

CONFRONTING HOLOCAUST TRIVIALIZATION, DENIAL, AND DISTORTION ONLINE:

HOLOCAUST MEMORY THREATENED BY GLOBAL POST-OCTOBER 7TH DISTORTION SURGE

MAY 2024

BY THE COMBAT ANTISEMITISM MOVEMENT (CAM)



**COMBAT
ANTISEMITISM
MOVEMENT**

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The October 7th massacre has exposed the true nature of contemporary antisemitism. As if the atrocious crimes against humanity perpetrated by Hamas were not enough, the seven months since that horrific Saturday morning have seen widespread attempts across the globe to deny, distort, justify, lionize, and celebrate the murder, kidnapping, and rape of more than 1,500 Israelis, the vast majority of whom were civilians.

Across the ideological spectrum, nefarious voices seeking to propagate the claim that *“resistance by any means is justified,”* have not just extolled the barbaric acts carried out that day, but have also insidiously sought to distort the sequence of events to both shield Hamas from criticism and demonize Israel following the largest slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust.

Many of the attempts to revise the realities of October 7th have mimicked Holocaust denial, trivialization, and – above all else – distortion. In a strategic bid to obfuscate Hamas’ crimes and delegitimize Israel’s military response, purveyors of this new form of antisemitism have aimed to draw equivalences between Israel and Nazi Germany and portray Palestinians as victims of a systematic Israeli genocide campaign.

These efforts can only be described as maliciously sinister, aimed at demonizing and delegitimizing the world’s only Jewish state by holding it to a standard not applied to any other sovereign country in the international community.

By engaging in tactical Holocaust distortion, rather than blatant denial or trivialization, propagators of this form of denialism look to extract unique characteristics of the systematic extermination of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators with the intent to draw baseless and ludicrous moral equivalences to the contemporary actions of the State of Israel and Jewish people. The claim that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza has not only reverberated across social media networks, but fueled a radicalization of the younger generations, embuing a hatred of Israel and Zionism among Gen Z-ers, and has also been echoed at the highest echelons of political power, including the United Nations and U.S. Congress. Never before has Holocaust denialism been so present in open political discourse.

In conjunction with this unprecedented level of Holocaust distortion, **October 7th denialism has emerged as the latest evolving form of antisemitism, directly mimicking denial, distortion, trivialization, and justification of the scope of the Holocaust – with October 7th serving as a new historical marker.**

As this report underscores, this threat is rapidly expanding and can no longer be ignored or downplayed by world leaders and influential policymakers.

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Key Findings

The murderous invasion of Israel by Hamas through air, land, and sea on October 7th significantly altered the volume of Holocaust trivialization, denial, and distortion on X, causing a surge of nearly 590%.

Analyzing online discourse spanning from October 7th, 2023, to April 1st, 2024, it becomes evident that Holocaust trivialization and denial comprised merely 13% of the broader conversation on Holocaust denialism. Conversely, distortion overwhelmingly dominated the discourse, constituting 87% of the discussion.

This stark shift marks a significant departure from pre-October 7th dynamics, wherein distortion accounted for just 17% of the overall discourse on Holocaust, with trivialization and denial occupying a substantial 83% share.

The 25-34 age range predominantly engages in Holocaust distortion, with the 18-24 age range following closely behind. Together, those aged 18-34 accounted for more than 68% of Holocaust distortion monitored on X.

Findings indicate that the top 5 countries experiencing the most significant increase in Holocaust trivialization, denial, and distortion are as follows: United States (58%), Germany (5%), UK (5%), Canada (5%), and France (4%).

Introduction

In the digital age, social media platforms have become powerful conduits of information, facilitating global connectivity.

However, within the vast landscape of user-generated content, a troubling phenomenon has emerged: the trivialization, denial, and distortion of one of humanity's darkest chapters – the Holocaust. This report delves into the alarming presence of Holocaust-related misinformation across X (formerly Twitter), shedding light on its implications for historical memory and societal attitudes when disseminated through social media.

Although they may certainly experience overlap, Holocaust denial, trivialization, and distortion encompass distinct characteristics and manifestations. Holocaust denial is [defined](#) by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance as any attempt to claim that the Holocaust did not take place. Trivialization involves downplaying the significance or severity of the Holocaust, often by comparing it to lesser historical events or using it as a rhetorical tool to diminish its impact. Distortion encompasses a broader range of tactics aimed at manipulating historical facts and narratives surrounding the Holocaust.

