



The Role of Holocaust Denial in the Ideology and Strategy of the Iranian Regime

By Yigal Carmon^{*}

The persistent Holocaust denial of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad raises a vital question that needs to be addressed: What function does this denial serve in the ideology of the Iranian regime and in its strategy? The answer to this question bears cardinal importance to the future of the State of Israel.

When we, at the Middle East Media Research Institute, collect and analyze the statements made by Ahmadinejad and others in the Iranian regime, we can distinguish two major goals, both of which lead to the same conclusion: the Iranian regime's Holocaust denial is not a manifestation of *irrational* hatred, but a premeditated and cold-blooded instrument to achieve its goals.

Denial of Israel's Legitimacy

The first of these goals is the attempt to deny any legitimacy to the creation and continued existence of the State of Israel as a safe haven for the Jews after the Holocaust. In order to achieve this goal, he proclaims that no Holocaust occurred, and that if Jews were indeed harmed in World War II – a claim that requires thorough and "objective" research – this was no different than the experience of others in World War II. At any rate, Ahmadinejad and other top Iranian officials claim, this "myth" cannot justify the establishment of Israel in Palestine.

Elimination of the Zionist Entity, i.e. Israel

The second goal is – as often proclaimed by Ahmadinejad – is to "wipe Israel off the map." His Holocaust denial is, therefore, planned, intentional, and premeditated. He is aware that as long as the world remembers the Holocaust, it will resist any new attempt to perpetrate another genocide against the Jews. Thus, eradicating the memory of the Holocaust is essential in order to achieve his goal.

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Demonization

In order for Ahmadinejad to bring his plans to fruition, however, he has to demonize the Jews and the State of Israel. Demonization is a necessary precondition for genocide. As we well know, Hitler first engaged in a major campaign of demonization of the Jews before actually murdering them en masse. Ahmadinejad and the Iranian regime are taking the same path, and are conducting a similar virulent, anti-Semitic campaign of demonization.

To this end, Iranian state-controlled television produces various TV series dedicated to the demonization of Jews. These include classic blood libels, depicting Jews as using the blood of non-Jewish children to bake their Passover matzot, and as kidnapping non-Jewish children to steal their body parts. Jews are reduced to sub-human levels, depicted as pigs and apes. They are accused of persecuting the Prophet Muhammad in voodoo ritualistic scenes, and as tormenting a historic figure reminiscent of Jesus on the Cross. All these TV series exist alongside others that deny the Holocaust.

Again, it should be stressed that all these phenomena are interrelated, and are state-directed at the highest level. It is most indicative that Ahmadinejad's first public appearance after coming to power was made before television producers.

All this is done in order to achieve the goal of demonization of Jews and Israel, which, as I mentioned earlier, is vital for their elimination. However, it is not possible to demonize a people as long as it is viewed as a victim of the Holocaust. Therefore, as long as the Jews are perceived as victims of the Holocaust, this demonization cannot take root. Holocaust denial is thus vital, in order to wipe out the image of the Jews as victims.

This is the reason why these three elements— Holocaust denial, the elimination of the State of Israel, and demonization of the Jews – are constantly present in statements by Ahmadinejad and other senior Iranian officials.

Let us hear the Iranians in their own words. True, many of these statements have already circulated separately in the media. But hearing them together, in the context I have just outlined, will enable us to understand their function and significance within the ideology and strategy of the Iranian regime.

In his well-known speech at the Iranian "World Without Zionism" Conference on October 23, 2005, Ahmadinejad laid out his views on the State of Israel. It is an absolute evil, a tool in the hands of the West to dominate the Muslims. In reply to those who ask if it is indeed possible to bring about a world without America and Zionism, he says: "You had best know that this slogan and this goal are attainable, and can surely be achieved."

Later, he cites Khomeini: "The Imam said: 'This regime that is occupying Qods [Jerusalem] must be eliminated from the pages of history.'" Commenting on this statement by his spiritual mentor, Ahmadinejad says: "This sentence is very wise. The issue of Palestine is not an issue on which we can compromise." Later he adds, "Very soon this stain of disgrace [i.e. Israel] will be purged from the center of the Islamic world – and this is attainable." This speech clearly announced the ultimate goal: the elimination of Israel.

