

Updated 9/12/2016

**Timeline:**  
**Holocaust Denial and Distortion from Iranian Government and Official  
Media Sources  
(1998-2016)**

<https://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/holocaust-denial-and-distortion/iran-cartoon-exhibition/antisemitism-and-holocaust-denial-today/timeline>

January 23, 1998: Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, president of Iran from 1989–1997, opened an Iranian Al-Quds Day rally dismissing as “Zionist propaganda” the fact that six million Jews died during World War II.<sup>1</sup>

April 20, 1998: The Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei met with convicted French Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy,<sup>2</sup> who wrote about “the myth of the six million” Jewish victims in his book *The Founding Myths of Modern Israel*.

January 13, 1998: The author of an article published in the pro-Khamenei and pro-Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (at this time an Iranian politician) newspaper *Resalat* claimed that Roger Garaudy was brought to trial in France even though his findings were not “far from the truth” and many scholars considered the reported atrocities of Auschwitz to be a “big lie.” Instead of “writing the history” of Nazi crimes, Western scholars “invented history.”<sup>3</sup>

January 19, 1998: On Tehran TV, President Mohammad Khatami described Garaudy as “a thinker” and “a believer” who was prosecuted solely for “displeasing to the West” with his research.<sup>4</sup>

January 14, 1999: An article published in the Iranian newspaper *Jomhuri-ye Islami*, once managed by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, declared that the “false slogan of the murder of millions of Jews” was a “ridiculous pretext” Zionists used to convince the world of the need for a Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> Robert S. Wistrich. *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), p. 913.

<sup>2</sup> Matthias Küntzel, “The Roots of Iranian Antisemitism and its Current Consequences,” Articles by Matthias Küntzel, <http://www.matthiaskuentzel.de/contents/the-roots-of-iranian-antisemitism-and-its-current-consequences> (accessed April 5, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> David Menashri, “Iran, the Jews and the Holocaust,” Institute of Sino-Western Communications, <http://sino-west.org/sjtu/Holocaust.pdf> (accessed May 9, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Menashri.

State and that anyone who disproved the “historical allegation on the basis of reliable evidence” was silenced under threat of serious consequences.<sup>5</sup>

January–February 2001: An author writing for the government-run *Tehran Times* claimed that only 150,000 prisoners died at Auschwitz and that most deaths could be attributed to disease. Any purposeful killings that took place were only due to “acts of resistance and sabotage.”<sup>6</sup> Another author writing for the *Tehran Times* attested that no evidence existed to confirm the gassing “of even one human being in a German camp” and that German documents “directly refute” the “Holocaust story.”<sup>7</sup>

April 24, 2001: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei claimed the “exaggerated numbers” of Jews killed during the Holocaust were “fabricated to solicit the sympathy of world public opinion, lay the ground for the occupation of Palestine, and justify the atrocities of the Zionists” while speaking at a conference on Palestine in Tehran.<sup>8</sup>

August 2003: The Iranian government invited Gerald Fredrick Töben, the founder of the Australian-based Adelaide Institute, an online and print publication that distributes Holocaust denialist material, to Tehran to speak at the International Conference on the Palestinian Intifada. Courts in Germany and Australia have found Töben guilty of violating Holocaust denial laws.<sup>9</sup> In his speech to the conference, Töben alleged that Auschwitz was physically too small for killing mass numbers of Jews.<sup>10</sup>

January 26, 2005: The *Tehran Times* ran an op-ed by Hossein Amiri titled “Lies of the Holocaust Industry.”<sup>11</sup>

December 8, 2005: During an Organization of the Islamic Conference meeting in Mecca (now called The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation), Ahmadinejad stated: “Some European countries are insisting on saying that Hitler burned millions of oppressed Jews in crematoria.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Aislinn Simpson, “Holocaust Denier Gerald Toben arrested at Heathrow,” *The Telegraph*, October 1, 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/australia/3116061/Holocaust-denier-Gerald-Toben-arrested-at-Heathrow.html>.

<sup>10</sup> George Michael, “Deciphering Ahmadinejad’s Holocaust Revisionism,” Middle East Forum, <http://www.meforum.org/1704/deciphering-ahmadinejads-holocaust-revisionism> (accessed April 8, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Steven Wicken, “Views of the Holocaust in Arab Media and Public Discourse,” *Yale Journal of International Affairs* 1, no. 2 (2006), p. 105.

