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WJC
WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS

S H O R T S U M M A R Y

Holocaust denial and distortion spread hate online

Denial and distortion of the Holocaust attacks truth and knowledge. It feeds on and spreads antisemitism and jeopardises the understanding of one of the most tragic and violent episodes in the history of humanity: the genocide of 6 million Jews by Nazi Germany, its allies and collaborators.

This publication by the United Nations and UNESCO studies the extent and nature of Holocaust denial and distortion on Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok and Twitter in English, French, German and Spanish. Holocaust denial and distortion on social media remains a significant cause of concern across all platforms. The report finds that nearly half of all content on public Telegram channels that discusses the Holocaust either denies or distorts its history. These posts are easily accessible to people searching for information about the Holocaust on the platform.

Educating about the history of the genocide of the Jewish people and other Nazi crimes offers a robust defence against denial and distortion. To build resilience against ideologies of hate, learners need accurate knowledge about the fundamental facts of the Holocaust, and critical thinking and digital literacy skills. Online platforms have a vital role to play in supporting and promoting such education.

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"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed"

United Nations

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United Nations

History under attack

Holocaust denial and distortion on social media

Foreword

Holocaust denial and distortion are as old as the Holocaust itself. Throughout the war, the Nazis sought to cover their heinous crimes under a veil of secrecy and outrageous lies.

Today, that same denial and distortion runs rampant once again amidst growing antisemitism, ignorance, and bigotry.

We must better understand what precisely is enabling it to spread so far and so quickly.

This report is an important contribution to that effort. It details the ways in which social media is fertile ground for hate and prejudice – and proposes actions we can take in response.

Based on the data of billions of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Telegram users, the report outlines what information English, French, Spanish, and German speakers encounter about the Holocaust.

The report's findings are stark.

Almost half of all Holocaust-related content on Telegram, for example, is false, misleading, or distorted. And even on moderated platforms like Twitter, nearly one in five posts either denies or distorts the history of the Holocaust.

While this demonstrates the importance of content moderation, it also shows how much more remains to be done to strengthen global resilience to disinformation.

Understanding the history of the Holocaust is crucial to safeguarding our future.

This is particularly crucial as we see some seeking to rewrite history or to whitewash and rehabilitate those who committed crimes against humanity.

If we fail to identify and confront the lies and inhumanity that fueled past atrocities, we are ill-prepared to prevent them in the future.

We must never forget how easily hate speech can turn to hate crime; how ignorance or indifference can lead to intolerance; or how silence in the face of bigotry is complicity.

Too many times since, the international community failed to live up to its promise of 'Never Again' – as we sadly witnessed with the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and the 1995 Srebrenica genocide.

Faced with the highest number of violent conflicts since 1945, we must be more vigilant than ever.

This work is a core part of the mission of the United Nations. And it goes beyond the Holocaust itself. The report shows how intimately linked its denial is to other forms of online violence, including those rooted in racism, misogyny, or xenophobia.

Antisemitism, Holocaust denial and distortion, and any form of religious bigotry and hatred are a seismograph. The more they rattle our world, the greater the cracks to the foundations of our common humanity.

Today, the cracks are impossible to ignore.

This report is an urgent wake-up call that must jolt us into action – to pursue truth, remembrance, and education, and together build a world of peace, dignity and justice for all.

António Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations

Foreword

This publication is the first report from UNESCO and the United Nations to specifically address Holocaust denial and distortion, at a time when, tragically, the history of the Holocaust is being increasingly manipulated, twisted and maligned on social media.

Denial of the Holocaust is not a new phenomenon – indeed, the Nazi German regime, their collaborators and allies sought to disguise the genocide of Europe's Jews even as it was happening. Through euphemisms and the destruction of evidence, they attempted to avoid bearing responsibility for the most heinous of crimes.

We are now witnessing a rise of social media accounts celebrating, mocking and distorting this history, often accompanied by racism, misogyny, homophobia and other forms of intolerance. This is happening as we are losing the last generation of survivors of the Holocaust, who refute lies and deceptions by sharing their stories.

This study presents messages found on Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok and Twitter that attempt to rehabilitate the hateful ideologies of the Nazi regime and attack the core values that UNESCO was established to defend in the aftermath of the Second World War. Left unchecked, these messages threaten to undermine the human rights principles of equality, tolerance and dignity of all peoples by trivializing the crime of genocide.

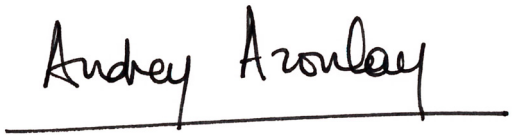
Holocaust denial and distortion catalyzes on antisemitic conspiracy theories by replacing history and evidence with myths about Jews and supposed "Jewish power" – a trend accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Concerningly, these theories are accessible to young people searching for information about the Holocaust on social media, facilitating the spread of hate speech and violent ideologies. This supports political discourses that seek to manipulate historical facts and attenuate the responsibilities of Nazi allies and collaborators in the genocide of the Jewish people.

UNESCO promotes education about the Holocaust to foster peace and mutual understanding and, in partnership with the World Jewish Congress, provides accurate information about the Holocaust on Facebook and TikTok by inviting users to visit our website AboutHolocaust.Org. Our Organization is also leading global efforts to promote smart regulation of online platforms, to break the cycle of algorithms actively amplifying hateful content in the interest of greater engagement and therefore profit.

Online platforms, governments, international organizations and civil society must work together to honour the memory of the victims of the Holocaust and uphold the reality of their suffering through remembrance and education, and by taking effective action against hate speech.

It is a responsibility we also owe to young people, as an investment in a future free from genocide: to protect the facts of the past and to teach critical thinking and media and information literacy, so that they may understand the world they live in, and act as informed and responsible global citizens, with the skills they need to detect and resist disinformation and hate speech.

Without such foundations, we are unable to learn from the past.



Audrey Azoulay
Director-General
United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Executive summary

Holocaust denial and distortion is dangerous. It is an attack on truth and knowledge. It feeds on and spreads antisemitic tropes and prejudices, and threatens our understanding of one of the most tragic and violent histories: The genocide of six million Jews by Nazi Germany, its allies and collaborators. In countries across Europe, people became complicit in the persecution and murder of their neighbours. Holocaust denial and distortion can prevent society from reckoning with this past. It impedes our comprehension of the causes and warning signs of genocide, and that might strengthen efforts for genocide prevention. It is insulting to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, and risks the rehabilitation of violent, antisemitic ideologies. At its most extreme, it celebrates and glorifies this history, inciting violence against Jews and calling for another genocide.

The United Nations and UNESCO condemn the rise of Holocaust denial and distortion online as a dangerous form of hatred, and commissioned this report in partnership with the World Jewish Congress to raise awareness of the forms and functions of Holocaust denial and distortion on social media, and determine a series of policy and educational responses.

This report is a data-driven investigation into the extent and nature of Holocaust denial and distortion on online platforms. It is based on a manual review of almost 4,000 pieces of content collected in June and July 2021 that related to Jews, the Holocaust, antisemitism and Holocaust denial and distortion from five major online platforms and messenger apps. It looks at content posted on Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok and Twitter: some of the world's largest online platforms and collectively home to billions of users. It addresses content in four different languages: English, French, Spanish and German, with the aim of providing a wide-ranging review that addresses multiple countries and contexts.

This report aims to answer four questions:

1. How much Holocaust-related content on social media either denies the Holocaust or distorts key elements of history?
2. What are the key narratives in contemporary Holocaust denial and distortion?
3. How are Holocaust denial and distortion communicated, and how are they situated within wider discourses and frames?
4. What can online platform companies, policy-makers, educators and organizations promoting Holocaust remembrance, education and research do to tackle the problem?

Based on the findings of this report, it provides a series of recommended actions that online platforms, policy-makers, civil society, researchers and educators can implement to prevent and counter Holocaust denial and distortion online.

Major findings

1. **Nearly half (49 per cent) of all content on public Telegram channels that discusses the Holocaust either denies or distorts its history.** This includes over 80 per cent of posts in the German language, and approximately 50 per cent of posts in English and French. These posts are often explicitly antisemitic, which is on the rise across the globe.[1] They are easily accessible to people searching for information about the Holocaust on the platform. Telegram does not have a policy to take action on Holocaust denial or distortion, creating a safe haven for those who wish to deny or distort the genocide.

2. **Holocaust denial and distortion is present on all online platforms, including platforms with targeted content moderation policies to address Holocaust denial and distortion.** On these platforms, Holocaust denial is less present, but Holocaust distortion is far more common and takes various forms. According to the research:

- Nearly one in five (19 per cent) of all Holocaust-related public Twitter content either denied or distorted the history.
- 17 per cent of public TikTok content that related to the Holocaust either denied or distorted the Holocaust.
- Eight per cent of public Holocaust-related content on Facebook was either Holocaust denial or distortion.
- Three per cent of material posted publicly on Instagram discussing the Holocaust either denied or distorted the history.

3. **Much depends on the willingness of online platforms to take effective action against Holocaust denial and distortion.** Where platforms have introduced policies, content moderation and clear user guidance, this can have an impact in limiting and removing harmful content. There was a notable difference in the levels of Holocaust denial and distortion between Facebook – which has moved to address criticisms of disinformation – and Telegram, which remains highly unmoderated.

4. **Online platform community guidelines and moderation policies are often limited to addressing Holocaust denial rather than the more complex issue of Holocaust distortion.** Online platforms should also monitor and, when necessary, take action on content that distorts the Holocaust in partnership with experts, civil society organizations and international organizations. Actions may include adding fact-check labels that redirect to accurate and reliable content; downranking, de-amplifying, placing under warning label or removing harmful content; disabling advertising revenue; and/or deactivating accounts of actors producing and spreading such content, including through inauthentic coordinated behaviour, while upholding international standards of freedom of expression.

5. **Posts on moderated sites can be camouflaged and signpost users to far more explicit material on other sites, such as Telegram.** Consequently, where Holocaust denial has been limited on moderated platforms, it has migrated to other online platforms. The more mainstream sites are still used to direct users to more radical forums.

6. **Holocaust distortion trails world events and shifts in form depending on current affairs, areas of deep public concern and the evolving news agenda.** As such, a high degree of Holocaust distortion was linked to anti-lockdown protests and other restrictions implemented to tackle coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

7. **Holocaust denial and distortion are often manifested in covert and coded ways, which may hinder efforts to mitigate their dissemination online.** Therefore, researchers, online platform companies and educators need to engage more and understand these contemporary modes of communication to develop creative, bold and disruptive counter-messaging, as well as effective educational responses.

8. **Holocaust denial and distortion is sometimes spread through memes and 'humour', to glorify or mock the Holocaust** by online communities spreading violent extremist ideologies. 'Humour' and memes allow hateful narratives to gain acceptability and legitimacy among the wider public; to propagate racist, white supremacist ideology; to recruit and radicalize new members; and to signal a sense of group identity. Holocaust denial and distortion are therefore closely related and often co-present with other types of online harms including homophobia, misogyny, racism and xenophobia.

9. **Educating about the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes is the best defence against denial and distortion.** It is imperative that young people are provided with accurate knowledge about the fundamental facts of the Holocaust, and develop critical thinking skills and media and information literacy, so that they can reject and counter disinformation and hate speech.

[1] The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry (2021). Antisemitism Worldwide Report 2021.

Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Holocaust memory informs much of our public and political discourse – by drawing attention to the causes, consequences and legacies of genocide and atrocity crimes, it serves as a touchstone for any number of moral, social and political issues. There are a large number of museums, memorials and commemorative events around the world; and the Holocaust is a part of many school curricula; public interest in the Holocaust is evident by a wide range of popular novels, feature films and other cultural representations. However, many myths and misconceptions also circulate in this collective memory – there is a wide gulf between academic and public knowledge of the Holocaust.[2]

This study examines discourse about the Holocaust online, particularly on social media and online platforms. The internet has had an impact on society on a scale comparable to that of the printing press.[3] Not only has it enormously expanded free access to knowledge about our world, the shift caused by Web 2.0 and online platforms have created a space where members of the public can participate in the production and sharing of information on a vast, unprecedented scale.[4] However, what was hoped to be a democratizing force – one that enabled citizens to contribute more fully to public discourse, opened new frontiers of debate and gave a platform to new voices – has also led to a spread of misinformation and has had unintended consequences for public understanding of the very nature of truth.[5]

What was the Holocaust or Shoah?

The Holocaust is a well-documented and the most intensively researched example of genocide in the long history of atrocity crimes. As a result, there is well-established knowledge about the Holocaust, and a clear and broad consensus on its fundamental facts.

The term 'Holocaust' (or Shoah, meaning 'catastrophe' in the Hebrew language) is used to refer to a specific genocidal event in twentieth-century history: the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and genocide of 6 million Jews in Europe by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Alongside the murder of Jewish children, women and men, the Nazis systematically murdered Roma and Sinti. Millions more, including disabled persons, Poles, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

For more information, please see AboutHolocaust.org: A website established by the World Jewish Congress and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to provide young people with essential information about the history of the Holocaust and its legacy.

[2] See Hoskins, A. (2003). Signs of the Holocaust: exhibiting memory in a mediated age. Media, Culture & Society, 25(1), 7–22.
[3] Müller, Jan-Werner. (2002) Memory and power in post-war Europe: Studies in the presence of the past. Cambridge, UK, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. p.13
[4] The term 'social media' is used to denote internet-based, computer technology 'that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities', following a definition provided by Maya E Dollarhide.
[5] The Oxford English Dictionary chose 'post-truth' as its word of the year in 2016, defining it as shorthand for 'circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief', cited in D'Ancona, Matthew (2017) Post Truth. The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back. London: Edbury Press, p.13.

Many hoped and expected that – in an open, free market of ideas – rational discourse and the best, most compelling and persuasive arguments would win out. Indeed, the internet does provide a rich repository of accurate and useful information on many subjects. However, it is also the case that, online, the power of emotion, confirmation bias, titillation, click bait and the false certainty of strident claims can overwhelm the slower, fact-checking norms of the mainstream media (which itself is hardly immune to sensationalism); the sober deliberations of experts; and the peer-reviewed papers of academia. This has been fuelled by algorithms that corporations have created to prioritize advertising revenue and data collection over the provision of accurate, fact-checked information, in an environment where liberal democracies have been hesitant to create legislative oversight for fear of compromising the right to freedom of expression.[6] As a result, the explosion and diversification of sources of misinformation on online platforms have led some to describe this as a 'post-truth' era.[7] It is in this context, when research into online platforms such as YouTube indicates a tendency to amplify messaging that is 'divisive, sensationalist and conspiratorial',[8] that the rise and pernicious consequences of Holocaust denial and distortion can be observed.

This report seeks to address the extent and nature of Holocaust denial and distortion on social media and online platforms. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) has defined Holocaust denial as: 'any attempt to claim that the Holocaust/Shoah did not take place [and]… may include publicly denying or calling into doubt the use of principal mechanisms of destruction (such as gas chambers, mass shooting, starvation and torture) or the intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people'.[9] A resolution on Holocaust denial was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in January 2022, condemning Holocaust denial of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part, and urging Member States and online platform companies to take active measures to combat antisemitism and Holocaust denial or distortion.[10] Holocaust distortion refers to claims that do not outright deny the reality of the Holocaust, but seek to distort or subvert key facts about it. Holocaust distortion is both far more widespread than Holocaust denial and 'often shares the same antisemitic goals'.[11]

The issue of Holocaust denial and distortion has long been a problem on social media and online platforms.[12] While for many years online platforms took little action on the subject, recently some companies have begun attempts to limit the spread of such material on their platforms. There are some positive signs that the actions of online platforms to limit such discourse are having an impact. For example, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) found that 'the spread of Holocaust denial content dropped significantly on YouTube following changes to their terms of service in 2019... [and] a number of factors limit the visibility of Holocaust denial on Reddit, such as the banning of subreddits dedicated to Holocaust denial, moderators deleting comments and pushback from other users'.[13] Furthermore, recent campaigns to encourage online platforms to play a more responsible, responsive and active role in addressing Holocaust denial have led to Facebook and TikTok adopting new protocols. In January 2021, for example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Jewish Congress announced a partnership with Facebook that would redirect Facebook users searching for Holocaust or Holocaust denial related terms in 12 languages to an authoritative website AboutHolocaust.org. The website, available in 19 languages, was accessed from more than 100 countries after the start of the partnership. Since 27 January 2022, TikTok users engaging with Holocaust-related content in the For You feed, search function and hashtag pages are presented with a message asking them to consult trusted sources on the Holocaust to limit the spread of hate and misinformation and directing them to the AboutHolocaust.org website where they can find authoritative information on the Holocaust.

[6] Concerns about the use of algorithms to fuel an 'attention economy' (habit forming mechanisms designed to keep people watching videos, sharing content and spending ever more time on social media platforms in order to attract ever more advertising revenue) have been increasingly raised even within the industry by leading engineers such as Justin Rosenstein, who created the 'like' button on Facebook, now ubiquitous across platforms; Guillaume Chaslot, formerly of YouTube formerly of YouTube, has warned about the distortions which arise from 'filter bubbles' where an algorithm's recommendations lead people to remain within a particular discourse, reinforcing existing ideas even when these are ill-informed; Tristan Harris, formerly of Google, who has said, 'A handful of people, working at a handful of technology companies, through their choices will steer what a billion people are thinking today'; and Safiya Noble, who argues that search engines are not sources of neutral and objective information, but economic incentives and the social values assigned to ideas, objects or people shape search engine results. See Noble, S. (2018). Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism. New York: NYU Press.

[7] The origin of the term 'post-truth' is disputed but was perhaps first used by writer Steve Tesich in a 1992 article in The Nation.

[8] The Guardian (2 February 2018) Fiction is outperforming reality: How Youtube's algorithm distorts truth https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/feb/02/how-youtubes-algorithm-distorts-truth, accessed 24 April 2022.

[9] IHRA, What are Holocaust Denial and Distortion? https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-holocaust-denial-and-distortion, accessed 24 January 2022.

[10] United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Holocaust Denial A/RES/76/250, adopted 20 January 2022.

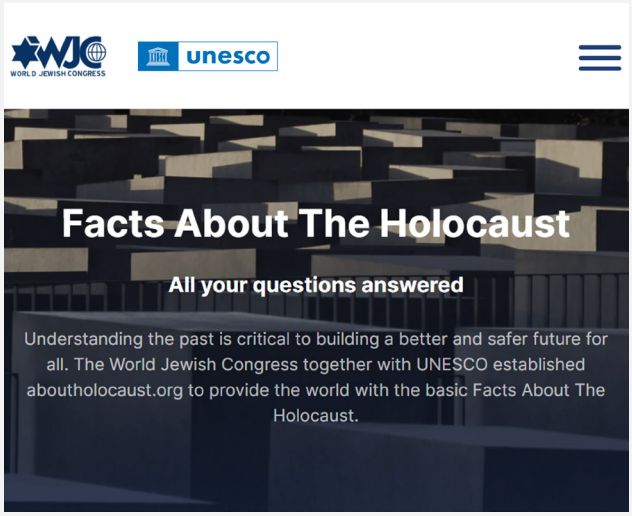
[11] IHRA, Why is Distortion of the History of the Holocaust Such a Problem?, https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/news-archive/what-holocaust-distortion-and-why-it-problem, accessed 24 January 2022.

[12] See, for example, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2020) Hosting the 'Holohoax': A Snapshot of Holocaust Denial Across Social Media https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/hosting-the-holohoax-a-snapshot-of-holocaust-denial-across-social-media/, accessed 22 April 2022.
Also: Whine, M. (2020) Countering Holocaust Denial in the Twenty-First Century , Israel journal of foreign affairs, 2020-01-02, Vol.14 (1), p.53-68, Routledge; Bauer, Y. (2020) Creating a "Usable" Past: On Holocaust Denial and Distortion, Israel journal of foreign affairs, 2020-05-03, Vol.14 (2), p.209-227, Routledge; ADL (2020) Free to Play? Hate, Harassment and Positive Social Experience in Online Games 2020, accessed 22 April 2022;
WJC, Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism on social media up 30 percent in January 2018 compared to 2016, WJC report finds.

[13] Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2020) Hosting the 'Holohoax': A Snapshot of Holocaust Denial Across Social Media.

Despite these efforts, recent research has demonstrated that Holocaust denial and distortion remain present on social media and online platforms.[14] In December 2021, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) found several examples of Holocaust denial on Facebook, one year after the platform banned such content.[15] In Latin America, ObservatorioWeb also reported an increase in Holocaust denial online over the course of 2020.[16] All of this needs to be seen in the context of rising antisemitism online, which often goes unchecked.[17]

Figure 1: Facebook and TikTok redirect to the joint World Jewish Congress and UNESCO site AboutHolocaust.org



This report therefore seeks to update knowledge on the context of Holocaust denial and distortion at a time when many platforms have begun to amend their policies, but enforcement appears far from complete. It seeks to answer the following critical questions:

1. How much Holocaust-related content on social media denies it or distorts key elements of it?
2. What are the key narratives in contemporary Holocaust denial and distortion?
3. How are Holocaust denial and distortion communicated, and how are they situated within wider discourses and frames?
4. What can be done by online platform companies, policy-makers, educators and organizations promoting Holocaust remembrance, education and research to tackle the problem?

In addition to updating knowledge, the report also makes two other important contributions. First, it addresses content in four languages (English, French, German and Spanish) and thus builds on many existing civil society reports that focus primarily on English.[18] In addition, by placing more focus on Holocaust distortion (rather than just denial), the report provides a broad picture of the problem online. The report aims to inform legislators and policy-makers; the companies that run online platforms; and practitioners working in the area of Holocaust education about the extent and nature of the contemporary problem. Furthermore, the report seeks to provide an evidence base for educational practitioners to build on as they continue their work to ensure the history of the Holocaust is understood.

