vulnerabilities to amplify **divisive narratives** and undermine democratic institutions. The **Black Sea countries**, including Romania, Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine, are at the forefront of these efforts, given their geographic proximity to Ukraine and their history of exposure to authoritarian influence. Mapping and countering such war-related disinformation is not only a pressing regional need but a critical step toward safeguarding the democratic values and societal resilience of Europe as a whole.

This report is part of the project "**Investigating the Impact of Disinformation Targeting the Israel-Hamas War in the Black Sea Region**," developed under the **Disinfo4BlackSea** initiative

⁴ Ibid.1

⁵ Ibid.1

⁶ Ibid.1

⁷ Ibid.1

⁸ Ibid.1

⁹ James Gregory, (13 oct. 2023). EU opens investigation into X over alleged disinformation. BBC News, link [here](#)

¹⁰ James Gregory & Tom Gerken, (11 oct. 2023). EU tells Meta to crack down on Israel-Hamas disinfo. BBC News, link [here](#)

and funded by the **European Media and Information Fund (EMIF)**. The project is spearheaded by a consortium of five entities: the independent media platform **G4Media** (Romania), two think tanks – **CRPE** (Romania) and **CSD** (Bulgaria), the fact-checking platform **Veridica.ro**, and sociological research institutes. Together, these organizations aimed to investigate, analyze, and counteract the disinformation narratives linked to the Israel-Hamas war, with a special focus on Romania, Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine.

The country reports sheds light on the alarming disinformation campaigns exploited by different state and non-state actors which weaponize the Israel-Hamas war to amplify divisive narratives and undermine democratic institutions in Eastern Europe. These campaigns not only fuel **antisemitic rhetoric** and deepen societal divisions but also serve as a proxy battlefield for broader geopolitical influence. By combining **digital forensics**, **social media listening platforms**, and **sociological analysis**, the project uncovers the mechanics of disinformation production, its appeal to vulnerable audiences, and its impact on public perception and conflict dynamics.

This report **presents key findings from the Romanian context**, analyzing how the war in Gaza has been exploited to shape public opinion, spread misinformation, and create new vulnerabilities in the country's information ecosystem. It provides an in-depth look at **fake narratives**, the actors and networks driving these campaigns, and the implications for Romania's **low media literacy** and **limited media independence**.

1. COUNTRY SPECIFIC CONTEXT - ROMANIA

1.1. Latent or growing anti-semitism in Romania: an overview

In recent years, antisemitism has emerged as a persistent and growing concern in Romania, underscored by alarming statistics, incidents of hate speech, vandalism, and the increasing prominence of far-right political rhetoric. Recent survey data from the Elie Wiesel Institute in Romania reveal that 71% of Jewish people in Romania believe antisemitism is present in the country, with 41% noting an increase in the past five years. Antisemitic acts, ranging from graffiti targeting Jewish synagogues and cemeteries to Holocaust denial and hate speech, have created a climate of fear and marginalization. Additionally, the rise of far-right political forces following the 2024 elections has amplified anti-Jewish sentiments, with populist and conspiratorial rhetoric further fueling online and offline antisemitism. These trends highlight the urgent need for comprehensive measures to counter hate and foster tolerance.

1.2. Perceptions of antisemitism

According to a survey by Avangarde for the “Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, around 71% of Jewish people in Romania believe that anti-Semitism

remains present in the country¹¹. While 23% of the respondents consider that antisemitism is present "to a great extent." 41% believe that antisemitism has increased in the last five years.¹² A more recent Survey on Jewish Perceptions of Antisemitism in Romania (2024)¹³ highlighted

- **71%** of Jewish people in Romania believe antisemitism exists in the country.
- **23%** consider antisemitism to be present "**to a great extent.**"
- **41%** believe antisemitism has increased in the past five years.
- **24%** reported being victims of antisemitic remarks.

Recent acts of vandalism & hate Incidents during the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza:

- **January 10, 2024:** Multiple monuments and churches in **Bucharest** were vandalized with the Star of David and obscene messages.¹⁴
- **January 30, 2024:** The **Sighetu Marmatei Synagogue** was vandalized with "Free Palestine" graffiti.¹⁵
- **April 2024:** The **Filantropia Jewish Cemetery Gate in Bucharest** was vandalized with "Free Gaza" graffiti.¹⁶
- **February 2024:** Antisemitic graffiti, including "*Iohannis Jidan*", appeared on a mural in **Bucharest**.¹⁷

1.3. Radicalization of online speech

Antisemitic and Holocaust-denying speeches have been encountered in the public discourse as documented at public events by the Monitorization Report of the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania¹⁸.

