

COMBATING HISTORY'S BIGGEST LIE:
HOLOCAUST DENIAL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
An Introduction to an Analysis of Holocaust Denial

“In the 1930s Nazi rats spread a virulent form of anti-Semitism. . . . Today the bacillus . . . threatens to ‘kill’ those who already died at the hands of the Nazis a second time. . . . All those who value truth, particularly truths that are subject to attack by the plague of hatred, must remain ever vigilant.”¹ - Deborah Lipstadt

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Simon Wiesenthal said, “the history of man is the history of crime.” Holocaust Denial began not after World War II but during the War with the Nazi masterminds of the Holocaust themselves.

Fearing what awaited them in defeat, they sought the total destruction of the documentary evidence of the regime’s crimes. Well before Hitler retreated into his Berlin bunker, his henchman tried to eradicate all proof of the “Final Solution,” even as they strove to complete the destruction of Europe’s Jews. SS Leader Heinrich Himmler instructed his concentration camp commandants to destroy all signs of mass extermination in the most audacious coverup attempt in the history of crimes.

Postwar Deniers in Europe, the U.S., and the Middle East thought that the Nazi defeat meant that the Fuhrer posthumously tasked them to thwart the work of the Nuremberg Trials and inflict upon Holocaust Survivors the destruction of the evidence needed to prove the Nazis’ genocidal conspiracy. This way, the reputations of genocide’s perpetrators, living and dead, could be shielded from history’s and humanity’s judgment. They also hoped to lay the groundwork for a postwar revival of the fascist version of totalitarianism.

Holocaust Denial began during World War II, but so did the efforts of Holocaust survivors to chronicle the truth of their experience. A few victims of the Holocaust who survived, like Simon Wiesenthal, instinctively recognized their responsibility to do whatever possible to document the heinous deeds of the perpetrators culpable for their unspeakable crimes against humanity, preserve the memory and dignity of 6 million murdered Jews, and defeat the efforts of Hitler’s post-World War II accomplices to hide the truth of the Final Solution. As early as 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower also anticipated that someday an attempt would be made to destroy or distort Holocaust history. When U.S. troops found the victims of Nazi concentration camps—dead and barely alive skeletons—he ordered photographs to be taken to create a record that would defeat future conspiracies to hide or deny the horrors that reduced battle-hardened soldiers to tears.

The campaigns of Holocaust Deniers and the battle against them both continued after the incomplete work of post-WWII tribunals like that at Nuremberg. The pursuit of escaped war criminals and those who helped them evade justice has not ended even with increasing numbers of perpetrators dying of old age. Contemporary Nazi hunters like the Wiesenthal Center’s Dr. Efraim Zuroff and documentarians continue to this very day to thwart Holocaust Denial by identifying surviving perpetrators, documenting the extent of their crimes, and urging trials of the accused.

This Report documents the ongoing campaign of Holocaust Deniers that began during the final stages of World War II and continue into the twenty-first century. We focus primarily on the period since the year 2000 to detail the sordid history of Holocaust Denial and shed light on the heroic mission of those who refused to allow the Nazis a posthumous victory by erasing the guilt of Hitler and his accomplices.

The Report is roughly divided into three parts. We start with the Deniers attempt in a London court room “to put history on trial” by lying about the Holocaust. In 2000, UK Trial Judge Charles Gray caused this conspiracy against historical truth to come crashing to the ground. He demolished the lawsuit for libel brought by Denier David Irving

against historian Deborah Lipstadt by ruling: "I have found . . . that Irving has for his own ideological reasons persistently and deliberately misrepresented and manipulated historical evidence . . . for the same reasons he has portrayed Hitler in an unwarrantably favorable light . . . ; that he is an active Holocaust Denier; that he is anti-Semitic and racist and that he associates with right wing extremists and promotes neo-Nazism."²

Second, we look at Holocaust Denial during the period beginning roughly with the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In this new period, the Deniers sought to compete with new conspiracy theories seeking the public's attention even as they perfected their strategies of deceit and distortion about the Holocaust. Another strategy they introduced, especially in countries where Holocaust Denial was against the law, was to establish a false "moral equivalency" by arguing that "Allied wrongs" during World War II were equal to or greater than Hitler's.

