Report: Holocaust Denial and Distortion on Social Media Yom HaShoah 2023

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Executive Summary

During January 2023, CyberWell's research team conducted a one-month review of Holocaust denial and distortion, culminating in data released by CyberWell for International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27. We found that, while the rate of removal of content denying the Holocaust on social media (36%) is higher than the average removal rate of reported antisemitic content in general (24%), this is only true for posts in English. When we reviewed similar content in Arabic, the rate of removal for blatant Holocaust denial was abysmal, dropping to just 10% and despite this content directly violating social media hate speech policies. Prior to Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel) on April 18, 2023[1], CyberWell further dug into this issue, and found stark differences between platforms, as well as even worse disparity between removal rates in English and Arabic than originally identified.

Introduction & Methodology

CyberWell is a non-profit organization dedicated to eradicating online antisemitism through driving the enforcement and improvement of community standards and hate speech policies across social media platforms. Through data, we aim to identify where policies are

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[1] Yom HaShoah is observed annually in Israel on the 27th of Nissan, according to the Hebrew lunar calendar.

not being enforced and where they fail to protect Jewish users from harassment and hate. Our unique methodology consists of identifying antisemitic keywords, applying a specialized dictionary based on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, and two rounds of human review. Our professional analysts are trained in the fields of antisemitism, linguistics, and digital policy, and vet each piece of content we collect both based on the IHRA definition and according to what, if any, hate speech policy that content violates. For more about our methodology, check out our policy guidelines.

Holocaust Denial According to the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism

Holocaust denial and hate speech are prominent antisemitic themes most commonly falling into the 4th and the 5th examples of antisemitism according to the IHRA definition.

Example 4: "Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g., gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust)".

Example 5: "Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust".

Holocaust Denial Policies According to Social Media Platforms

Holocaust denial is prohibited according to the community standards of each of the five social media platforms that CyberWell monitors – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube.

Meta (Facebook & Instagram): Hate Speech Tier 1 - "Harmful stereotypes historically linked to intimidation, exclusion, or violence on the basis of a protected characteristic, such as Blackface**; Holocaust denial**; claims that Jewish people control financial, political, or media institutions; and references to Dalits as menial laborers."

Twitter: Abusive Behavior - "**We prohibit content that denies that mass murder** or other mass casualty events took place, where we can verify that the event occurred, and when the content is shared with abusive context. This may include references to such an event as a "hoax" or claims that victims or survivors are fake or 'actors.' It includes, but is not limited to, **events like the Holocaust**, school shootings, terrorist attacks, and natural disasters."

YouTube: Hateful Content - "We also do not allow content that denies that a well-documented, violent event took place."

TikTok: Hateful Behavior - "**Do not post, upload, stream, or share** […] Content that denies well-documented and violent events have taken place affecting groups with protected attributes **(e.g., Holocaust denial)."**

CyberWell's Findings: Facebook vs. Twitter

Methodology

Within the timeframe of January 1, 2022, through March 27, 2023, CyberWell's monitoring system flagged **5,094** social media posts with keywords related to the Holocaust with a high probability of being antisemitic. Our team reviewed **909** of these publications, out of which **290** publications from Facebook and Twitter were confirmed as including Holocaust denial and distortion – the fourth and fifth examples of the IHRA working definition.

Check out our public platform to search for, and report, Holocaust denial on social media.

Number of Publications Reviewed

	Twitter	Facebook
English	105	69
Arabic	63	53

Removal Rates for IHRA 4 & 5 - English vs. Arabic

Twitter English: 34%

Twitter Arabic: 8%

Facebook English: 11%

Facebook Arabic: 4%

Note! The average rate of removal of antisemitic content for the same timeframe**: 24%**

According to CyberWell's data, the total rate of removal for IHRA examples 4 & 5 in English on Twitter is 34%. On one hand, this shows that Holocaust denial is removed at a significantly higher rate when compared to antisemitic content in general (24%). On the other hand, the rate of removal of relevant content in Arabic drops to only 8%.

Importantly, on Facebook, the rates of removal plummet across the board, and differ between English and Arabic as well – 11% vs. 4%.

This data shows the strong disparity between enforcement of policies when users report violating content to the platforms, as well as between languages. However, it is worth noting that antisemitic content denying or distorting the Holocaust made up only 4.1% of the dataset collected by CyberWell in 2022 – suggesting that, overall, content denying and distorting the Holocaust is more regularly flagged and removed by automated resources across the major social media platforms.