Moreover, only ten percent of Jews in Romania believe state institutions are highly effective in protecting their rights. Forty-one percent consider them somewhat effective, while thirty-one percent say they are not very effective.¹⁹

The rise of far-right political representation in Romania, observed after the **2024 European Parliament elections** (June) and the **national parliamentary elections** (December), signals a troubling trend amid escalating disinformation waves linked to both the **Israel-Hamas conflict**

¹¹ Grupul de Studii Socio-Comportamentale Avangarde (2023). Raport de Cercetare, Perceptii ale mintoriatii evreiesti asupra societatii romanesti. Link [here](#)

¹² European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, (2024). Jewish people's experiences and perceptions of antisemitism. Link [here](#)

¹³ Institutul Național pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel" (2024) Raport de Monitorizare. Antisemitismul in Romania inainte si dupa 7 octombrie 2023, (Pages 8-13). Link [here](#)

¹⁴ Idem 17, page 8

¹⁵ Idem 17, page 8

¹⁶ Idem 17, page 8

¹⁷ Idem 17, page 13

¹⁸ Idem 17

¹⁹ Ibidem 16

and the **war in Ukraine**. In 2024, **8 out of Romania's 33 MEPs** were elected from far-right parties, both known for their extremist, populist, and conspiratorial rhetoric. Representatives from these political forces have openly propagated **antisemitic narratives**, portraying Jewish communities as adversaries to Romanian interests.

The disinformation ecosystem surrounding the **Israel-Hamas conflict** has further amplified antisemitic sentiments online, with comments proliferating under antisemitic posts. These narratives not only link Jews to conspiracy theories but also intertwine with broader pro-Kremlin narratives targeting **Ukraine**, fostering divisiveness across the region.

The **proliferation of antisemitic and extremist content** across online platforms is another critical issue. Whether in social media comments, book reviews, or other digital spaces, hateful speech targeting Jewish communities has intensified, further fueled by the intersection of global conspiratorial narratives and misinformation linked to the **Israel-Hamas conflict**.

1.4. Romania - low societal resilience towards disinformation

Romania ranks second to last in the EU in terms of media literacy, making the population particularly susceptible to misinformation: the country ranks 29th out of 38 in trust in the media²⁰. Moreover, according to the 2022 Societal Resilience Barometer, Romanians have deeply internalized global conspiracy narratives and misinformation has often outweighed arguments from the scientific community.²¹ Finally, many Romanians lack self-taught fact-checking habits and are often unaware of the risks caused by disinformation²².

The Romanian media landscape is compromised by a lack of independence, with political and economic influences shaping content. According to many recent assessments among which Reporters Without Borders (RSF)'s page about Romania, media funding is often opaque and corrupt²³. While the largest media companies remain self-sufficient, most outlets depend on external funding, including state subsidies. The non-transparent diversion of public funds to media organizations is a widespread political practice, distorting both the media market and its watchdog function.

2. COVERAGE OF THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT BY COUNTRY

2.1. Media analysis of the Israel-Hamas war coverage in Romania

Over 54,000 articles were published in Romanian on news portals and online media from the beginning of the conflict (October 2023) to the fall of 2024 – the period analyzed in our

²⁰ Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre (2022) Barometrul rezilienței societale la dezinformare, link [here](#)

²¹ Ibid. 24

²² Ibid. 24

²³ Romania -country profile, Reporters without Borders, link [here](#)

report. The media analysis reveals a fragmented coverage, with consistent articles and reporting in mainstream media, but also a significant presence of websites and portals known for amplifying disinformation.