The report is structured as follows: the introduction provides definitions of Holocaust denial and distortion, with a detailed typology of distortion. Questions about the harm of Holocaust denial and distortion are also addressed. Section 2 describes the methodology and presents overall findings on the amount of Holocaust denial and distortion identified on online platforms. It analyses different types of Holocaust denial and distortion, with concrete examples of their use online. Section 3 explores the ways in which Holocaust denial and distortion are communicated. Sections 4 and 5 provide conclusions and gather the evidence in the form of policy recommendations for governments, civil society, academia, international organizations, online platform companies and education.

[14] Walden, V.G. (2021). Understanding Holocaust memory and education in the digital age: Before and after COVID-19. Holocaust Studies, 1-22.
[15] ADL, (2021). One Year After Ban, Holocaust Denial Remains on Facebook.
See also, the Expo Foundation, HOPE not hate, and the Amadeu Antonio Foundation (2021). Antisemitism in the Digital Age, accessed 15 April 2022.
[16] Observatorio Web (2020) Antisemitismo en Internet.
[17] For example, the Centre for Countering Digital Hate showed in August 2021 that 84 per cent of antisemitic content that was reported to social media companies was allowed to remain on their platforms: Centre for Countering Digital Hate (2021) https://www.counterhate.com/failuretoprotect, accessed 15 January 2022.
[18] English, French and Spanish were chosen as the focus of this study as three transnational and United Nations languages. German was added to the study in consideration of the specific historical legacy of the Nazi German regime, and the prevalence of relevant legislation on Holocaust denial. Holocaust denial and distortion are present on social media in many other languages and these deserve full and proper attention in further research.

1.2 A global commitment to counter Holocaust denial and distortion

The denial of the genocide of the Jewish people, often referred to as the Holocaust or Shoah, perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its allies and collaborators has been resoundingly denounced by the international community. A resolution on Holocaust denial adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in January 2022 condemned Holocaust denial and distortion without any reservation and urged all United Nations Member States to do so, in line with the United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 60/7 (2005),[19] 61/255 (2007)[20] and UNESCO General Conference Resolution 34C/61 (2007).[21]

The United Nations resolution from January 2022 defines Holocaust denial and distortion[22] as referring to:

- Discourse and propaganda that deny the historical reality and the extent of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during the Second World War, known as the Holocaust or Shoah;
- Any attempt to claim that the Holocaust did not take place, and may include publicly denying or calling into doubt the use of principal mechanisms of destruction (such as gas chambers, mass shooting, starvation and torture) or the intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people;
- Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany;
- Gross minimization of the number of the victims of the Holocaust in contradiction of reliable sources;
- Attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide;
- Statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event;
- Attempts to blur the responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps devised and operated by Nazi Germany by putting blame on other nations or ethnic groups.

In the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Holocaust denial, adopted on 20 January 2022, Member States expressed specific concern about 'the growing prevalence of Holocaust denial or distortion through the use of information and communications technologies'.[23] The resolution urges all Member States to 'reject without any reservation any denial or distortion of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part, or any activities to this end'. It further asks Member States to develop programmes to educate future generations, and urges online platform companies to take active measures to combat antisemitism and Holocaust denial or distortion. This report and recommendations are intended as a contribution to this vital work.

[19] Resolution on Holocaust Remembrance adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 1 November 2005 A/RES/60/7.
[20] Resolution on Holocaust Denial adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 22 March 2007 A/RES/61/255.
[21] Resolution adopted by UNESCO General Conference Resolution on 8 October 2007 34C/61.
[22] The Resolution draws on the non-binding working definition of denial and distortion adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) by consensus at the Plenary meeting in Toronto on 10 October 2013. It states, that 'distortion and/or denial of the Holocaust refers, inter alia, to: (a) Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany; (b) Gross minimization of the number of the victims of the Holocaust in contradiction to reliable sources; (c) Attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide; (d) Statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event; (e) Attempts to blur the responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps devised and operated by Nazi Germany by putting blame on other nations or ethnic groups'.
[23] United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Holocaust Denial A/RES/76/250, adopted 20 January 2022.

1.3 What is Holocaust distortion?

Holocaust distortion significantly and deliberately misrepresents its historical facts. For example, the numbers of victims might be grossly underestimated; the numbers of helpers and rescuers inflated; difficult parts of a country's own national history might be overlooked or omitted (for example, holding only Hitler and the leading Nazis responsible, downplaying the role of collaborators and the widespread complicity of many ordinary people in the genocide, including in occupied and allied countries).

Several countries have introduced 'memory laws' that attempt to advance specific narratives of the Holocaust, that deflect guilt and responsibility for the crime of genocide from the nation to Nazi Germans, 'marginal fringe' groups, or onto the Jewish people.[24] The laws advance Holocaust distortion when they deny national or communal complicity in atrocity crimes, and protect those narratives from criticism or refutation. In several instances, such laws have been used to prosecute or have significantly restricted legitimate historical inquiry by researchers, scholars and on the victims of atrocity crimes, which infringe upon international standards of freedom of expression.

National memory debates have also included efforts to rehabilitate the perpetrators of the genocide, by portraying their ignorance of Nazi crimes, conjecturing about their 'secret opposition' to genocidal acts, or representing the perpetrators as victims.

Current expressions of Holocaust distortion are numerous and varied. In order to add structure to the empirical work in the report, a typology of potential distortion was developed, based upon the IHRA Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion:

Celebrating: Statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event. For example, the 'Six Million Wasn't Enough' slogan.

Blaming: Attempts to deflect responsibility and guilt for the Holocaust onto the Jews, by accusing them of causing their own genocide, arguing that they were actively complicit in the Holocaust (in order to use it to gain a national State), or that they somehow 'deserved' or provoked their fate.[25]

Delegitimizing: Distortion through depicting Israel as a Nazi State, equating Israeli policy towards the Palestinians with the gas chambers, death camps and mass murder used in the Holocaust.

Smearing: Distortion through claims that accuse Jews of exploiting or seeking to benefit from the Holocaust. This includes claims that the Holocaust is given more importance than it deserves; or that Jews talk too much about the Holocaust and use it to manipulate others.

Equating: Distortion by appropriating the emotional and rhetorical force of the Holocaust in the service of a political, social or moral agenda by equating the Holocaust to another event, without regard for the integrity of the historical past or the suffering of the Nazis' victims.

Omitting: Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany. This could include deflecting the guilt and responsibility for the Holocaust onto the Nazis and/or a 'marginal fringe', rather than acknowledge the participation, collaboration and complicity of one's own nation.[26] This includes distortions omitting aspects of the Holocaust that are too difficult to bear because they conflict with a strongly held sense of identity (often linked with national myths held by nationalistic, illiberal movements).

[24] Shafir, M. "Denying the Shoah in Post-Communist Eastern Europe". In Robert S. Wystrich (ed.), Holocaust Denial. The Politics of Perfidy, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2012: 27-65.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

1.4 Why is the denial and distortion of the Holocaust harmful?

The Holocaust is still within living memory and its trauma continues to impact our world. It affects the self-identity and world view of the descendants of the victims and their communities, and also of people from the societies that committed these historic crimes. It is well-recognized in the field of transitional justice that truth-seeking can be healing, that an accounting for past crimes can lead to greater understanding and may help to resolve conflicts between peoples and communities.[27] Denial and distortion of the Holocaust inhibit such productive memory-work.

The Holocaust was first and foremost a disaster for its victims, and it remains a historic wound for the communities that were targeted. However, it was also a catastrophe for humanity as a whole: an expression of antisemitism and violence, enabled by an anti-democratic, totalitarian regime, its allies and collaborators. In countries across Europe, people became complicit in the murder of their neighbours. If humanity fails to remember, confront and learn from this traumatic past, then society will have an incomplete understanding of the deep flaws in the modern world, the social and economic relations, beliefs and value-systems and the weaknesses in political institutions that facilitated mass violence in Europe. The question is urgent and vital. Distortions of the Holocaust prevent society from reaching a full reckoning with this difficult past, a reckoning that could lead to greater understanding of the causes and warning signs of genocide, and that might help to strengthen efforts for genocide prevention.

Antisemitism exists in all regions of the world, regardless of the presence of a Jewish population or a direct link to the history of the Holocaust.[28] Antisemitism can be spread through Holocaust denial and forms of Holocaust distortion. Accusations that the Holocaust is a hoax recirculate age-old antisemitic lies, myths and tropes that Jews are devious and untrustworthy people who manipulate the world through conspiracies. Some deniers claim that Jews invented the Holocaust to extort money from Germany and other countries through reparations, and to garner support for their claims to national statehood. It is used by some to legitimize neo-Nazism, white supremacy and the far right through an attempted rehabilitation of Hitler and the Nazis. Holocaust denial is also found in other violent extremist movements, among radical Islamists and on the far left,[29] often as part of an anti-globalist, anti-capitalist and anti-colonialist discourse with antisemitic undercurrents that link Jews with global capitalism, buy into myths of Jewish conspiracies based on anti-Israelism (the idea that the State of Israel has no legitimacy) and in response to the conflict in the Middle East.[30] Holocaust denial and distortion feed violent and extremist groups. These groups threaten everyone.

Those who deliberately distort the Holocaust may not deny the mass murder of European Jews but are often motivated by animosity towards Jews that they share with deniers. Some seek to excuse or justify the Holocaust, blaming Jews for what happened to them, or to minimize these mass crimes by grossly underestimating the number of victims. Others wilfully misrepresent historical records by omitting difficult parts of their own national history or by ignoring it altogether,[31] downplaying the role of local perpetrators and collaborators in the Holocaust; inflating the number of helpers and rescuers; or glossing over the general population's widespread complicity in the genocide. As with denial, antisemitism is often a key component in these forms of Holocaust distortion. Holocaust memory and remembrance may evoke guilt and can challenge strongly held national myths or political identities, which may deepen resentment towards Jews.[32] Such manifestations once again often invoke antisemitic notions that Jews exaggerate or use the Holocaust for their own benefit.[33]

[27] Jones, Briony and Lühe, Ulrike. (eds.) (2021) Knowledge for Peace. Cheltenham UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
[28] In 2016, a Holocaust cartoon competition in the Islamic Republic of Iran was sponsored by the Owj Media and Cultural Institute and the Sarsheshmeh Cultural Center, exhibiting over 15 cartoons that either denied or distorted the Holocaust, including through mocking and celebrating the genocide. The event followed a similar conference in 2006. Both events condemned by UNESCO, while former Secretary-General Kofi Annan responded in 2006 that, "any attempt to cast doubt on the reality of this unique and undeniable horror must be firmly resisted by all people of goodwill and of whatever faith". See, https://news.un.org/en/story/2006/12/202352-secretary-general-deplores-any-conference-would-question-reality-holocaust.
[29] Igounet, V. (2000), Histoire du négationnisme en France. Seuil; Share, S. (2001). Les idées fausses ne meurent jamais. Le négationnisme, histoire d'un réseau international. Lormont, Le Bord de l'eau.
[30] Mulhall, Joe, et al (2018) Rewriting History: Lying, Denying and Revising the Holocaust. Hope Not Hate Publishing. In a wide-ranging survey, the authors explore denial on the far right and on the left.
See also Hope Not Hate (2020) Inside Keep Talking. The conspiracy theory group uniting the far left and far right.
Davidovitch, Nitza (2017) 'The Holocaust paradox: Holocaust denial and its use in the Arab world'. Israeli Affairs 23(2):411-26.
[31] Schmalenberger, S. and Hübscher, M., 'Tertiary Antisemitism in Social Media Posts of Germany's Alternative für Deutschland'. In Hübscher, M., & Von Mering, S. (2022). Antisemitism on social media. Routledge: London.
[32] Bergmann, W. and Erb, R., (1986). "Kommukationslatenz, Moral und öffentliche Meinung. Theoretische Überlegungen zum Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland ", Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie, 38, 2, pp. 223-246.
[33] IHRA (2019), op.cit.

The history of the Holocaust can also be distorted through universalization that decontextualizes the historical reality of this past. It is often unintentional, unrecognized and not necessarily done with any antisemitic intent. It can also reflect a deep-rooted unwillingness to confront the historical reality of the Holocaust – that this was a genocide of Jews, committed and facilitated by non-Jews.[34] In some forms – such as the TikTok Holocaust trend in Summer 2020 where young creators posted short videos of themselves in the role of dead Holocaust victims – it may not be immediately clear what motivates such behaviour and representations.[35] Deeply offensive and distressing to many, it appears that, in some cases at least, this may have been an attempt to respond to learning about the Holocaust and to educate others. Such distorted representations of the past nonetheless have significant consequences for public knowledge, memory, discourse and historical understanding. Policy-makers, researchers, civil society, educators as well as online platforms need to understand these manifestations more deeply in order to provide effective counter-messages around such forms of distortion.

Historical literacy; awareness of antisemitic rhetoric, stereotypes and prejudice; and media and information literacy are crucial for preventing and countering Holocaust related dis- and misinformation and an important step towards countering all forms of contemporary antisemitism. It is hoped that this study will prove an important contribution to countering denial and distortion of the Holocaust and will strengthen efforts to understand and confront this profoundly traumatic and disturbing past.

[34] Salmons, P. (2010) 'Universal meaning, or historical understanding?' Teaching History 141: 59, Historical Association.
[35] Walden, V.G. (10 September 2020) TikTok #HolocaustChallenge https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2020/09/10/tiktok-holocaustchallenge/, accessed 20 May 2022.

Measuring Holocaust denial and distortion online

2.1 Research scope

This report aims to provide a wide-ranging assessment of the extent to which Holocaust-related content on social media and online platforms denies its factual basis or distorts the Holocaust by minimizing or misrepresenting its history. The report seeks to identify content that has evaded content moderation (on platforms that seek to remove content which denies and distorts the Holocaust). Perhaps more importantly, it also aims to provide an understanding of how denial and distortion about the Holocaust are communicated by people on online platforms.

This research was conducted across multiple languages (English, French, Spanish and German) and different platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and Telegram) in June and July 2021. These platforms were selected because they are extremely popular online forums for social discussion, but also because they provided a range of different formats for expressing content. Furthermore, they all have different approaches to 'content moderation', the practice whereby platforms enforce rules and norms about what content users can and cannot create and share on their services.

Content moderation policies on Holocaust denial or distortion

Facebook and **Instagram (Meta)** users are told not to post content targeting a person or group of people (including all groups except non-protected groups such as those who have carried out violent crimes or sexual offences or representing less than half of a group) on the basis of their aforementioned protected characteristic(s) or immigration status with designated dehumanizing comparisons, generalizations, or behavioural statements (in written or visual form) that include denying or distorting information about the Holocaust.

Telegram considers that 'all Telegram chats and group chats are private amongst their participants'. Telegram does not process any requests related to them.

- By signing up for Telegram, users agree not to:
- Use the service to send spam or scam users.
- Promote violence on publicly viewable Telegram channels, bots, etc.
- Post illegal pornographic content on publicly viewable Telegram channels, bots, etc.

Telegram 'does not apply to local restrictions on freedom of speech'. Telegram 'will not block anybody who peacefully expresses alternative opinions'.

Twitter prohibits 'targeting individuals or groups with content that references forms of violence or violent events where a protected category was the primary target or victims, where the intent is to harass. This includes, but is not limited to media or text that refers to or depicts:

- genocides, (e.g., the Holocaust);
- lynchings'.

In addition, Twitter considers 'hateful imagery to be logos, symbols, or images whose purpose is to promote hostility and malice against others based on their race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or ethnicity/ national origin. Some examples of hateful imagery include, but are not limited to:

- symbols historically associated with hate groups, e.g., the Nazi swastika;
- images depicting others as less than human, or altered to include hateful symbols, e.g., altering images of individuals to include animalistic features; or
- images altered to include hateful symbols or references to a mass murder that targeted a protected category, e.g., manipulating images of individuals to include yellow Star of David badges, in reference to the Holocaust.

Media depicting hateful imagery is not permitted within live video, account bio, profile or header images. All other instances must be marked as sensitive media. Additionally, sending an individual unsolicited hateful imagery is a violation of our [Twitter's] abusive behaviour policy'.

TikTok 'do not permit content that contains hate speech or involves hateful behaviour, and we remove it from our platform'.

TikTok consider hateful ideologies to be those that 'demonstrate clear hostility toward people because of their protected attributes. Hateful ideologies are incompatible with the inclusive and supportive community that our platform provides and we remove content that promotes them'

According to the community guidelines, users cannot post, upload, stream or share:

- Content that praises, promotes, glorifies, or supports any hateful ideology (such as white supremacy, misogyny, anti-LGBTQ or antisemitism)
- Content that contains names, symbols, logos, flags, slogans, uniforms, gestures, salutes, illustrations, portraits, songs, music, lyrics or other objects related to a hateful ideology
- Content that denies well-documented and violent events have taken place affecting groups with protected attributes (such as Holocaust denial)
- Claims of supremacy over a group of people with reference to other protected attributes
- Conspiracy theories used to justify hateful ideologies.

2.2 Methodology[36]

First, a list of keywords was identified relating to the Holocaust and commonly associated with Holocaust denial discourse. There were four main types of keyword:

- Generic words and phrases relating to Jews, such as 'Jews' and 'Judaism';
- Generic words and phrases relating to the Holocaust, such as 'Auschwitz' or 'Arbeit macht frei';
- Words and phrases often associated with antisemitism, such as 'ZOG '('Zionist Occupied Government' - an antisemitic conspiracy theory that suggests Western governments are controlled by Jews); and
- Words and phrases including coded terms often associated with denial and distortion of the Holocaust, such as 'holohoax' (a shortened term suggesting the Holocaust was a hoax that has become popular in denial communities) and 'six gorillion' (a sarcastic reference to the six million who lost their lives in the Holocaust that implicitly suggests this number is exaggerated).

The aim of the list was to collect a broad spectrum of keywords that would maximize the chances of capturing the variety of different forms of talking about and discussing the Holocaust using the platforms and languages in question. These keywords were collected through desk research: by reviewing existing literature on Holocaust denial and distortion including academic works and reports by institutions working in the field of Holocaust education and remembrance and think tanks. Review and suggestions were also requested from the project's Advisory Group. Some of the keywords collected were specific to each language, whereas others applied across multiple languages. A list of sources consulted and a link to download the keyword list are available in Appendix A1. While the list is complete, it is not an exhaustive list of all relevant keywords related to the Holocaust.

Using this keyword list, data were collected from the online platforms in question by searching for content containing the keywords identified. Each platform has a slightly different way of providing data and has varying restrictions on the type of data it provides. Some platforms also make it easy to search for language specific content, whilst others make it more difficult. The differences mean that comparisons between platforms should be interpreted with caution. Nonetheless, broad trends and differences are evident and tentative conclusions can be drawn. Appendix A2 gives full details of this process.

All the data were collected in June and July 2021.[37] For each platform, data were collected during a period of about one week. The timing of the data collection means the results are likely to be influenced by events that were ongoing while the data were collected. The largest such event is undoubtedly COVID-19: the outbreak began in early 2020 but was still at the top of the news agenda when the data were collected. A ceasefire was also agreed between Israel and Hamas in May 2021 after 11 days of conflict, just before the data collection took place. Other such events will be highlighted where appropriate throughout the study. If the data had been collected at a different time, it is likely that the results would have been different as some of the observed patterns are sensitive to temporal shifts. Future research could investigate longer time periods, or compare different periods, to further understand the impact of current affairs on Holocaust denial and distortion.

Facebook and Instagram data were collected through the Crowdtangle Application Programming Interface (API), which provides access to large-scale public Facebook groups, Facebook pages and Instagram accounts. Twitter data were collected through the Twitter Search API, which provides access to the previous seven days of tweets created on the platform. For TikTok,[38] a search was conducted for hashtags related to the keywords identified, as TikTok offers no other means to search for content. For each identified hashtag, the top five videos were captured by manually visiting the hashtag page on TikTok.[38] For Telegram, a search was carried out for public Telegram groups containing the identified keywords in their title or description. The most recent 10 contributions from each group were then collected. A more detailed summary of the data collection on each platform is provided in Appendix A2.

Finally, from the data collected using the methods above, a subsample was selected for coding. The aim was to collect around 200 pieces of content per platform and per language, resulting in around 4,000 pieces of content overall. The sample was also selected to provide an approximate balance between content containing the generic keywords (relating to Jews and the Holocaust in general) and the keywords relating specifically to either antisemitism or Holocaust denial and distortion. Although the sample is relatively small for each platform and language, the aim of the project was to take a broad-spectrum approach and look across as many languages and platforms as possible. As not all platform and language combinations generated 200 pieces of content during the time period, a total of 3,848 pieces of content were coded. A full breakdown of all the content coded for each language is provided in Appendix A2.

[36] This project received ethical approval from the Oxford Internet Institute research ethics board (ref: SSH_OII_CIA_21_018).
[37] The precise date of data collection varied between platforms – see Appendix A2 for details. These time periods coincided with the start of the data collection phase of the project and were not selected for any specific reason.
[38] The top five videos are not necessarily the most recent as they are ordered by a ranking algorithm, although the researchers found that more recent videos tended to be prioritized.