Top Holocaust-Related Antisemitic Themes

English

- Holocaust denial: claims that the events of the Holocaust did not take place.
- Historical comparison: when the Holocaust is compared to other mass violent events (Vietnam; Black slavery/ oppression) in order to argue that the former is fake, and that the latter are "real" exterminations.
- Number distortion: pictures of alleged registries and population censuses from the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's claiming to show that, at the end of WWII, the Jews were more numerous than in the 1920's, and that therefore the Holocaust is a lie.
- Justification of the Holocaust with classic antisemitic tropes: Jews deserved to be massacred because Jews are Khazars, invented bolshevism, etc.
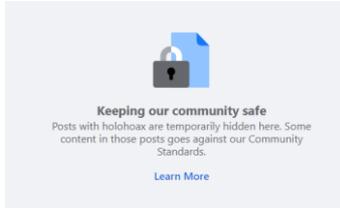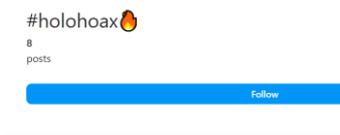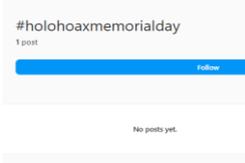- Jews/Israel profiting from the Holocaust.

Arabic

- Holocaust denial – "الهولوكوست المزعوم" [the alleged Holocaust].
- Condemnation of International Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremonies in the Arab world and of the normalization process is very popular on YouTube.
- Drawing a comparison between the events of the Holocaust and Israeli policy, comparing Israel to the Nazis [10th example of IHRA] is popular on Twitter.
- Jews/Israel profiting from the Holocaust.

Important Note! Social media platforms do put in place efforts to reduce the *exposure* of their users to Holocaust denying and distorting content. The searching options and results reflected for the above narratives are therefore limited but can still be found.

As a next step, CyberWell checked how easy it is to search for Holocaust denial on the major social media platforms we monitor by searching for it directly. In this study, our team relied on the keyword strings that represent Holocaust denial in its basic and acute form - **#holohoax** in English and **الهولوكوست المزعوم [the alleged Holocaust]** and **كذبة الهولوكوست [the lie of the Holocaust]** in Arabic.

Searchability by Platform

	English #holohoax	Arabic الهولوكوست المزعوم - the alleged Holocaust كذبة الهولوكوست - the lie of the Holocaust	Additional Remarks
Twitter	**Searchable**	Both terms are **searchable**	
Facebook	**Not searchable + pop-up notification** "Keeping our community safe Posts with holohoax are temporarily hidden here. Some content in those posts goes against our Community Standards"	"الهولوكوست المزعوم - **the alleged Holocaust searchable** [limited results] كذبة الهولوكوست - **the lie of the Holocaust searchable** [limited results]	
Instagram	**Not searchable***	Both terms are **not searchable**	*While Instagram *displays* antisemitic hashtags related to Holocaust denial in English [ex: #holohoaxmemorialday], they cannot be accessed.

YouTube	**Searchable** but most of the results are not antisemitic [the access is limited]	"الهولوكوست المزعوم – **the alleged Holocaust** **searchable** [limited results] كذبة الهولوكوست – **the lie of the Holocaust** **searchable** [limited results] In Arabic, very few posts were found. Most referred to Sheikh Mohammad Essa's prayer in Auschwitz. Enforcement exists but isn't 100% effective.	Searching for "fake Jewish holocaust" brings up multiple videos showing Nazi symbols. While these posts do not include Holocaust denial, it is worth noting.
TikTok	**Not searchable + pop-up educational content** "Get the facts We encourage you to verify the facts and trust credible sources while seeking information about the Holocaust and its legacy." **Get the facts** We encourage you to verify the facts and trust credible sources when seeking information about the Holocaust and its legacy. Learn more	الهولوكوست المزعوم – **the alleged Holocaust** **Searchable**, but no relevant content found. كذبة الهولوكوست – **the lie of the Holocaust** **Not searchable + pop-up educational content in English** "Get the facts We encourage you to verify the facts and trust credible sources while seeking information about the Holocaust and its legacy." **Get the facts** We encourage you to verify the facts and trust credible sources when seeking information about the Holocaust and its legacy. Learn more	
YouTube	**Searchable** but most of the results are not antisemitic [the access is limited]	"الهولوكوست المزعوم – **the alleged Holocaust** **searchable** [limited results] كذبة الهولوكوست – **the lie of the Holocaust**	

Platforms Ranked by Enforcement & Recommendations for Improvement

TikTok is the only platform that prohibits searching for both the English term Holohoax as well as the phrase "the lie of the Holocaust" in Arabic. "The alleged Holocaust", while searchable, does not turn up any relevant content, signifying that it is strongly moderated. Furthermore, TikTok displays a warning against misinformation and a recommendation to trust credible sources when searching in both English and Arabic.

To improve its enforcement, TikTok should block the phrase "the alleged Holocaust" from being searchable. In addition, TikTok should translate its educational pop-up into Arabic so that those searching in Arabic will receive information in their native language.