To succeed in their audacious campaign to be accepted as "legitimate revisionist historians," the Deniers had to continue to slander and libel reputable professional historians like Deborah Lipstadt.

In the third phase of the post-2000 Holocaust Denial campaign, the Deniers remained obsessed with their predetermined idea that the Holocaust did not occur, and that they could prove it by minimizing, by blatantly denying, or by simply ignoring historical facts. When they did not deny the Holocaust outright, they trivialized it through the use of outrageous analogies such as "Holocaust of Abortion" or "Red Holocaust." In the twenty-first century, such falsifications continue to be developed and propagated. In Germany, Thorsten Eitz and Georg Stötzel, have authored a Holocaust dictionary debunking the strategy of historical trivialization.

The third period, beginning around 2006, was also distinguished by the new lead role that the Islamic Republic of Iran played in Holocaust Denial campaigns worldwide.

Both the propagation of Holocaust Denial and the fight against it continues today on many fronts. Educational programs, media campaigns, social media, legislation against historical defamation, and legitimate Holocaust scholarship are the weapons we have available to defeat Holocaust Denial.

INTRODUCTION

Who were the first deniers of history's greatest crime - Nazi Germany's genocidal "Final Solution" against Europe's Jews that snuffed out the lives of six million innocents including a generation of children.

The perpetrators of The Final Solution themselves!

On October 4, 1943, SS Chief Heinrich Himmler gave a speech in Poland explaining to a meeting of SS Major Generals: "We will never speak of it [the Final Solution] publicly . . . I mean the evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish race. The Jewish race is being exterminated—that is clear, it's in our program—elimination of the Jews and we're doing it, exterminating them . . . This is a page of glory in our history which has never been written and is never to be written." In other words: lie, deny, destroy evidence, and falsify the record so that the truth will never be known.³

As early as April 1945, the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe, General Dwight D. Eisenhower anticipated that someday an attempt would be made to destroy or distort Holocaust history. When Allied troops found the victims of Nazi concentration camps, he ordered photographs to be taken to create a record that would debunk future conspiracies aimed at denying the truth about the Holocaust.⁴

Since the end of World War II, Holocaust Deniers in Europe, North America, the Arab and Muslim world, and as far away as Japan, have sought to implement Himmler's—and Hitler's— command. A seemingly hopeless task, given that the Holocaust is perhaps the single most documented event in human history.

According to the philosopher George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." But in the twenty-first century, we are confronted with a much bigger nightmare: Not only forgetfulness but outright denial. And if lapses of memory lead to tragedy—deconstructing memory could lead to genocide or Armageddon. In our hi-tech age dominated by social media, falsehoods need not annihilate truth; all that's required is for them to trivialize truth into irrelevance and oblivion. (See related SWC report on social media and Holocaust Denial at www.wiesenthal.com/holocaustdenialsocialmedia).

Deborah Lipstadt knows the danger first-hand. Holocaust Deniers around the globe rose up in support of the lawsuit in the United Kingdom by disgraced historian and Holocaust Denier David Irving, to destroy her career. It took tremendous internal fortitude for her to stand up for truth, with the outcome very much on the line.