The distortion of Holocaust narratives on social media platforms complicates the landscape of historical discourse. Through the manipulation of images, videos, and text, bad actors exploit digital platforms to manipulate public perception and advance their own agendas. Whether through deliberate misinterpretation of historical events or fabrication of misleading content, these distortions contribute to the blurring of fact and fiction, sowing seeds of confusion and distrust among both online and offline audiences.

This report selected X as a case study because it serves as a digital town square where policymakers, activists, and thought leaders converge to develop and propagate narratives. As a prominent online platform, X plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse and influencing perceptions, making it an ideal subject for analysis in understanding the dynamics of Holocaust-related discourse and its impact on society.

The report sheds light on two critical findings. Firstly, it underscores the alarming surge of Holocaust denialism, distortion, and trivialization across social media platforms. Secondly, it emphasizes the concerning growth of Holocaust distortion specifically, particularly in its correlation with trivialization and denialism. While the latter has often been relegated to the fringes and deemed insignificant, proponents of Holocaust distortion aim to integrate this form of denialism into mainstream political discourse – and have largely succeeded. By skillfully avoiding direct comparisons of the Holocaust with specific political narratives, purveyors of this antisemitism hijack distinct aspects of one of Jewish history's darkest chapters, with the outcome of normalizing antisemitism.

Building on Previous Findings

A 2021-2022 [report](#) titled *Holocaust Trivialization: A Burgeoning Threat* by CAM's Antisemitism Research Center observed a significant rise in efforts to minimize the crimes committed against the Jewish people by Nazis and collaborators from 1933 to 1945. Specifically, the report's findings indicated that COVID-19 containment measures implemented by governments around the globe were a driving force behind the emergence of mainstream Holocaust trivialization, accounting for 58.4% of overall monitored incidents in this respective category. Holocaust trivialization was also detected across issue areas such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (13.6%), general political opposition (6.5%), the 2022 outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war (5.6%), climate change (1.4%), and sports (1.4%). This report observed that seemingly anything one disagreed with was being normalized into Holocaust comparisons. Simultaneously, CAM's Antisemitism Research Center observed that Holocaust trivialization proved to be a gateway to more severe forms of antisemitism and extremism.

Expanding on these findings, this year's report investigates the influence of the October 7th massacre on the prevalence of Holocaust denialism online. Holocaust denialism and allegations of Israeli genocide are deeply antisemitic, distorting historical facts and portraying Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people, as a perpetrator of perhaps the most heinous crime against humanity. Such narratives not only trivialize the six million Jewish lives lost in the Holocaust but also perpetuate hatred and prejudice against Jewish communities.

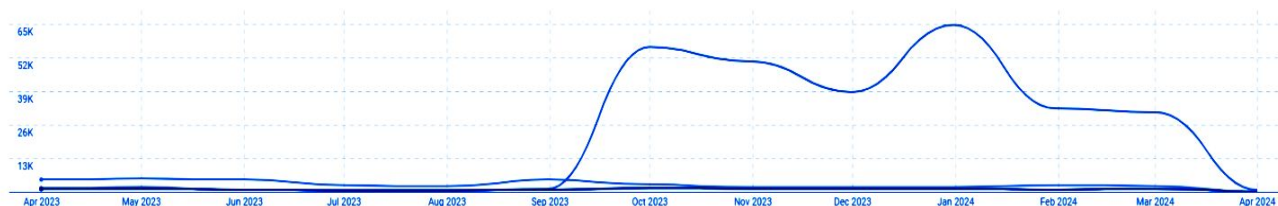


Figure 1.1: The evolving nature of Holocaust denialism following October 7th

Breakdown of Manifestations

In the aftermath of October 7th, many of the mechanisms and ideologies driving forms of Holocaust denialism have been utilized by world leaders, academics, and activists to condone, justify, and lionize the actions of Hamas and Palestinian collaborators on that infamous day.

Examples of this include the presidents of [South Africa](#), [Brazil](#), and [Turkey](#); all three of which have alleged that Israel is carrying out a genocide against Palestinians:



"[South Africa] condemns in the strongest terms the appalling slaughter and genocide of the people of Palestine"

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, first row left, listens in Johannesburg to the ruling from the top U.N. court that harshly criticized Israel's war against Hamas, Jan. 26, 2024. (Source: VOA)



"What is happening in the Gaza Strip with the Palestinian people has no parallel in other historical moments. In fact, it did exist when Hitler decided to kill the Jews."

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva speaks during a press conference in Addis Ababa, Feb. 18, 2024. (Ricardo STUCKERT / Brazilian Presidency / AFP)



"Netanyahu has reached a level that would make Hitler jealous with his genocidal methods."