Source analysis: a series of the websites usually promoting conspiracy-theory websites in Romania have also covered the Israel hamas conflict

- The most active sources covering the Israel-Hamas war included mainstream portals **Hotnews.ro, Libertatea.ro, G4Media and Digi24.ro**, which collectively published a significant portion of the analyzed articles.
- The analysis indicates a consistent **presence of the Conspiracy-Theory ecosystem, often** amplifying polarizing narratives or disinformation, blending factual reporting with speculative or unfounded claims to influence reader sentiment

Linking the Israel-Hamas war to the Ukrainian conflict

- In a total of **400 of articles** in Romania the Israel-Hamas war has been linked to the ongoing Ukrainian conflict or Russia
- Articles frequently drew parallels between the two conflicts, suggesting both are part of broader geopolitical strategies involving the U.S., NATO, and Russia.
- Narratives speculated on **shared implications for global powers**, with some framing the conflicts as evidence of weakening Western influence in managing multiple crises.
- Qualitative analysis indicates that coverage often emphasized the role of Russia, tying its influence to instability in both regions.

How the Romanian media covered/ countered disinformation and Fake News on the Israel-Hamas War

- **A limited number (135 articles)** explicitly addressed disinformation or fake news related to the conflict – under 0.2% of the coverage on the topic
- **The most frequent topics - targeted by desinformation and fact check-ers**
 - **Claims of staged footage:** Fake videos circulated, including unrelated footage (e.g., from Romania or Syria), misrepresented as events from the Israel-Hamas war.
 - **Conspiracy theories:** Articles propagated narratives accusing third parties (e.g., the U.S., Israel, or Iran) of fabricating or amplifying the conflict for strategic purposes.

- **Misinformation trends, usually re-published from international sources:** Stories claiming humanitarian aid blockages or exaggerated casualty numbers were widely shared on platforms with unclear sourcing.

Key and dominant mentions:

- **Most mentioned entities:**
 - " Hamas," " Israel," and " Gaza" dominated coverage, often tied to military operations and humanitarian impacts.
 - " Netanyahu," " UN," and " Russia" appeared frequently, framing the conflict as part of a broader geopolitical struggle.
- **Dominant narratives:**
 - **Humanitarian crisis:** Articles highlighted civilian casualties and suffering, amplifying polarized opinions on the responsibilities of Israel and Hamas.
 - **Geopolitical escalation:** Many narratives speculated on Iran's involvement, Russia's influence, and the potential for broader regional destabilization.

The coverage of the Israel-Hamas war in Romania has been shaped by a mix of factual reporting - with very limited on-the-ground information and coverage, geopolitical framing, and the amplification of disinformation. The narratives often intersect with existing public concerns about the Ukrainian conflict, creating a layered perception of global instability. Disinformation trends underscore the need for critical media literacy to discern reliable information from manipulated content.

3. DISINFORMATION ANALYSIS

3.1. Notable cases of disinformation in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict – analysis on Romania)

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the most common narratives—targets of disinformation—regarding the conflict between Israel and Hamas. The research shows that several anti-Israel narratives have fueled antisemitism or sought to promote narratives and disinformation from Russian war propaganda. The monitoring of narratives and disinformation related to this war was conducted by CRPE between October 2023 and October 2024, using public sources, social listening tools for social media, and data extracted from online press monitoring throughout the entire period.

Anti-Israel Disinformation

- **Fake war images with strong emotional impact** – aimed at creating a wave of outrage against Israel. The videos and images are presented as being from Gaza but actually originating from other conflicts, such as Syria. Fake news with a powerful emotional

character (e.g., some war scene pictures appeared to be from Syria when fact-checked). [These false images](#), with a strong emotional impact, were mainly sourced from social media and circulated in the Black Sea region as well as in [Western Balkan countries](#).

- **Bombing of a Greek Orthodox Church in Gaza:** The image was widely circulated, but fact-checking, including reports from regional publications such as [Balkan Insight](#) and in [Romania](#), showed that there is no conclusive evidence of this attack. On October 9, 2023, a video widely circulated on X claimed that Israel had bombed the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius. This 12th-century structure is one of the most historic sites in Gaza. However, the church denied the claim on its Facebook page that same evening in an announcement published in Arabic, English, Greek, and Russian.

Disinformation amplifying conspiracy theories

1. Ukraine sending weapons to Hamas

This narrative aims to discredit Ukraine in the Black Sea region, directly fueled and supported by Russia/the Kremlin. It seeks to cast doubt on Ukraine's position, undermine international military support for the country, and erode trust in the Ukrainian army. The narrative also circulated in Romania and was [officially denied by Ukraine through the Intelligence Directorate of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense](#) (GRU), which directly accused Moscow of attempting to compromise military aid for Ukraine by sending captured weapons from conflict zones to Gaza. This disinformation campaign was widely spread and thoroughly fact-checked by [international media](#).