They insist so much on this issue that if someone proves the opposite, they convict him and throw him into prison.”<sup>12</sup>

December 13, 2005: In a speech made in the Iranian city of Zahedan, Ahmadinejad claimed that the Europeans “created a myth in the name of the Holocaust and valued that higher than God, religion, and the prophets.” This speech was broadcast on Iranian television.<sup>13</sup>

February 6, 2006: Farid Mortazavi, graphics editor of a national Iranian newspaper *Hamshahri*, announced a contest for cartoons about the Holocaust with gold and cash prizes for the winners. The newspaper, which is publicly owned by the city of Tehran and has the highest circulation rate of any paper in Iran, received almost 1200 submissions from over 60 countries, including cartoons that deny or minimize the Holocaust.<sup>14</sup>

July 2, 2006: The Supreme Leader Sayyid Ali Khamenei referred to “the myth of the massacre of Jews known as the Holocaust” in an address to Iranian Air Force Servicemen.<sup>15</sup>

August 2006: The Saba Art and Cultural Institute in Tehran opened an exhibition, sponsored by Iranian President Ahmadinejad, of a selection of 200 cartoons from the February 2006 Holocaust cartoon contest.<sup>16</sup>

December 11–12, 2006: The Iranian Foreign Ministry's Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS) held a conference promoting Holocaust denial titled “Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision.” Rasoul Mousavi, head of the IPIS, referred to the conference as an opportunity for discussion on the Holocaust “away from Western taboos and the restrictions imposed on them in Europe.”<sup>17</sup> Sixty-seven participants from thirty countries attended. Participants included former Ku Klux Klan leader and Holocaust denier David Duke, French Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson, and officials of the neo-Nazi German National Democratic Party (NPD) among others.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Yigal Carmon, “The Role of Holocaust Denial in the Ideology and Strategy of the Iranian Regime,” Yad Vashem, [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/insights/pdf/carmon\\_iranian\\_denial.pdf](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/insights/pdf/carmon_iranian_denial.pdf) (accessed April 8, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Manfred Gerstenfeld, *The Abuse of Holocaust Memory: Distortions and Responses* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2009), p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> Wistrich, p. 916–17.

<sup>15</sup> Matthias Küntzel, “‘Moderate’ Holocaust Denial in Iran?,” Articles by Matthias Küntzel, <http://www.matthiaskuentzel.de/contents/moderate-holocaust-denial-in-iran> (accessed April 5, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Matthias Küntzel, *Unholy Hatreds: Holocaust Denial and Antisemitism in Iran* (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center of the Study of Antisemitism, 2007), p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Menashri.

<sup>18</sup> Matthias Küntzel, *Unholy Hatreds*, p. 1; “Holocaust deniers gather in Iran for 'scientific' conference,” *The Guardian*, Dec. 11, 2006, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/dec/12/iran.israel>.

2006/2007: The state-run Political Science & Research Institute (PSRI) published Mohammed Taghi Taghipour's book *Beyond the Holocaust Scene*. The author argued that no Nazi plan to eliminate all Jews ever existed and that any deaths in Nazi prisoner of war camps were due to typhus.<sup>19</sup>

January 7, 2007: The organizer of the "Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision" conference, Mohammad Ali Ramin, an Iranian politician, political analyst, author, and former Deputy Minister of Culture and presidential advisor under Ahmadinejad, announced the creation of the "World Foundation for Holocaust Research" with himself as the director.<sup>20</sup>

January 26, 2007: Iran attacked UN Resolution 61/255<sup>21</sup> against Holocaust denial, saying that the Holocaust should be examined to determine its scope.<sup>22</sup>

February 15, 2007: 103 Iranians in Europe and North America published a statement in *The New York Review of Books* condemning the government's 2006 Holocaust conference and deploring the fact that Holocaust denial "has become a propaganda tool that the Islamic Republic of Iran is using to further its own agendas."<sup>23</sup>

September 6, 2012: Mark Weber of the California-based Institute for Historical Review (IHR), which publishes material and sponsors conferences denying the Holocaust, visited Iran and spoke at Tehran University.<sup>24</sup>

September 25, 2013: In an interview on CNN with Christiane Amanpour, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani condemned the Holocaust stating: "I can tell you that any crime that happens in history against humanity, including the crime the Nazis created towards the Jews as well as non-Jews is reprehensible and condemnable. Whatever criminality they committed against the Jews, we condemn."<sup>25</sup> Iranian media later accused CNN of fabricating Rouhani's comments.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Menashri.

<sup>20</sup> Wistrich, p. 920.

<sup>21</sup> The General Assembly, "Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on Holocaust denial (A/RES/61/255, 26 January 2007)," The United Nations, 2007, <http://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/docs/res61.shtml>.

<sup>22</sup> Gerstenfeld, p. 109.

