



An Antisemitic Fire Extinguisher Attack on a Menorah Has Become a Global Far-Right Meme

By Tim Hume
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White nationalists around the world are creating memes celebrating Polish MP Grzegorz Braun's Hanukkah stunt, making the fire extinguisher a new symbol of antisemitism.

A far-right Polish MP's attack on a Hanukkah display is being celebrated by white nationalists and antisemites worldwide, with the fire extinguisher used in the incident becoming a potent online symbol for anti-Jewish hate.

MP Grzegorz Braun's stunt last week—using a fire extinguisher to snuff out the candles on a menorah displayed in the Polish parliament building—has inspired a wave of memes referencing the incident, according to organisations which combat antisemitism and extremism, such as the New York-based Anti-Defamation League and Poland's Never Again Association.



One U.S.-based anti-Semitic group, the Goyim Defense League, even claimed during a Spaces event on X, formerly known as Twitter, last week that the fire extinguisher was “now the universal sign of the resistance to Jews.”

One antisemitic meme being circulated on platforms such as Telegram is an updated version of the “Come and take it” flag, also known as the Gonzales flag. The original version of the flag depicts a silhouette of a cannon above the text “Come and take it,” before it was recently adapted by the gun-loving Right to feature an AR-15; in the latest iteration, white nationalists have replaced the weapon with a fire extinguisher.

Another popular meme shows a suited Pepe the Frog - a figure heavily associated with the so-called alt-right - spraying a menorah with a fire extinguisher. Others referred to “fire extinguisher nationalists,” or featured the fire extinguisher alongside calls for action like: “End your local Hanukkah.”

Marilyn Mayo, senior research fellow at the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism, said the antisemitic fire extinguisher memes were generally being circulated within white supremacist circles.

"They often depict the extinguisher blowing out Hanukkah candles as a weapon against Jews and Judaism," she told VICE News.

"The 'Come and take it' meme, for example, is an implicit call for 'confrontation' against Jews, with the implication that antisemites will fight to rid the world of Jews [and] Judaism."

Braun's actions have also been celebrated on far-right online media shows, said Mayo. One recent episode of The Stew Peters Show, a weekly far-right show on Rumble, featured an interview with Lucas Gage, a vocal antisemite with a large online following. In the interview, a smiling Gage spoke approvingly of the rise of AI-generated fire extinguisher memes.

"This is a really serious act of rebellion against what I would say is Jewish supremacy," said Gage.

"One guy made a picture of Christ extinguishing a menorah in the temple... I even made one that was kind of funny too."

While the memes have largely appeared on unmoderated platforms popular with the far-right, such as Telegram and Rumble, Braun's actions are also being celebrated on platforms that are supposedly more mainstream. Last week, U.S. presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. posted a happy Hanukkah message on X featuring a lit menorah; the responses were dominated by high-follower far-right accounts sharing images of Braun wielding a fire extinguisher.

"It's a no for me," wrote one account, accompanied by a photo of Braun, his suit spattered with extinguisher foam, in front of the menorah.

Mayo said it was clear that antisemites worldwide had been inspired by Braun's stunt, in part due to "the fact that he literally took action to squash some aspect of Jewish culture."

Braun, a former film director who had an instinctive flair for the theatrical gesture, appeared to have carefully choreographed his stunt for maximum impact, and at a moment when all eyes were on the Polish parliament ahead of a critical vote of confidence for a new government after years of nationalist rule.

Rafal Pankowski, head of Polish anti-racist group Never Again, said the spread of the meme via social media was a vivid example of the globalisation of hateful extremism.

"Braun's activity is crafted for social media consumption," he told VICE News. "That's how, thanks to a manipulation of modern technology, a physical attack on a menorah by an unhinged far-right Polish MP rooted in medieval antisemitism has come to symbolise a global phenomenon of anti-Jewish hatred."

The memes have been gaining traction at a time of surging antisemitism, said Mayo. The Anti-Defamation League says it had already documented a rise in antisemitism in the U.S. prior to the October the 7th Hamas attack on Israel, but since then, a further rise in anti-Semitic incidents has been documented in many countries around the world.

The spread of “fire extinguisher” memes internationally comes after reports of alarming demonstrations of online support for Braun’s actions in his homeland. Last week, VICE News reported that dozens of listings for merchandise celebrating Braun’s stunt - from T-shirts to coffee mugs - had appeared on major Polish online marketplaces. The platforms, Allegro and OLX, removed the items after being alerted to their existence, saying they contravened their terms and conditions.

VICE News contacted a creator of one of the items - a T-shirt with a stylised fire extinguisher next to a menorah - seeking a response to concerns that the product was promoting antisemitism. In response, the vendor - who identified himself as Adrian Biel - denied there was anything anti-Semitic about the product.

“You can blow my candle, you supporters of murders of Palestine’s citizens,” he replied, implying that Hanukkah - a Jewish festival commemorating the commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple of Jerusalem at the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt in the 2nd century BC - was in some way “racist” because it “celebrated the murder” of non-Jews. “So who is racist?” he wrote.

Posts promoting the T-shirt on the vendor’s Facebook business page include a Polish slur for Jews.

Despite receiving widespread condemnation from across Poland’s political spectrum for his actions, and facing serious repercussions, including a criminal investigation, Braun has remained unapologetic for his stunt. The 56-year-old politician, a hardline Catholic nationalist, has been suspended from the current parliamentary session and his own party’s parliamentary group, had his salary cut in half for three months as a financial penalty, and been referred to the public prosecutor.

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<https://www.vice.com/en/article/n7e54k/grzegorz-braun-antisemitic-fire-extinguisher-meme>