Holocaust Denial

An overview of conspiracies related to the Holocaust
What is the purpose of this document?

This document provides an overview of Holocaust denial and is one in a series of extremism briefing notes produced by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) out of a long-running partnership with Microsoft*. The purpose of these documents is to provide entry-level context and background about various extremist and conspiratorial narratives and movements. These are not intended as comprehensive deep-dives. Rather, they present key concepts, theories, terminology and imagery deployed by the given movements or narratives. Further reading recommendations are provided at the end of each document, should readers want to learn more.

*Microsoft makes no statement as to the accuracy of the contents of this document. The contents herein are a product of ISD and are provided for informational purposes only.

CONTENT WARNING: this document contains material that may be harmful, triggering or traumatizing to some readers.

FAQ

How are these briefing notes produced?

They are informed by both literature review and digital research using publicly accessible websites, social media pages, channels and forums. This briefing note was published in September 2020 and is based on research conducted from July to August 2020.

What topics do they cover?

Topics span the ideological spectrum, covering prevalent extremist theories and narratives, as well as specific extremist movements. The scope ranges, with some briefing notes covering specific conspiracy theories like “the Great Replacement”, and others looking at broader, overarching issues like extreme misogyny online.

Can I share these and/or refer to them in my work?

You may share them with other colleagues if you deem this is relevant to their work. Please do not share them outside of your immediate organization or with the general public. You may refer to them in your work, bearing in mind that these are entry-level only and that the contents may prove triggering for those not familiar with the topic. Should you want additional resources on this or other topics related to disinformation, hate and/or extremism, please email ISD via the contact details provided below.

Additional questions?

Get in touch with ISD’s Charlotte Moeyens at crlm@isdglobal.org

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Holocaust Denial

“Holocaust denial has long been one of the most insidious conspiracy theories targeting Jewish communities, with its extremist proponents drawn from across the ideological spectrum, from extreme right-wing to hard left to Islamist. Research has shown that digital platforms have only served to amplify and mainstream this warped strain of thinking in recent years”. - ISD, 2020

Shaded in purple are countries that have some form of legislation that criminalizes Holocaust denial. The consistency of enforcement varies, however, as do the sentences imposed.

In addition, social media policy related to Holocaust denial varies. The accessibility and persistence of it online therefore changes from platform to platform.

Background:

What is it? Simply put, Holocaust denial is the denial or downplay of the extent and reality of the Nazi genocide of Jewish people during World War 2. Since then, it has been used to amplify antisemitic conspiracy theories, to minimize the dangers of Nazism (and neo-Nazism), and to attack Jewish people and communities.

Tie-in with Extremism: ISD’s research shows Holocaust denial is prevalent across the extremist ideological spectrum, where it is used to promote antisemitic conspiracy theories that claim Jewish people control and manipulate current events.

Why is it dangerous? The danger of Holocaust denial lies in its ability to serve as an effective vehicle to advance antisemitism. For example, Holocaust deniers often disguise or mask their denial (and antisemitism) as a quest for historical “truth”, “revisionism” or “intellectual freedom”, thus framing it within academia and giving it a false sense of legitimacy. This implicit nature of Holocaust denial compounds the danger it poses by making antisemitic narratives appear more defensible.
Related Narratives and Terminology*

**Antisemitic tropes:**
Antisemitic extremist groups often place the Holocaust within antisemitic tropes that claim Jewish people have undue control over media, politics and the economy. In this vein, the Holocaust is seen as a deliberate lie to seize and maintain this power.

**Gas chambers weren’t real or weren’t used to kill:**
The infamous Leuchter Report is often cited as proof that gas chambers were not used for the purpose of killing Jewish people. While Leuchter and his report have been debunked, claims that gas chambers weren’t real or weren’t used to kill remain persistent amongst Holocaust deniers.

**The Holocaust was an Allied conspiracy to demonize Hitler and Nazi Germany:**
This conspiracy generally claims that Nazi Germany didn’t exterminate Jewish people, it rather wanted to relocate them. As such, it claims the Holocaust was an elaborate propaganda tool used by the Allied powers to vilify Nazism and Nazi Germany. “The Realist Report”, a well-known antisemitic Holocaust denial site, states, for example, that the Holocaust “narrative” is “really just an extension of an elaborate and ongoing anti-German propaganda campaign”. This narrative is dangerous not only in its rejection of genocide against Jewish people, but also in its reframing of Nazism (and neo-Nazism) as a victimized ideology that was unfairly and unjustly demonized by other Western powers.