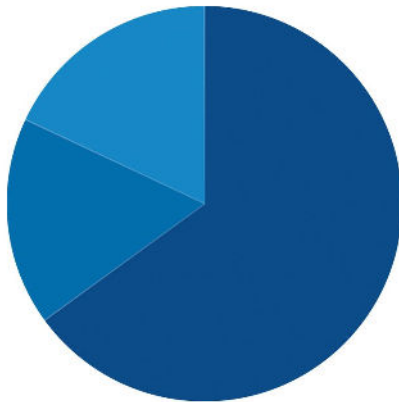
Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attends a joint press conference with the Ukrainian president at the Dolmabahce Presidential office in Istanbul on March 8, 2024. (Ozan Kose/AFP)

Attempts to draw outrageously amoral comparisons between Israeli leaders and key figures from Nazi Germany or between the Israeli Defense Forces and Nazi soldiers are designed to both legitimize crimes against humanity perpetrated against Israelis and strike at the heart of Jewish collective trauma with the sole purpose of causing pain.

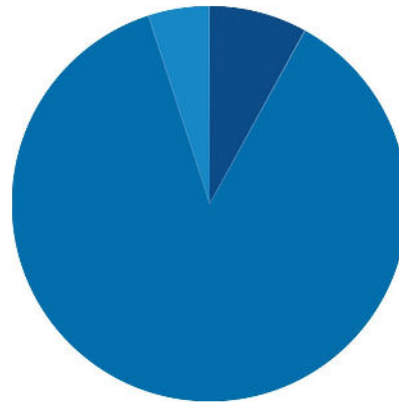
Six months before October 7th, social media discussions predominantly revolved around trivialization, constituting approximately 65% of the discourse related to ahistorical Holocaust commentary. Blatant denial accounted for 18%, while distortion represented the smallest portion at 17%.

Pre-October 7th



■ Trivialization (65%) ■ Distortion (17%) ■ Denial (18%)

Post-October 7th

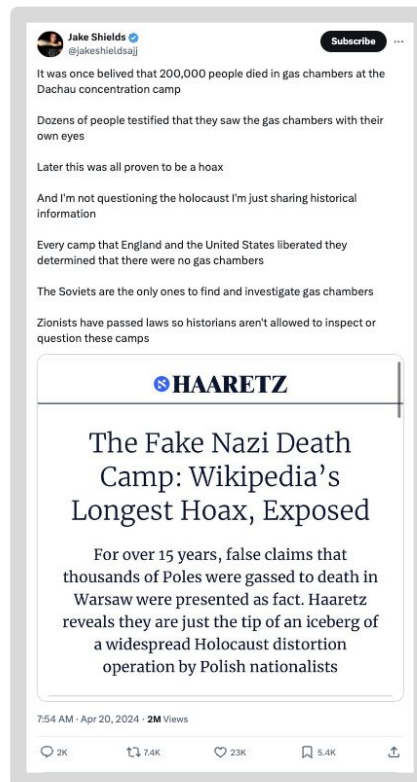


■ Trivialization (8%) ■ Distortion (87%) ■ Denial (5%)

Trivialization



Denial



Distortion

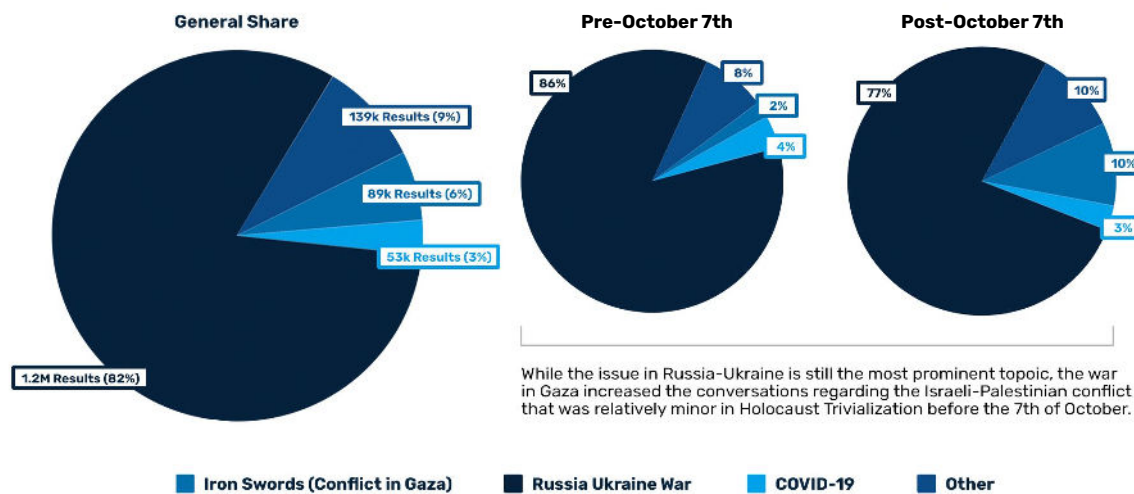


The invasion of Israel by Hamas through air, land, and sea on October 7th significantly altered the volume of Holocaust denialism on X, causing a surge of nearly 590%.

