

## **PLENARY LECTURE “ISLAM AND ANTISEMITISM”**

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Title: **“Redeeming Humanity from the Evil of the Jews – Islamist Rationalization of Antisemitism”**

The Arab Spring brought to the fore the usage of the term 'Jew' to define adversaries by Judaizing them and attributing to them certain supposed features of Jews, while denouncing them for doing so. The Jew has been constructed as a functional metaphor, an authentic all-purpose generic villain, to explain the changing circumstances and catastrophes. Competing political and religious factions – the government, state-supported religious authorities, moderate and radical Islamists – all managed to manipulate the image of the Jews and imbue it with meaning, especially since the eruption of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Palestine.

This paper will focus on the Islamist brand of antisemitism. In their attempt to crystallize a coherent rational worldview, Islamist thinkers constructed an image of the Jew as an irredeemable destructive agent, hostile to Arabs and Muslims as well as to the whole of humanity, highlighting the Jews' alleged *innate* evil and vices. Islamism is an apocalyptic ideology which seeks to redeem the world from the ills of modernism, capitalism, imperialism, and the Jews. It reinforces Islam's dichotomous worldview of good and evil, believers and non-believers, the House of Islam and the House of war, which can be reconciled only with the ultimate victory of Islam.

It will also point to the increasing critical voices in the Arab and Muslim worlds, rejecting antisemitism and prevalent conspiratorial thinking, and conclude by examining whether those voices could be incorporated in the fight against antisemitism.