<sup>23</sup> Gholam Reza Afkhami, "On the Holocaust Conference Sponsored by the Government of Iran," *The New York Review of Books*, February 15, 2007, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2007/02/15/on-the-holocaust-conference-sponsored-by-the-gover/>.

<sup>24</sup> Alvin H. Rosenfeld, ed., *Deciphering the New Antisemitism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), p. 372.

<sup>25</sup> Mick Krever and Josh Levs, "Iran's New President: Yes, the Holocaust Happened," CNN, September 25, 2013, <http://amanpour.blogs.cnn.com/2013/09/25/irans-new-president-yes-the-holocaust-happened>.

<sup>26</sup> Max Fisher, "Hassan Rouhani's Jewish Problem," *The Washington Post*, September 26, 2012, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/09/26/hassan-rouhanis-jewish-problem>.

March 20, 2014: In his official 2014 Nowruz address, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei remarked: “The Holocaust is an event whose reality is uncertain and if it has happened, it’s uncertain how it has happened.”<sup>27</sup>

April 1, 2015: Two government-sponsored Iranian cultural organizations announced a second Holocaust cartoon contest, expecting to receive entries from cartoonists in dozens of countries.<sup>28</sup>

December 16, 2015: Organizers of the 11th Tehran International Cartoon Biennial announced a cash prize of \$50,000 for the best cartoon on the Holocaust.<sup>29</sup>

January 27, 2016: On International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei released a video titled “Holocaust: Are the Dark Ages Over?” on his website, which included his comments from 2014 questioning the Nazi mass slaughter of more than six million Jews during World War II. Khamenei remarks: “No one in European countries dares to speak about the Holocaust, while it is not clear whether the core of this matter is clear or not. Even if it is a reality, it is not clear how it happened. Speaking about the Holocaust and expressing doubts about it is considered to be a great sin. If someone does this, they stop, arrest, imprison, and sue him. This is while they claim to be the supporters of freedom. This is the ignorance that exists in today’s world.”<sup>30</sup> On the same day, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova met with Iranian President Hasan Rouhani and raised the problem of the Holocaust cartoon exhibition then scheduled for June of 2016.<sup>31</sup>

April 25, 2016: In an interview published in the *New Yorker*, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tried to distance the government from the Holocaust cartoon contest, asserting that it did not receive government support or endorsement, and that no official permission was necessary to hold it<sup>32</sup>. A spokesperson from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic

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<sup>27</sup> Barak Ravid, “Reality of Holocaust ‘Uncertain.’ Says Iran’s Supreme Leader,” *Haaretz*, March 21, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/news/1.581145>.

<sup>28</sup> Iran Cartoon, “The Second International Holocaust Cartoon Contest - 2015,” <http://www.irancartoon.com/the-second-holocaust-international-cartoon-contest-2015> (retrieved April 8, 2016).

<sup>29</sup> Islamic Republic News Agency, “Tehran Biennial to Grant \$50,000 Cash Prize to Best Cartoon on Holocaust,” IRNA, December 17, 2015, <http://www.irna.ir/en/News/81883105>.

<sup>30</sup> Jack Moore, “Iran’s Ayatollah Khamenei Posts Holocaust Denial Video on Remembrance Day,” *Newsweek*, January 28, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/irans-ayatollah-khamenei-posts-holocaust-denial-video-remembrance-day-420511>.

<sup>31</sup> Alessandro Bianchi, “UNESCO to Challenge Iran’s Rouhani on Holocaust Cartoon Competition,” *Newsweek*, January 26, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/unesco-challenge-irans-rouhani-holocaust-cartoon-competition-419600>.

<sup>32</sup> Robin Wright, “Iran’s Javad Zarif on the Fraying Nuclear Deal, U.S. Relations, and Holocaust Cartoons,” *The New Yorker*, April 25, 2016,

Guidance questioned the Foreign Minister's comments, affirming that the Ministry supports any program that "enlighten[s] people about the Holocaust<sup>33</sup>." The spokesperson for the contest also confirmed that they are cooperating with the Ministry on the contest. Following Foreign Minister Zarif's interview, the main spokesperson for the contest, Mas'oud Shoja'i Tabataba'i, said that Zarif was not welcome at the contest<sup>34</sup>.

May 14, 2016: An exhibition displaying 150 Holocaust cartoons from the 11th Tehran International Cartoon Biennial opened in Tehran in the art section of the Islamic Propaganda Organization. This date was chosen to coincide with the date of Israel's Declaration of Independence.<sup>35</sup> The exhibition closed on May 30, 2016.