Instagram does not enable searching for content denying the Holocaust by the keywords and phrases that CyberWell checked in both English and Arabic. However, it also does not provide pop-up warnings or educational content when users search for these terms.

While Instagram does an excellent job of blocking harmful content, it can improve its commitment to safety by creating pop-up educational material.

Facebook does not enable searching for Holohoax in English, and furthermore displays a pop-up about community standards and safety. However, in Arabic, both key phrases are entirely searchable with no warning pop-ups or content.

To improve its enforcement, Facebook should block Holocaust denying content from being searchable in Arabic. It should also translate its community standards and safety pop-up into Arabic and show it when users search for Holocaust denying content.

YouTube allows users to search for Holocaust denying words and phrases and does not provide pop-up content, but it limits the antisemitic results both in English and Arabic.

To improve its enforcement, YouTube should block Holocaust denying content from being searchable. It should also create a community standards and safety pop-up to display when users search for Holocaust denying content.

Twitter allows users to search for Holocaust denying words and phrases and does not provide warnings or pop-up content. Twitter may be limiting user exposure to this content, but key word and phrase searches bring up multiple Holocaust denying publications both in English and Arabic.

To improve its enforcement, Twitter should block Holocaust denying content from being searchable. It should also create a community standards and safety pop-up to display when users search for Holocaust denying content.

Appendix of Examples of Holocaust Denial

*All of the following posts were live as of the publication of this report

Twitter

1. **February 26, 2023**

https://twitter.com/GusMau4/status/1629634559318056960

Note! **At the time of this screenshot, this post received 2,636 views**
As the Views feature on Twitter is new, CyberWell did not have the opportunity to calculate the total views for each post or overall views for the entire dataset. However, this example clearly demonstrates that, while some posts are not widely viewed, others are able to gain significant traction. As long as these posts are online, users can see them and Holocaust hate speech is being spread.

2. **January 29, 2023**

https://twitter.com/pedostrangler/status/1619704978888888327

3. March 24, 2023

https://twitter.com/stokerocknroll/status/1639316596425408512

4. April 8, 2021

https://twitter.com/HasamShaker/status/1380183420807045126

5. **February 16, 2023**

Sioxe Ramoon
@RamoonSioxe

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Replying to @EdyCohen

لم لا تنسوا انتم " الهولوكوست " المزعوم وتسامحوا هتلر وتترحموا عليه !!!!!

Translated from Arabic by Google

Why don't you forget the alleged "Holocaust" and forgive Hitler and have mercy on him!!!!!

1:35 PM · Feb 16, 2023 · 32 Views

https://twitter.com/RamoonSioxe/status/1626183362531450881

Facebook

1. **October 7, 2022**

Brock Landers
October 7, 2022 · 🌐

···

This one will probably get me 30 days in the fb slammer...

How can there be 6 million holohoax victims and 6 million holohoax survivors?

There wasn't even 6 million total Jews in Europe at the time!

It's almost like someone needed an event to justify the creation of the state of Israel 🧐

Nah, impossible! That would require way too many people being in on the conspiracy 😀

👍❤️😆 13   6 💬

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=5563474790358066&id=100000868017362