HOLOCAUST DENIAL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

A recent survey of Google "hits" to internet web pages about the Holocaust yielded 3.4 million in English alone. The arrival of the more viral world of social media dynamic "web 2.0" has stimulated the volume of Holocaust Denial online even more.⁶

Here are three major trends shaping Twenty-First Century Holocaust Denial:

1. DENIERS TAKE HISTORY TO COURT

Denialism goes back at least to the 1960s, but historian Nicholas Terry traces the critical online "gestation and codification" for Holocaust Denial to the period culminating in 2002. It began with the so-called Faurisson Affair. Robert Faurisson was a French professor of literature French who became notorious for widely publicizing his view that "Hitler never ordered nor permitted that anyone be killed by reason of his race or religion." Professor Noam Chomsky helped make Faurisson famous by defending him as an "apolitical liberal" free of anti-Semitism. After the passage of France's Gayssot Act against Holocaust Denial in 1990, Faurisson was prosecuted, convicted and fired.⁷

In 1978 in the U.S., Willis Carto, inspired by Faurisson's success in portraying himself as a free speech martyr, launched the pseudo-scholarly Institute for Historical Review (IHR), that sponsored conferences denying or "negating" the Holocaust worldwide. The IHR offered \$50,000 to anyone who could prove that Jews had been gassed at Auschwitz. Mel Mermelstein was a Hungarian-born survivor of Auschwitz where he saw his mother and two sisters led to Gas Chamber Number 5. He sued the IHR in 1981. On the basis of Mermelstein's sworn affidavit and other evidence, an American court ruled for Mermelstein that gassings of Jews at Auschwitz is an "incontestable fact." Mermelstein was awarded \$90,000. The IHR was also ordered to apologize to Mermelstein and other survivors for causing them "pain and suffering." Mermelstein was portrayed by Leonard Nimoy in a 1991 TV film, *Nazi Files*, about the 1981 lawsuit. He wrote of the court battle in his autobiography, entitled *Behind the A*.

The deportation trials in Canada of Denier Ernst Zundel in 1985 and 1988 also generated publicity that fueled Denial. So, did historian David Irving's conversion to strident Denialism. In addition in the 1990s, Holocaust Denial took "a forensic turn" with the emergence of Fred Leuchter, an "engineer" with fake credentials who claimed to have proven that there were no traces of cyanide in the ruins of the gas chambers at Birkenau.⁹

But the real culmination of pre-2000 Denialism was David Irving's libel suit against Deborah Lipstadt, decided in 2000, that initially energized the Holocaust Denial Movement. Lipstadt's aggressive legal team, including historians Richard Evans and Christopher Browning, tore to shreds Irving's evidentiary case that he presented himself without expert support. The Denialist organizations and websites that rose with David Irving went down with him. The subscriber base of the IHR declined from 6,000 in 1993 to 300 in 2002.¹⁰

2. POST-2000 DENIALISM

Beginning around the year 2000, Holocaust Denialism had to compete for internet exposure with other conspiracy theories including intensified anti-Zionism after the outbreak of the Second Intifada and an uptick in global conspiratorialism following the 9/11 attacks.

In the mid-1990s, Willis Carto's Liberty Lobby had withdrawn its support from The Institute for Historical Review. The IHR was forced to turn to the internet for financial support—as did Ernst Zündel's "Zündel'site." The transition proved rough going.¹¹

Bradley R. Smith, a former media director of the IHR, founded the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH). Starting in 2009 with the *Ha a C m r* it placed advertisements questioning whether the Holocaust happened in college campus newspapers. But then it had a hard time paying for Holocaust-denying ads.¹²

In 2006, David Irving spent a year in an Austrian jail for denying the Holocaust. To lessen his sentence, he diluted his advocacy. The IHR's Mark Weber shifted from Holocaust Denial to anti-Zionism. Yet German Germar Rudolph began blanketing the web with pseudo-scholarly trash several notches below that was published earlier by the IHR. Declining numbers of Holocaust Denial "researchers" concentrated on smearing the character of reputable historians.¹³

Europe's new right political movements, from France's Front National (FN) to Greece's Golden Dawn, put strategic distance themselves and Holocaust Denial. Catholic English Traditionalist Bishop Richard Williamson tried to fill the void by fusing Holocaust Denial with his extremist anti-Vatican Movement.¹⁴

Rather than abate their onslaught against Jews and Israel, Holocaust Deniers worldwide redoubled their efforts. They also became more proficient utilizing the web 2.0 and forms of "low intensity warfare" against Holocaust commemoration short of outright Denial.

