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Jesus-denial, Bible denial and other dangerous 'denialisms' of global anti-Semitism

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Holocaust denial is widely known and widely understood to be a form of anti-Semitism and a tool to delegitimize Israel.

Anti-Semites do not want Jews to be recognized as victims because sympathy for Jews impedes spreading hatred of them.

Anti-Semites also see the Holocaust as legitimizing the notion that Jews, like other peoples, need their own country with the political and military means to defend themselves.

All right thinking people condemn Holocaust denial, which is not just a fringe belief but is extremely widespread especially in the Middle East, no less than they would condemn a movement that denied that American slavery existed – should anything so nutty ever come to be.

Yet Holocaust denial is but one of the many kinds of widespread anti-Semitic denialisms that exist and powerfully grip peoples especially in the Middle East, but also in Europe, and even in the United States.

Unlike Holocaust denial many of these other denialisms are barely known to right thinking people, and therefore, to varying degrees, flow through cultures and traditional and digital media almost wholly uncontested and unchecked.

These anti-Semitic denialisms include:

-- ***Israel denial.*** This denies that the country as a morally or internationally legitimate country exists (it is a "Zionist entity"), or that it is like other countries, protecting its people's security and interests. Instead, it is deemed to be fundamentally of a different species, a "Nazi state."

-- **Bible denial.** This denies that the Jewish bible known as The Old Testament, whoever else embraces it, is the province of Jews. Some maintain that it is a forgery in its entirety. Others maintain that it no longer belongs to Jews, but to others.

-- **History denial.** This denies that the Jews have had a historical home in the land of present-day Israel, including a country during antiquity.

-- **Temple denial.** This denies that the temples of David and Solomon, the holiest of Judaism's sites, existed at all, or if they existed, that they did so in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount, for which the Western Wall was one of the retaining walls. This is meant to wrest from Jews any broad claim to Jerusalem as their holy city, and the narrower claim to the holiness of the Temple Mount for Judaism and Jews. Many Muslims assert that the Temple Mount is solely an Islamic holy site, from which Mohammed ascended to heaven, and maintain today that it should be exclusively Palestinian territory.

-- **Jerusalem denial.** Not only is Jerusalem not deemed a holy city for Jews, but this denies Jews' very historical presence in Jerusalem, and any claim they make to present-day Jerusalem.

-- **Dead Sea Scrolls denial.** This denies that these most famous religious and legal manuscripts, including hundreds of texts from the Jewish Bible, dating from antiquity, had anything to do with Jews or Judaism.

-- **Jesus denial.** This denies that Jesus was a Jew, maintaining instead that he was a Palestinian. Yasser Arafat, subsequent Palestinian leaders, and Palestinian and other Arab and Islamic media have steadily denied that Jesus was a Jew, regularly proclaiming that Jesus was a Palestinian, to inaugurate Christmas in Bethlehem.

The Palestinian Authority's prime minister, Salam Fayyad, declared, as he lit Bethlehem's fifty-foot Christmas tree in December 2011, "Christmas is an opportunity to celebrate the Palestinian identity of Jesus Christ."

Palestinian leaders have created a chain of Jews' victimization of Palestinians from Jesus all the way to the present day, including by explicitly linking him to contemporary leaders.

In 2011, on Palestinian Authority Television, Fatah Central Committee member Jibril Rajoub declared: "The greatest Palestinian in history since Jesus is Yasser Arafat." As amazing as all this may sound to Western ears—and specifically to Christian ears, the comparison of Arafat to Jesus—there is actually an age-old practice of denying or concealing that Jesus was a Jew.

In Germany, before and especially under the Nazis, this was a common practice. This, like many other anti-Semitic European and especially Nazi tropes and initiatives, has been adopted and is now persistently employed by Palestinians and Arabs and Muslims.

-- **Peoplehood denial.** This denies that the Jews are a people like other people. The contemporary version of this in the Arab and Islamic worlds hearkens back to the Nazi notion that the Jews are not a people but a pseudo-people.

-- **Humanity denial.** It finds expression in various forms of dehumanization, most notably in the widespread discourse, grounded in the Koran, that Jews are not human beings but the descendants of “apes and pigs.”

This wrests from Jews two things: any claim to the things, including a country, that peoples, composed of human beings, have, and any claim to the moral consideration that is accorded to peoples.

-- **Right-to-life denial.** This is an explicit and implicit discourse that Jews do not have the right to be alive, that they are, in their essence, evil and irredeemable, that they do not have the right to live and, indeed, must be destroyed.

-- **Anti-Semitism denial.** This is a widespread discourse, especially in Europe and North America, whereby anti-Semites deny that anti-Semitism (except perhaps as a minor or fringe prejudice) exists at all.

It has many streams within it. Some deny that anti-Semitic discourse is anti-Semitic—after all, it can’t be the *prejudice* of anti-Semitism, because it is true.

Others maintain that anti-Semitic assaults, namely assaults on people who are Jews merely because they are Jews, are not anti-Semitic, but random acts of violence, or justified acts of violence.

Others maintain that the blatant anti-Semitism that is an overt part of the discursive and material assault on Israel, or that so manifestly undergirds the assault, has nothing to do with anti-Semitism at all and instead is but a cool and rational response to Israel’s and its people’s alleged predations.

These denialisms, no less than Holocaust denial, serve anti-Semites by spreading hatred of Jews and by delegitimizing their country – indeed, in their most extreme form suggesting or calling for each one’s destruction, which is a commonplace in the Middle East.

Because these denialisms are so overtly political and because of the aggression they legitimize, they are even more – arguably much more – pernicious than Holocaust denial.

No other people and no other country face almost any of these individual denialisms, let alone such an array of them.

Altogether, they compose a portrait not of a human group with a history but of a thoroughly illegitimate, interloper, dehumanized, and demonized group of beings who deserve no regard and no rights, even the right to live securely in their country or to be alive.

But then no other people has been the victims of a hatred of such long standing, power, and mass murderousness as anti-Semitism.

These denialisms, continuing this long tradition, are but one of the mainly unrecognized new features of this ancient prejudice's most recent transformation into its current form of global anti-Semitism.

Whenever we come across these denialisms, we should recognize their kinship with Holocaust denial, their dangerous implications, and that their authors are declaring themselves unfit for public life.