Additionally, various comments and blogs—frequent hosts of authors, articles, posts that promote conspiracy theories—further amplified the topic, linking it to older conspiracy narratives.

Example: "The conflict in Ukraine – a confrontation between Russian nationalists and global Jewish power" – This narrative has been widely shared and promoted on blogs and platforms run by authors who support sovereignty and advocate nationalist ideas.

2. "The Israeli government intends to ban Christianity"

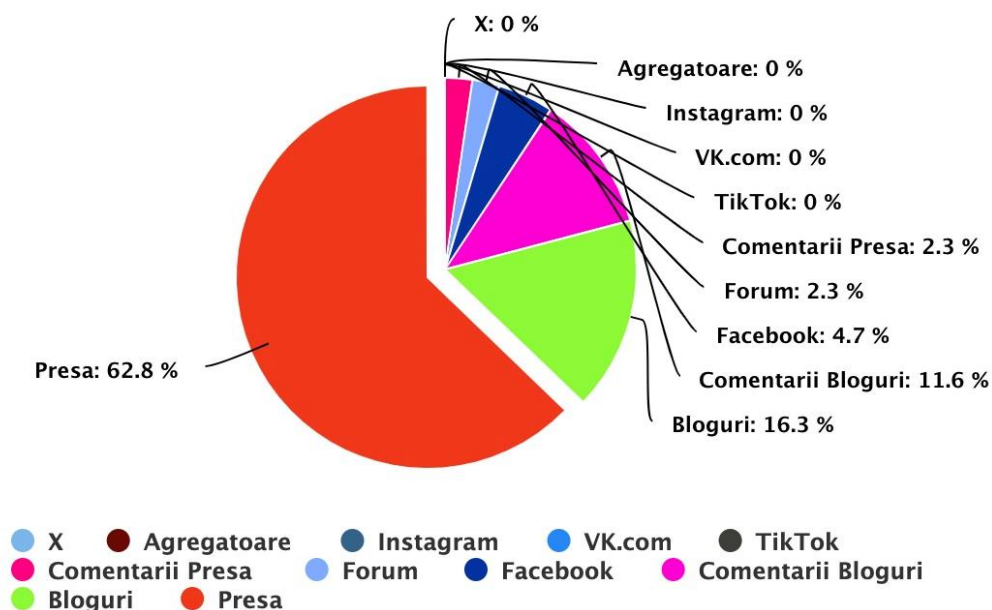
This disinformation was heavily circulated, particularly around Easter. Given the significance of this period for Christians, this fake news fueled religious fears among Christians in Israel. It originated from a controversial legislative proposal in Israel, which was publicly and officially rejected by Prime Minister Netanyahu. However, parts of the ecosystem that amplify conspiracy theories picked up this narrative. It was later explained and debunked by [Veridica \(Cezar Manu, 2024\)](#).

Media and social media monitoring indicate that the terms associated with this claim were mostly mentioned in the press—where credible sources were predominant—but over 30% of

the content came from blogs and comment sections. These latter sources are often susceptible to inauthentic content or are known for amplifying divisive themes and conspiracy theories.

Israel interzice crestinismul OR Israel vrea sa interzica

aparitii ultimul an



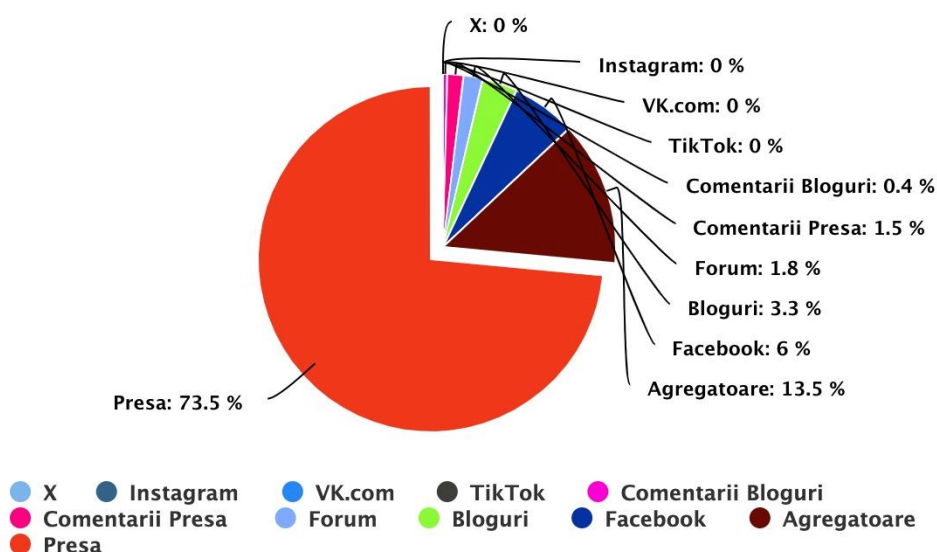
3. 'Israel knew about the attacks on the 7th of October'.