Each piece of content was coded by one of the researchers in the team. The researcher looked at whether the piece of content related to the Holocaust itself. A total of 1,028 of the items considered were related to the Holocaust, or around 27 per cent of the overall content. This comparatively low number was the result of the wide spectrum of screened keywords. For example, many of the keywords relating to Jews, and those which were associated with antisemitism, produced content that was not substantially related to the Holocaust. However, this wide spectrum has the benefit of capturing a range of discourses about the Holocaust that would have been missed by a narrower spectrum of keywords. A second factor behind this comparatively low number was the lack of language specificity of some of the keywords, meaning that content from other languages often made its way into the data. For example, the words 'Hitler' and 'Auschwitz' are globally recognized and therefore independent of language; whilst hashtags such as #HitlerWasRight have appeared on content in a wide variety of different languages even though they are ostensibly in English. A small amount of content was also unavailable for review, after being deleted either by the user themselves, or by the content moderation efforts of the platforms under review.

Once it was established that the content related to the Holocaust, the researchers then assessed whether it denied or distorted the Holocaust. An individual piece of content could contain more than one example of Holocaust denial and distortion and therefore be assigned to several categories. For instance, a video that claimed that the number killed in the Holocaust had been greatly exaggerated to enable Jewish people to gain greater reparations from Germany would be classified as both Holocaust denial and Holocaust distortion, the latter under the 'exploiting' sub-category. Indirect references to denial and distortionist narratives (for example, news reports about Holocaust denial) were not classified as denial or distortion. A second member of the research team rechecked all coding decisions made by the first researcher, with any disagreements resolved by discussion.

Limitations

Beyond only being able to address a small amount of content in each language-platform combination, one of the main issues for studies of social media is a lack of information about who is posting the content observed, or the nature of their intentions. Indeed, as described below, this lack of information on intention is one of the main challenges of online content moderation. It is also a defence that many contemporary purveyors of Holocaust denial and distortion hide behind. Future research could usefully address this gap.

2.3 Quantifying Holocaust denial and distortion online

Scale of the problem

As shown in Figure 2, out of the 1,028 pieces of content identified as relating to the Holocaust, 16.4 per cent either denied or distorted the history of the Holocaust.

16.4%

either denied or distorted the history of the Holocaust.

The results presented in Figure 3 show how Holocaust-related content was distributed over the five platforms and, in each case, the proportion on each platform that either denied or distorted history.

Figure 2. Percentage of content relating to the Holocaust that denied or distorted its history.

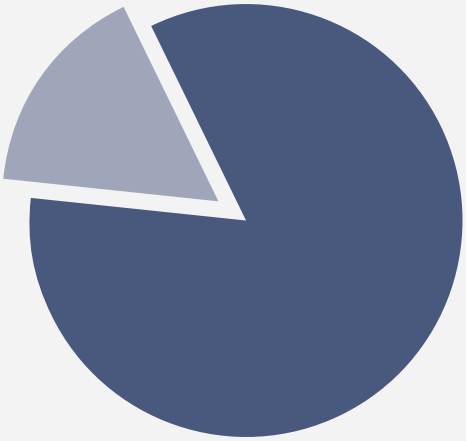
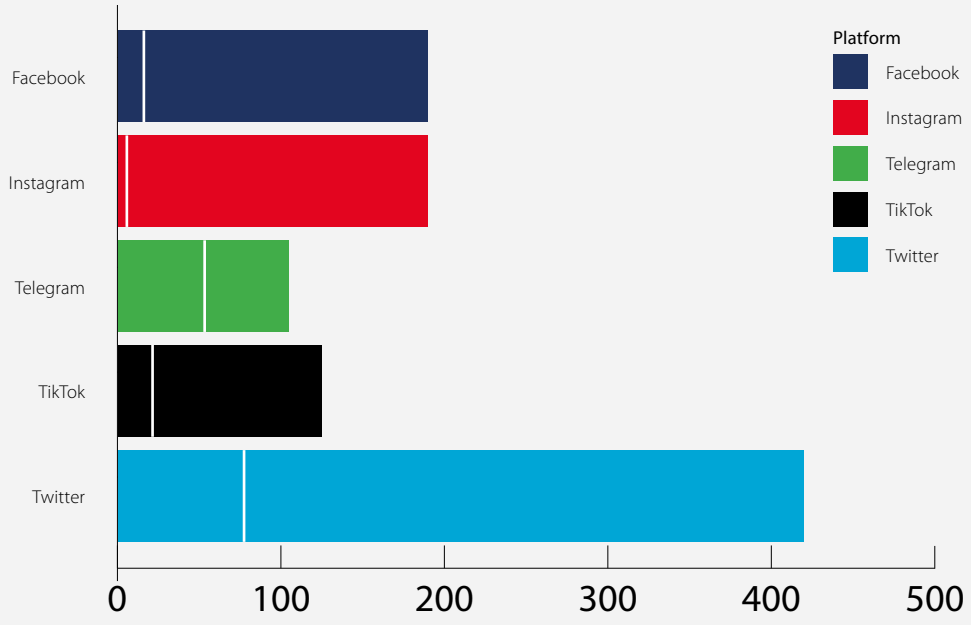


Figure 3 compares the proportion of content on each platform containing themes of Holocaust denial or distortion. The graphics are then further broken down in Figure 4 into the different categories of Holocaust denial and distortion. The very different data collection methods available for each platform mean that such comparisons between platforms should be treated with caution.

For example, the Crowdtangle service that allows access to Facebook and Instagram data focuses on large-scale, public areas of the site,[39] whilst the Twitter API allows a search across all tweets except for those posting from private accounts. If posts in large, public areas are less likely to be those denying or distorting the Holocaust, then this may bias the results.

Figure 3: Distribution of 1,028 pieces of Holocaust content across five online platforms, and the proportion (to the left of the white line) that denied or distorted history.

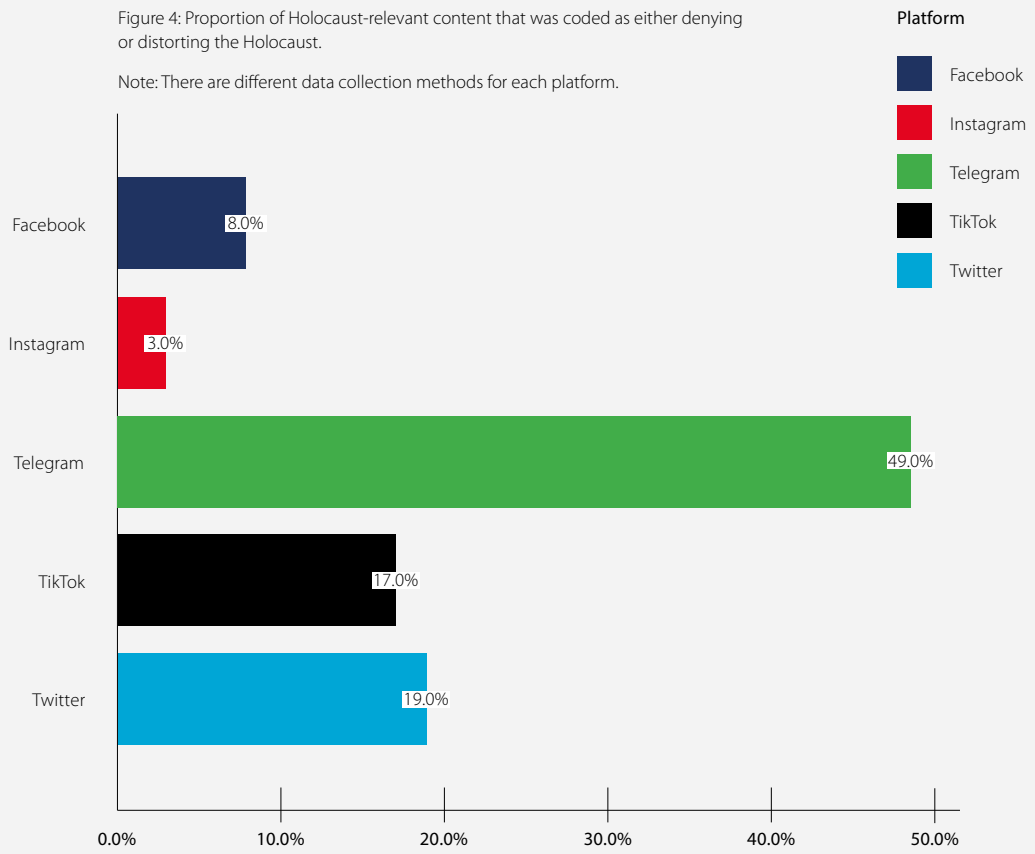
Note: There are different data collection methods for each platform.



[39] CrowdTangle tracks the public content from influential verified Facebook profiles, Facebook Pages, Facebook Public Groups, public Instagram accounts and popular subreddits. Any accounts, Pages or Groups that have privacy settings enabled cannot be searched.

Figure 4: Proportion of Holocaust-relevant content that was coded as either denying or distorting the Holocaust.

Note: There are different data collection methods for each platform.



Every platform reviewed contained some content that either denied or distorted the Holocaust. Despite the fact that some platforms have changed their content moderation standards, Holocaust denial and distortion therefore continue to exist throughout social media.[40] While on some platforms (such as Facebook and Instagram), the proportions are relatively small, they are nevertheless significant in light of the enormous volume of content that is published on these platforms. Furthermore, the proportion of Holocaust denial and distortion may be underestimated on image-reliant platforms such as Instagram that rely on using CrowdTangle to research hashtags and keywords. This methodology does not identify these terms if they are represented in the image alone.

Secondly, across three of the platforms reviewed (Telegram, Twitter and TikTok), the proportion of Holocaust denial and distortion is relatively large – indeed on Telegram it approaches 50 per cent of the content reviewed. On this platform in particular, users who are looking for accurate and reliable content on that period in history have a high chance of encountering material that denies or distorts the Holocaust.

[40] Not all forms of Holocaust distortion constitute hate speech as defined by international standards. While there is no international legal definition of hate speech, the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech understands it 'as any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, on other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor'. Examples of Holocaust distortion that do not reach this threshold are still dangerous, as they can restrict or manipulate how people understand of the past, limit critical thinking and are offensive to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

2.4 Holocaust denial and distortion across languages

Figure 5: proportion of denial and distortion content identified, by language and platform

Note: the Y-axis is different for each platform.

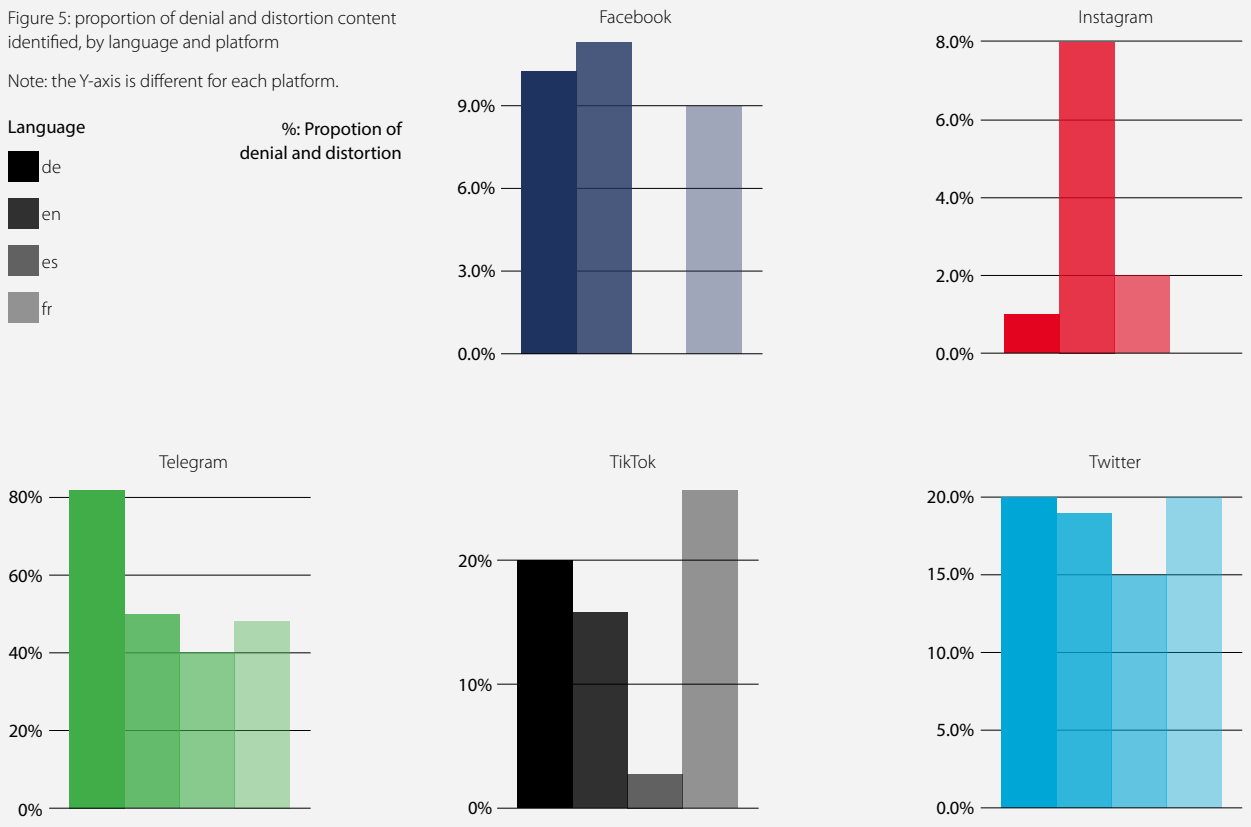


Figure 5 reviews the proportion of Holocaust denial and distortion content by language. Holocaust denial and distortion are an issue in all the languages in question. Each platform, however, reveals different patterns. Facebook had comparable amounts of denial and distortion content in German, English and French, but none in Spanish. On Instagram, the small amount of Holocaust denial and distortion found was almost exclusively in English. On Telegram, all languages showed a high prevalence but German was particularly striking, with over 80 per cent of all German language content reviewed either denying or distorting the Holocaust. This chimes with other research claiming that German-language Telegram hosts conspiracy theories and misinformation, which is especially concerning as the number of German-language Telegram users continues to increase.[41]

On TikTok, French was the language that contained most denial and distortion. This was partly driven by the popularity of antisemitic French comic Dieudonné on the platform.[42]

On Twitter, the significant amount of problematic content was relatively equal across all languages.

While no content relating to denial or distortion was found in Spanish on Facebook or in French on Instagram, this does not mean that Holocaust denial and distortion are nonexistent on online platforms in these languages. Considering that only approximately 200 pieces of content were reviewed per language for each platform over a period of about a week through a keyword search, it is not necessarily the case that there is no content that denies and distorts the Holocaust in these languages, but simply that the prevalence of this content is too low to be uncovered in a small sample. Other studies, such as the Anti-Defamation League's report, "Holocuento y otras mentiras": El antisemitismo en español en Facebook ["The Holohoax and other lies": Antisemitism in Spanish on Facebook], suggest that moderation is actually a lot less effective on non-English content.[43]

[41] Scott, M. (22 September 2021). Ahead of German election, Telegram plays radicalizing role accessed 4 April 2022. Ahead of German election, Telegram plays radicalizing role.
[42] See Figure 23, page 43.
[43] See also, Altman, Liat and Bermusez, Caroline (2021). The anti-Semitism that Facebook allows in Spanish is unacceptable, accessed 4 April 2022. El Español; Braylan, Marissa (2018 /Informe sobre antisemitismo en la Argentina report from Argentina, accessed 4 April 2022.(2018). Informe sobre antisemitismo en la Argentina report from Argentina.

While it is possible to identify the language of a piece of content, this does not mean that it is also possible to identify the location of the individual creating the content, nor anything about their demographic characteristics. Future research could usefully explore the question of who is creating content that denies and distorts the Holocaust in more detail. Similarly, further research in other languages not included in this study is vital to understand a wider, global picture of Holocaust denial and distortion online.

Across all languages, most content received little engagement, suggesting it was from low-level accounts rather than high-profile figures, influencers or organized campaigns. [44]

2.5 Narratives of Holocaust denial and distortion on social media and online platforms

This report applies a qualitative and narrative analysis of the denial and distortion content found in the research. As outlined above, each individual piece of content was coded by researchers based on whether it contained references to Holocaust denial, or one of six different types of Holocaust distortion.[45]

Figure 6: proportion of content with references to denial and distortion narratives

Note: One piece of content can contain multiple narratives.

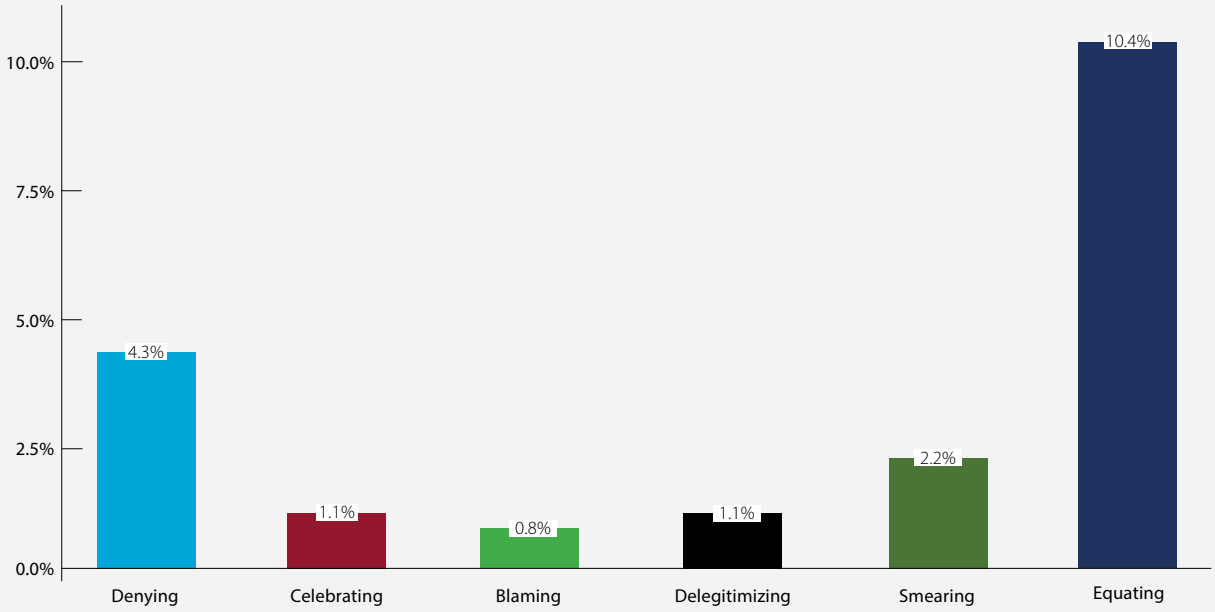


Figure 6 shows the proportion of Holocaust-related content referencing one of these narratives that was observed during the research project. Each individual piece of content can contain multiple narratives within it. For example, a piece of content that argued the Holocaust was exaggerated to benefit Jewish people would come under both the 'denying' and 'smearing' categories.

Equating the Holocaust with other phenomena for rhetorical force and emotional effect was the most significant category of Holocaust denial and distortion present across all platforms: more than 10 per cent of all content reviewed involved equating the Holocaust to other present and past events. The arguably more offensive forms of distortion, which either celebrated or denied the history of the Holocaust, may have been subject to self-, community- or platform-regulation. To be clear, not all comparisons to the Holocaust are problematic.

[44] Holocaust denial and distortion are also spread through coordinated messages that may not result in significant direct engagement and/or sharing of content, but are nevertheless harmful. This has been observed in studies of the use of disinformation by both State and non-State actors that use proxy accounts for the purposes of propaganda, for example. See Shu, K. (2020). Disinformation, misinformation, and fake news in social media: Emerging research challenges and opportunities. Cham, Switzerland.

[45] See the introduction.

For example, it is reasonable and legitimate to reference the Holocaust in relation to other mass crimes and genocides. What is at issue here are misappropriations of the Holocaust that invoke its emotional power with little regard for the significance or historical integrity of the Holocaust itself. The calculus involved is to some extent subjective – what may seem a reasonable and legitimate comparison to one person can be highly offensive and inappropriate to another. However, as much as there can be a grey area, it is also clear that calling people Nazis simply because you disagree with them, or likening public health measures during a pandemic to persecution in Hitler's Germany are so far from the reality of the Holocaust as to be no more than a rhetorical device, using and exploiting the memory of millions of dead in order to further an entirely unrelated political or moral agenda. As described below, comparisons between the Holocaust and contemporary COVID-19 public health measures were particularly prevalent.

Outright Holocaust denial remains significant on social media and online platforms and comprised the second largest category: 4.3 per cent of online content that referenced the Holocaust contained arguments that denied that it had taken place. The majority of this content featured on Telegram.

Narratives smearing Jews by accusing them of exploiting the Holocaust were comparatively less present (2.2 per cent of content reviewed). Narratives celebrating the Holocaust and delegitimizing Israel by equating it to a Nazi State were both present in 1.1 per cent of the content reviewed. Narratives blaming Jews for the Holocaust, or suggesting outright Jewish complicity in the Holocaust, were the least common, at 0.8 per cent.

Omitting

This final category of 'omitting' does not appear in the data, because it did not readily show up in individual social media posts analysed in this report. This study focused on what content about the Holocaust was included in the discourse, not on what has been left out. Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust, including the actions of collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany may, in some contexts, be driven by governments and political actors, and therefore more likely to be found in other arenas of Holocaust discourse, such as in politics or research, or in other specific languages.[46]

These narratives can be found on online platforms, but are less identifiable by a methodology that employs a keyword search. For example, online discourses often emerge around the memory or memorialisation of particular events or acts of genocide, or specific perpetrators and national actors. These names and terms may not appear in a global study that requires a broader set of keywords. A different form of study would be needed to examine this kind of distortion, reviewing the wider public discourse about the Holocaust to see which narratives are commonly circulating and analysing how far these reflect the fulness of historical scholarship, or how far they are dominated by popular misconceptions and national myths.