Post-Communist East European nations with much to account for about the murder of their Jewish neighbors during the Nazi Holocaust also joined in. As the Wiesenthal Center's Chief Nazi Hunter Efraim Zuroff has documented, Holocaust denial in Croatia typically involves the downplaying or denial of the Holocaust carried out by the Ustasha regime, particularly against Serbs and Jews at the Jasenovac concentration camp. Lithuania and other Eastern European governments refused to put Nazi war criminals on trial and sought to sanitize any references to collaborators with the Nazi regime.¹⁵

Of course, until very recently, the leading internet platforms headquartered in the U.S. did little or nothing to inhibit Holocaust Denial.¹⁶

3. ISLAMIST IRAN TAKES THE HOLOCAUST DENIAL LEAD

promoted by President Ahmadinejad attracted Robert Faurisson, Bradley Smith, and David Duke. Tehran's mullahs sought to make Holocaust Denial an integral weapon in their propaganda jihad throughout the Muslim World and beyond. To generate additional momentum, they instituted their annual Holocaust Denial Cartoon Contests.¹⁸

In 2016, on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei released a video entitled "Holocaust: Are the Dark Ages Over?" He remarked:

"No one in European countries dares to speak about the Holocaust, while it is not clear whether the core of this matter is clear or not. Even if it is a reality, it is not clear how it happened. Speaking about the Holocaust and expressing doubts about it is considered to be a great sin. If someone does this, they stop, arrest, imprison, and sue him. This is while they claim to be the supporters of freedom. This is the ignorance that exists in today's world."

In May, over 150 cartoons that denied or mocked the Holocaust were distributed by the state-run Islamic Propaganda Organization in Tehran. After this exhibition closed, the Islamic Propaganda Organization sponsored exhibits of winning cartoons in provincial capitals.¹⁹

The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank added its voice to the chorus. While being forced to acknowledge the existence of the Holocaust in 2006 and 2014 Palestinian President Abbas has continued to argue for the thesis of his 1982 dissertation, written in the Soviet Union, that the Jews collaborated the Nazis to perpetrate the Holocaust and questioned whether 6 million Jews were murdered. In 2012, he told *A Ma a* ~~Beirut~~ Beirut TV station affiliated with Iran and Hezbollah, that he "challenges anyone who can deny that the Zionist movement had ties with the Nazis before World War II."²⁰

2004

In an interview on New York City radio station *WSNR* in February Hutton Gibson, father of actor and film director Mel Gibson, reiterated his previous statements denying the Holocaust. "It's all—maybe not all—fiction, but most of it is," Gibson said of the Nazi genocide. "Do you know what it takes to get rid of a dead body? To cremate it? **It takes a liter of petrol and twenty minutes. Now, six million of them? They did not have the gas to do it. That's why they lost the war.**"³²

Former world chess champion Bobby Fischer was arrested in Japan in July for possible deportation to the United States, where an arrest warrant was issued because he violated U.S. sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia by playing a chess match there in 1992. According to media reports, Fischer may seek to stave off deportation to the U.S. by claiming German citizenship, because his father is German, but traveling to Germany could result in him being prosecuted for Holocaust-denial. Fischer's personal web site declares: "**The so-called 'Holocaust' of the Jews during World War II is a complete hoax! It never happened. The Jews are liars ... Japan beware you're backing a loser. Don't go down the drain with the filthy Jew-controlled U.S.**"³³