This narrative claims that either Israel knew about the Hamas attack in October 2023 or that it was orchestrated by Israel itself to justify an invasion of the Gaza Strip.

There are [reports](#) that Israel received warnings and information about Hamas' possible intentions, including [detailed plans](#), but the interpretation of this information is crucial. Even if there were warnings, there is no tangible evidence that Israel deliberately ignored these warnings and allowed the attack to take place. The rhetoric behind this narrative aims to amplify conspiracy theories, especially in the Palestinian community in Romania.

Monitoring of the media and social networks in Romania shows that this topic has been covered by the press and explained by both fact-checking platforms and mainstream media. However, there is also a significant presence of this narrative on blogs, aggregators and commentaries - much more susceptible to amplifying disinformation and inauthentic behavior. Of the total of over 400 mentions of the terms, 50 were on blogs (which regularly host anti-Semitic and anti-Western opinions) and another 69 mentions in aggregators and comments on press articles.

Israel stia atac Hamas OR Israel stia atacul Hamas OR aparitii ultimul an



4. “Romania has committed to receiving 3 million Israelis” or “In case Israel disappears or “Romania will have to receive 3 million refugees”

The narrative was propagated in Romania by sites that host extremist, xenophobic, anti-LGBT approaches and fuel conspiracy theories. One of the sites on which this narrative appeared was banned in Romania, but, according to Veridica, it is still active on the Russian network Vkontakte. This narrative appeared against the backdrop of Israel's response to the Hamas attack in October 2023, an occasion on which extremists from all camps - pro/anti-Israel or pro-anti Palestinians - propagated and fueled conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism. In Romania, this narrative fuels older conspiracy theories - according to which there is a Jewish occult that controls/has influence over some world powers (mainly the USA), in the world of finance, technology, etc. The same narrative also aims to fuel anti-immigration discourses, present in Romania but with less traction in the collective mind. Fact-checking platform Veridica explained in detail the [propagation of this narrative](#), but it was also dismantled by mainstream news sites.

5. **“Jews control the world through AI for global censorship”** – with the aim of fueling unjustified fears and anti-Semitism. This theme has been promoted on extremist websites and pro-Russian social networks and is a false and dangerous narrative, according to which, through an artificial intelligence program developed in Israel, the aim is to suppress the global population and manipulate information in the digital ecosystem ([Veridica, 2024](#)). This claim has been debunked by numerous media outlets and experts, who have shown that it is a conspiracy theory without any real basis. It has been shown that this narrative is part of a broader anti-Semitic discourse that accuses Jews of so-called “global conspiracies” and a desire for domination.

6. **The Khazar Jews (who replaced true Semitic Jews) are controlling or seeking to control the world and Romania**, a long-standing conspiracy theory that has gained traction again with the Gaza war. The conspiracy theory regarding the Khazars, which has existed for many years and has also been promoted in Romania by various extremist figures, began to circulate more intensely (on social networks, online comments, etc.) with the outbreak of the Gaza war and [was also taken up by the extremist MEP Diana Soșoacă/SOS](#). A series of posts circulating on social networks in Romania, even a year after the outbreak of the conflict in Gaza, talk about a so-called "Khazar Elite" that controls the world and in which George Soros was included in an attempt to validate other conspiracy theories related to the "global occult". The narratives were circulated by associations/some self-styled "TV stations" whose mission is to "awaken the Romanian nation"