[46] Bauer, Yehuda. (2020). Creating a "Usable" Past: On Holocaust Denial and Distortion. Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs, 14(2), 209-227; Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, Jolanta. (2019). The uses and the abuses of education about the Holocaust in Poland after 1989. Holocaust Studies, 25(3), 329-350; Koposov, N. (2018). Memory laws, memory wars: The politics of the past in Europe and Russia (New studies in European history). Cambridge. Glöckner, O., & Knocke, R. (2017). Das Zeitalter der Genozide: Ursprünge, Formen und Folgen politischer Gewalt im 20. Jahrhundert (Gewaltpolitik und Menschenrechte ; Bd. 1). Berlin. Esther Webman, 'Die Entwicklung der Holocaustwahrnehmung in arabischen Raum', in: Günther Jikeli, Kim Robin Stoller, Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun (eds.), 'Umstrittene Geschichte. Ansichten zum Holocaust unter Muslimen im internationalen Vergleich', Frankfurt/m.-New York 2013, pp. 93–121. International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, (2021). Understanding Holocaust Distortion: Contexts, Influences and Examples.

Figure 7: proportion of content containing references to denial and distortion narratives, by platform

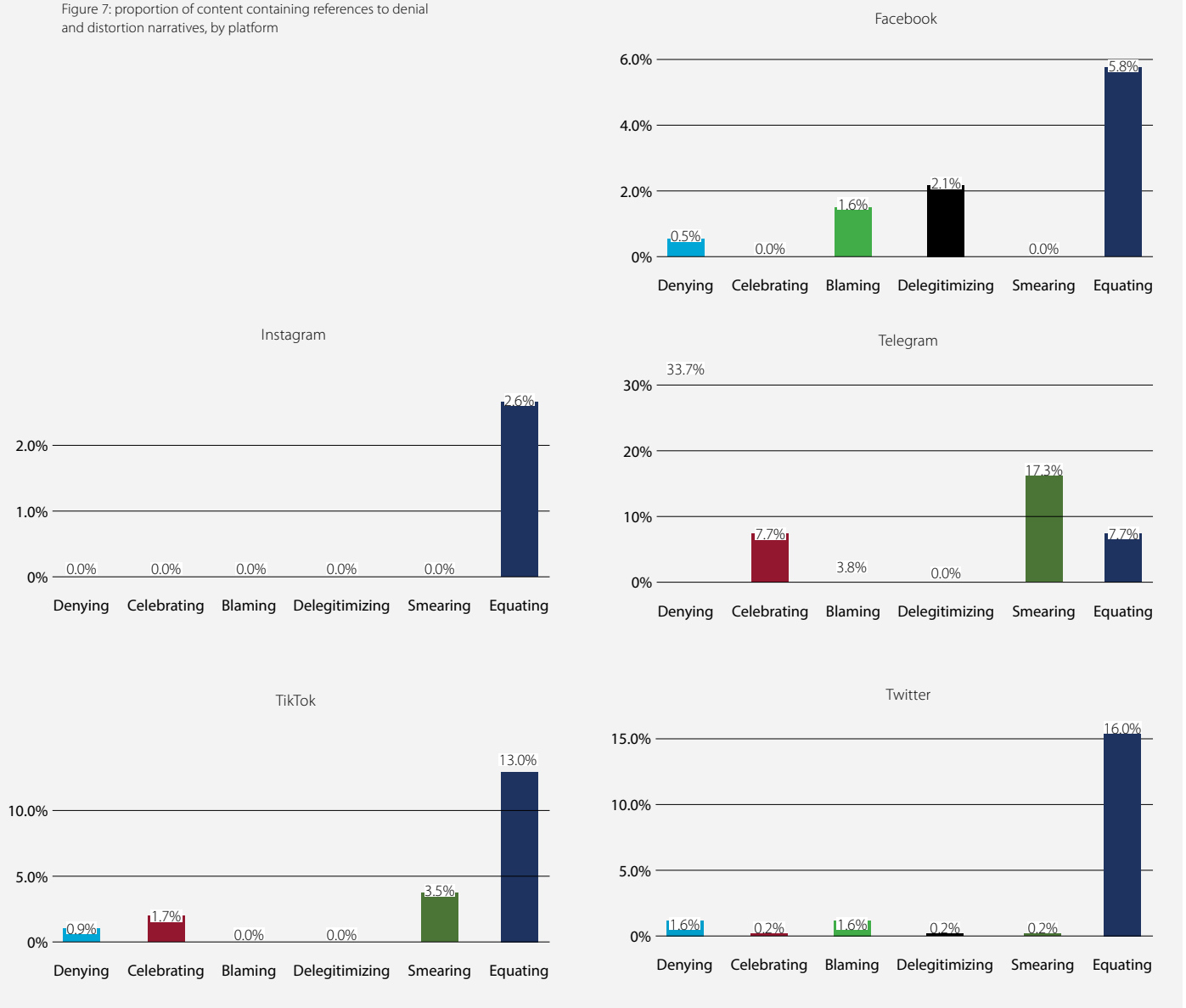


Figure 7 breaks down narrative types by individual platform. Telegram, the only platform studied without a moderation policy on hate speech or content that denies or distorts the Holocaust, was the only platform that hosted a majority of Holocaust denial (33.7 per cent), whilst 17.3 per cent suggested it was exaggerated to benefit Jewish people (smearing). On Telegram, 7.7 per cent of content celebrated the Holocaust and a further 7.7 per cent reference Holocaust equivalence (equating). Finally, 3.8 per cent of content blamed Jewish people themselves for the Holocaust.

On Facebook, equating is the biggest category, with references to Holocaust equivalence being contained in 5.8 per cent of posts. Delegitimizing Israel by depicting it as a Nazi State was the next most common category at 2.1 per cent, with blaming and denial following at 1.6 per cent and 0.5 per cent respectively. On Instagram, the only category identified was equating, accounting for 2.6 per cent of material connected to the Holocaust.

On TikTok, equating the Holocaust with other phenomena is the most common problematic category in the discourse (13 per cent), though 3.5 per cent of the content reviewed smeared Jews, accusing them of benefiting from the Holocaust, and 1.7 per cent of posts referencing the Holocaust engaged in celebrating/mocking the mass murder.

On Twitter, 16 per cent of all Holocaust-related posts reviewed suggested equivalence between the Holocaust and other issues, while 1.6 per cent of relevant content aimed to delegitimize Israel as a Nazi State. A further 1.6 per cent of content studied denied the Holocaust, 0.2 per cent blamed Jews for the Holocaust and 0.2 per cent of content came under the other two categories (smearing Jews and celebrating the Holocaust).

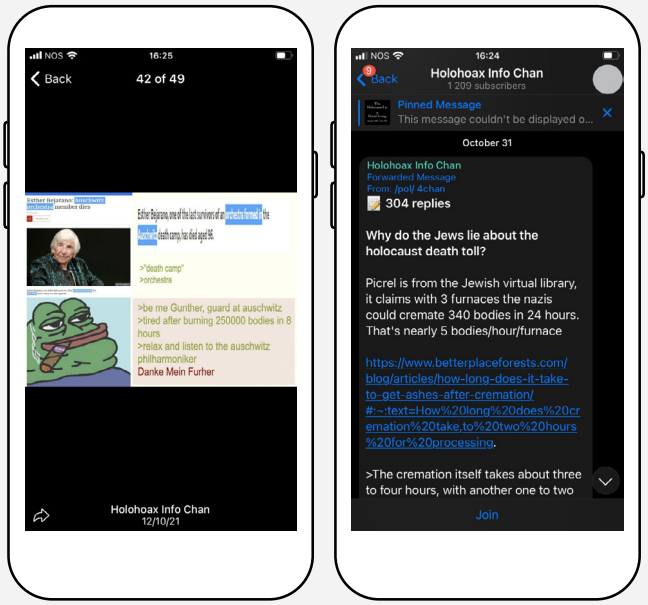
In the following sections, the report illustrates the types of material found in each of these categories.

2.5.1 Holocaust denial

Holocaust denial is illegal in several European countries and in Israel, whether covered by direct reference to Holocaust denial or as part of wider hate-speech laws.[47] Although such legislative means of tackling the phenomenon remain controversial (on the grounds of effectiveness and protecting free speech), the criminalization of Holocaust denial is a strong indication that it remains firmly outside acceptable mainstream discourse in many societies. This helps to explain why areas of the internet quickly became colonized by extremist and marginalized groups from the late 1990s. Web 2.0 became a space for proponents of conspiracy theories and other fringe beliefs to spread ideas that had little currency in academia, large publishing houses or established media organizations (because the latter could be held to account on the grounds of accuracy, probity and truth-telling). As such, sections of the internet and online platforms remain a virtual home for a range of extremist views, where such belief systems are cultivated and deepened. Even more worryingly, they also attract new adherents or filter into more mainstream discourse.

Content referencing narratives that deny the Holocaust made up 4.3 per cent of the total Holocaust-related material reviewed, and was largely discovered on Telegram. The denials identified could be broadly divided into two subtypes of conspiracy theory: Holocaust denial that attempts to discredit the established facts and historical evidence of the Holocaust, and posts that used Holocaust denial to provide evidence for other conspiracy theories.

Figure 8: Posts on Telegram questioning the number of Holocaust deaths



Holocaust denial has been circulating offline for several decades, initially promoted by figures such as Zundel, Faurisson and Irving, and which have been repeatedly tested and debunked in courts of law.[48] This form of denial involves direct challenges to and refutation of some of the core facts about the Holocaust.[49] In the social media content reviewed, such manifestations of denial often entered into quite specific, detailed debates. By way of illustration, the content in figure fignum above focusses on contesting the numbers killed during the Holocaust, claiming that six million people couldn't conceivably have been killed in the way that was described because cremating that number of bodies would have been impossible. The question posed "Why do the Jews lie about the holocaust death toll?" is an antisemitic trope that presents Jews as devious, manipulative and self-serving, and draws upon antisemitic conspiracy myths present in forgeries such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion which falsely claim Jews use such lies in order to further their plans for 'world domination', manipulating others to gain power and wealth. The argument is that by inventing or exaggerating the numbers of dead, Jews can use the guilt of Germany and other nations to extort enormous sums of money in reparations, drawing on a further antisemitic trope that Jews are greedy and avaricious.

[47] In the European Union, a 2008 Framework Decision on racism and xenophobia sought to align national legislation on Holocaust denial. Laws against Holocaust denial also exist in Israel and the Russian Federation. Some courts in the United States and the United Kingdom have taken judicial notice that the Holocaust occurred. In some contexts, national legislation may criminalize Holocaust denial while States propagate or encourages other forms of Holocaust distortion. See also: European Parliamentary Research Service. (2022). Holocaust denial in criminal law: Legal frameworks in selected EU Member States, accessed 23 May 2022.

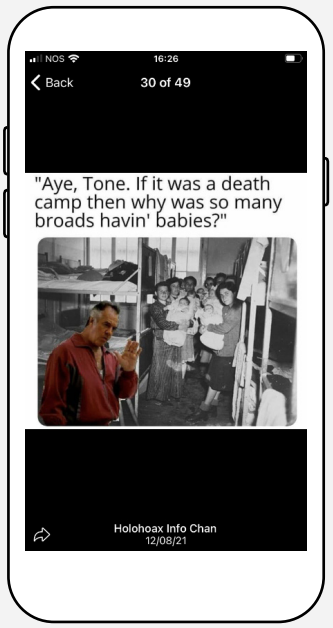
[48] Kahn, R. A. (2006). Holocaust Denial and the Law: A Comparative Study. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; Lipstadt, D. (2016). Denying the Holocaust: The growing assault on truth and memory. Penguin: United Kingdom.

[49] The World Jewish Congress and UNESCO website AboutHolocaust.org provides the world with the basic facts about the Holocaust.

Other pieces of content picked up on what the deniers regard as inconsistencies between the ruins of the camps and how they were used in the Holocaust. For instance, they argue that wooden doors could not conceivably have been used in gas chambers or that the current layout of some of the camps did not support the idea that they had been used for extermination (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: A 'Holocaust Fact Check' virtual tour posted on Telegram that details buildings in Auschwitz

Figure 10: Two posts on Telegram presenting 'happy' images of people at Auschwitz



Translation: Incredible photos of the situation of Jewish people in the German National Socialist Concentration Camp of Auschwitz.

Again, all the Holocaust deniers' claims have been consistently and irrefutably debunked by historians.[50]

Some content used pictures that were allegedly from the camps of inmates smiling or happy, or mothers who had recently given birth to babies, cited as evidence that systematic extermination could not have occurred there. Indeed, one Telegram channel (with thousands of subscribers) showed dozens of photographs of camps such as Auschwitz, Mauthausen and Esterwegen, including doctored images or photographs from other locations, misrepresenting the actual conditions and purporting to show the 'comfortable' aspects of life in these camps, such as the Mauthausen Orchestra, vegetable storage rooms in Auschwitz or the camps' sanitation and heating systems, as well as the orderly construction sites in the camps.

There were other such examples of factual contestation. Indeed, many of the Telegram channels organized themselves as collections of evidence, in a sort of pseudo-documentary fashion that involves a systematic denial of Holocaust history. The identification of these channels suggests that content related to Holocaust distortion is easily accessed through Telegram. Users do not need to circumvent detection tools to disseminate such content, and indeed make little effort to hide their motives, which marks Telegram out as distinct from the other platforms that were reviewed. What also seems significant is that even those searching for generic Holocaust related terms on Telegram (such as 'Auschwitz') are fairly likely to encounter explicit denial and distortion content.

[50] For detailed answers to the deniers' claims, visit Holocaust Denial on Trial – Debunking Holocaust Denial https://www.hdot.org/debunking-denial/.

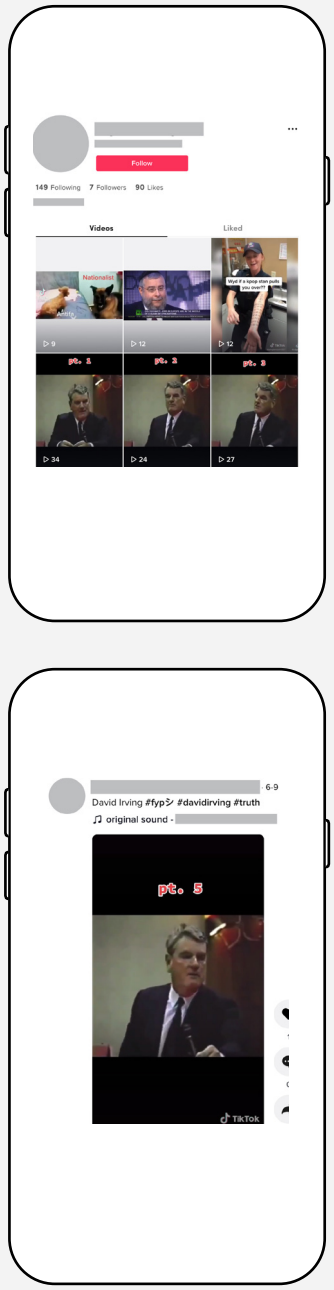
Other social media posts disseminated works by well-known Holocaust deniers and distorters. These individuals, such as David Irving, David McCalden, Ingrid Rimland, Roger Dommergue and Ursula Haverbeck, present themselves as legitimate historians and thus act as authority figures on which others can base their claims. Holocaust deniers are careful to present their arguments in ways that do not appear outwardly antisemitic or linked to neo-Nazi and other extremist forums, taking on the role of false experts by linking their social media posts to websites that present arguments with pseudo-academic, highly detailed arguments that are apparently well-sourced with copious footnotes. Those drawn to such sites and intrigued by their theories are not necessarily driven by antisemitism or extremist ideology, but may be attracted to Holocaust denial just as others are to fantastical conspiracy theories that claim the moon landings never happened, the earth is flat or that Australia does not exist. Their claims have been refuted by historians and experts, most famously by historian Deborah Lipstadt who won a legal trial in 2000 against Holocaust denier David Irving when he sued her for libel for calling him a Holocaust denier and right-wing extremist.[51] Her book 'Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory' is the first full length study on Holocaust denial.[52]

Antisemitism must be at play in the acceptance of Holocaust denial. As historian Deborah Lipstadt has pointed out, it is not possible to be seduced by the arguments of Holocaust deniers without believing antisemitic tropes that Jews are devious, powerful, manipulative and money-grabbing.[53] Simply rebroadcasting works by these individuals therefore acts as an important and very explicit form of Holocaust denial.

Antisemitsm and Holocaust denial

Holocaust denial takes different forms, is used for various purposes and thus is antisemitic in several ways. It is antisemitic because it is used to legitimize neo-Nazism, white supremacy and the far right through an attempted rehabilitation of Hitler and the Nazis' project to murder the Jewish people. It is also antisemitic in its false claim that the Holocaust is a hoax invented by Jews to extort money from Germany and other countries through reparations, or to garner support for their own national State. Such lies rely upon and recirculate age-old antisemitic myths and tropes that Jews are devious and untrustworthy, manipulating the world through plots and conspiracies.

Figure 11: Videos of David Irving on Tiktok

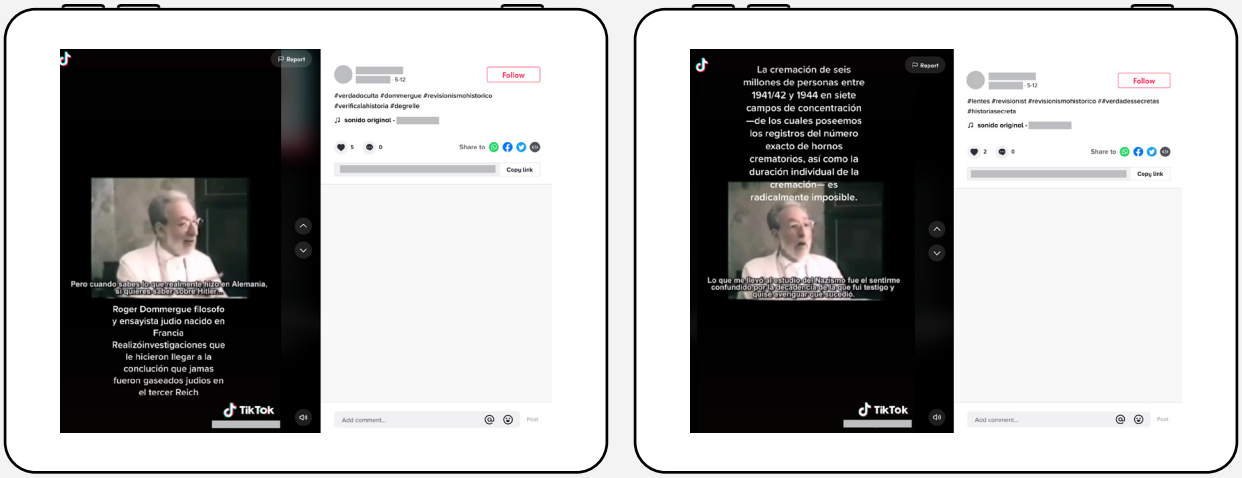


On TikTok for instance, one English-speaking user posted several videos with declarations by David Irving, a well-known denier who has claimed that the gas chambers at Auschwitz were fake and fabricated after the end of the war.[54] The TikTok user not only enabled others to access to Irving's videos, but also, by accompanying the video with the hashtag #truth, suggested that the videos provide hidden evidence that was being suppressed[55] (see Figure 11).

[51] Lipstadt, D. (2006) History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier. Ecco/HarperCollins: United States.
[52] Lipstadt, D. (1993) Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory. Free Press/Macmillan: United States.
[53] Lipstadt, D. (2014) 'Holocaust denial: A flat earth theory or a clear and present danger?', talk given at University of Cambridge Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities.
[54] Charny, I. W. (2003). A classification of denials of the Holocaust and other genocides. Journal of Genocide Research, 5(1), 11-34.
[55] The claimed suppression of evidence is entirely unfounded. David Irving presented evidence for his position during a libel trial that he lost in London in 2000. The full transcript of the trial is publicly available at https://www.hdot.org/trial-materials/.

Similarly, a Spanish-speaking user posted videos by Roger Dommergue claiming, inter alia, that after years of research, he could conclude that the six million deaths were arithmetically and technically impossible. The videos show Dommergue's declarations and are accompanied by contextual comments made by the user. These comments reinforce the denial and distortion narratives. The hashtags in the caption, such as #verdadessecretas and #historisecreta (meaning secret truths and secret history), also suggest strong support for Dommergue's words.

Figure 12: Videos of Roger Dommergue on TikTok



A second type of Holocaust denial exploits the conspiracy theory that the Holocaust was fabricated by a globalist cabal of elites who run the world to direct the audience to other conspiracy theories. Such conspiratorial rhetoric often connected Holocaust denial with conspiracies about COVID-19, suggesting that both had been fabricated.

Figure 13: Examples of conspiratorial denial on Facebook

Translation of text: The return of the big lies is quicker each time…including the 'Holostory'

Translation of image: The three biggest lies of our time that unfortunately many people still believe

Translation from top left to bottom right: The danger is the bankers, not the immigrants! This isn't a crisis it's a hold up. Because we don't have a 'Shoah': perhaps a play on words, with the word Shoah being pronounced similarly to the french word 'choix', suggesting that we don't have a choice. Image references a video in a radical French political website. https://www.egaliteetreconciliation.fr/Le-retour-de-la-Memoire-en-octobre-60944.html

In some cases, references to Holocaust denial were not the main focus of the social media post. For example, there were many posts that called COVID-19 a 'holocough'. These posts did not go on to say anything about the Holocaust itself, they seem to imply that both COVID-19 and the Holocaust were invented (and possibly by the same group of people).