Moreover, the primary manifestations of Holocaust denialism post-October 7th were markedly altered. In assessing online discourse from October 7th through April 1st, 2024, Holocaust trivialization and denial accounted for only 11% of the overall conversation pertaining to Holocaust denialism, whereas distortion accounted for an overwhelming 89%.

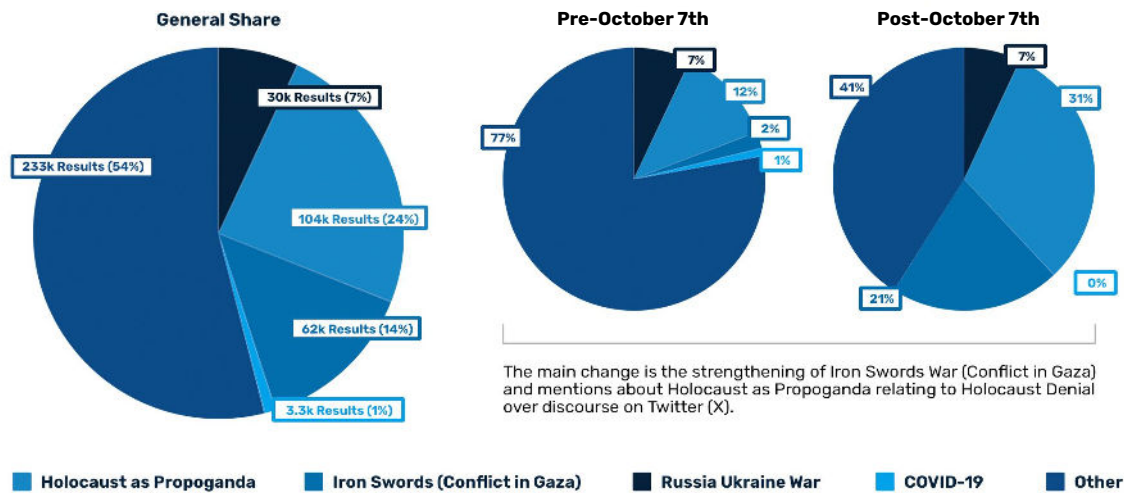
Upon further analysis, the subject matters being used to engage in Holocaust denialism online also experienced changes following the incidents of October 7th. In terms of trivialization, general discourse primarily sought to minimize aspects of the Holocaust to discuss the Russia-Ukrainian war, experiencing a slight increase of 8% in rhetoric seeking to demonize and delegitimize Israel following the October 7th massacre.

Share of Subjects – Holocaust Trivialization



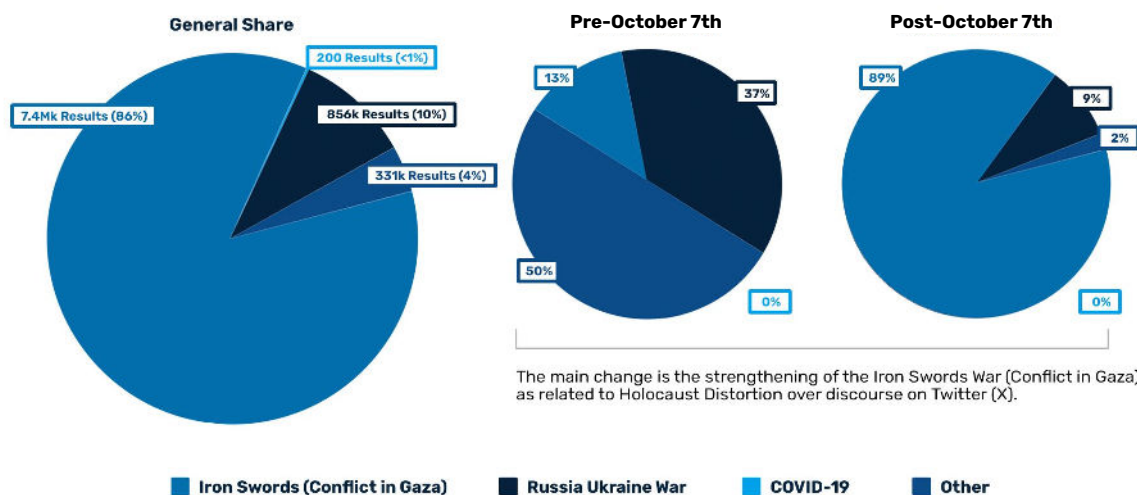
When evaluating the evolution of overt Holocaust denial on the platform X, a troubling transformation in tone becomes evident in online discussions following October 7th. Two significant shifts are observed within this specific category. First, there is a notable 19% surge in posts denying the horrors inflicted by the Nazis and their collaborators. In doing so, purveyors of this form of Holocaust denialism seek to demonize Israel's response in Gaza by arguing that Palestinians are experiencing a horror greater than that experienced by Jews during World War II. Second, within this same category, there is a corresponding 19% rise in posts alleging that the Holocaust is a manipulation, a mere "propaganda" tool.