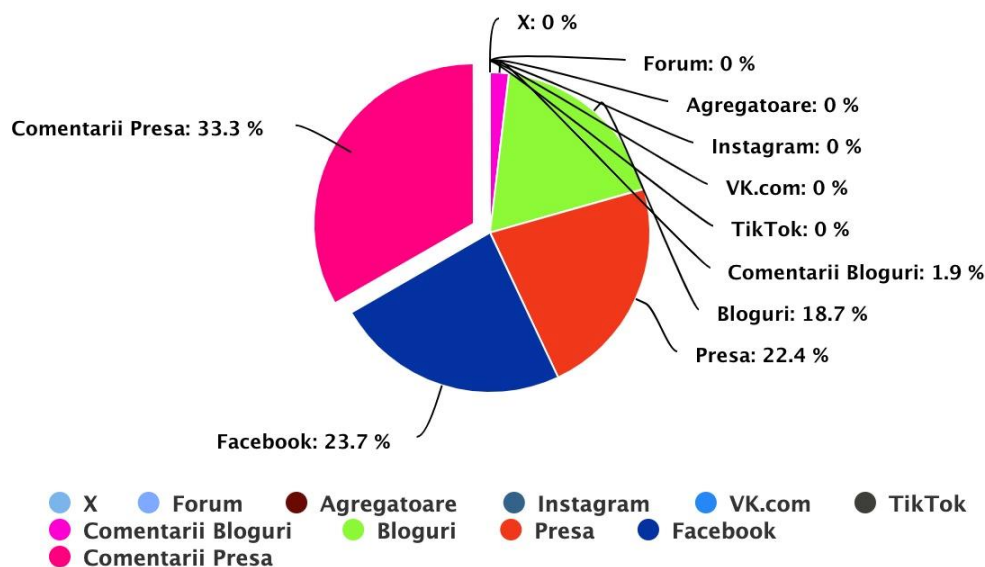
Examples from monitoring appearances on social networks and blogs:

- A series of similar comments posted on different accounts fuel the conspiracy theory regarding globalist powers, including, of course, the Khazarian Jews
“(....) Romania with the market economy of globalist multinationals controlled by neo-Marxists. In Romania, in December 1989, a coup d’état by the Khazarian Bolsheviks took place”

Monitoring for social networks over the past year (February 2024-February 2025) shows a growing presence of mentions of this topic, especially in comments and blogs, especially in the area of those promoting conspiracy theories. On these sources we also find the highest impact (over 65% cumulative) unlike the press with 22% of the total audience on the topic (especially fact-checking, reporting fake-news)