Antisemitism: Jews and disease

The association of Jews with disease and infection draws on a long history and on deep-rooted antisemitic tropes. The best known, and most dramatic example of this came in the late 1340s, when bubonic plague – the Black Death – swept through Europe, killing around 20 million people. This staggering death toll amounted to a third of the entire population of Western Europe. In many places, Jews were blamed for causing the plague by allegedly poisoning wells, and they were tortured, put on trial, executed or expelled. Thousands of Jews were murdered for this non-existent crime and hundreds of Jewish communities were destroyed.

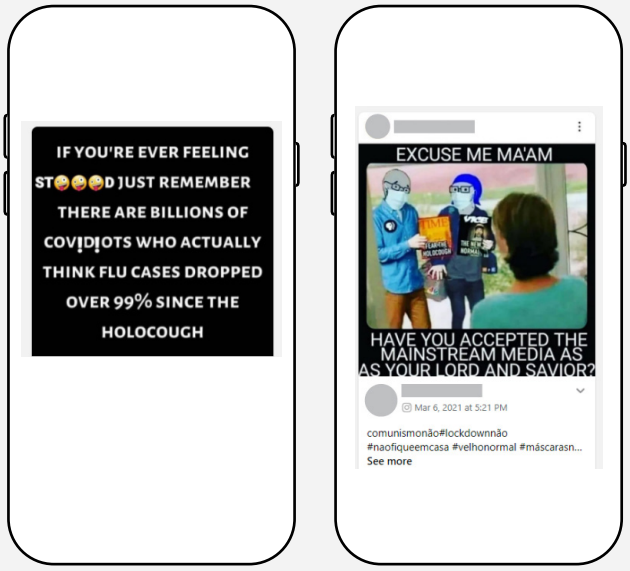
Nazi propaganda regularly compared Jews to fleas, lice and other disease-bearing creatures, most notoriously in the film Der Ewige Jude (The Eternal Jew), which depicted Jews as rats spreading their infection across Europe. This is the antisemitic legacy that is now echoed in this century by conspiracy theorists and Jew-haters across the internet.[56]

Frequent use of the 'New World Order' conspiracy theory, which responded to the idea that society will have to deal with a 'new normal' after COVID-19, does not necessarily explicitly reference the Holocaust, but has nevertheless returned well-known antisemitic conspiracy theorists such as David Icke to the spotlight.[57]

New World Order conspiracy theory

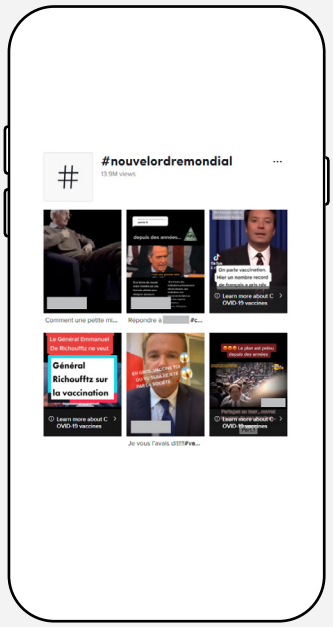
Proponents of the New World Order conspiracy theory falsely believe that an immensely powerful secret cabal manipulates world events as it seeks to seize control of the world and institute a single, totalitarian global government that will oppress and enslave the peoples of the world. The secret elite said to be at the centre of this plot are variously identified as Freemasons, the Illuminati or even a reptilian alien race. However, whichever group is said to be involved, a common underlying trope draws upon the antisemitic canard The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a forged document purporting to document a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world.

Figure 14: Conspiratorial denial on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok



Examples of 'new world order' (nouvelordremondial) videos on TikTok.

Note: '#nouvelordremondial' (New World Order) videos have almost 14 million views on TikTok.



[56] CST. (2020). Coronovirus and the Plague of Antisemitism, pp. 3-4.

[57] David Icke is an English conspiracy theorist and former footballer and sports broadcaster. He has claimed that a shape shifting, hybrid reptilian-human race, variously identified as the Babylonian Brotherhood, the Illuminati or the 'elite' control world events as they seek to create a New World Order, a global fascist state that would end freedom of speech. Together with his endorsement of the antisemitic forgery, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, he has argued in his book And the Truth Will Set You Free (1995) that Jews funded the Holocaust or that the Holocaust did not happen at all.

2.5.2 Celebrating the Holocaust

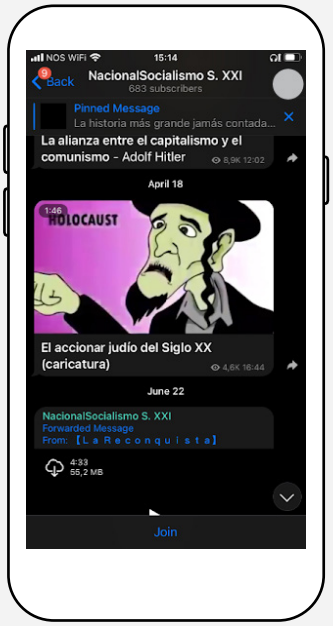
With the failure of Holocaust deniers to gain acceptance in the mainstream, a new generation of the far right has turned to 'humour' to attack Holocaust memory, with online message boards now less preoccupied with proving the Holocaust did not happen and more with celebrating it.[58] This celebration of mass murder and violence is highly politicised and deliberately intimidating, containing as it does the potential threat of further violence to Jews, or – by extension – to other perceived opponents of the deniers' ideological goals. While it represents a relatively small proportion of Holocaust distortion observed in this study (1.1 per cent of all Holocaust-related content reviewed), the visceral nature of such content and its undertone of violence make it deeply concerning. Such celebration can be divided into several types: celebration through glorification of the Holocaust; celebration by denigrating its victims – arguing that the Holocaust was a good thing; or did not go far enough; and celebration through mocking the Holocaust and its victims.

The first type of attacks on the memory of the Holocaust – glorification – have surfaced on online platforms including on the platforms right wing extremist websites such as the Daily Stormer. Examples include the sharing of images such as of people wearing T-shirts emblazoned with 6MWE (six million wasn't enough)[59], or the 'Camp Auschwitz – Work Brings Freedom' hoodie worn by an insurrectionist at the storming of the United States Capitol building on 6 January 2021.[60] The research team uncovered this type of content in the context of the veneration of Nazi symbology in merchandising for a skinhead band: a T-shirt emblazoned with the phrases 'Final Solution', and 'Blood and Honour' (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: 'Final Solution' T-shirts for sale on Telegram

Such open celebration, glorification and veneration of the mass murder of Jews is intimidating, and carries with it the threat of further violence. This is exacerbated in a wider extremist discourse that seeks to justify the Holocaust, to frame the murder of Jews as a way of ridding the world of various 'evils', as seen in the post in Figure 16, and the denigration of Jews as corrupters who manipulate the world for their own benefit. A post that positively quoted Adolf Hitler and claimed that Jews are behind the ills of both capitalism and communism, presented a deeply antisemitic cartoon of a caricatured Jew who, upon being thrown out of Germany, goes on to create communism and encourage the confrontations that took place throughout the Cold War.

Figure 16: Antisemitic post on Telegram



Often explicitly, this type of celebration is connected to antisemitic, conspiratorial fantasies that Jews control the world, while their elimination is to be celebrated as supposedly protecting people from assumed Jewish 'domination'.

[58] Mulhall, J. et al (2018), Rewriting History: Lying, Denying and Revising the Holocaust, Hope Not Hate Publishing.
[59] ADL. (December 2020). Proud Boys' Bigotry is on Full Display.
[60] Lynch, S. and Stempel, J. (13 January 2020). Man with Camp Auschwitz Sweatshirt, Olympic Swimmer Charged Over Capitol Riots.

Humour and Holocaust denial and distortion

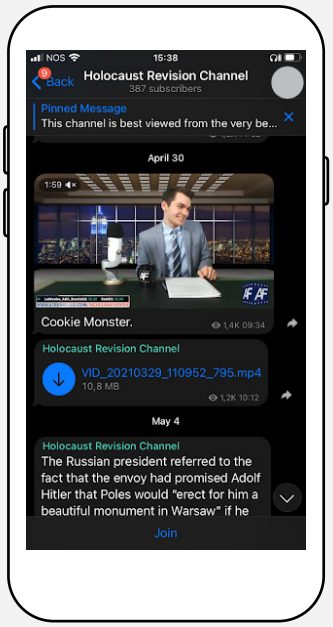
While Holocaust denial, glorification and openly antisemitic material continues to circulate among violent extremist online communities, there has also been a recognition within the far-right movement that this openly racist, violent rhetoric and the use of Nazi symbology are deeply off-putting to many that the movement would like to recruit. Against this backdrop, there has been a strategic shift among far-right extremists, one that is important to understand as a different form of celebratory distortion of the past – that of mocking the Holocaust. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, far-right movements have made a concerted effort to broaden their appeal and to make inroads into the mainstream. A new generation calling themselves the alt-right have abandoned the street violence and symbolism of the neo-Nazi skinhead movement to avoid the stigma attached to earlier generations, without abandoning their core beliefs.[61]

As they strategically integrated themselves into emerging online culture and communities, the internet became an important tool for recruitment and radicalization, as Maik Fielitz and Reem Ahmed have noted: 'far-right extremists… learned the lesson that if — in our digitalised societies — a movement wants to be successful, it needs to be entertaining and participatory.':

> **"[H]umour helps to reframe hate-based ideologies, thereby reducing objections towards positions that would otherwise be condemned by the wider public. At the same time, it helps to cover up one's own barbarity and to ignore the consequences of one's own rhetoric and actions."[62]**

'Humour' and memes are used to gain acceptability and legitimacy among the wider public; to propagate racist, white supremacist ideology; to recruit and radicalize new members; and the use of shared, covert language and signals strengthen a sense of group identity.[63] In cumulative ways, then, such 'humour' – far from being harmless – 'has become a central weapon of extremist movements to subvert open societies and to lower the threshold towards violence'.[64]

Figure 17: Nicholas J. Fuentes on Telegram



The research team observed a form of celebratory revelling in the Holocaust on the channel of alt-right influencer Nicholas J. Fuentes, pictured above. Fuentes used a metaphor about baking cookies to suggest the number of dead in the Holocaust was exaggerated, later defending himself against criticism by saying it was simply meant to be humorous.

While it is relatively easy to detect the underlying message in mocking the Holocaust by prominent members of the far right, such as Fuentes, and known antisemites such as the French comic Dieudonné (discussed below), other representations of the Holocaust can be far more difficult to assess, posing challenges for moderators who need to decide whether posts have infringed their platform's rules.

[61] Gilbert, J. & Elley, B. (2020): Shaved heads and sonnenrads: comparing white supremacist skinheads and the alt-right in New Zealand, Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online.
[62] Fielitz, M. and Ahmed, R. (2021) It's not funny anymore. Far-right extremists' use of humour. Radicalisation Awareness Network, European Union.
[63] Bogerts, L and Fielitz, M, "Do You Want Meme War?" Understanding the Visual Memes of the German Far Right. In Fielitz, M., & Thurston, N. (2018). Post-Digital Cultures of the Far Right: Online Actions and Offline Consequences in Europe and the US (Edition Politik; 71). Bielefeld.
[64] Fielitz, M. and Ahmed, R. (2021) It's not funny anymore. Far-right extremists' use of humour. Radicalisation Awareness Network, European Union.

What to make, for example, of content encountered on TikTok: a video that shows a Lego concentration camp? The suggestion to 'build the concentration camp' seems to implicitly celebrate its construction, and the use of Lego, a child's toy, appears to trivialize the enormity of mass murder. Whether the original poster truly intended to celebrate the Holocaust and cause offence by mocking deep, intergenerational trauma remains unclear. As with the TikTok 'Holocaust Challenge' that trended in 2020, where creators posted short videos of themselves in the role of dead Holocaust victims – it may not be immediately clear what motivates such behaviour and representations. For some young people, this could be a form of transgressive 'humour' that mocks the Holocaust to gain reposts or likes from other users. For others, however, it could be a way of processing their own responses to learning about such emotionally challenging events. For some, it might be a creative, aesthetic way to inform others of their own generation by using a new medium where the ethics of representation have still not been fully developed. It may also involve raising challenges to existing ideas about representational ethics.[65] While it is deeply offensive and distressing to many, content of this type may not be celebratory at all in some cases, but rather an attempt to respond to learning about the Holocaust and to educate others.[66] This makes it very difficult to accurately classify this type of content in terms of intent, although there is little doubt about the harmful effect it can have without the contextualization of a historical educational programme. Critically, the very diffused nature of social media posts; their potential for ambiguity; and the playful, ironic and transgressive quality of much content creates an environment that can be exploited by those who do wish to attack Holocaust memory.

Figure 18: A Lego representation of a concentration camp, posted on TikTok

[65] Walden, V.G. (2015). 'New Ethical Questions and Social Media: Young People's Construction of Holocaust Memory Online'. Frames Cinema Journal. http://framescinemajournal.com/article/new-ethical-questions-and-social-media-young-peoples-construction-of-holocaust-memory-online/, accessed 19 May 2022.

[66] Rosensaft, M. (2006). 'Lego Can Teach About the Holocaust'. Haaretz. https://www.haaretz.com/1.4922175, accessed 14 May 2022.

2.5.3 Blaming Jews for the Holocaust

In total, distorted narratives that blamed Jews for the Holocaust accounted for 0.8 per cent of the posts reviewed. There was a further breakdown into two main claims. One form blamed Jews for bringing the Holocaust on themselves, accusing them of being responsible for the context in which the Holocaust happened (0.5 per cent of all Holocaust-related content reviewed). Jews have been held responsible for the Holocaust in various ways: drawing on antisemitic tropes that communism was a Jewish plot, and so 'justifying' the Holocaust as anti-communist action; decontextualizing the role played by certain Jewish leaders or groups such as the Jewish police to argue that Jews were complicit in and collaborated in their own destruction; or claiming that there is something inherent in the Jewish character that explains antisemitism, and so the victims' own behaviour somehow led to the Holocaust. The main example of this form of victim-blaming, which was only present in Telegram, is presented in Figure 19 – snippets of newspaper reports and documentaries arguing that the Jewish people had declared war on Germany (fantasies that were promulgated by Nazi Germany itself).[67]

The second form of victim blaming was even more explicit – the charge that Jews collaborated with the Nazis in order to use it to gain a national State (a further 0.4 per cent of all Holocaust related content reviewed).

Figure 19: Still photograph from a Telegram channel referencing the Jewish 'declaration of war' on Germany

[67] Lang, B. (2006). The Jewish "Declaration of War" against the Nazis. The Antioch Review, 64(2), 363-373.

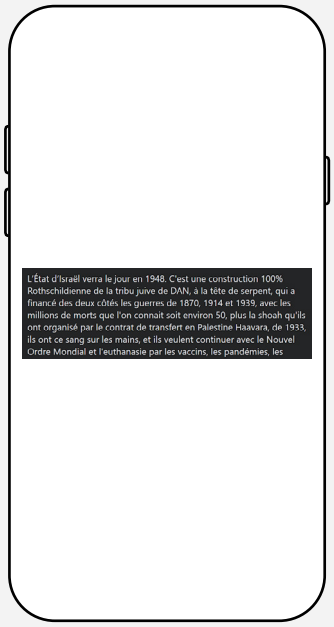
The linking of the Haavara agreement to the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948 is an attempt to delegitimize Israel by association with the Nazis. As Reiner Schulz has argued: 'Any claim that Nazis and Zionists ever shared a common goal is not only cynical and disingenuous, but a distortion of clearly established historical fact'.[68] This Facebook post also draws upon and recirculates a centuries-old antisemitic conspiracy myth about the Rothschild family.

Using deep-seated pejorative and hateful stereotypes about Jews, [this conspiracy theory] originated more than 150 years ago and spreads lies about the prominent Rothschild family as symbols of a mythical 'Jewish power', said to be malevolently orchestrating world events and catastrophes…

[C]onspiracy theorists often target and scapegoat individuals who belong to minority groups. This can create a negative public perception of that minority, leading them to be shunned, discredited or subjected to repressive measures and violence. Because the Rothschilds are both wealthy and Jewish, it is easy and effective to swirl conspiracy theories around them. This particular conspiracy theory about the Rothschilds is antisemitic because it draws upon and advances pejorative and hateful stereotypes about an entire group of people, in this case Jews.[69]

The conspiracy theory connects to earlier antisemitic myths, such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, and to contemporary conspiracy narratives about the New World Order. This is one reason why antisemitic 'globalist' conspiracy theories are critical for the discussion of Holocaust denial and distortion, even if they do not explicitly reference the Holocaust – because they often co-exist with Holocaust denial.

Figure 20: Excerpt from a detailed Holocaust conspiracy theory posted on Facebook



[68] Schulz, R. (2016), Labour Antisemitism Row: There Was Nothing Zionist About Hitler's Plans for the Jews, The Conversation.
[69] Salmons, P., Davar, F. and Alavi, S. (2021). Debunking the Rothschild Conspiracy, IranWire.

2.5.4 Delegitimizing Israel by depicting it as a Nazi State

Depicting Israel as a Nazi State and equating Israeli policy towards the Palestinians with the gas chambers, death camps and mass murder of the Holocaust was another type of Holocaust distortion observed during the research project (1.1 per cent of all Holocaust-related content reviewed). To be clear, it is not antisemitic per se to criticize an Israeli government for its policies – all countries need to be scrutinized for their human rights records, especially in times of conflict.

The issue is therefore not criticism of Israeli policy but that the equation of Israel as a Nazi State goes far beyond legitimate discourse or reasoned debate – not only is such a charge ahistorical, at its core it is antisemitic, as it serves to render the Jewish national homeland itself as illegitimate, thereby denying Jews the right to self-determination.[70]

The timing of the research, which occurred just after a recent ceasefire declaration between Israel and Hamas, undoubtedly played a role in the amount of this kind of distortion encountered, which would probably have been far higher during the time of heightened conflict, when the hashtag 'Hitler was right' began to trend on many major online platforms. 'ZioNazi' was a common hashtag used in much of this content, which explicitly makes the connection between Zionism, the founding ideology of the State of Israel, and the Nazi regime.

The connections between this delegitimizing category and the moral equivalence category highlighted below are evident, as in each case the moral force of the Holocaust is invoked as a rhetorical device. Critically, however, it is important to note the significant qualitative difference in 'playing the Nazi card' against Jews as against non-Jews: that the Holocaust's ongoing historical trauma suffered by Jews matters and must be taken into account when evaluating the harm caused by such accusations. As Paul Igansky and Abe Sweiry have argued:

> **"The "Nazi card" is not exclusively played against Jews. But when Jewish people are targeted, it would be an understatement to propose that given the depth of the collective wounds involved, we might anticipate deeper hurts to be inflicted than when it is played against others. The hurts inflicted are inevitably mediated by the collective historical memory of a people."**[71]

Figure 21: Example of the use of the term 'ZioNazi' on Twitter

There is a strong crossover between those linking Zionism with Nazism and those suggesting that Jews have benefited from the Holocaust, or that they were actively complicit in the Holocaust, as a way of advancing claims to a Jewish State. These forms of Holocaust distortion have strong antisemitic undercurrents, which can aggravate hatred towards Jews and exacerbate the risk of potential violence.

[70] Giesel, L (2021), 'Comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany in Contemporary German Discourse', in Comprehending Antisemitism through the Ages: A Historical Perspective (ed. Lange, A. et al.), De Gruyter, pp. 448-451.
[71] Igansky, P. and Sweiry, A. (2009), Understanding and Addressing the 'Nazi Card'. Intervening Against Antisemitic Discourse, Report of the European Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism (EISCA).

2.5.5 Smearing Jews by accusing them of inventing or exploiting the Holocaust for their own benefit

The idea that Jews exploit the Holocaust for their own benefit was encountered in 2.2 per cent of all content reviewed. This category intermingles with many of the other types of distortion, often because theories about Jewish benefits from the Holocaust intermingle with ideas that the event has either been wildly exaggerated or simply made up. Some of these claims of benefit (as in Figure 22) lean on the false claim that the Holocaust is a hoax, made up to benefit an elite cabal of Jews who control the world.

Figure 22: Example of the Holocaust being denied through claims that accuse Jews of exploiting or seeking to benefit from the Holocaust on Telegram.

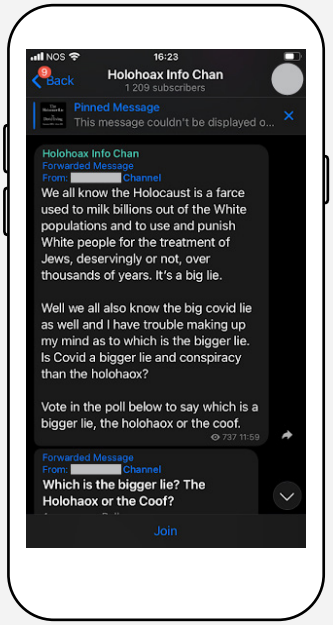


Figure 23: Dieudonné's 'Shoananas' song on TikTok

Translation: it's going to be fun

French antisemite, political activist and 'comedian' Dieudonné has been convicted for hate speech, advocating terrorism and slander in Belgium, France and Switzerland. He received international attention when the Cannes Film Festival banned his movie l'Antisémite (The Antisemite) in 2012, and some of his shows were cancelled in 2014 for different forms of hate speech and denial of the Holocaust. In one of his songs, Shoananas (encountered on TikTok during the study), Dieudonné combines the Hebrew word Shoah (meaning 'catastrophe', and another name for the Holocaust) with the French word for ananas ('pineapple'). He sings about pineapples searching for reparations for the harm done to them, occasionally pausing after Shoah… before continuing to form the hybrid play-on-words, Shoananas. Drawing on the conspiracist myth that Jews 'extort' reparations from Germany, Dieudonné recirculates the distortion that Jews exploit the Holocaust. Instead of denying that the Holocaust happened, here Dieudonné mocks and taunts Jews for their suffering with the 'pineapple' analogy, using 'humour' to trivialize – even to celebrate – the Holocaust, all the while promoting the antisemitic image of devious, manipulative Jews grasping for money and avoiding moderation and regulation with a simple change of words.