May 31, 2016: An awards ceremony was held for the winners of the Holocaust cartoon contest. According to the organizers, six prizes were given to Iranian cartoonists, two to Brazilians, two to Frenchmen, two to Indonesians, and one each to cartoonists from Turkey, Morocco, India, and Portugal<sup>36</sup>. Majid Mollanoroozi<sup>37</sup>, the director of Tehran's Museum of Contemporary Art and the Head of the Graphic Arts section of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, took part in the awards ceremony<sup>38</sup>. Prizes reportedly totaled \$50,000.

July 2016: Works from the May Holocaust cartoon exhibition were shown in other provinces in Iran, including Lorestan, Qazvin, Kermanshah, Kogilouyeh va Buyerahmad, Hormozgan, Qom, Bushehr, and Chanar Mahal va Bakhtiari<sup>39</sup>. Opening on International Quds Day in the Hamedan province, an exhibition of 35 cartoons were displayed on streets and bridges<sup>40</sup>.

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<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/irans-javad-zarif-on-the-fraying-nuclear-deal-u-s-relations-and-holocaust-cartoons>

<sup>33</sup> "Zarif is Misunderstood: We Will Support Programs That Shed Light on the Holocaust," *Naseem News Agency*, April 28, 2016, <http://www.nasimonline.ir/Content/Detail/2026923/از-صحبت-های-ظریف-سو-عبر-داشت-شده-است-بر-نام>.

<sup>34</sup> "Holocaust Contest's Chairperson Reacts to Zarif," *Farda*, April 27, 2016, <http://www.fardanews.com/fa/news/516030/واکنش-دبیر-مسابقه-کار-یکاتور-هولوکاست-به-اظهارات-ظریف>.

<sup>35</sup> "Exhibition of International Holocaust Cartoons in the Art Center /Presentation of 150 Artworks," *Fars News Agency*, May 2, 2016, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13950213000239>.

<sup>36</sup> "Winners of Second Holocaust Cartoon Contest," *Mehr News Agency*, May 30, 2016, <http://www.mehrnews.com/news/3672791/دومین-مسابقه-کار-تون-و-کار-یکاتور-هولوکاست-بر-گزیدگان-خود-را-اشناخت>.

<sup>37</sup> Gero Schleiss, "Tehran-Berlin Art Exhibition Jeopardized by Ties to Holocaust Denial," *Deutsche Welle*, June 22, 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/tehran-berlin-art-exhibition-jeopardized-by-ties-to-holocaust-denial/a-19347478>.

<sup>38</sup> Mollanoroozi's involvement with the contest sparked some controversy in Germany, as he signed an agreement in October 2015 with Günther Schauerte, the Vice President of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) concerning an exhibition of Iranian and international artworks collected by the last Iranian Empress, Farah Diba Pahlavi.

<sup>39</sup> "Holding Holocaust Exhibitions in Provinces," *Shoma News*, June 30, 2016, <http://shomanews.com/fa/news/802253/بر-یابی-نمایشگاه-هولوکاست-در-مرکز-استانها>.

<sup>40</sup> "Holocaust Exhibition was Opened in Hamedan Province," *IQNA (International Quran News Agency)*, July 2, 2016, <http://iqna.ir/fa/news/3512005/نمایشگاه-کار-یکاتور-هولوکاست-در-همدان-گشایش-یافت>.

August 16, 2016: Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif was questioned in the Iranian Parliament about his position on the Holocaust cartoon contest and exhibition. He again asserted that the contest was held by an NGO and not the Iranian government. He replied, “I have always believed that this position [denying the Holocaust] has no benefit for the Islamic Republic. Regarding the exhibition, it was held without any coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I said this is not a government action and I will not show up. The exhibition was the work of an NGO and there was no need for officials to attend... As an expert, I declare that talking about the Holocaust does not harm the Zionist regime<sup>41</sup>.”

### **International Standards on Holocaust Denial and Distortion**

[UN General Assembly Resolution 60/7, Nov. 2005](#) (condemning Holocaust denial)

[UN General Assembly Resolution 61/255, Jan. 2007](#) (condemning Holocaust denial)

[UNESCO Resolution 34c/61, 2007](#) (combating Holocaust denial through education)

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)<sup>42</sup>, adopted Oct. 2013 ([working definition of Holocaust denial and distortion](#))

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<sup>41</sup> “Zarif: Talking About the Holocaust has No Benefit for the Islamic Republic, *Alef*, August 16, 2016, <http://alef.ir/vdcgqx9wwak97x4.rpra.html?382213>.

<sup>42</sup> IHRA is an intergovernmental organization that works to lobby support for Holocaust education, remembrance and research nationally and internationally. For more information: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com>.