

# Holocaust Deniers and Public Misinformation

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007272>

Holocaust denial and minimization or distortion of the facts of the Holocaust is a form of anti-Semitism.

Holocaust deniers ignore the overwhelming evidence of the event and insist that the Holocaust is a myth, invented by the Allies, the Soviet communists, and the Jews for their own ends. According to the deniers' "logic" the Allies needed the "Holocaust myth" to justify their occupation of Germany in 1945 and the "harsh" persecution of Nazi defendants. Holocaust deniers also claim that Jews needed the "Holocaust myth" to extract huge payments in restitution from Germany and to justify the establishment of the State of Israel. Holocaust deniers claim that there is a vast conspiracy involving the victorious powers of World War II, Jews, and Israel to propagate the Holocaust for their own ends.

Holocaust deniers assert that if they can discredit one fact about the Holocaust, the whole history of the event can be discredited as well. They ignore the evidence of the historical event and make arguments that they say negate the reality of the Holocaust in its entirety.

Some Holocaust deniers argue that, since there is neither a single document that outlines the Holocaust nor a signed document from Hitler ordering the Holocaust, the Holocaust itself is a hoax. To make this argument, they reject all the evidence submitted at Nuremberg. They denounce as fabrications the genocidal intention of the Nazi state and the thousands of orders, memos, notes, and other records that document the process of destruction. When they cannot sustain arguments that documents are forged, they argue that the language in the documents has been deliberately misinterpreted. Furthermore, some Holocaust deniers insist that the Allies tortured the perpetrators into testifying about their role in the killing process and that the survivors who testified about Nazi crimes against Jews were all lying out of self-interest.

Some Holocaust deniers claim that those "few" Jews who perished died from natural causes or were legitimately executed by the Nazi state for actual criminal offenses. They assert that Jews and the Allied powers deliberately inflated the numbers of Jews killed during the war. Holocaust historians have placed the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust between 5.1 and 6 million, based on legitimate available historical sources and demographic methods. Holocaust deniers cite uncertainty about the exact number of deaths within this accepted range as proof that the whole history of the Holocaust has been fabricated and that the number of Jewish deaths during World War II has been grossly exaggerated.

Some Holocaust deniers assert that the Nazis did not use gas chambers to kill Jews. They deny the reality of the killing centers. Deniers have focused their attention on Auschwitz and believe if they could just disprove that the Nazis used gas chambers in Auschwitz to kill Jews, the whole history of the Holocaust would also be discredited.

Holocaust deniers often mimic the forms and practices of scholars in order to deceive the public about the nature of their views. They generally footnote their writings by citing the publications of other Holocaust deniers and hold pseudo-scholarly conventions.

Holocaust denial on the Internet is especially a problem because of the ease and speed with which such misinformation can be disseminated. In the United States, where the First Amendment to the Constitution ensures freedom of speech, it is not against the law to deny the Holocaust or to propagate Nazi and anti-Semitic hate speech. European countries such as Germany and France have criminalized denial of the Holocaust and have banned Nazi and neo-Nazi publications. The Internet is now the chief source of Holocaust denial and the chief means of recruiting for Holocaust denial organizations.