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Title: **“The Contemporary Revival Of The Ritual Murder And Religious Violence Accusations Against Jews In The Orthodox Church And Its Link To The New Antisemitism”**

Panel: Bible, Christianity and Anti-Semitism

Ritual murder accusations against Jews have spread through Europe since the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. A prominent element in them was the allegation that Jews secretly performed religious rituals involving the torture and murder of innocent Christian victims and the consumption of their body parts. In the realm of the Orthodox Church — in Russia and the Ottoman Empire — ritual murder accusations were also widespread during the nineteenth century. Several developments in the last thirty years constitute an alarming revival of ritual murder and religious violence accusations against Jews in the realm of the Orthodox Christianity. Among these, the recent restore of the cult of the past alleged ‘victims’ (eg. Gabriel of Bialystok), the application of the antisemitic speech addressing municipal authorities in Jerusalem (eg. the Orthodox Ascension Monastery), and, most alarming, the growing veneration of the New Martyr St. Philoumenos of Jacob's Well.

The Cypriot monk Philoumenos Hasapis was murdered in Jacob's Well Church in Nablus. His death was described as a ritual murder performed by a fanatical Jewish-Israeli group. Philoumenos was later sanctified by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and his relics became a target of pilgrimage. The baseless popular narrative, which accuses a conspiring group of Jews in ritually torturing the monk to his death and desecrating his church, gained publicity in Orthodox Christian communities worldwide, was endorsed by various NGOs and even published in scholarly literature. In his birth town in Cyprus, a special shrine was built for his worship.

However, the event was a criminal act performed by an insane person, who was a series-killer and murdered Jews and non-Jews alike. The findings from the scene dismiss any ritual murder motifs.

This question this research seeks to answer is: How it is possible that, in modern time a ritual murder narrative gained a wide publicity? The paper demonstrates that the development patterns of the popular narrative correlate with akin accusations levied against medieval Jewish communities in Europe. The narrative became widespread due to the cultural reservoir of the Orthodox Christian target audience, and the detected-

usage of this sentiment by the ecclesial leaders in the Holy Land and Cyprus for advancing their interests. The case demonstrates a link between the 'classical' Christian antisemitism and the New Antisemitism. The paper will also offer recommendations for the decision makers on combating the modern revival of the religious-motivated antisemitism in the Orthodox Christian realm.