Lithuanian prosecutors announced in June that they would not bring charges against two suspected war criminals, on the grounds that there is no evidence that the massacre in which they are believed to have participated actually took place. In July 1941, members of a Lithuanian basketball team took part in a contest with German soldiers, and as their "prize" were permitted to murder about thirty local Jews. The two suspects were members of the team. The Lithuanian ambassador to Israel, Alfonsas Eidintas, conceded that the massacre did take place, but defended the prosecutors' decision.³⁴

2005

The Austrian government arrested David Irving for Holocaust Denial. He received a three-year sentence in 2006 but is released that December, contingent on his leaving Austria.³⁵

The government of Canada deported Ernst Zündel to Germany to stand trial for Holocaust denial. German courts convict Zündel for 14 counts related to Holocaust denial in 2007, for which he received a five-year prison sentence.³⁶

In a speech broadcast on live television on December 14, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called the Holocaust a "myth."³⁷

2006

Iran's government sponsored a meeting of Holocaust deniers in Tehran called "Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision." Farid Mortazavi, graphics editor of the Iranian newspaper *Ham aqad*, announced a Holocaust cartoon contest with gold and cash prizes for the winners. There were nearly 1,200 submissions from over 60 countries, including cartoons

2008

The European Union adopts a Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia that included a call for EU member states to ensure that Holocaust Denial is punishable by law.⁴⁰

The Rizoli twins dropped the charade when it comes to their Holocaust Denial. Two days after the Intelligence Report published a story earlier this year detailing allegations that Framingham, Massachusetts, anti-immigration extremists Jim and Joe Rizoli have promoted Holocaust denial online using the handles of “jjrizo” and “JoRiz” since at least 2001.

Holocaust Denier Gerald Toben Wins Extradition Fight.⁴¹

2009

English-born Roman Catholic Bishop Richard Williamson denied the existence of gas chambers and minimizes the extent of killing during the Holocaust. The Vatican ordered Williamson to recant his statements. When he did not, the Vatican excommunicated Williamson from the Church.⁴²

David Duke, the former leader of the Ku Klux Klan, was arrested by Czech authorities for denying the Holocaust and inciting hate. He had been invited to speak at Charles University by the Národní odpor (National Resistance) group. The Czech government ordered Duke to leave the country the following day.⁴³

On June 10, 2009, 88-year-old white supremacist and Holocaust denier, James Wenneker von Brunn, entered the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. with a rifle and fatally shot Museum Special Police Officer Stephen Tyrone Johns.⁴⁴

Bradley Smith placed his first online Holocaust Denial advertisements on the website of the student university newspapers including Harvard. The Internet was becoming the chief conduit of Holocaust Denial.⁴⁵

2010

Lithuania updated its criminal code to include a law against Denial and gross trivialization of Nazi crimes and crimes perpetrated by Soviets in Lithuania. Under its recently passed law on Holocaust Denial, Lithuanian authorities investigated the Lithuanian magazine *Viena* for publishing an article that called the Nuremberg Trials the “greatest legal farce in history.” The investigation closed in early 2011, after local investigators declared that

Romania Party, denied the Holocaust on the talk show *R m a r a a R a* . Tudor states, "In Romania there was never a Holocaust. . . . I will deny it till I die because I love my people."⁵⁰

2013

On Holocaust Remembrance Day, Fathi Shihab-Eddim, an aide to then Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, claimed that the 6 million Jews who were killed by the Nazis actually relocated to the United States. "U.S. intelligence agencies, in cooperation with their counterparts in Allied nations during World War II, created it [the Holocaust] to destroy the image of their opponents in Germany, and to justify war and massive destruction against military and civilian facilities of the Axis powers, and especially to hit Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the atomic bomb."⁵¹

Gyorgy Nagy became the first Hungarian to be convicted of Holocaust Denial. Nagy carried a sign during a 2011 demonstration in Budapest which read "the Holocaust never happened" in Hebrew. The Court sentenced him to 18 months in prison and probation. Part of his sentence was also to visit either Budapest's Holocaust memorial museum, Auschwitz, or Yad Vashem.⁵²