**The Holocaust is a deliberate Jewish conspiracy:**
Holocaust denial is often framed within broader antisemitic stereotypes of Jewish people being greedy and manipulative. In this context, the Holocaust is viewed as an elaborate lie created by Jewish people and that Jewish people somehow successfully force media and other institutions to promote this “lie”. Outright denial and rejection of the Holocaust as such is similarly often rooted in antisemitic conspiracies that claim the Holocaust was fabricated by Jewish people to “extract repatriation money from Germany… to gain world sympathy and facilitate the theft of Palestinian land for the creation of Israel”.

**Terminology and Imagery***

- **Holohoax** or “Hollow Hoax” – derogatory names for the Holocaust used by some Holocaust deniers and affiliated groups.
- Holocaust “indoctrination” – right wing extremist groups may refer to Holocaust education as “indoctrination” or “brainwashing”. This reinforces stereotypes of Jewish people as exploitative and able to control the masses.
- Juu/Joo or ((())) – In order to bypass content moderation and/or as a sign of disrespect, antisemitic groups may intentionally misspell “Jew” or use “(((()))” around a noun or name to indicate to readers that this noun or name is Jewish.
- The “happy merchant” meme – a meme or illustration of a dark-haired man with a hooked-nose, who is hunched over with a greedy expression. This is often used online by antisemitic groups to depict Jewish people.
- “Six gorrillion” – an antisemitic term used to refer derogatorily to the six million Jews that are thought to have died in the Holocaust.

*the narratives, terminology and imagery provided are a sample and should not be taken as exhaustive.*
### Affiliated Figures and Sites*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ernst Zundel</td>
<td>Although Zundel passed away in 2017, he remains an influential figure in contemporary Holocaust denial and related neo-Nazi circles. Zundel was known to be a Nazi-sympathizer and antisemite, promoting the conspiracy that Jewish people are able to control large institutions and governments. He is also known for sponsoring the Leuchter Report, which claims gas chambers were not used for the mass murder of Jewish people. For more about Zundel, click here.</td>
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<td>Stormfront</td>
<td>Stormfront has a “History and Revisionism” forum that is predominantly focused on the Holocaust, with users claiming “the Jews weren’t gassed. This is a damn lie!... Most of what people recognize as the ‘Holocaust’ is made up of outright lies...”</td>
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<td>The Daily Stormer</td>
<td>The Daily Stormer is a neo-Nazi propaganda site founded by Andrew Anglin. The site contains a number of Holocaust denial articles, one as recent as September 16, 2020.</td>
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<td>David Duke</td>
<td>Duke is a former Ku Klux Klan leader and white supremacist who calls himself a “Holocaust exposer” rather than “denier”. Duke is known to have attended a number of “Holocaust revisionist” conferences across Europe and in Iran. For more about Duke, click here.</td>
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<td>David Irving</td>
<td>Considered a “hero” amongst extremist circles, David Irving has built a global reputation as a prominent and unwavering Holocaust Denier. He has, for example, defended both Zundel and the Leuchter report. For more, see here.</td>
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### Useful Sources:

- [Hosting the “Holohoax” - A Snapshot of Holocaust Denial Across Social Media](#) - by ISD
  - By analysing the term “holohoax”, which is commonly used by Holocaust deniers, ISD’s paper examines the extent to which Holocaust denial content is readily accessible across Facebook, Twitter, Reddit and YouTube.

- [Holocaust Denial](#)
  - A webpage by Southern Poverty Law Center that summarises Holocaust denial, its history amongst the extreme right, as well as known Holocaust denial groups.

- [What is Holocaust Denial?](#)
  - A useful resource by the Museum of Tolerance that explains and debunks various common Holocaust denial claims.

- [Holocaust Denial](#)
  - The Anti-Defamation League has a series of articles about Holocaust denial and its intersection with extremism.