Evreii khazari controlează lumea OR Evreii khazari

impact ultimul an

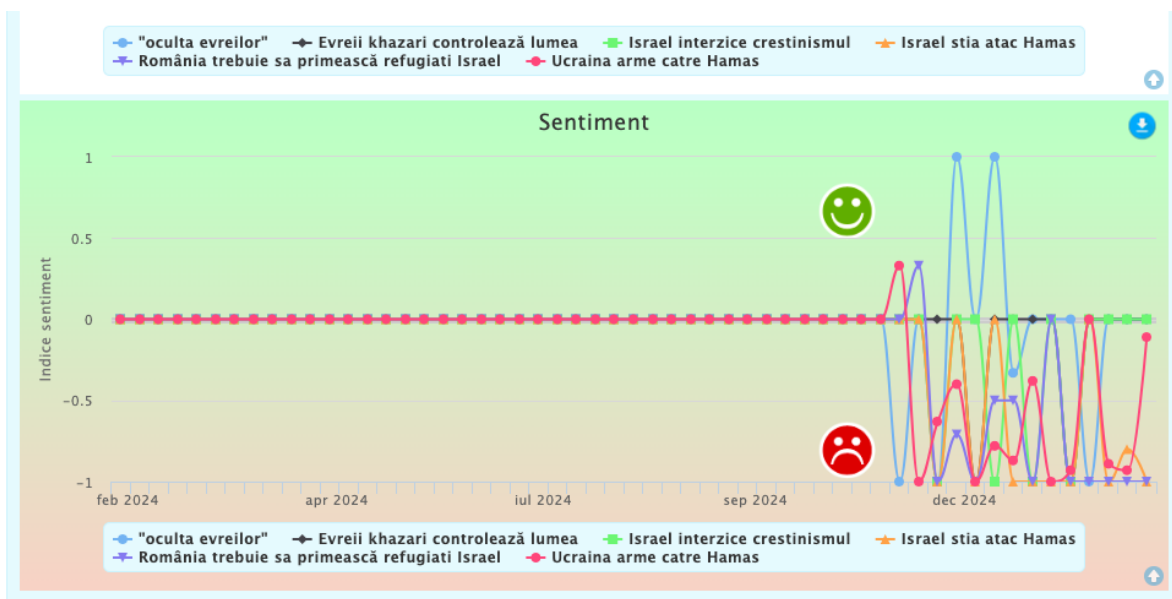
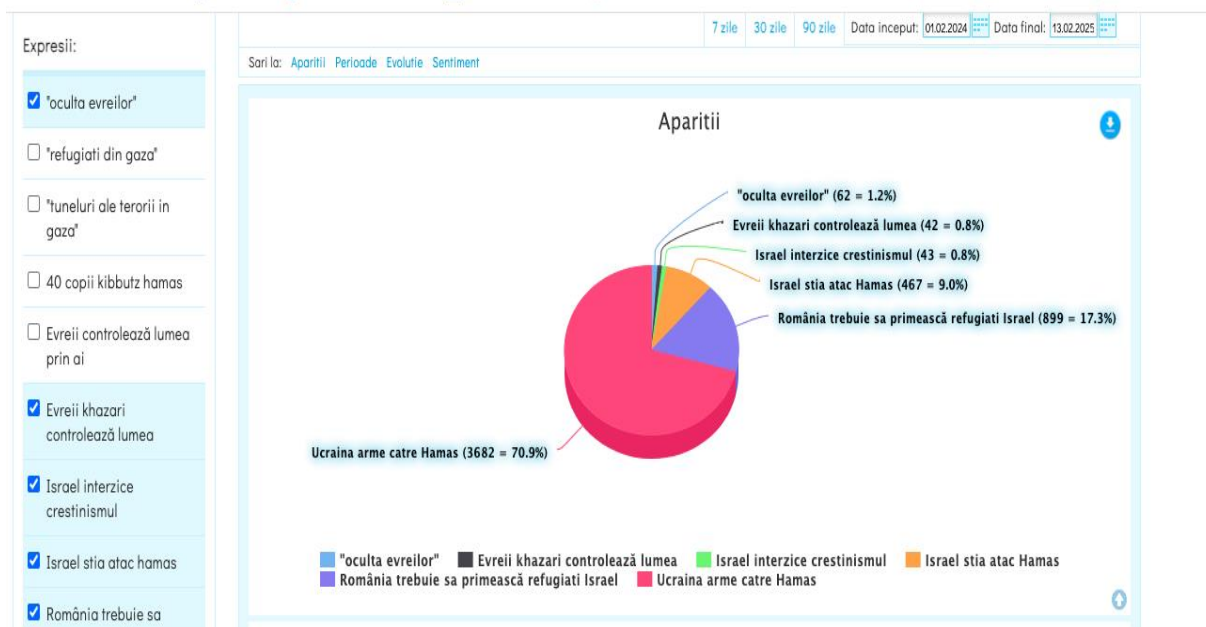


c) Anti-Palestine disinformation

"Pallywood" disinformation ("Palestine" and "Hollywood") - a pejorative term that accuses Palestinians of fabricating scenes and images of war victims: for example, fake or dramatic images of Gaza or of victims, to discredit Palestinian narratives. In the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict, pro-Israeli social media accounts have used the term "Pallywood" to accuse Palestinians of staging their suffering. For example, an Israeli diplomat shared a clip from a Lebanese short film, falsely claiming that it was proof that Palestinians fake videos, calling it an example of "Pallywood" ([France 24](#)). In this context, the term "Pallywood" can become a propaganda tool to undermine the credibility of Palestinian accounts and justify Israeli actions in the conflict. Such approaches amplify public disinformation, discredit victims, and further polarize the situation. HotNews (2023) "[Fake news like Pallywood](#)". The war between Israel and Hamas is just as intense on social media, where disinformation thrives.

"Palestinians are not a people" - propagated by Israeli radicals to deny the legitimacy of Palestinian claims. This narrative aims to undermine Palestinian claims to self-determination and statehood.

Media and social media monitoring also shows us which of the target narratives of disinformation were most frequently mentioned, but also which was the period with the greatest polarization.



4. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

A national survey on Disinformation – Romania conducted by **Conducted By:** Center for International Research and Analyses (CIRA) for G4media exclusively within the framework of the DISINFOBLACKSEA project during January 16-23, 2025 reveals the public perceptions of disinformation regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict, and related narratives.