Share of Subjects – Holocaust Denial



Lastly, further confirming the shifting landscape of Holocaust distortion post-October 7th, alterations within this particular category underscore a staggering 76% surge in online discourse attempting to reinterpret, misrepresent, and strip the context from Israel's military actions in Gaza. Consequently, this distortion has given rise to absurd allegations of Israeli attempts at ethnic cleansing or extermination of Palestinians in Gaza, while also drawing inappropriate moral equivalences between senior Israeli officials and policymakers, and notorious Nazi figures such as Hitler and Goebbels.

Share of Subjects – Holocaust Distortion



An examination of Holocaust denialism in online discourse reveals a troubling pattern emerging in the wake of the October 7th massacre. While there are clear attempts to undermine and condemn Israel's military operations through trivialization and denial of the Holocaust, it's the distortion of historical truths that has experienced the most alarming surge. This phenomenon underscores the interconnectedness of Holocaust denialism and the events of October 7th, as they mutually reinforce each other. Their aim is to portray Jews, or the world's only Jewish state, as perpetrators of crimes akin to those inflicted upon them by the Nazis Germany.

Breakdown of Manifestations by Country

Most Prominent Countries



This chart illustrates the share of most prominent countries in the discourse on Twitter (X) about Holocaust Trivialization and Distortion.

Leading Purveyors of Holocaust Trivialization, Denial, and Distortion

Top Engaging Accounts Disseminating Holocaust Distortion



Top Engaging Accounts Disseminating Holocaust Trivialization



In a [2021-2022 report](#) examining the trivialization of the Holocaust, the Antisemitism Research Center by CAM highlighted key factors contributing to this trend. Among these factors were government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukrainian war. Importantly, the latter two were largely associated with far-right ideologies, which opposed government health measures and supported isolationist foreign policies.

In the aftermath of the October 7th massacre, various ideologies, including those associated with the far-right, far-left, and radical Islam, have embraced forms of Holocaust denialism.

Advocates of these ideologies have particularly aimed to distort both the Holocaust and the events of October 7th. Anecdotal evidence suggests advocates of these ideologies have widely succeeded in penetrating mainstream discourse, as evidenced by rhetoric and signage at U.S. campus protests against Israel. By denying or revising aspects of Hamas' monstrous actions and simultaneously distorting truths about Israel's legitimate retaliation against the terror organization, these individuals seek to manipulate historical truths about the Holocaust and October 7th while demonizing the Jewish state, home to the largest Jewish community in the world.

Briahna Joy Gray (@briebriejoy) · ...

"Believe all women" was always an absurd overreach: woman should be heard, claims should be investigated, but evidence is required. The same is true of the allegations out of Israel.

But also, this isn't a "believe women" scenario bc no female victims have offered testimony.

Batya Ungar-Sargon (@bungarsargon) · Dec 5, 2023

For years, certain people demanded we replace due process with "Believe all women." These same people, when presented with evidence of the mass rape of Israeli women, now demand "context." Believe all women became don't believe the confessions of rapists—if their victims are Jews

