

Holocaust Denial and Antisemitism Briefing 2018

The Holocaust Educational Trust

WHAT IS HOLOCAUST DENIAL?

Whilst outright denial of the Holocaust is rare in political discourse, it continues to present a persistent issue on social media platforms where individuals feel more able to make outrageous claims without fear of consequences.

Holocaust denial is discourse and propaganda that deny the historical reality and the extent of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during World War II, known as the Holocaust or the Shoah. Holocaust denial refers specifically to any attempt to claim that the Holocaust/Shoah did not take place.

Holocaust denial 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.

Holocaust denial in its various forms is an expression of antisemitism. The attempt to deny the genocide of the Jews is an effort to exonerate National Socialism and antisemitism from guilt or responsibility in the genocide of the Jewish people. Forms of Holocaust denial also include blaming the Jews for either exaggerating or creating the Shoah for political or financial gain as if the Shoah itself was the result of a conspiracy plotted by the Jews. In this, the goal is to make the Jews culpable and antisemitism once again legitimate. This form of antisemitic victim blaming is relevant today.

WHAT IS HOLOCAUST DISTORTION?

1. Intentional efforts to excuse or minimise the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany;
2. Gross minimization of the number of the victims of the Holocaust in contradiction to reliable sources;
3. Attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide;
4. Statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event. Those statements are not Holocaust denial but are closely connected to it as a radical form of antisemitism. They may suggest that the Holocaust did not go far enough in accomplishing its goal of "the Final Solution of the Jewish Question";
5. 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.

WHAT IS HOLOCAUST EQUIVOCATION?

The inappropriate equation of the Holocaust to contemporary conflicts, situations or individuals.

Whilst not always with malicious intent, Holocaust language and imagery is sometimes casually used by journalists, politicians, commentators, authors, cartoonists, artists and activists of all political persuasions to describe contemporary world events.

There is a danger that the misapplication of Holocaust analogies to current conflicts or genocides can result in an oversimplification of a complex past.

LAZY MISUSE OF THE HOLOCAUST

Hyperbolic Holocaust language or imagery can also be used to describe anything that one merely dislikes or disagrees with – a more insensitive and inappropriate (rather than politically divisive) form of the comparison.

It is, however, a lazy form of arguing as casual use of “you’re a Nazi” or “you’re just like Hitler” trivializes the political phenomenon.

Another example of this would be when animal rights campaigners refer to the appalling conditions that some animals are held in as “Auschwitz”.

These are examples of casual, non-politically motivated use that wrongly uses the Holocaust as a frame of reference in order to create an attention-grabbing headline.

EXAMPLES OF HOLOCAUST DENIAL, DISTORTION, EQUIVOCATION AND ANTISEMITISM

Examples of antisemitism directed at the Holocaust Educational Trust:

- “slithering Jew always make everything about the Holocaust.”
- “Here is Gaza, this is the real Holocaust.”
- “.. the Holohoax. The truth should be taught.”
- Referring to the Holocaust as “Zionist Fairy Tales”

Examples of Holocaust denial:

- In August 2017, a Jewish organisation in London received a tweet that read: “The Holocaust is fake history”.
- In October 2017 graffiti was found in London along a canal, using the same language and handwriting over a prolonged period, said things like: “The Holocaust is a lie” and “Holohoax”.
- “Holohoax” flyers and material expressing support for Holocaust denier David Irving, were found on London, Cambridge, Glasgow and Edinburgh campuses. One such leaflet denied the existence of gas chambers.

Examples of Holocaust distortion:

- In April 2017, Ken Livingstone distorted the Holocaust through excusing the impact of the Holocaust when he made suggestions that there had been ‘real collaboration’ between Jewish people and Nazis during the Second World War
- Earlier this year, the Polish Prime Minister made comments after pressure was put on him regarding Poland’s Holocaust Law, where he used the term “Jewish perpetrators”.

Examples of Holocaust equivocation:

- An example includes comments made by a former MP, when they said:
“Having visited Auschwitz twice — once with my family and once with local schools — I am saddened that the Jews, who suffered unbelievable levels of persecution during the Holocaust, could within a few years of liberation from the death camps be inflicting atrocities on Palestinians in the new State of Israel and continue to do so on a daily basis in the West Bank and Gaza.”

HOW DO WE CHALLENGE THIS?

The Holocaust did not start with the gas chambers, it started with hate-filled words. We need to fight ignorance and hatred and education is key. At the Holocaust Educational Trust we



teach the history of the Holocaust so that people know what happened, in memory of the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered and for the sake of those who survived and to learn its contemporary lessons. We reach thousands of young people every year, who become our ambassadors. They become our advocates, witnesses of the truth and a key part of the next generation that ensure the memory of the Holocaust lives on – and ensure they stand up to hatred today.

At the Holocaust Educational Trust we have a range of programmes that ensure the memory of the Holocaust is not forgotten, and the lessons of the past are learnt:

- Our **Outreach Programme** sends Holocaust survivors to schools, colleges, universities and organisations throughout the year. At HET, we firmly believe that everyone should hear a Holocaust survivor share their story. It is often a life changing experience, to hear first-hand about where hate-filled words can lead. The survivors we work with go into schools and organisations on a weekly basis, and speak to thousands upon thousands of people every year to educate them about the Holocaust.
- Our **Lessons from Auschwitz Project** has so far taken over 40,000 students and teachers to the former Nazi Concentration Camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Project is a key part in teaching the next generation about where hate-crime and specifically antisemitism can lead. We teach students about pre-war Jewish life in Europe, and how hate and antisemitic ideology sought to destroy a whole population of people across the continent, in only our parents/grandparent's lifetimes.
- Every year over 1,500 teachers take part in our **Teacher Training Programmes**. We offer free professional training workshops and courses as well as intensive residential courses delivered by our experts and prominent academics who engage in the latest scholarship on the Holocaust. It is important that the Holocaust is taught to students, and with 1,500 teachers a year benefitting from our programmes, their reach to students is huge.
- Our **Ambassador Programme** consists of all the young people that have taken part so far in our *Lessons from Auschwitz* Project. There are over 27,000 Ambassadors of the Trust whose job it is to help educate their generation and the next, to take every opportunity they have to learn more about the Holocaust and share it with others. We have a team of Regional Ambassadors who go above and beyond to play this vital role on behalf of the Trust.

Our programmes and projects rely heavily on people hearing first-hand the testimonies of those lucky enough to have survived. However, survivors are getting fewer and frailer and therefore it is imperative that we do everything we can to keep their memories alive; passing their stories on to the next generation who will have the tools to educate others about the problem of antisemitism.

We must continue to remember the Holocaust and ensure community and political leaders do the same, not only on Holocaust Memorial Day on 27th January of each year, but throughout the year. Every year we lose more survivors, and every year this will become harder – but understanding the Holocaust and where antisemitism can lead is a lesson that should continue to be taught and never be forgotten.

We expect political leaders to take a stand against antisemitism in Britain, and we must hold people to account. We must be clear when it comes to antisemitism – whether a physical manifestation or in inappropriate language - is unacceptable in today's society. Recent events in politics and on social media make it all the more prominent and visceral, we must continue to educate about the danger of hate.