2. **June 28, 2023**

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=138354115511008&set=a.112283204784766
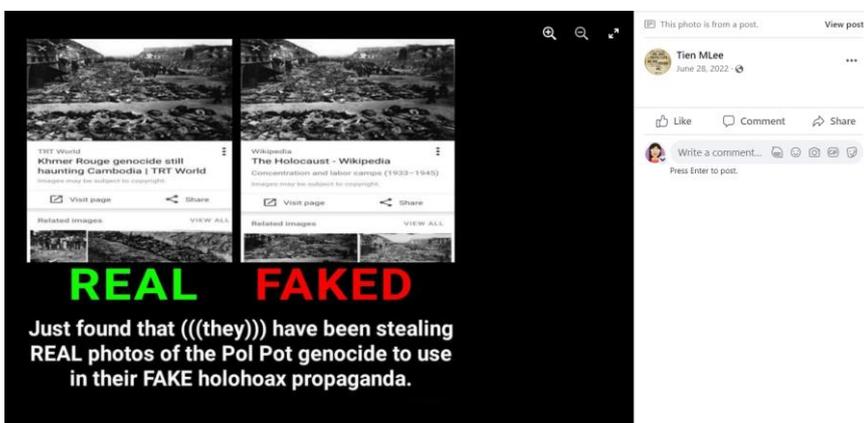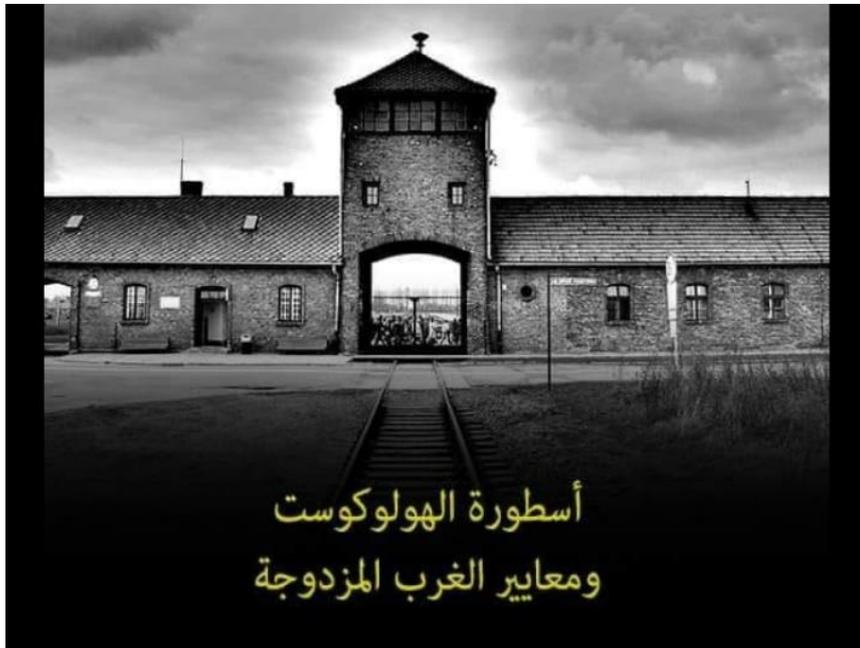
3. **July 15, 2022**

This image shows a concentration camp with the Arabic caption "The legend of the Holocaust and western double standards". The post's text begins with: "**About the alleged Holocaust** [..]" and mentions alleged "proof" that the events of the Holocaust are exaggerated.

أسطورة الهولوكوست
ومعايير الغرب المزدوجة

https://www.facebook.com/100038076937055/posts/726066628672562

YouTube

1. **March 2, 2022**

Origins of the "6 Million Jews killed in the Holocaust" magic count

Inconvenient Truths
30 subscribers   Subscribe   👍 11   👎   ↪ Share   ⬇ Download   ⋮

195 views Mar 2, 2022
Old Newspaper evidence of Jewish groups in USA using the "6 million Jews" count decades before Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. Archives from The New York Times and others since 1915.
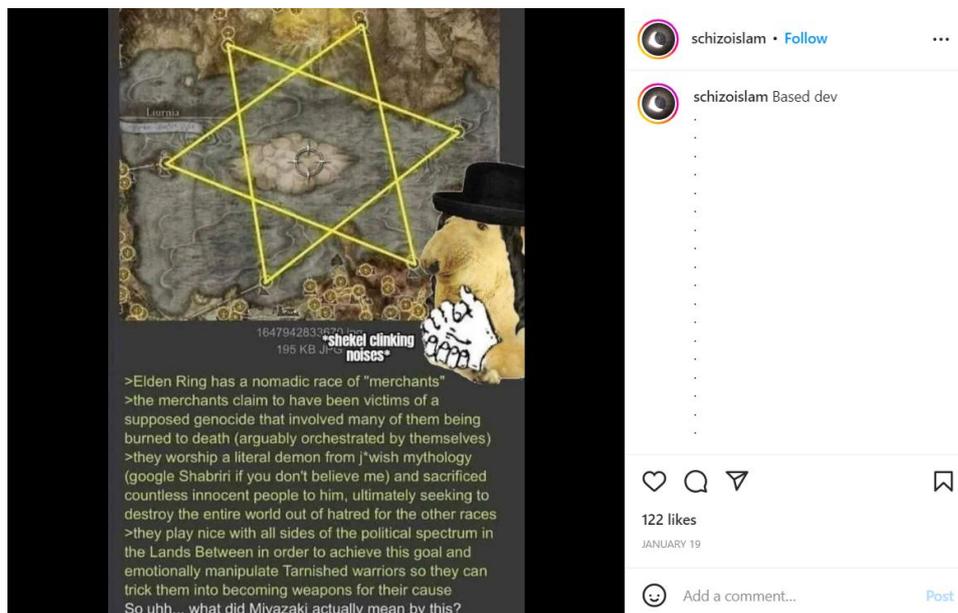
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ic7kAOTG2LA

2. **June 12, 2020**

Video title: "Saudi Zionist Mohammed Al-Essa supports his Jewish brothers and talks about the **alleged Holocaust"**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ym4iB5ID-l0

Instagram

1. **January 19, 2023**

https://www.instagram.com/p/CnIygJvO4bG/