

Presenter: Meir Litvak, Tel Aviv University

Title: **“The Jews as Enemies of Shi`ism and of Iran: New Trends in Iranian Antisemitism”**

Panel: Islam and Anti-Semitism

Antisemitism is an important component of anti-Zionist policy and ideology of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Accordingly, the Jews had struggled against Islam from its inception and have allied themselves with Western imperialism in order to subjugate Islam. In recent years two new trends have appeared in Iranian Antisemitism. The first is the attempt to portray the Jews as active enemies of the Shia (Iran's official religion), by attributing to them active and decisive role in several crucial and traumatic events in Shi`i history. Most important among them are the alleged role of the Jews in depriving Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, of the Caliphate and Jewish role in the unnatural deaths of all Shi`i Imams. The other trend is the portrayal of the Jews as historical enemies of Iran. Thus, the Jews are described as the perpetrators of the "Iranian Holocaust" in the Achaemenid period, based on the stories of the Biblical "Book of Esther." Regarding the modern period, the Jews are depicted as agents of western imperialism in the exploitation of Iran during the Nineteenth Century and in establishing Reza Shah on the throne in 1925. The paper will analyze these new themes in Iranian Antisemitism and the motivation behind them as well as their historical significance.