NEWS NATION · IGNORANCE OVER ISRAEL · JAYAPAL SAYS RAPE A "WEAPON OF WAR" · 3:24 PM MT · 0:01 / 0:57

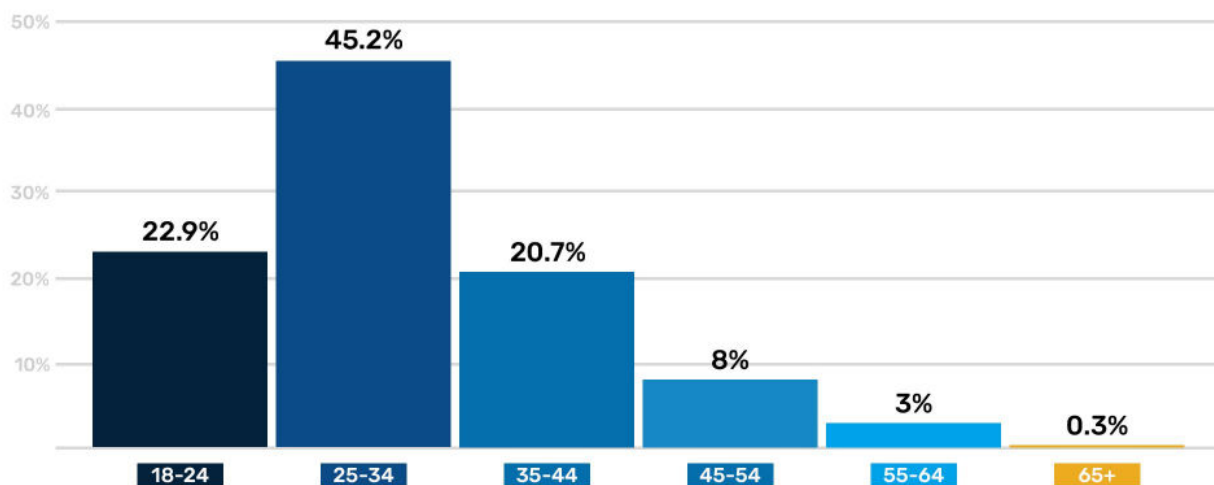
3:37 AM · Dec 5, 2023 · 6M Views

4.3K · 2.9K · 7.9K · 998

Furthermore, the report's findings indicate that the 25-34 age range predominantly engages in Holocaust distortion, with the 18-24 age range following closely behind. Together, those aged 18-34 accounted for more than 68% of Holocaust distortion monitored on X.

This raises concerning questions about contemporary education and awareness efforts, highlighting a critical need for targeted interventions to address misinformation and promote historical accuracy among younger demographics. Understanding why younger generations are more susceptible to Holocaust denialism is pivotal in crafting effective strategies to combat this dangerous trend and safeguard the integrity of historical memory.

AGE



Distortion of the Holocaust and October 7th – in comparison to both trivialization and denial – poses a unique and dangerous challenge. In tactically revising key characteristics of these atrocities, purveyors of their distortion often avoid being viewed as “fringe,” thus allowing for its mainstreaming into political discourse.

The Impact on College Campuses

The United States has experienced a disturbing proliferation of antisemitic incidents in 2024 as anti-Israel demonstrations have swept across colleges and universities nationwide. Jewish students and faculty have faced assaults, harassment, vilification, intimidation, and isolation, and protest encampments have featured the glorification of violence and calls to “remove Zionists” from campuses. This concerning rise in antisemitism coincides with the trend of Holocaust distortion predominantly carried out by individuals within the 18-34 age bracket, emphasizing the significant role young students and faculty members play in shaping such narratives on campuses.

The October 7th massacre and Israel's military response in the Gaza Strip have significantly influenced the frequency and severity of antisemitic incidents on U.S. campuses. Comparing year-to-date data, the Antisemitism Research Center by [CAM observed a 188% increase](#) in the period ending April 2022 compared to the period ending April 2024 (117 recorded incidents), and a staggering 321% increase (80 recorded incidents) in the period ending April 2023 to compared to the period ending April 2024 in antisemitic incidents across colleges and universities.

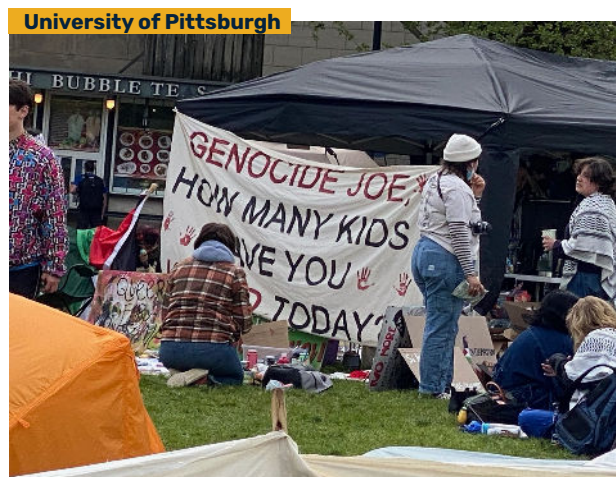
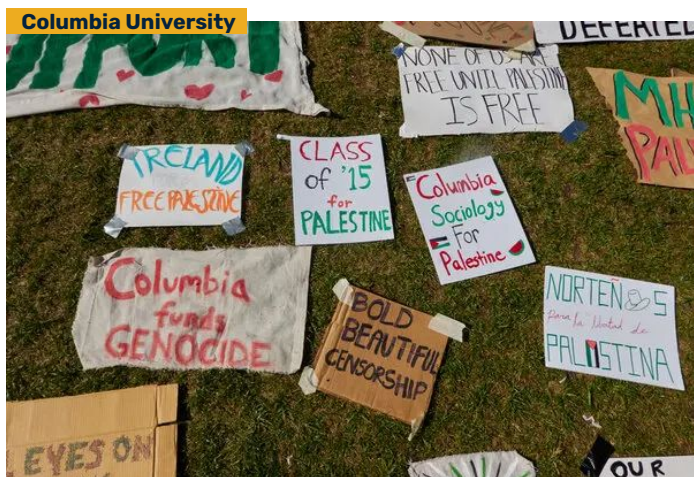
Examples of the overt and violent antisemitism on dozens of American campuses are deeply troubling. From vandalism targeting Jewish spaces to physical attacks on Jewish students, these incidents demonstrate the urgent need for concrete measures to address and combat antisemitism in all its contemporary forms.