2.5.6 Equating the Holocaust

Holocaust equivalence, whereby the emotional and rhetorical force of the Holocaust is appropriated in the service of a political, social or moral agenda, was the most common type of distortion observed during the research. Out of all the content relating to the Holocaust, 10.1 per cent contained themes equating it to other issues.

To be clear, it is of course legitimate to compare the Holocaust with a range of other issues, as comparisons can help to clarify differences as well as similarities between phenomena, and new concepts, understandings and insights can be developed in the process. Prohibiting all comparisons between the Holocaust and other atrocities, suffering or injustice often arises from the fear that comparing the Holocaust with other memories of violence will lead to the dilution of Holocaust memory, and facilitate Holocaust denial.

Such fears may themselves be harmful to Holocaust memory in the long run, for if there is no space to compare legitimately the Holocaust with contemporary and historical events – particularly with other examples of atrocity crimes, including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes – how then can the commemoration and education about this violent past remain relevant and meaningful in the present? The concern here is not with comparisons as such, but rather with equivalences, where the Holocaust and other issues are collapsed in on themselves in ways that gloss over differences and obscure rather than clarify understanding. The Holocaust is widely invoked in comparisons that (intentionally or not) can trivialize and diminish it through false equivalencies or misappropriate the Holocaust or in furtherance of a political or moral agenda.

In the material studied, such equivalence could be broadly categorized into three different types, which in this report are labelled moral equivalence, procedural equivalence and conspiratorial equivalence.

First, in terms of moral equivalence, a wide variety of references compared the Holocaust to other examples of oppression, violence or even systematic murder throughout history. Many of the examples identified were related to current news events at the time (for example, debates on policing practices and the history of racial oppression in the United States (and beyond), and the discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves in former indigenous residential schools in Canada coincided with much of the primary research). There were also several references to contemporary politicians in India and Germany.

These references are labelled moral equivalences because they rarely focus on the historical detail of the Holocaust itself, they are not concerned with careful comparisons that explore how understanding the Holocaust and other issues can deepen and enrich each other, nor do detail how the equation was formulated. Rather, the Holocaust is used merely as a 'moral touchstone', as a way of expressing outrage, abhorrence and condemnation of another event or phenomenon. Many of these issues constitute grave violations of human rights and involved great suffering or even huge loss of life. They are by no means trivial, and they demand serious attention. Furthermore, most of this type of content is probably permissible under current content moderation rules of many platforms and removing them may violate international standards of freedom of expression. However, the concern is that if any moral cause can be promoted through invoking the Holocaust – no matter how different it might be in terms of its particular contours, context, causes and consequences – then that might drain the Holocaust itself of specific features that are essential to its continuing significance, and limit our understanding of the other event in question.[72] If the Holocaust is reduced to a generalized, useable case of moral indignation then its particular features – the continent-wide scale of the genocide, the context in which it unfolded, the ideology and intentionality of the perpetrators, the widespread complicity of surrounding populations and the ongoing trauma of victims and their descendants – might be negated in the equation. Considering that such moral equivalencies are likely to be an ongoing feature of Holocaust-relateddiscussions on online platforms, it is important for educators to develop material to address sensitively how they can cause harm, even when none is intended and they are articulated in a well-meaning way.

A second type of equivalence was labelled procedural equivalence. This type focused more on comparing current government behaviour, especially policies related to COVID-19, to the tools and techniques of the Nazi regime.[73] Again, a rhetorical use of the Holocaust is evident – the 'Nazi card' being played to delegitimize government policies. These references focused on the language and practices of Nazi government, equating them with policies said to threaten contemporary society in similar ways. Procedural equivalence also makes use of the moral force of the Holocaust, but is largely oriented towards dire fantasies and predictions rather than comparison to actual events.

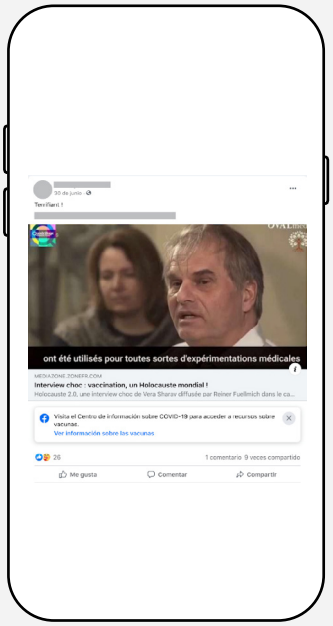
[72] See Levy, D., & Sznaider, N. (2006). The Holocaust and memory in the global age (English ed.]. ed., Politics, history, and social change). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
[73] ADL (2019). Anti-Vaccine Protesters Misappropriate Holocaust-Era Symbol to Promote Their Cause, accessed 2 May 2022. See also, Porat, D. et al (2020), Antisemitism Worldwide, European Jewish Congress.

One such reference was to the 'Yellow Star', a badge that Nazi Germany and its collaborators throughout Europe forced Jews to wear to identify themselves (although in other forms it has featured in many other societies since medieval times).[74] Comparisons of the Yellow Star to 'health passes', which were part of many societal responses to COVID-19, were a recurring motif on online platforms (and have also been used in demonstrations throughout the world), with many arguing that the health pass is used to exclude and marginalize the unvaccinated in the same way that the Yellow Star was used to push Jews out of society. Vaccination requirements bear no resemblance to the experience and reality of persecuted Jews in Nazi Germany or during the Holocaust and reveal a deep lack of empathy towards victims of the Holocaust, or the incapacity to conceive of Jews as victims.

Figure 24: examples of Jewish badges employed in anti-vaccination memes on Facebook

Another frequent reference was to the Nuremberg Code, which was often part of current debates about vaccines. Some social media content argued that vaccines constitute a kind of medical experiment on humanity, similar to those perpetrated on concentration camp inmates by Nazi doctors during the era of the Third Reich and the Second World War.[75] Other references were made to concentration and extermination camps, or vaccines being a 'final solution', or something that 'sets you free', an ironic reference to Arbeit macht frei (work sets you free), a slogan at the entrance of several concentration camps (most infamously the gateway to Auschwitz I Main Camp). Others argued that free speech and limits on the press were being imposed. In each case, the intention is to suggest that the mindset of current governments has something in common with the Nazi regime, and that the restrictions to tackle COVID-19 are the beginning of a much worse and more sinister phenomenon. In these cases, there is arguably an overlap (or some connection) between these arguments and the narratives where COVID-19 is depicted as a worldwide conspiracy, perhaps of Jewish origin.

Figure 25: Facebook video on asking if vaccination is equivalent to a new global Holocaust



Translation of video title: Vaccination, a global Holocaust?

[74] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Jewish badge: during the Nazi era. Holocaust Encyclopedia. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-badge-during-the-nazi-era.
[75] USHMM. Nazi Medical Experiments. Holocaust Encyclopedia. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nazi-medical-experiments.

Communication of denial and distortion content

This section explores different modes of communication for Holocaust denial and distortion. The internet provides many spaces where users can share their creativity, with many means of communication through a variety of social platforms with different options.[76] On top of these technical possibilities, there are complex and varied internet subcultures, with their own references and norms of production.[77] The different platforms and languages studied showed a variety of ways of communicating about the Holocaust, from very explicit Telegram channels full of denial material through to very oblique, coded references circulating on more mainstream platforms. In order for contemporary Holocaust educators and others to fully address discussions about the Holocaust on online platforms, it is important that they appreciate the range of ways in which discussions are communicated, and how people encounter denial and distortion content online.

The review of communication modes looks at four issues: coded language, memes, dog whistles and signposting. Each one highlights the complexity of internet-mediated communication, as well as the challenges of accurately defining and classifying content as denying and distorting the Holocaust. The next section shows how Holocaust denial and distortion content is often present alongside other forms of discrimination.

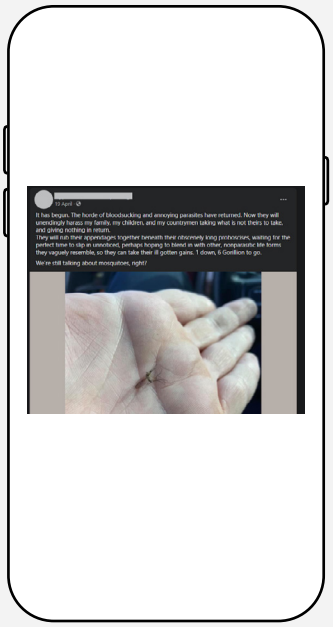
3.1 Coded language

Perhaps the most important fact about communication of Holocaust denial and distortion online is its coded nature. Like most internet subcultures, communication of denial or distortion content makes use of a library of oblique references that are hard to understand or may appear completely innocuous to those without specialist knowledge.[78]

One example of this was to use references to the number six million, accompanied by photographs of animals, mosquitoes or other items that automatic image detection technology would be unlikely to flag as offensive. Such references were sometimes used as a subtle way of casting doubt on the claim that six million people had died in the Holocaust. It is possible that the choice of animal might also be a reference to antisemitic zoomorphic tropes. For example, the mosquito reference may be based on the idea that Jews are carriers of disease, 'bloodsuckers' and 'parasites'. Such posts often play into the idea that the number of people who died in the Holocaust is wildly exaggerated. The aim of denying essential, clearly established facts about the Holocaust is relatively clear, but might nevertheless be missed by those who are not familiar with the symbology of Holocaust deniers.

Such cultures are, of course, often strongly supportive of the idea that the Holocaust has either been exaggerated or made up entirely.[79]

Figure 26: Facebook post of a picture of a mosquito. The post criticized the idea that 6 million of these insects could have died



[76] Hogan, Bernie. (2015). Mixing in Social Media. Social Media Society, 1(1), Social media society. Volume 1:Number 1 (2015).
[77] Nagle, A. (2017). Kill all normies [electronic resource]: The online culture wars from Tumblr and 4chan to the alt-right and Trump. Winchester, UK; Bartlett, J. (2016). The dark net: Inside the digital underworld (First Melville House paperback. ed.). Brooklyn, NY. Holt, Thomas J., Freilich, J.D., & Chermak, S.M. (2017). Internet-Based Radicalization as Enculturation to Violent Deviant Subcultures. Deviant Behavior, 38(8), 855-869.
[78] Miller-Idriss, C. What Makes a Symbol Far Right? Co-opted and Missed Meanings in Far-Right Iconography. In Fielitz, M., & Thurston, N. (2018). Post-Digital Cultures of the Far Right: Online Actions and Offline Consequences in Europe and the US (Edition Politik). Bielefeld.
[79] See: (2021) The Alt-Right, and Holocaust Denial and Distortion Online, an online discussion hosted by the Digital Holocaust Memory Project; also Mulhall, J. (2021) Antisemitism in the Digital Age, HOPE Not Hate; and Wodak, R. (2015), Saying the unsayable. Denying the Holocaust in media debates in Austria and the UK. Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict, Volume 3, Issue 1, Jan 2015, pp 13-40.

Codes can also take the form of physical gestures such as Dieudonné's 'quenelle', a hand gesture he invented to combine what looks like a Nazi salute pointing downwards with the left hand resting on the right shoulder. This gesture has been commonly reproduced by his supporters and is used to signal support for his ideas.[80] The quenelle is over ten years old but can still be found today on online platforms as a way of indicating support for Dieudonné. Indeed, supporters may hunt for appearances of the gesture in popular media. For example, in the image above, which is a still from the popular 'anime' cartoon series Attack on Titan, the principal antagonist of the series appears to be reproducing the quenelle gesture, though this is almost certainly a coincidence.

Figure 27: A still on TikTok from the Attack on Titan series apparently showing a quenelle gesture. (almost certainly a coincidence)

Several coded images did not deny or distort the Holocaust but were nevertheless antisemitic. This included the 'Blue the Jew' meme (identified by Savvas Zannettou).[81] This meme encourages people to post pictures of famous people coloured in blue to identify them as Jews as a way of propagating the antisemitic canards of Jewish domination of media, politics and industry. Other posts were coloured in blue as a way of referencing this meme.

Developments in content moderation may drive the evolution of coded terminology. Content containing well-known Holocaust denial terms (such as 'Holohoax') is now banned from many online platforms, for instance. Notably – during the course of the research – TikTok disabled users' ability to post even with the hashtags 'Holocaust' or 'Auschwitz'. Hashtags are a central part of the way TikTok is organized: posts often contain hashtags, and people can view videos on a certain theme by clicking on a given hashtag. During the research, many words relating to Holocaust denial and distortion were not permitted as 'valid' hashtags on TikTok: for example, 6MWE (six million wasn't enough, a hashtag celebrating the Holocaust that was seen on the clothes of a member of the Capitol Hill rioters), is not a valid TikTok hashtag. Removing neutral terms such as Holocaust also limits people's ability to search for educational content about the history.

As a result, the research found that TikTok users posting material that discussed the Holocaust resorted to using the same types of misspelling and numerization of words that were previously the domain of those denying and distorting the Holocaust (for example, Holocoust, H0l0c4st and so forth). The removal of #Holocaust and #Auschwitz may make it harder to disseminate informative and research-based educational content about the Holocaust. Indeed, this type of unintended consequence of algorithmic content moderation has already been commented on in other studies.[82]

[80] British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), (30 December 2013). Who, What, Why: What is the quenelle gesture? https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-magazine-monitor-25550581.
[81] Zannettou, S., Finkelstein, J., Bradlyn, B., & Blackburn, J. (2018). A Quantitative Approach to Understanding Online Antisemitism. 14th International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM 2020).
[82] See, for example, Karizat, N., Delmonaco, D., Eslami, M., & Andalibi, N. (2021). Algorithmic Folk Theories and Identity: How TikTok Users Co-Produce Knowledge of Identity and Engage in Algorithmic Resistance. Proceedings of the ACM on Human-computer Interaction, 5(CSCW2), 1-44.

3.2 Memes

PA second communication aspect of Holocaust denial and distortion, closely related to the use of coded language, is the use of memes.[83] Memes form part of internet culture that members of subcultures can use to show their allegiance and membership. Such repetition often involves creative modification, such that the meme itself quickly evolves and changes. Within alt-right Holocaust denial and distortion communities, generic memes from the wider internet can also be harnessed to make simple points in a visually arresting manner.

The meme above depicts a man bowling, and has been widely used in a popular internet meme called 'the bowler',[84] which is often used to convey humour about powerful arguments, refutations or important facts. Such memes are often called image macros, and employ images whose use is more or less fixed, overlaid with novel text. Here it is used to communicate an old denial theory that systematic killing of Jewish people could not have happened because the doors of the gas chambers at Auschwitz were made of wood, which – it is wrongly asserted – could not have contained the gas.[85] In this case, a Holocaust denier is making use of a wider internet meme subculture to quickly and forcefully convey a point.

Figure 28: 'The bowler' meme used to transmit a classic denial argument on Telegram

[83] See González-Aguilar, J. M., & Makhortykh, M. (2022). Laughing to forget or to remember? Anne Frank memes and mediatization of Holocaust memory. Media, Culture & Society.
[84] See https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/the-bowler, accessed 10 May 2022.
[85] For a straightforward refutation of Holocaust denial claims about the 'inadequacy' of wooden doors, see https://holocaustcontroversies.blogspot.com/search?q=wooden+doors, accessed 10 May 2022.

The below example is a relatively elaborate meme that is worth exploring in detail. It features the Shiba Inu dog from the 'doge' meme that has been on the internet for at least eight years (and is not in itself antisemitic). The dog is presented in two different poses (which are often used to represent strength and weakness). Three 'weak' looking dogs are wearing the yarmulke head covering of observant Jewish men, marked with Stars of David, and are sitting in a cellar. The setting of the 'darkened room' is reminiscent of conspiratorial meetings, and the three 'Jewish' dogs are then presented as secretive, conniving and underhand. One is talking about money, an obvious antisemitic trope about Jewish people, and the other says 'six gorillion', a commonly used Holocaust denial meme that has been noted above. A third says 'let's watch cuties', a reference to a Netflix series that was accused of sexualizing young girls (though Netflix denies these claims),[86] and which plays into a further antisemitic trope that Jews are sexual predators and corrupters (see below). A fourth 'strong' Shiba Inu (not wearing a yarmulke, and so identified as a non-Jew) enters the room, shining a light from outside on these 'nefarious goings on', and labels everything 'cringe', an internet slang term meaning 'terrible'. What is worth highlighting is how many different cultural references are embedded in this meme, which are only understandable to a specific group of people and are probably unknown to those who are not regular online platform users. Exposing educators to this type of content and enabling them to understand it may be an important next step in Holocaust education, in order to help them to safeguard young people by preparing them for what they may encounter on online platforms, and creating a space in the classroom to debunk such myths and antisemitic tropes.

Figure 29: An antisemitic denial meme posted on Facebook

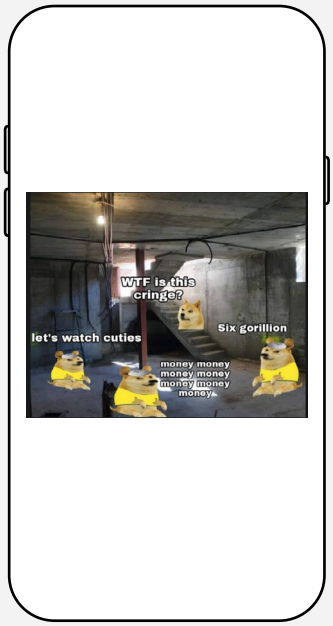


Figure 30: An example of a meme posted on TikTok

This final example is based on a popular Spanish-language meme about two characters debating who has the most fans. In this case, it features Daniel Jadue, a Chilean politician[87] betting that he has more fans than Hitler. There is also a reference to the 'Holocuento', a Spanish hybrid term mixing Holocaust with 'fairy tale', and used by neo-Nazis who celebrate Hitler as a 'saviour of humanity' for targeting Jews and other 'criminals'.

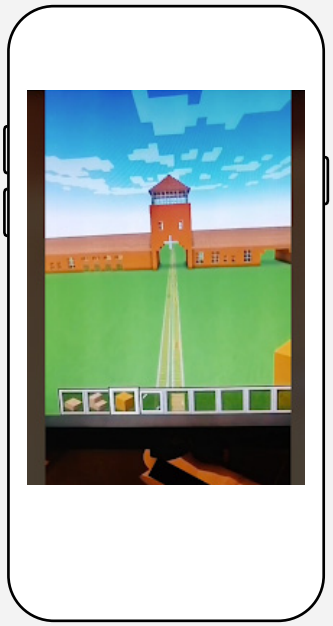
Like the coded language described above, these memes are by no means an exhaustive sample of those circulating about the Holocaust, and will undoubtedly be quickly superseded. Rather, they are included to illustrate some key points. First, while Holocaust deniers and distorters have their own library of memes, they also make use of wider online trends to communicate and 'mainstream' their ideas. Knowledge of these wider trends is therefore crucial for understanding the language they use to communicate. Second, it is important to recognize the visual power and transmissibility of memes, and how they engage people much more easily than long pieces of text. Antisemitic language can be mainstreamed through these memes without the audience necessarily knowing that they are antisemitic, which runs the risk of such ideas becoming normative. There is little understanding about how accurate information on the Holocaust can also be communicated in this way, through counter-messaging campaigns, for instance.

[86] Vulture (7 October 2020). Wait, What's Going on With Netflix and Cuties? https://www.vulture.com/2020/10/netflix-cuties-twerking-poster-drama-explained.html, accessed 10 May 2022. Daniel Jadue featured in the Simon Wiesenthal Centre's 2020 report on the world's worst antisemitic incidents, a fact explicitly acknowledged in the meme.
[87] Simon Wiesenthal Centre (2020). Top Ten Global Anti-Semitic Incidents 2020. https://www.wiesenthal.com/assets/pdf/top-ten-worst-global.pdf.

3.3 Dog whistles

Another type of content observed during the project is what could be referred to as 'dog whistles': apparently neutral or inoffensive posts to avoid provoking opposition or to evade moderation policies that nevertheless trigger denial and distortion comments. One notable example of this type of content was found on TikTok. A video shows a recreation of the Auschwitz camp on Minecraft (see Figure 31). The caption of the video reads 'Shout out to all six million of y'all! #rip #sixmillion'. Whilst the user does not explicitly express denial or distortion statements about the Holocaust, the video and caption have a trivializing tone that also seems to fit in with the celebration category. Furthermore, the message and hashtags highlight the number of victims of the Holocaust, which is one of the most contested topics in denial and distortion narratives. The content triggered a series of comments claiming that the number of victims was exaggerated or using variations of denial terms, such as 'Six Gorillion' (a shorthand phrase often used to suggest that the number of people who died in the Holocaust is considerably exaggerated).

