

Combating Holocaust  
and Genocide Denial  
**Protecting Survivors,  
Preserving Memory, and  
Promoting Prevention**

*Policy Paper*

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communities, and states. It does not allow for healing and empathy. It also undermines the judicial decisions that have been made and therefore undermines justice. This is to the contrary of what societies which have experienced conflict and have a legacy of atrocity crimes require. It is unacceptable and must be condemned.

We therefore need to address genocide and Holocaust denial urgently and firmly, and this must be done in full respect of international human rights standards and of freedom of opinion and expression. Addressing this phenomenon through legislation should only be used for the most serious instances where genocide and Holocaust denial reaches the threshold of incitement speech, for which the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence provides clear guidance. Moreover, we need to look beyond legislative measures and use comprehensive policy meas-





Further, within the United Nations, substantial work has been carried out by the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, the Department of Global Communications (DGC) Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme, UNESCO, and other entities to highlight the dangers of Holocaust denial and distortion and provide resources for educators, civil society, and governments to counter it.<sup>x</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Political leaders and non-State actors in positions of authority should publicly reject prominent assertions of Holocaust denial and distortion and denial of genocides and atrocity crimes. UN actors should affirmatively reject narratives that harm survivors of atrocity crimes and members of communities that have experienced them and work with all stakeholders to discourage denial and disinformation, in line with work carried out by the UN entities indicated above and with statements by the UN Secretary-General. It is particularly important to clearly reject Holocaust or genocide denial or distortion when advanced by domestic actors in positions of authority; in such situations, while engagement may be difficult, UN actors may be perceived as condoning false narratives if they remain silent.
- All UN actors should ensure they are aware of and respond to Holocaust and genocide denial and distortion using an

Convention on the Prohibition and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide<sup>xiii</sup> are obligated to prohibit through law. However, any efforts to prohibit and punish Holocaust or genocide denial must be undertaken for a legitimate purpose and be necessary and proportionate, in line with international standards governing freedom of expression, with determinations of intent and the likelihood of resulting harm made on a case-by-case basis.<sup>xiv</sup> Criminal sanctions will only be appropriate in the most serious cases.<sup>xv</sup> International human rights law does not permit the use of legal prohibitions of Holocaust or genocide denial to punish





- Social media companies and online platforms should be encouraged to adopt definitions of hate speech and adapt community standards to more comprehensively recognize that recognize that denial and distortion of the Holocaust and genocide can cause revictimization, repeat historical patterns of discrimination and negative stereotypes, and incite hostility and violence.
- Social media companies should be encouraged to take affirmative efforts to mitigate the impact of Holocaust and genocide denial and distortion through varying forms of content moderation, including but not limited to content removal. They should also ensure that their algorithms do not promote or direct users to content that constitutes denial or distortion of the Holocaust or genocide or glorification of perpetrators.
- Social media companies should be encour-



## ENDNOTES

The United Nations understands hate speech as “any kind of communication in speech writing of behavior that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words based on religion, ethnicity, nationality race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor”,

<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/hate-speech-strategy.shtml>

<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/>

<https://www.jbi-humanrights.org/>

[https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/Genocide\\_Framework%20of%20Analysis-English.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/Genocide_Framework%20of%20Analysis-English.pdf)

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