Instances of blatant antisemitism, particularly associated with what some term as "liberated zones" on campus, have notably manifested through unfounded allegations of genocide against the State of Israel. It's crucial to note that the term "genocide" holds specific gravity in international law, originating from the systematic extermination of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust.

A stark example of this distortion was observed during a visit to the Columbia University encampment by Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota. [Omar's assertion to the press](#) that "hatred of Jews should not be tolerated, whether they are pro-genocide or anti-genocide," aimed to create a troubling dichotomy. By insinuating that Jewish students who support Israel's defensive campaigns in Gaza endorse genocide, she maliciously drew an equivalence between Nazi Germany and the state of Israel. This tactic not only misrepresents the extraordinary success Israel's military has had in reducing civilian casualties in Gaza, but also exploits one of the darkest chapters in Jewish history to delegitimize Israel's right to self-defense.



Other policymakers' rhetoric has also contributed to the sharp rise of antisemitism seen on college campuses during the Spring. For example, Massachusetts Senator [Elizabeth Warren alleged in a speech](#) at Boston's Islamic Center that Israel's campaign in Gaza will be legally recognized as a genocide. In another instance, Congresswoman [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez alleged](#), during a speech delivered on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives chamber, that a genocide was unfolding in Gaza.



These encampments, and the antisemitism they foment, also arose at dozens of colleges and universities including [Brown University](#), [California State Polytechnic University](#), [Harvard University](#), [Miami University](#) (Ohio), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the [New School](#), the University of California, Berkeley ([UC Berkeley](#)), the University of California, Los Angeles ([UCLA](#)), the [University of Michigan](#), the [University of Pittsburgh](#), and the [University of Texas at Austin](#).



In a another instance, during Northeastern University's "Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Week," classrooms were [plastered with flyers](#) saving space for Palestinian "martyrs."



This incident underscores a form of Holocaust distortion by appropriating the solemn remembrance of Holocaust and genocide victims to promote the delegitimization of the State of Israel and the wider Jewish community. By equating the suffering of Palestinians with the systematic genocide of six million Jews during the Holocaust, it not only diminishes the unique horrors of the Holocaust but also manipulates historical narratives to serve contemporary political objectives.

The rise of antisemitism on college campuses, fueled by online platforms, highlights the dangerous reality that hate propagated online doesn't stay confined to the digital realm.

Antisemitism online does not stay online, and antisemitism in real life is disseminated online today. It permeates physical spaces, shaping attitudes, and behaviors, and threatens the inclusive environment that universities strive to cultivate. Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort to combat hate speech, promote education, and foster a culture of empathy and understanding both online and offline.

Policymaking Recommendations

1. **Clear Content Moderation Guidelines:** To effectively combat the rise of Holocaust denial, distortion, and trivialization, as well as emergent 10/7 denial, policymakers must prioritize the implementation of comprehensive regulatory frameworks tailored to address this specific issue. First and foremost, clear and enforceable content moderation guidelines should be established.
2. **Robust Compliance Mechanisms:** Platforms should be mandated to swiftly remove any content that denies, distorts, or trivializes the Holocaust or the October 7th atrocities. These guidelines should be accompanied by robust enforcement mechanisms, including regular audits and penalties for non-compliance, to ensure platforms adhere to their responsibilities in combating hate speech and misinformation.
3. **Legal Accountability for Platforms:** Additionally, policymakers should consider instituting legal measures to hold platforms accountable for the dissemination of Holocaust denial, distortion, and trivialization, particularly if used to incite violence or threats against Jewish communities. This may involve revisiting existing legislation to clarify the legal obligations of social media companies in preventing the spread of such harmful content.
4. **Foster International Cooperation:** Furthermore, exploring avenues for international cooperation and harmonization of regulations can strengthen the effectiveness of these measures, as online content knows no borders. By fostering collaboration between governments, law enforcement agencies, and tech companies, policymakers can create a unified front against Holocaust denial, distortion, and trivialization in the digital sphere.
5. **Recognize Holocaust and October 7th Denialism as Antisemitism:** More than 1,200 countries, sub-national government bodies, educational institutions and civil society organizations have adopted the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism as a policy framework in recent years. Similarly, to better recognize and combat Holocaust Denialism, entities should adopt and look to the IHRA's working definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion. Policymakers and antisemitism should also incorporate October 7th Denialism as an emerging form of antisemitism.

