
Conference The Holocaust in Public Discourse. Use and Abuse

6 November 2015

Eötvös Loránd University,
Budapest



IHRA Conference The Holocaust in Public Discourse. Use and Abuse

In response to the explosion of antisemitism and Holocaust distortion in recent months, this conference aims to discuss the ways in which the Holocaust is used and misused in media and public discourse. These issues include the need to ensure an accurate representation of the Holocaust; ways in which overuse of the word Holocaust can minimize respect for the genocide of the Jewish people during the Second World War; how willed and unconscious distortion of Holocaust history invites and reflects antisemitism; and how informed discourse on the Holocaust can help societies address contemporary problems, including democratic development, social unrest, freedom of speech and media, and challenges to multiculturalism, among others.

The conference consists of four panels consisting of experts from a variety of professional backgrounds on the topics of print, popular media, digital media and political discourse. IHRA aims to bring together politicians, journalists, NGO representatives and academics on a wide range of subjects to foster international exchange and to develop best practices on this emerging topic.

If you would like to participate in the conference, please register here: www.ihra-conference.eventbrite.com.

About IHRA

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) is an intergovernmental body whose purpose is to place political and social leaders' support behind the need for Holocaust education, remembrance and research both nationally and internationally. IHRA's Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial was created to form a common approach to address the upsurge in antisemitism and Holocaust denial and trivialization. One of its key achievements was the development of the "Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion," which was adopted by the IHRA Plenary in October 2013.

Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion

The present definition is an expression of the awareness that Holocaust denial and distortion have to be challenged and denounced nationally and internationally and need examination at a global level. IHRA hereby adopts the following legally non-binding working definition as its working tool.

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.

The goals of Holocaust denial often are the rehabilitation of an explicit antisemitism and the promotion of political ideologies and conditions suitable for the advent of the very type of event it denies.

Distortion of the Holocaust refers, inter alia, to:

1. Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize 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.

Program

IHRA Conference

The Holocaust in Public Discourse. Use and Abuse

Venue:

Eötvös Loránd University
Ceremonial Hall
Egyetem tér 1-3
1053 Budapest

Contact:

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08:00 – 08:45 *Registration and Coffee Reception*

09:00 – 09:30 **Opening Keynote and Remarks**

- **State Secretary Zoltán Kovács** (Spokesperson of the Hungarian Government)
- **Szabolcs Takács** (IHRA Chair)
- **Mark Weitzman** (Chair of the IHRA Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial)

09:30 – 10:30 **Panel No. 1: Print Media and Misuse of the Holocaust**

- **Alison Smale** (Berlin Bureau Chief, NY Times)
- **Konstanty Gebert** (Journalist of Gazeta Wyborcza, Poland)
- **Miklós Haraszti** (former OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media)

Moderator: Juliane Wetzel (Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial. Senior researcher at Center for Research on Antisemitism Technical University, Germany)

10:30 – 11:30 **Panel No. 2: Popular Media and Social Use of the Holocaust**

- **Evelien Gans** (Professor at NIOD - Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies and at University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands)
- **András Kovács** (Professor at Central European University, Hungary)
- **Cristina Finch** (Head of OSCE/ODIHR Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department)

Moderator: Felicia Waldman (Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial. Professor at Goldstein Goren Center for Hebrew Studies, University of Bucharest, Romania)

11:30 – 12:15 **Lunchtime Discussion**

András Heisler (President, Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary)
Yehuda Bauer (Honorary Chairman of the IHRA)

12:30 – 1:30 **Panel No. 3: Digital Media and Use/Misuse of the Holocaust**

- **Rafal Pankowski** (Professor Collegium Civitas, Associate Professor Collegium Civitas ‘NEVER AGAIN’ Association, Poland)

Moderator: Alex Maws (Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial. Holocaust Educational Trust, UK)

1:30 – 1:45 *Coffee*

1:45 – 2:45 **Panel No. 4: Political Discourse and Use of the Holocaust**

- **Peter Kreko** (Director Political Capital Institute, Hungary)
- **Rabbi Andrew Baker** (Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism and Director of International Jewish Affairs at the American Jewish Committee)
- **Boriss Cilevičs** (Member of parliament, Latvia)

Moderator: Robert Williams (Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial. Director Development and New Initiatives at US Holocaust Memorial Museum (US))

2:45 – 3:30

Closing remarks: Mark Weitzman (Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial. Director of Government Affairs at Wiesenthal Center, USA)