The Ukrainian government passed several so-called decommunization laws. Although these laws ban the use of communist and Nazi symbols, certain provisions also prohibit criticism of certain national heroes of the anti-Soviet resistance, including some persons whose historical records include collaboration with the Nazis and crimes against Jews and ethnic Poles during the years of the Holocaust.⁶⁰

2016

On International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei released a video entitled "Holocaust: Are the Dark Ages Over?" on his website, which includes his 2014 comments questioning the Nazi mass slaughter of six million Jews during World War II.⁶¹

An exhibition displaying 150 Holocaust cartoons from the 11th Tehran International Cartoon Biennial opened in Tehran in the art section of the Islamic Propaganda Organization. Two weeks later, an awards ceremony was held for the winners of the Holocaust cartoon contest. Majid Mollanorozi, the director of Tehran's Museum of Contemporary Art and the Head of the Graphic Arts section of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, took part in the awards ceremony. Prizes reportedly total \$50,000.⁶²

The Polish cabinet approved a bill imposing prison terms on anyone convicted of referring to death camps operated by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland as "Polish." Claiming that the Poles collaborated with the Nazis in exterminating the Jews would also be considered a criminal offense.⁶³

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance passed its "Non-Legally Binding Working Definition of Anti-Semitism." This definition included language that indicates how Holocaust Denial is a form of anti-Semitism. Since 2016, more than 20 countries have adopted the definition for use at the national level.⁶⁴

2017

A new generation of Holocaust Deniers is emerging through a clutch of popular "gateway" conspiracy theories, according to one of the UK's leading experts on the subject. As *Denial*, a film about the disgraced historian and notorious Holocaust denier David Irving, hits cinemas, attention is focusing on the ageing generation of Deniers who emerged with Irving at its vanguard and are now dying out. But it appears that Holocaust Denial has found new momentum in the digital age. The UK's foremost academic on the subject claims a new internet-based generation is embracing denial, having been drawn to it out of anti-Semitism or a belief in conspiracy theories. Dr Nicholas Terry, a history lecturer at Exeter University, estimates that there are now thousands of "low-commitment" Holocaust deniers online.⁶⁵

2019

David Irving gave “secret talks” in Scotland to sympathetic audiences.⁶⁹

Denying that the Holocaust ever happened isn't a form of freedom of expression protected under the European Human Rights Convention, a top court has ruled in a case that stretches back nearly a decade. Udo Pastoers, a German who suggested in a 2010 speech that the Holocaust never occurred, was fairly convicted under the country's laws against the intentional defamation of Jewish people, the European Court of Human Rights ruled while rejecting his complaints.⁷⁰

2020

A decade ago, 38 percent of U.S. adults and 53 percent of high school students either “didn’t know” or incorrectly defined “the Holocaust.” Today’s Deniers seek to transform this growing knowledge deficit into a new warrant for genocide. In Sweden—which produced Holocaust hero, Raoul Wallenberg, who saved thousands of Hungarian Jews—a third of young people voice skepticism that the Holocaust actually happened. Holocaust Denial not only perverts history; it destroys the bonds between new generations and those who endured blood, sweat, and tears during World War II. It also affronts the dwindling ranks of Holocaust Survivors whose suffering is mocked by the Holocaust Deniers.⁷⁷

Germany in particular cannot afford to rest on its laurels and treat its post-World War II “deNazification” campaign as a closed chapter. Education about the Holocaust and its linkages with contemporary Holocaust Denial, anti-Semitism, and unreasoning hatred of Israel needs to be intensified and expanded. Educational initiatives need to target in particular young Germans of Muslim faith and Turkish, Iranian, and Arab youth.

How best approach young Moslems about the Nazi Era? Tell the truth. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al Husseini, who allied himself with Hitler, toured the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, and helped recruit 20,000 Bosnian Muslims to serve in the Waffen SS.⁷⁸ High profile visits to Auschwitz by leading Muslim Imams in recent years have made a major impact around the world.