Strengthen Holocaust Education

1. **Address Educational Failure:** As the report shows, 68% of Holocaust denial, distortion, and trivialization is perpetrated by Gen Z and Millennial demographics. Policymakers and educators must recognize the unfortunate reality that Holocaust education is failing younger generations.
 2. **Promote Digital Literacy and Historical Understanding:** Investing in uniform and effective educational initiatives to promote digital literacy and historical understanding is essential in addressing the root causes of Holocaust denial and distortion online. Policymakers should allocate more resources to develop age-appropriate educational programs that equip users with the critical thinking skills necessary to discern fact from fiction and recognize the dangers of Holocaust denial.
 3. **Invest in Research:** More in-depth research on these topics is needed. Government entities should invest in and collaborate with research centers to further study these emergent threats to the Jewish people and the western liberal democratic order.
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Conclusion

While this report primarily examines Holocaust minimization, denial, and distortion on X, it's evident that these issues extend across various social media platforms. This pervasive phenomenon poses significant societal challenges if left unaddressed. Failure to tackle Holocaust denial, distortion, and trivialization perpetuates harmful narratives that can fuel hatred and bigotry in our communities. This not only erodes historical truth but also undermines the dignity of survivors and their descendants.

Without concerted efforts to combat this trend, we risk normalizing antisemitism and other forms of discrimination in both online and offline spaces. Left unchecked, these harmful ideologies can foster division, mistrust, and even violence within society.

To effectively combat contemporary Holocaust denialism, it is imperative to address attempts to minimize, deny, or trivialize the crimes against humanity perpetrated by Hamas and Palestinian collaborators on October 7th. Serving as a primary manifestation of contemporary Holocaust distortion, policymakers, academics, and activists bear the responsibility to vehemently oppose attempts to whitewash, revise, or justify the atrocities perpetrated against Israel during the most devastating day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

Holocaust distortion today is a troubling form of antisemitism that strategically targets members of the Jewish community, especially when Israel is wrongfully accused of genocide or compared to Nazi Germany. Such comparisons don't just twist historical facts; they also deeply wound the collective memory of those who survived the Holocaust and the descendants of those who perished. Equating Israeli policies with the horrors inflicted by the Nazis not only trivializes the immense suffering of six million Jews but also unfairly vilifies Israel, often turning legitimate political discourse into a breeding ground for hate. These distortions often seek to ostracize and demonize

members of the Jewish community around the world, the vast majority of which regard Jewish self-determination in Israel as a critical pillar of their identity.

The invocation of the Holocaust as a tool to be weaponized against Jews is an unfortunate reality. Whether through denial, distortion, or minimization, this practice persists on social media platforms, at the expense of Jewish safety and security.

Methodology

The study analyzed conversations on X, formerly Twitter, published from April 2023 to April 2024, focusing specifically on the six months preceding and after October 7th. The research aimed to explore the discourse around Holocaust Trivialization, Distortion, and Denial. Keywords related to these three variables were used to filter relevant posts on X. Two samples were selected for analysis: one consisting of prominent posts based on engagement metrics, which were analyzed qualitatively by an experienced analyst to identify key issues and themes; and a second, larger sample of 106,000 posts, representing a broader discourse on the platform, to estimate the share and volume of each variable in the conversation.

The qualitative analysis involved examining the content of the prominent posts to provide a nuanced understanding of how Holocaust-related issues were discussed and perceived. This analysis helped to identify the main topics and sentiments expressed by users. The quantitative analysis of the larger sample allowed for a comprehensive estimation of the prevalence of each variable in the overall discourse on X. By combining these methods, the study aimed to offer a detailed and accurate depiction of Holocaust-related discussions on X over the past year and to assess the impact of the "Iron Swords War" on these conversations. This approach enabled the researchers to capture both the qualitative shifts in sentiment and the quantitative changes in the volume of posts related to Holocaust Trivialization, Distortion, and Denial.

To access the data compiled for this report [click here](#).

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