Figure 31: A 'Minecraft' game representation of Auschwitz on TikTok

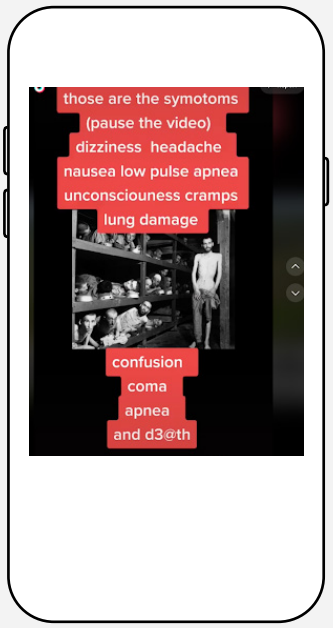


Whether the user intended to encourage reflection, or trivialize and diminish the Holocaust, is unclear. Indeed, it can be difficult to establish the true intention behind many posts on online platforms. The user may also have posted an apparently neutral piece of content in order to circumvent existing content moderation policies. This poses a great challenge for moderation. On the one hand, according to literature on Holocaust memory, creative digital responses to the Holocaust (such as computer-generated mapping), create embodied spaces where users are encouraged to take responsibility for creating Holocaust memory by experiencing the past while recognizing the limitations for understanding victims' lived experiences.[88] They provide for reflexive encounters and can enable people to learn about and engage with a difficult history. On the other hand, some content creators could intentionally use ambiguous or coded expressions to address an audience without attracting negative attention from the majority. Because platforms often sanction expressions that deny or distort the Holocaust, purveyors of such harmful material may use this strategy that manual or automated moderation may find more challenging to identify.

[88] Walden, V.G. (2019). What is 'virtual Holocaust memory'? Memory Studies, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1750698019888712.

Another potential case of dog whistling is the TikTok video in Figure 34, which included photographs and information about the Holocaust. Whilst the information was mainly describing the gas chambers, and there was no explicit reference to distorted facts, there are cues that suggest that the user may have been aware of Holocaust denial and distortion detection strategies by the platform. The user's avatar is a picture of Nazi Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, portrayed with hearts around his face. Moreover, the user obscured words with intentional misspellings, such as d3@th and #h0l0caust, perhaps as a way to evade detection by content moderation. The video received attention from English- and German-speaking users. Some comments refer to the Holocaust being a smoke screen and others suggest Jews deserved the Holocaust and are now repeating history. Again, of course it is difficult to assert the intentions of the creators of this kind of video content – their ambiguity may be intended to give plausible deniability that any harm was intended. However, the comments demonstrate that features of these publications enable and give an open space for users to engage in denial and distortion narratives.

Figure 32: Dog whistle content on TikTok



3.4 Signposting

Holocaust denial and distortion is also communicated through the 'signposting' of discussion venues and forums on different platforms. This was especially common in groups using coded language to signal Holocaust denial and distortion but not much outright or explicit content. The examples above are taken from Facebook.

Such posts often followed a common pattern. Users would post relatively innocuous looking images or texts, but embedded within them would be links to other platforms. Many of these links seem to lead to Discord channels or Telegram channels. While this is not stated explicitly, the implication is that users will be able to speak more freely on these other platforms, with Telegram known for a relatively lax content moderation policy. Online platforms are being used simultaneously for different purposes, and are interconnected in use through the posting of URL links signposting to one another. As major platforms become increasingly regulated, it may be that more of this kind of content emerges, where the big platforms are used less to spread radical messages and more as a way to signpost people to other, more radical locations on the internet.[89] Policy responses that focus solely on content removal are therefore likely to be ineffective. Instead, online platform companies need to work together and in partnership with researchers, civil society and international organizations to implement a range of strategies to try to marginalize groups that are disseminating hateful narratives and violent ideologies, depending on how they exploit specific platforms.[90]

Figure 33: Telegram channels signposted on Facebook

[89] Macdonald, S, Grinnell, D, Kinzel, A & Lorenzo-Dus, N. (2019) Is Twitter a Gateway to Terrorist Propaganda? A Study of Outlinks Contained in Tweets Mentioning Rumiyah. GRNTT policy brief. London: RUSI.
[90] Alexander, A., and Braniff, W. (2018) Marginalizing violent extremism online. Lawfare Blog. Accessed 9 September 2019 via https://www.lawfareblog.com/marginalizing-violent-extremism-online.

3.5 Co-presence of hate speech and hateful ideologies

Social media posts are not created or consumed as individual items – they form part of a wider discourse, conversation and exchange of ideas. It is imperative to try to place single pieces of content into their wider context, in order to understand what might have influenced their creation, as well as how they might be received, understood, reshared and reframed within that wider discourse. For this reason, a final observation within modes of communication was content that denies and distorts the Holocaust alongside other types of hateful online discourse.

The report has already explored the connection with anti-vaccination and COVID-19 denial in the 'equating' section above. However, Holocaust denial and distortion were also present alongside racism, homophobia, misogyny and xenophobia. It can be considered as part of a broader pattern of radical online counterculture. These prejudices, attitudes and ideologies help to explain, for example, why some mock, deride and celebrate the Holocaust. Hateful ideas such as homophobia and misogyny fuel antisemitism when Jews are held to be the source of any manner of perceived 'problems' and 'threats'.

Case Study

Misogyny in Holocaust denial and distortion follows a similar pattern. Jewish people are portrayed as corrupters of the innocent, and spreaders of the 'disease' of promiscuity.[91] The above post makes a direct link between Nazi antisemitic imagery and unrelated contemporary events. Here, the serious issue of the #MeToo movement is co-opted by antisemites to defame all Jews as sexual predators. It uses the heinous crimes of convicted sex offender Harvey Weinstein (identified as Jewish by the triple brackets around his name) to 'validate' an age-old depiction of male Jews as lustful, powerful, dangerous and untrustworthy.

In a worrying distortion of the Holocaust, it uses a well-known Nazi propaganda image from a 1930s children's book, where an antisemitic caricature of a Jew is trying to seduce a blond, supposedly Aryan, woman by presenting her with jewels. This caricature is presented as a mirror image of Harvey Weinstein pictured with the actor Emma Watson. The antisemitic ideology of the Nazis is somehow 'validated' by the crimes of Harvey Weinstein: an individual Jew stands as 'evidence' of a 'race' of sexual predators and corrupters.

However, the content is even more multilayered than this, and again speaks to the need to locate such posts in a wider discourse, to consider the copresence of other hateful ideology. The depiction of women in many posts supports or reinforces patriarchal views of gender roles. Reaffirming the Nazi antisemitic trope of Jews as 'race defilers' is connected by the caption 'The last days of the white man' to a current far-right phobia of a coming 'white genocide', supposedly engineered by Jews, whereby the 'white race' will be overwhelmed by other 'racial' groups.[92] There is, then, a further inversion of Jews as victims of Nazi racial hatred to, instead, a depiction of Jews as perpetrators of so-called crimes against the 'white race', which is felt to be under siege. Holocaust victims become 'deserving' of their fate as the 'truth' of the 'innate Jewish character' is unveiled in the crimes of Harvey Weinstein. In these online forums, past and present are conflated and distorted, as old antisemitic tropes are recirculated in new forms: Hitler is rehabilitated as a 'saviour of the white race'; Nazi ideology is 'vindicated'; the Holocaust can be celebrated, and the threshold for further violence against Jews – and against other 'racial' groups, immigrants and all those threatening 'the last days of the white man' – is lowered. These depictions of sexuality are not only antisemitic, but entrench and perpetuate racism.

Figure 34: A meme suggesting Jews are corrupters of women on Facebook

Holocaust distortion does not only threaten the memory and our understanding of the history of the Holocaust, but perpetuates anti-science, anti-rational viewpoints that in turn increase the likelihood of people rejecting human rights principles and becoming more susceptible to believing Holocaust denial.

[91] Lawrence, D., Simhony-Philpott, L and Stone, D. (2021). Antisemitism and Misogyny: Overlap and Interplay, accessed 23 May 2022.
[92] See ADL, White Genocide accessed 2 May 2022; ADL The Great Replacement.

Conclusions

A range of different types of Holocaust denial and distortion are prevalent on major online platforms. On Telegram, it constituted almost 50 per cent of all content relating to the Holocaust. Even on other platforms, which have policies in place against Holocaust denial, examples of denial and distortion were nevertheless accessible to the public, albeit in lower quantities.

The levels of Holocaust distortion on each platform indicate that it is just as pernicious as Holocaust denial. Holocaust distortion is pervasive, in part due to its complexity, which limits the potential for it to be identified by moderators. Nevertheless, Holocaust distortion depends upon and spreads antisemitism. It threatens the ability to remember and learn from the past by misrepresenting the historical record.

Holocaust denial and distortion are often present alongside other types of online hate speech and misinformation such as homophobia, misogyny, xenophobia, conspiracy theory and COVID-19 denial. This co-presence indicates that these issues should not necessarily be addressed in isolation. Indeed, tackling a problem such as Holocaust denial and distortion may be very difficult without also addressing related issues.

Responses to Holocaust denial and distortion

Several governments have taken action to counter Holocaust denial and distortion on online platforms through legislative measures. For example, in Germany, the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) forces large online platforms to remove unlawful content from their services via a notice and action mechanism, including Holocaust denial which is unlawful in Germany. The law has been criticized by some human rights organizations for setting a dangerous precedent for other governments looking to restrict speech online by forcing companies to censor on the government's behalf.

Some technology companies have also adopted policies on the moderation and removal of content that denies the Holocaust. On 12 October 2020, Facebook updated its hate speech policy to prohibit any content that denies or distorts the Holocaust.[93] TikTok also announced a ban on content that denies well-documented and violent events that have taken place, including Holocaust denial and similar conspiracy theories.[94]

It is critical that actions taken by governments and online platforms companies meet international standards on human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression and privacy, and provide possibility for redress.

This report identifies a very explicit difference between Telegram, which practises very limited content moderation, and the other four platforms studied.[95] Telegram hosted the most content relating to denial and distortion. It was the only platform that hosted considerable amounts of Holocaust denial.

As Telegram and other new and alternative platforms, such as Bitchute, Minds, MeWe, Gab and Parler, grow in size, they require urgent attention from both researchers and policy-makers.

Despite the development of content moderation policies that specifically aim to reduce disinformation about the Holocaust on platforms such as Facebook and TikTok, this report found that Holocaust denial and distortion were present on all the platforms researched in this study, and could be accessed by anyone using the platform, including young people.

The decision by some online platforms to identify Holocaust denial as a form of hate speech has reduced the amount of harmful material. However, harmful content that does not reach the threshold for removal or has evaded moderation policies through misspellings and the use of coded language and symbols, remains present on online platforms without content warnings or other measures.

Antisemitism can be communicated online through an evolving code of symbols and memes that are sometimes used to signal hidden meanings and messages that aim to subtly deny or distort the history of the Holocaust. Denial and distortion also evolve in response to current events as the Holocaust is invoked to provoke an emotional reaction. This constantly shifting landscape means that it can be hard for moderation policies to stay completely up to date with changing language and modes of communication. There is therefore a need for international cooperation between online platform companies, academia, civil society and governments.

Content moderation efforts are altering how discussions about the Holocaust take place online. This was especially evident on TikTok, where even generic hashtags relating to the Holocaust (such as #Auschwitz or #Holocaust itself) appear to have been temporarily removed from the platform during the course of the study, possibly driven by a wave of videos on the platform glorifying the Holocaust driven by the conflict in the Middle East in May 2021. While online platforms may need to react to harmful trends and events, removing the term Holocaust as a hashtag has the potential to impair genuine attempts to discuss and learn about the Holocaust. As a result, accurate educational content about the history of the Holocaust may become harder to discover on the platform.

[93] Facebook (2020), Removing Holocaust Denial Content.
[94] UNESCO (2022). TikTok joins forces with UNESCO and the WJC to combat denial and distortion of the Holocaust online.
[95] All Telegram chats and group chats are private amongst their participants. Telegram does not process any requests related to them. Sticker sets, channels, and bots on Telegram are publicly available. Illegal content can be reported to Telegram. See https://telegram.org/faq.

This report finds that the most prevalent form of Holocaust distortion is its use as an 'equivalent' to contemporary or historic events. Many examples that equated the Holocaust were driven by current events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has the potential to produce surges in online distortion.[96] While it is ahistorical and inaccurate to equate the genocide of Europe's Jews to most contemporary events, it is legitimate to compare the history of the Holocaust with other abuses of human rights and atrocity crimes. Informed and meaningful comparisons between the Holocaust and other events with careful contextualization allow societies to learn from the past and can contribute towards the prevention of genocide and other human rights abuses.[97] Such equations create a difficult policy area for online platforms because many of them do not reach the threshold for hate speech by international standards and fall outside the scope of contemporary content moderation guidelines. This form of distortion requires a sophisticated response that raises awareness of the harm caused and that encourages online platform users to reference the Holocaust accurately and in its historical context.

Holocaust denial and distortion are an issue in all the languages studied. The multi-language nature of Holocaust distortion is critical to consider when reviewing research on content moderation, as the vast majority of pressure for content moderation focuses on the English language, particularly as online platforms including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter were founded in the United States.[98] For example, 87 per cent of Facebook's global budget for time spent on classifying misinformation goes towards the United States, while 13 per cent is set aside for the rest of the world — despite the fact that North American users make up just 10 per cent of its daily users.[99] It is also important in terms of collaboration: new platforms and less studied languages should benefit from areas where more work has been done.

Users wishing to promote denial and distortion content, but who are aware that this may be constrained by rules on moderated platforms, will often gesture and signal such content and then provide links to more radical spaces on other platforms. For example, during the empirical research on Facebook, some people linked to channels hosting harmful content on Telegram and Discord. Such links often signpost to other forums where Holocaust denial can be discussed more openly. Importantly, these links may be embedded in content that does not contravene platform norms and guidance.

Posts that may not breach online platform moderation policies can be a trigger for more serious forms of Holocaust denial and distortion. This report includes an example of an Auschwitz representation on the game Minecraft that stimulated a considerable amount of content that denied and distorted the Holocaust in the comments section. Policy-makers, online platform companies and educators must consider appropriate responses to attempts to trivialize the Holocaust as a vector for more harmful content.

Soft law instruments can help to identify the severity of content that denies or distorts the Holocaust, notably the Camden Principles on Freedom of Expression and Equality and the Rabat Plan of Action, taking into account the context, speaker, intent, content, extent and likelihood of harm.

Transparency

Researchers continue to lack access to data, which are provided in different formats across different platforms. Limitations on data mean make it difficult to draw conclusions, and especially comparisons, about the prevalence of online harms such as Holocaust denial and distortion on the platforms.

The United Nations, UNESCO and other actors have called for greater transparency of internet companies and their moderation policies as a means to enhance their accountability.

This multi-stakeholder movement has gained growing momentum in recent years, including among some UNESCO Member States. At least 30 countries and regions have proposed legal and regulatory measures, including through the European Digital Services Act. The UNESCO issue brief entitled Letting the Sun Shine In: Transparency and Accountability in the Digital Age presents enhancing transparency as a third way between State overregulation of content, which has led to disproportionate restrictions on human rights, and a laissez-faire approach that has failed to effectively address problematic content such as hate speech and disinformation.

Technology companies have also taken steps to be more transparent. In 2021, Access Now indexed over 70 companies that issue regular transparency reports, including Facebook and Instagram, TikTok and Twitter. Telegram does not publish transparency reports.

[96] See IHRA, (2021). See IHRA, (2021). Policy Recommendations on Recognizing and Countering Holocaust Distortion.
[97] See materials of the IHRA: Committee on the Holocaust, Genocide, and Crimes Against Humanity.
[98] Zakrzewski, C., De Vynck, G., Masih, N., and Mahtani, S., (24 October 2021). How Facebook neglected the rest of the world, fueling hate speech and violence in India, The Washington Post.
[99] ibid.

Education

As Holocaust denial and distortion were openly accessible on all platforms studied in this report, it is likely that many young people are encountering Holocaust misinformation if they are active on online platforms.

The biggest defence against the dangers of Holocaust denial and distortion is to advance historical literacy informed education about the history of the Holocaust within school curricula and education systems.[100]

Transmitting knowledge about the Holocaust will not be sufficient to counter the rise of Holocaust denial and distortion online: young people are entitled to education that safeguards them against misinformation and disinformation – that explicitly teaches disciplinary frameworks and procedures of knowledge production, in short, how we know what we know about the world. They further require the knowledge and social-emotional skills to identify and resist sharing Holocaust denial and distortion, and to respond appropriately should they encounter it. To achieve this, educators require training and support on the forms and functions of online hate speech, and how harmful material is communicated to develop effective counter-messaging, and strategies to overcome resistance to learning about the Holocaust.

Education is first and foremost the responsibility of governments, but online platform companies also have a responsibility to educate those who use their platforms to think critically, develop media and information literacy and promote digital citizenship.

On Telegram, denial and distortion could be discovered through searches for simple terms relating to the Holocaust, such as 'Auschwitz' or 'Holocaust'. This concerning observation raises pressing questions for Holocaust museums, archives and educational organizations. Should they also start to build more of a presence on newer or 'niche' platforms? As Telegram claims to have 550 million users worldwide, it is recommended that Holocaust educational organizations consider their engagement with this population. Such engagement may be targeted by those who seek to deny and distort the Holocaust, and Holocaust educational organizations would also have to consider the potential co-presence of their material with hate speech, antisemitism, racism and other forms of prejudice and harmful activity. However, it is critical that we respond to hate speech with accurate knowledge that challenges common myths and misconceptions about this complex past, and counters Holocaust denial and distortion with reliable, informed and accurate content online. Moreover, content should be created that exposes the agendas of those who deliberately deny and distort the past, and the methods they use to recruit and radicalize users, in order to better safeguard people online who might be exposed to indoctrination and manipulation.

[100] In a survey of school curricula from 139 UNESCO Member States carried out in 2015 by UNESCO and the Georg Eckert Institute, one in five countries do not reference the Holocaust in their school curricula and a further 33 per cent of national school curricula only included references to the context in which the Holocaust occurred, such as references to the Second World War or to National Socialism without referring explicitly to the genocide of the Jewish people. See Carrier, P., Fuchs, E., & Messinger, T. (2015). The international status of education about the Holocaust: A global mapping of textbooks and curricula. Paris.

Recommendations

This final section of the report provides recommendations formulated in the light of the empirical findings for policy-makers and governments; international organizations; civil society; research and academia; social media companies and online platforms; and educators.

5.1 Recommendations for policy-makers and governments

- Governments, political leaders, public institutions and national authorities have a responsibility to clearly reject Holocaust denial or distortion when it appears in public discourse.
- Addressing Holocaust distortion and denial online should be systematically and holistically integrated into national action plans addressing antisemitism, hate speech and/or disinformation, including through educational interventions in line with the education recommendations.
- It is recommended that governments establish advisory councils on Holocaust denial and distortion to engage with relevant experts, civil society organizations, institutions and international networks to support greater dialogue and understanding on the threats posed by Holocaust denial and distortion to democratic values, and to advise governments in their work with online platforms on how better to address persisting problems of hate speech and misinformation on online platforms. These bodies should monitor the manifestations of Holocaust denial and distortion online, and when necessary, take action on or against harmful content that denies or distorts the Holocaust.
- It is important to allocate funds and resources to advance independent research on online trends on online platforms, to develop robust response mechanisms and better mitigate the harmful impact of Holocaust denial and distortion, as well as any other form of hateful content.

Good Practice 1: The European Union Strategy of combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life

The European Union Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life is a response to rising levels of antisemitism in Europe and beyond. The Strategy sets out a series of measures articulated around three pillars: to prevent all forms of antisemitism; to protect and foster Jewish life; and to promote research, education and Holocaust remembrance.

As part of the Strategy, the European Commission will:

- "Strengthen the fight against online antisemitism by supporting the establishment of a Europe-wide network of trusted flaggers and Jewish organizations, in line with the Code of conduct. It will also support the European Digital Media Observatory and its national hubs to increase the capacity of their fact-checkers on disinformation and will work with independent organizations to develop counter narratives, including in non-EU languages."
- "Organize a hackathon to facilitate exchanges between experts to develop new innovative ways to address antisemitism in the online and digital environment."
- "Cooperate with industry and IT companies to prevent the illegal display and sale of Nazi-related symbols, memorabilia and literature online."
- "Conduct comprehensive data analysis to better understand the spread of antisemitism online, how it travels and expands."
- "Address antisemitic hate speech in the upcoming updated Better internet for kids strategy."

Source: The European Union Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_4990

Good Practice 2: Global Task Force Against Holocaust Distortion

In 2020, the German Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance launched the Global Task Force Against Holocaust Distortion. Through advocacy and awareness-raising, it unites international policy-makers and leading experts from Holocaust-related institutions and organizations against the increasingly dangerous influences of Holocaust distortion, antisemitism, hate speech and incitement to violence and hatred.[101]

Through the network, IHRA has developed specific recommendations for policy-makers and decision-makers on recognizing and countering Holocaust distortion with the input of international experts, published in partnership with UNESCO, and the global awareness-raising campaign #ProtectTheFacts initiated by the IHRA together with the United Nations, UNESCO and the European Commission.

For more information: IHRA Global Task Force Against Holocaust Distortion. https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/task-force-against-holocaust-denial-and-distortion

Good Practice 3: Republic of North Macedonia curriculum reform

As part of the curriculum reform for primary education, the Republic of North Macedonia will include teaching content addressing antisemitism and Holocaust denial for students in the final grades.

In addition, learners attending primary and secondary school in the Republic of North Macedonia will attend a mandatory educational visit to the Holocaust Memorial Center for the Jews from Macedonia in Skopje. The educational interventions have the aim of contributing to building a healthy society that promotes unity through cultural, racial and other diversity.