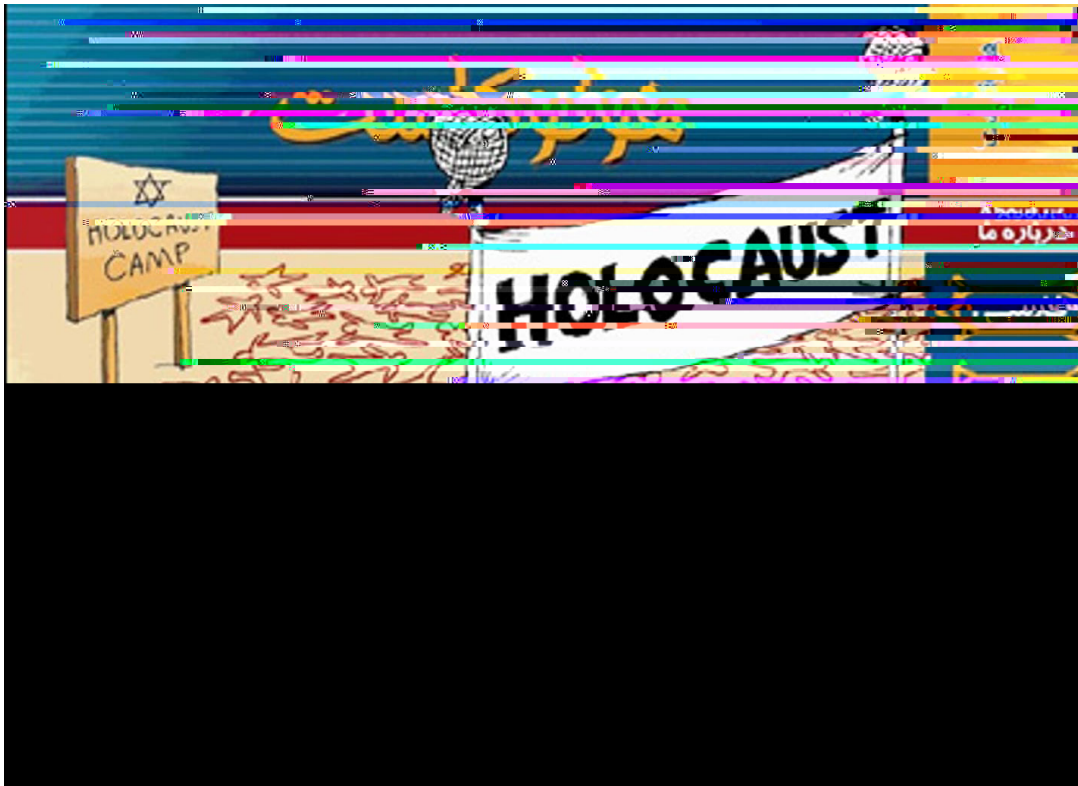
What is to be done about resurgent Holocaust Denial in Europe and the U.S.? In countries where governments consider them appropriate, there is a place for laws criminalizing Holocaust Denial that attempt to protect both Jewish minorities and the wider democratic order from the threat of movements with a history of practicing genocide. Such laws do not protect Jews or Judaism or Israel against criticism, satire, ridicule, or even defamation. Of course, the situation in the U.S. where the First Amendment is enshrined in the Constitution is different.⁷⁹

Finally, there is no defeating Holocaust Denial without confronting the dangers posed by the abuse of social media- a top priority of the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Digital Terrorism and Hate Project. Compared to issuing bulky pamphlets or organizing conferences, the internet provides a cost-effective means for Deniers to reach a mass market of consumers with information—and misinformation—while denigrating and demoralizing Holocaust Survivors. Through websites, blogs, hyperlinks, email, discussion boards, and chat rooms, deniers are able to link together with like-minded individuals who could help become the building blocks of larger online communities