Methodology: CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing), **sample Size:** 1,000 respondents, representative of the adult population (18+) in Romania, **margin of Error:** $\pm 3\%$ with a 95% confidence level. Key findings of the public perception survey indicates:

1. High exposure to disinformation

- **32%** of respondents primarily received information about the Israel-Hamas conflict from **national media**, while **27%** relied on **social media feeds**.
- **9%** got their news from **Facebook**, and **4%** from **TikTok**, which are platforms known for hosting disinformation.

2. Strong influence of conspiracy theories

- **30%** of respondents believe that *weapons from Ukraine were found and used by Hamas against Israel*, a frequent pro-Kremlin disinformation narrative.
- **25%** think *Israel knew about the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, but did nothing to stop it to justify invading Gaza*.

3. Confusion between facts and propaganda

- **51%** of respondents believe **Israel is justified in its actions**, while **26%** think **Palestine is right**.
- However, **20%** stated that **neither side is justified**, showing deep confusion and division in public opinion.

4. Polarization in public perception

- **43%** support Israel's **military expansion into Lebanon-Hezbollah**, while **34%** oppose it.
- **56%** say Israel was **justified in attacking Gaza**, while **24%** disagree.

- The responses show a strong divide in perception, influenced by different media and political affiliations.

5. Influence of Russian and pro-Kremlin narratives

- **31%** believe that **Russia has not used inhumane war methods, unlike Israel**—a direct reflection of pro-Kremlin narratives.
- **50%** of respondents falsely believe that *Israel's military actions in Gaza are worse than Russia's in Ukraine*.

6. Low trust in official sources

- Only **37%** of respondents believe that **the information they receive about the Israel-Hamas war is mostly accurate**.
- **44%** say they trust news about the conflict *only to a small extent*, while **19%** are unsure
- **31%** believe that **Russia is a key player in spreading false news about the war**, followed by **14%** who blame China, and **17%** Iran.
- Despite this, **many respondents are skeptical of fact-checking initiatives**, considering them politically biased.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Public institutions in Romania lack sufficient capacity for real-time monitoring and response to war-related disinformation, which undermines their ability to counter narratives in the public space. Strategic communication efforts are fragmented, leading to gaps in addressing misinformation effectively.

Recommendations:

- A **national task force** for strategic communication, equipped with advanced technology to monitor disinformation trends in real-time and provide rapid responses is highly needed.
- Develop and implement **proactive communication campaigns** that counter misinformation with accurate, easily accessible, and relatable content.
- Prompt and effective measures to discourage anti-semitism, xenophobia discourse and concrete measures for online outlets promoting hate speech.
- Increase **international cooperation** with regional and EU partners to share resources, expertise, and best practices in combating disinformation.

Social media and platform oversight Social media platforms have failed to moderate war-related disinformation effectively, particularly in non-English content. There is a constant and growing

lack of enforced regulation on platform accountability in addressing hate speech, conspiracy theories, and manipulative content.

Must have:

- **Stricter regulations** requiring social media platforms to develop transparent content moderation systems that address war-related disinformation promptly
- **Regional language support** and culturally contextual moderation mechanisms for platforms operating in the Black Sea Region.
- Intensive **collaboration between platforms and fact-checking organizations** to reduce the spread of fake news.

Fact-checking platforms are underutilized and lack visibility, which hinders their impact in countering disinformation. Media outlets struggle to balance coverage of complex international conflicts with fact-checking efforts due to limited resources.

Recommendations:

- Increased **visibility and funding** for fact-checking platforms to ensure they remain sustainable and accessible to the public.
- Support for **training programs for journalists** on covering international conflicts responsibly and identifying disinformation trends is in high demand
- Establish a **regional network of researchers and journalists** to monitor and analyze disinformation narratives and share actionable insights.

Romania ranks second to last in EU media literacy, leaving the population particularly vulnerable to manipulative narratives. There is a lack of structured media literacy programs in schools, which prevents young people from developing critical thinking skills.

Recommendations:

- Integrate **information, digital and media literacy education** into school curricula, focusing on critical thinking, fact-checking, and identifying disinformation in formal and informal modules.
- Partnerships with civil society organizations to deliver **workshops and training** for students and educators on identifying and responding to fake news are the most accessible and (still) available.
- **Educational campaigns** targeting young people on social media platforms to increase awareness of disinformation risks.

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Disclaimer:

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