At the Organization of the Islamic Conference meeting, which took place in Mecca in early December, 2005, Ahmadinejad made statements that explicitly tied this goal with Holocaust denial: "Some European countries are insisting on saying that Hitler burned millions of oppressed Jews in crematoria. They insist so much on this issue that if someone proves the opposite, they convict him and throw him into prison. Although we do not accept this claim, let's assume that it is true, and we ask the Europeans: Does the killing of oppressed Jews by Hitler [justify] their support for the regime that is occupying Jerusalem?..."

This statement by Ahmadinejad is telling. The implication is that the Holocaust is the only justification for the existence of Israel. The line, therefore, is two-fold: a) the Holocaust is a myth, and b) even if it is true, it cannot justify Israel's existence. In either case, Ahmadinejad's primary obsession is not with the Holocaust, but with Israel's very existence. If the Holocaust gets in the way of achieving this goal, it must be denied.

Later on in the same speech, he adds: "If you [Europeans] think that you committed an injustice against the Jews, why must the Muslims and the Palestinians pay the price for it? All right, you oppressed [the Jews]. So put some of Europe at the disposal of this Zionist regime...". Again, the guiding principle is that Israel cannot exist. Holocaust denial is important to Ahmadinejad because the Holocaust lends moral justification to the creation and continued existence of the State of Israel.

In the speech you saw earlier on the DVD, from December 14, 2005, Ahmadinejad once again linked these two elements together. He calls the Holocaust a "myth," but also adds: "If you [Europeans] are correct in saying that you killed six million Jews in World War II... If you committed a crime, it is only appropriate that you place a piece of your land at their disposal – in Europe, America, Canada, or Alaska..." Once again, Holocaust denial is important to Ahmadinejad first and foremost as a means of delegitimizing Israel's existence, and since the goal is the elimination of Israel, the speech includes the necessary element of demonization as well.

Then the Iranian president takes pains to portray the Jews as the true oppressors, and not as victims. "Zionism itself is a Western ideology and a colonialist idea, with secular ideas and fascist methods, which was founded by the English. So far, with the help and direct guidance of America and part of Europe, [Zionism] is slaughtering the Muslims." Later on in the speech, he says: "An important question that the Western countries and media must answer clearly is: What crime did they [i.e. the West] commit at that time [i.e. WWII] that the Zionists are not committing today? In essence, Zionism is a new Fascism..."

This, therefore, is Ahmadinejad's truth: the Zionists are the true oppressors and murderers. But while at times Ahmadinejad claims to differentiate between Zionists and Jews in general, in truth, this campaign of demonization uses and abuses history to depict Jews throughout the ages – not Zionists alone – as oppressors and murderers.

As you have just seen in the DVD, the true Holocaust, as portrayed by Ahmadinejad, was committed by the Jews: for example, by the Jewish king of Yemen, Yosef Dhu Nuwas, who, he claims, burnt the Christians in the early days of Christianity, and by the Iranian Jews, as described in the Book of Esther. Moreover, Jews in modern times are continuing their murderous ways: killing large numbers of Christian children in London and Paris – again, as you saw with your own eyes – in order to procure blood for Passover matzot.

To sum up, Holocaust denial is an inextricable part of demonization, on the way to the final goal: the elimination of Israel.

All these elements figure prominently in the identity and works of those invited by the Iranian regime to the Holocaust denial conference in Tehran. First and foremost is their explicit opposition to Israel's existence. This is why members of the anti-Zionist Jewish sect of Neturei Karta were invited, following the ongoing, strong ties maintained by the Iranian regime with them. Then comes the demonization of Jews in order to justify the agenda of elimination. Thus the invitation of Holocaust deniers, such as Frederick Toben, who not only denies the Holocaust, but also claims that the Jews intentionally spread the AIDS virus in the U.S.

In essence, the speech made by Ahmadinejad at the Holocaust denial conference best illustrates the role of Holocaust denial in the ideology and strategy of the Iranian regime. He begins his speech by addressing the Holocaust deniers participating in the conference: "Iran is your home, and here you can express your opinions freely, in a friendly manner and in a free atmosphere." Then, without batting an eyelid, he adds: "The life-curve of the Zionist regime has begun its descent, and it is now on a downward slope towards its fall... I tell you now... the Zionist regime will be wiped out, and humanity will be liberated."