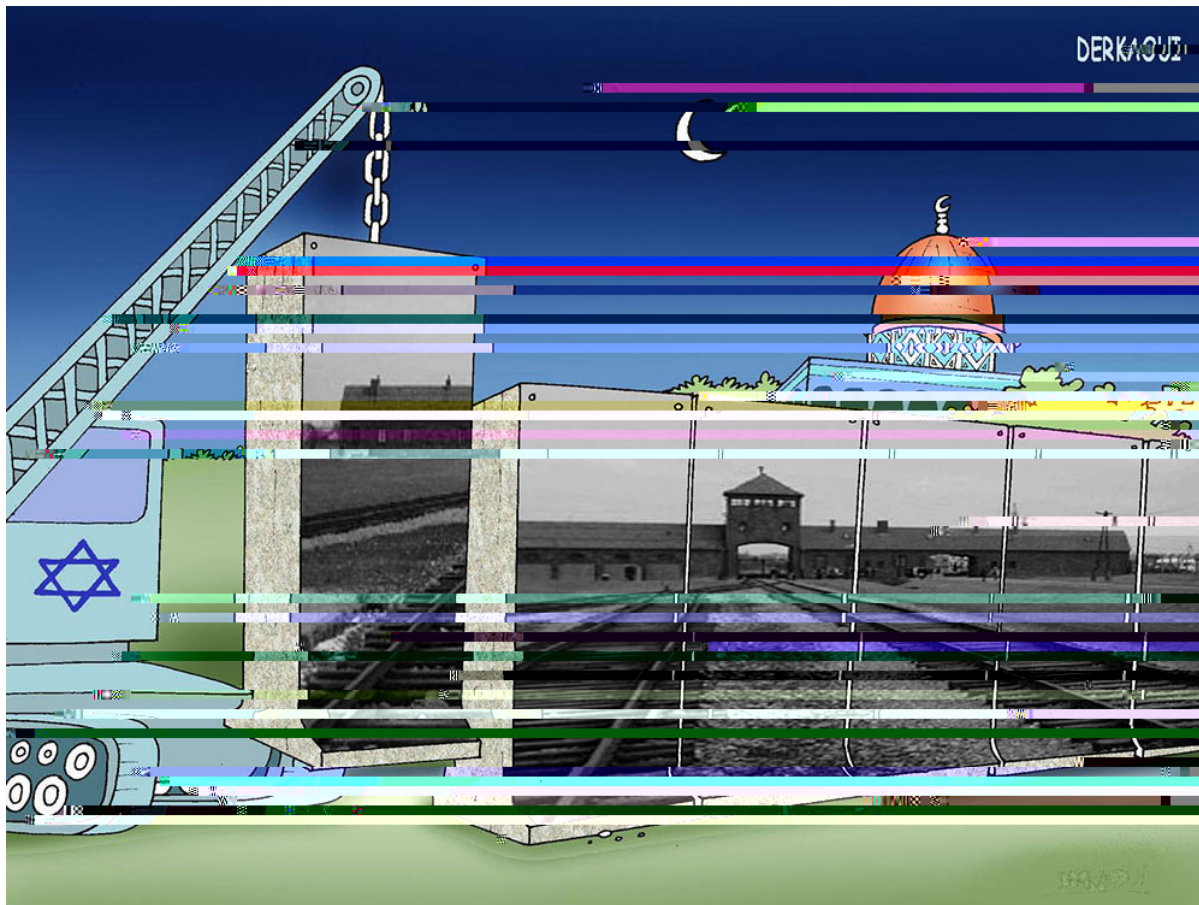
APPENDIX:

HOLOCAUST DENIAL CARTOONS

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3. Soros and Rothschild and the Holocaust as Puppet Show (Ben Garrison/Twitter via JTA)
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