For more information: pledges presented at the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism. https://www.government.se/articles/2021/10/pledges-to-the-malmo-forum-remember--react/

5.2 Recommendations for research bodies, academia and civil society

- Online subcultures and networks creating and spreading Holocaust denial and distortion content remain underexplored. Research bodies and universities should invest in international and cross-language research that studies Holocaust denial and distortion in different contexts and regions. These should investigate the use of alternative and new media platforms to promote and communicate Holocaust denial and distortion, including through codes, memes and insider jokes and language and invest in narrative-analysis to enhance understanding of motivations, ideologies and identity perceptions.
- Research bodies and universities should support interdisciplinary research to tackle the threat to human rights and democratic values from the rise of Holocaust denial and distortion. Researchers should be supported to translate research findings into evidenced-based intervention approaches to alert for, debunk, discredit and counter Holocaust denial and distortion that may be applicable in local, national and international contexts. The development of counter-speech or disruption campaigns should be based on in-depth research of the new trends, dissemination techniques and the target audiences.[102]
- Civil society organizations, in partnership with researchers, artists, influencers and online platform companies, should develop rapid and proactive communication responses to online trends involving Holocaust denial or distortion. Counter-messaging campaigns should carefully select key messages and trusted messengers based on the target audience that the campaign seeks to reach.

[101] IHRA (2021). Understanding Holocaust Distortion: Contexts, Influences and Examples. See also IHRA (2021) [film]. Holocaust Distortion: A Growing Threat.
[102] Ebner, J. Counter-Creativity. Innovative Ways to Counter Far-Right Communication Tactics. In Fielitz, M., & Thurston, N. (2018). Post-Digital Cultures of the Far Right: Online Actions and Offline Consequences in Europe and the US (Edition Politik ; 71). Bielefeld.

Good Practice 4: Institute of Strategic Dialogue

The European Commission funded a research study on the rise of antisemitism online during the pandemic, a study of French and German language content. This report, conducted by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), presents a data-driven snapshot of the proliferation of COVID-19 related online antisemitic content in French and German on Twitter, Facebook and Telegram. The study provides insight into the nature and volume of antisemitic content across selected accounts in France and Germany, including content that denies or distorts the Holocaust, analysing the platforms where such content is found, as well as the most prominent antisemitic narratives – comparing key similarities and differences between these different language contexts.

For more information: The European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/713106/en

Good Practice 5: Observatorio Web

Observatorio Web is the first organization to focus on online hate in Latin America. Observatorio Web's innovative approach brings together all types of minority groups to fight against online discrimination and educate teachers and students about the responsible use of technologies. It monitors content that incites hatred and discrimination based on religion, nationality, ideology, political opinion, sexual orientation, social status or physical characteristics, including Holocaust denial and distortion and antisemitism.

Observatorio Web works with government authorities, internet companies and civil society organizations to develop educational materials to foster digital citizenship in response to the findings of its research reports. It is a joint programme of the Latin American Jewish Congress (LAJC) and the Argentine Jewish community (AMIA and DAIA).

Further information can be found at https://www.observatorioweb.org/.

Good Practice 6: Amadeu Antionio Foundation, Expo Foundation and HOPE not Hate

A collaborative report between the Amadeu Antonio Foundation in Germany, Expo Foundation in Sweden and HOPE not Hate in the United Kingdom, which is funded by Google's philanthropic arm Google.org, explores the state of antisemitism online in Europe. The report investigates online antisemitism through the study of the questions: how is antisemitism being affected by the internet and how do different online spaces affect the nature of the antisemitism found within them?

The report explores antisemitism, including Holocaust denial and distortion, across nine social media platforms or websites. These include mainstream platforms like Facebook and YouTube, as well as alternative platforms like Parler and 4chan's /pol/ board, which are regularly used to spread violent extremist ideologies. The report investigates the moderation policies, algorithms and terms of services of different online spaces affect the nature of the antisemitism hosted on each platforms.

For more information: HOPE not Hate. https://hopenothate.org.uk/2021/10/13/antisemitism-in-the-digital-age-online-antisemitic-hate-holocaust-denial-conspiracy-ideologies-and-terrorism-in-europe/

5.3 Recommendations for online platforms

- Online platforms should be encouraged to adopt community standards that recognize that denial and distortion of the Holocaust promotes antisemitism and discrimination, and can, in some instances, incite hostility and violence.
- Online platforms should monitor and, when necessary, take action on content that denies or distorts the Holocaust in partnership with experts, civil society organizations and international organizations. Actions may include adding fact-check labels that redirect to accurate and reliable content; downranking, de-amplifying, placing under warning label or removing harmful content; disabling advertising revenue; and/or deactivating accounts of actors producing and spreading such content, including through inauthentic coordinated behaviour. In line with UNESCO's recommendations in the briefing paper, 'Addressing hate speech on social media: contemporary challenges', moderation policies must follow international standards on human rights, including the right to privacy and freedom of expression, particularly as stipulated by the *Rabat Plan of Action*.[103]
- It is recommended that online platforms appoint national and regional focal points on antisemitism and Holocaust denial and distortion, as well as providing a contact point for affected communities, researchers, policy-makers and civil society. Efforts should be made to translate community guidelines and company policies into local languages.
- Online platforms should invest in support and training for content moderators on the topics of Holocaust denial and distortion and antisemitism, and use technological advancements including Artificial Intelligence to identify harmful content while upholding human rights. They should make further efforts to identify content that has purposefully attempted to evade moderation policies, including through the misspelling of terms relating to the Holocaust and use of symbols to signal antisemitic and far-right sympathies.
- When conducting content moderation, online platforms should consider not only the content of posts and comments on their platforms, but also the content of other platforms and websites being linked to (as these sometimes contain more harmful and hateful content). Online platforms may provide content warnings, guidance and direction to accurate and reliable information about the Holocaust on such occasions.
- It is important that online platforms are transparent about their moderation policies and practices. Technology companies should use various metrics and goals to define what success means, sharing these criteria and the success rates, while keeping in mind the need to uphold freedom of expression. Services should be transparent about how they decide on which posts they take action (removing, de-amplifying, adding fact-check labels or removing advertisement revenue), as well as the policy that guided those decisions, and promote open research to assess the effectiveness of each of these actions.
- Likewise, online platforms can aid research and civil society responses to Holocaust denial and distortion by releasing open, consistent data about user behaviour on their platforms, while respecting the privacy and anonymity of their users. These data should be provided in a standardized format across all platforms to enable comparisons of trends and patterns. Companies should also create easier tools for research on their platforms.
- Sharing data between people and organizations working on Holocaust denial and distortion is extremely important, and would benefit from dialogue and cooperation among online platforms. For example, online platforms could work together to create and maintain a multilingual library of different forms of Holocaust denial and distortion, so it could be used to further content moderation efforts worldwide.

Good Practice 7: Twitter and TikTok

Twitter has increased the amount of information it makes available in its Transparency Center to include information requests, removal requests, potential copyright and trademark infringements, its rules governing enforcement and information on State-backed information operations and attempts to manipulate the platform.

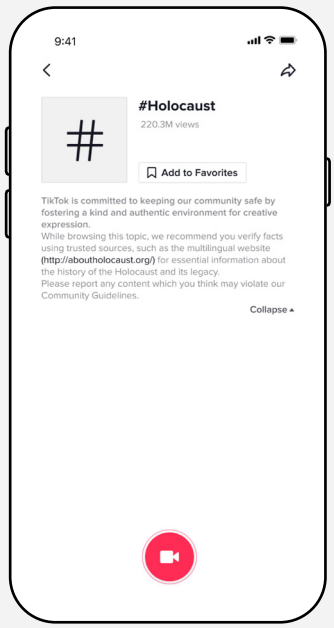
TikTok publishes information about its content moderation, algorithms and privacy and security practices. Its transparency reports show the volume and nature of content removed for violating TikTok's Community Guidelines or Terms of Service, and how TikTok responds to law enforcement requests for information, government requests for content removals and copyrighted content take-down notices. The company has announced Transparency and Accountability Centers in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.

Source: UNESCO. (2021), p.8. *Letting the sun shine in: transparency and accountability in the digital age* https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377231.

[103] UNESCO, (2021). Addressing hate speech on social media: contemporary challenges https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379177.

- To counter Holocaust denial and distortion, online platforms need to promote education about the Holocaust and urgently invest in media and information literacy. Platforms should promote and provide visibility to fact-checked information about the history of the Holocaust, and actively work with young people, teachers and education systems to develop teaching and learning resources that address the rise of Holocaust denial and distortion and support the development of digital citizenship in schools, universities and non-formal education.
- Online platforms can enhance educational responses by disseminating learning materials and guidance that address Holocaust denial and distortion, hate speech and antisemitism and support the development of media and information literacy. This could include developing and integrating tools and applications into their platforms that develop historical literacy and critical thinking to equip young people with the skills to resist and counter Holocaust denial and distortion and other harmful material. Online platform users who encounter or engage with content that infringes moderation policies relating to the denial or the distortion of the Holocaust should also be provided with true and reliable educational material about the history of the Holocaust. Platforms may additionally offer robust remedial options for those whose content has been removed, including access to true and reliable material about the history of the Holocaust.

Figure 35: Redirection to AboutHolocaust.org on TikTok



Good Practice 8: #ThinkBeforeSharing social media campaign

Twitter partnered with UNESCO, the European Commission and the World Jewish Congress on the #ThinkBeforeSharing social media campaign to help people to identify, debunk, react to and report on conspiracy theories to prevent their spread. Through a series of infographics and a social media pack, the campaign raised awareness about the importance of thinking critically and being informed about conspiracy theories, including those informed by antisemitism.

Good Practice 9: AboutHolocaust.org

Hosted by the World Jewish Congress and UNESCO, AboutHolocaust.org counters the rise of Holocaust denial and distortion by providing simple answers to questions such as "What was the Holocaust?", "How did the Nazis exploit their Jewish victims?" and "Were Jews the only victims of Nazi persecution?".

Since 27 January 2021, Facebook redirects its users searching for terms associated with the Holocaust, denial or distortion to the website.

These lessons are relevant for people in every country and context, making Facebook's expansion into 12 of the 19 languages available on AboutHolocaust.org all the more significant.

From 27 January 2022, TikTok users searching for terms related to the Holocaust, such as 'Holocaust victims' or 'Holocaust survivor', see a banner at the top of their search results which invites them to visit the website. Users searching for terms related to the Holocaust which violate TikTok's Community Guidelines, are informed their search results are restricted, and will be shown the same banner inviting them to visit AboutHolocaust.org.

For more information: AboutHolocaust.org.

5.4 Recommendations for education

- Holocaust education is the best defence against denial and distortion, and it should be further integrated into school curricula. It is imperative that young people are provided with accurate knowledge about the fundamental facts of the Holocaust so that they can reject and counter Holocaust denial and distortion.
- Holocaust denial and distortion cannot be addressed without also advancing media and information literacy in school curricula. To protect the facts of the Holocaust, Ministries of Education should invest in digital citizenship education to equip learners to interpret and evaluate (dis)information in the digital age and advance media and information literacy. School textbooks and learning materials should be systematically reviewed to ensure historical accuracy.
- Existing programmes that educate people about the Holocaust should renew their efforts to develop historical literacy skills that promote critical thinking and epistemic understanding about the Holocaust, through the evaluation of historical evidence and expert analysis in cooperation with archives, museums and historians. Holocaust education should also serve to raise awareness of Holocaust denial and distortion, its forms and consequences, to better prepare learners to identify and respond appropriately to denial and distortion should they encounter them. To support this, Ministries of Education should invest in teacher training on Holocaust education to promote pedagogies that build resilience against Holocaust denial and distortion, and provide access to accurate and informed resources of the history of the Holocaust. Holocaust educators require training, support and materials to better understand how Holocaust denial and distortion are communicated online, and the types of communities in which they currently circulate. Educators would also benefit from specific guidance and resources on how to respond to critical incidents of Holocaust denial and distortion in the classroom, on how to respond to resistance to learning about the Holocaust, and how to effectively navigate classroom discussions about hate speech and conspiracy theories.
- It is critical for governments and civil society to promote guidance on false and illegitimate equations between the Holocaust and other historical or contemporary events. This includes providing educators with training on how to meaningfully compare the Holocaust to other atrocity crimes whilst maintaining historical accuracy and contextualizing both histories. Educators should be supported to recognize and reject false and illegitimate equations, and to understand how such comparisons have the potential to cause harm. Holocaust museums, archives and educational organizations, civil society organizations, journalists and other actors also require guidance on how to effectively respond to false equivalences of the Holocaust.
- Holocaust educational organizations, museums and archives should increase their visibility on novel online platforms such as Telegram where there are large quantities of Holocaust denial and distortion. This will require investment in training of staff to increase understanding of the logic and culture of these platforms, and on the development of effective counter-speech and strategies that promote historical literacy and critical thinking.

Good Practice 10: The Anti-Defamation League

The Anti-Defamation League advertises its Hate on Display™ hate symbols database to educators. It provides an overview of many of the symbols most frequently used by a variety of white supremacist groups and movements, as well as some other types of hate groups.

The organization provides teaching and learning materials on hate symbols to provide an opportunity for learners to reflect on the importance of symbols in our society, understand more about specific hate symbols and identify strategies for responding to and eliminating hate symbols.

For more information: ADL Education. https://www.adl.org/education

Good Practice 11: Arolsen Archives

'Marbles of Remembrance' is an interactive and GPS-based chatbot that can be used with the messenger service Telegram. On five multimedia city tours, participants can learn about the life stories of young people – such as Zvi Aviram and Hanni Weissenberg – who as Jewish children went into hiding in Berlin and thus survived the Nazi era. The chatbot also tells about the efforts of the Youth Aliyah to save Jewish children from persecution. Other tours lead through districts of Berlin where Jewish life was particularly present before the Nazi era. Where in Berlin did Jewish children live? Where did they go to school? What was their everyday life like in the face of increasing antisemitism? And what did persecution mean for these young people?

The tours are multimedia-based – the stories are told using text messages, documents from the Arolsen Archives, photographs, infographics and voice messages. Three of the tours allow participants to test their knowledge: answering questions correctly leads to the next stop. The chatbot also offers various other features. For example, participants can ask questions about the history of the Holocaust and receive reliable information. 'Marbles of Remembrance' offers high-quality information for young people – as an alternative to hate and fake news on the internet.

'Marbles of Remembrance' is easy to use: Simply search for @MarblesBot on Telegram.

Annexes

A1 Keyword collection process

In addition to seeking input from the advisory board, the following list of sources was consulted to put together the list of keywords used in the project:

- The Institute of Strategic Dialogue reports 'Hosting the Holohoax' (https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/hosting-the-holohoax-a-snapshot-of-holocaust-denial-across-social-media/), *Cartographie de*
- *La Haine en Ligne* (https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Cartographie-de-la-haine-fr.pdf) and *The rise of antisemitism online during the pandemic*
- *A study of French and German content* (https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d73c833f-c34c-11eb-a925-01aa75ed71a1/language-en)
- The American Jewish Committee's 'Translate Hate' database (https://www.ajc.org/translatehate/)
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Holocaust Encyclopedia (https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/)
- *The Observatorio Antisemitismo produced by the Federación de Comunidades Judías de España* (https://observatorioantisemitismo.fcje.org/)
- An *Informe sobre antisemitismo en la Argentina, produced by the Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas* (https://www.daia.org.ar/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/informe-antisemitismo-2014-2015-CORREGIDO.pdf)
- The ADL Hate Symbols Database (https://www.adl.org/hate-symbols)
- The '*Histoire de la Holocauste*' produced by the *Musée de l'Holocauste Montréal* https://museeholocauste.ca/fr/histoire-holocauste/
- SCAN Global's 'Hate Ontology' (http://scan-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/scan-hate-ontology.pdf)
- The website of *Pratique de l'Histoire et Dévoiements Négationnistes* (https://phdn.org/)
- *Antisemitisme en suisse romande* by the OHCHR (https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/Submissions/CICAD1.pdf)
- *Discours de haine racistes en ligne : Tour d'horizon, mesures actuelles et recommandations* by Dr. Lea Stahel (https://www.edi.admin.ch/dam/edi/fr/dokumente/FRB/Neue%20Website%20FRB/T%C3%A4tigkeitsfelder/Medien_Internet/bericht_stahel_hassrede.pdf.download.pdf/Stahel_2020_Discours%20de%20haine%20racistes%20en%20ligne.pdf)
- *Wie die Rechten die Geschichte umdeuten from the Bildungsstätte Anne Frank* (https://www.bs-anne-frank.de/fileadmin/content/Publikationen/Themenhefte/Themenheft_Geschichtsrevisionismus_Web.pdf)
- *Antisemitismus im Internet und den sozialen Medien from Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/antisemitismus/321584/antisemitismus-im-internet-und-den-sozialen-medien)

The full list of keywords used during the project can be found at: https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:07810e50-b657-4356-b587-f6ce22d97e42

A2 Data collection process

This section describes in detail how data were collected from each platform studied (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and Telegram). As described below, each platform has a different approach to making data available.

Facebook and Instagram

Facebook and Instagram data were both collected through CrowdTangle (https://www.crowdtangle.com/), a service which is owned by Facebook. CrowdTangle seeks to facilitate the discovery of content created by 'influential' accounts on the platform, with influence broadly defined as the number of people consuming content from the account. On Facebook, according to the documentation, this equates to Pages with more than 100,000 likes, large scale groups, and large scale 'verified' Facebook accounts (which are owned by public figures). Instagram accounts with over 75,000 followers are also included. Furthermore, all of these groups and pages are 'public' (which means anyone can view the content without having to request or be granted access). CrowdTangle makes an 'API' (Application Programming Interface) available to researchers that allows them to query their database for content created by one of these influential accounts.

This API was used to query both Facebook and Instagram for data created containing one of the keywords in the keyword list described in appendix A1. One query to the API was made per keyword, and each query returned up to 100 results, if available. Only data created in the last seven days were retrieved, to make sure the data being used were up to date. It was specified that results should be ordered chronologically (most recent first), hence if there were more than 100 posts available in the date range the 100 most recent were returned. CrowdTangle also allows the specification of a language for each query, hence the query was made in the language appropriate to the keyword being used. If a keyword was relevant to multiple languages (such as Auschwitz) then one API query per language was made. The Facebook API queries were carried out between 30 June 2021 and 1 July 2021, and the Instagram queries were carried out on 11 July 2021.

It was possible to take a full sample of 200 pieces of content for each language from Facebook, meaning that a sample of 800 observations in total from Facebook. Instagram returned 200 pieces of content for English and German, but only 154 pieces of content for French and 177 for Spanish, meaning that in total a sample of 731 Instagram posts.

Twitter

The Twitter data were collected directly from the Twitter 'Search' API (see: https://developer.twitter.com/en/docs). Unlike the CrowdTangle API (which offers a subset of data), this API provides the ability to search all tweets created in the last seven days.

This API was used to query Twitter for data created containing one of the keywords in the keyword list described in appendix A1. One query was made to the API per keyword, and each query returned up to 100 results, if available. It was specified that results should be ordered by chronologically (most recent first), hence if there were more than 100 posts available in the date range only the 100 most recent would be returned. Twitter also allows the specification of a language for each query, hence the query specified the language appropriate to the keyword being used. If a keyword was relevant to multiple languages (such as Auschwitz) then one API query per language was made. The Twitter API queries were carried out on 23 July 2021.

It was possible to take a full sample of 200 pieces of content for each language from Twitter, meaning a sample of 800 observations in total from Twitter.

TikTok

TikTok does not maintain an official API, hence it was not possible to search for content directly. Instead, the research made use of an 'unofficial' TikTok API, which was accessed through the Python library TikTok-API (see documentation here: https://github.com/davidteather/TikTok-Api). This API makes it possible to query for the existence of TikTok hashtags (which are one of the major ways in which content on TikTok is organized). One query hashtag query was made for each of the keywords in the list, which identified up to 10 hashtags which were associated with this keyword. If the keywords actually had multiple separate words in them then they were unified into one (for example, for the keyword 'final solution' a query was made for the existence of #finalsolution). A manual review of the list of resulting hashtags was then conducted, which identified ones which were either an exact match for one of the keywords in the list, or which appeared closely related. The list of TikTok hashtags was extracted on 16 July 2021.

In total through this process, 151 relevant hashtags were identified from the list of hashtags reviewed (as described in the body text, many hashtags have been removed from TikTok, even for relatively generic terms such as Auschwitz).

When coding content, researchers were assigned hashtags (instead of individual videos) to review. They then reviewed the top five videos associated with this hashtag, which led to the review of approximately 800 videos. The coding took place between 16 July 2021 and 13 August 2021. One important caveat is that TikTok has an algorithm that orders videos under each hashtag, which means that the top five videos may not be the most recent ones (though in general all the videos looked at were relatively recent).

As the research reviewed five pieces of content for 151 hashtags, in total 755 pieces of content were reviewed for TikTok. The amount was slightly uneven across languages: there were 235 for German, 210 for English, 165 for Spanish and 145 for French.

Telegram

Telegram does not maintain an API that allows researchers to search directly for content. Instead, it maintains an API which allows them to search for publicly available Telegram channels, according to keywords present in the channel title and description. This API was used to search for channels with the keyword list described in Appendix A1. The results were limited to 10 channels per keyword, if available. Channels with less than 100 participants were ignored. For each of the resulting channels found, the 10 most recent messages posted to the channel were retrieved, meaning that up to 100 messages (10 messages from 10 chats) were be collected per keyword. Both the Telegram chats and the Telegram messages were accessed on 27 July 2021.

It was possible to collect a full sample of 200 messages from English, German and Spanish however only 162 pieces of content were available for French, meaning that in total the project reviewed 762 pieces of content.

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History under attack

Holocaust denial and distortion on social media

A new United Nations and UNESCO study together with the support of the World Jewish Congress investigates Holocaust denial and distortion on social media, measuring their extent and nature on Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Twitter and TikTok, at a time when the memory and fundamental facts of the Holocaust are under threat from lies, smears and the spread of violent ideologies. It provides recommendations that governments, online platforms, educators and researchers can implement to counter denial and distortion, prevent antisemitism and uphold human rights.

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