

# **Holocaust Denial: A Global Survey - 2006**

by Rafael Medoff & Alex Grobman

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## Executive Summary: *Holocaust Denial - A Global Survey: 2006*

The prosecution and imprisonment of prominent Holocaust-deniers in Europe dealt a serious blow to the Holocaust-denial movement in 2006. Some civil libertarians decried the use of laws prohibiting Holocaust-denial, but there was a noticeable decline in denial activity following the jailing of the movement's best-known figure, David Irving, in Austria, and the prosecution of prominent activists Ernst Zundel and Germar Rudolf in Germany. The release of Irving from prison in December 2006, after serving about one-third of his three year sentence, is likely to reinvigorate the denial movement in the year ahead.

In the Middle East, Holocaust-denial continued to enjoy official sponsorship in many countries in 2006. The regimes in Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Syria promoted Holocaust-denial or defended Holocaust-deniers. The Iranian authorities took the lead in this regard, organizing the first-ever government-sponsored international conference of deniers, held in Tehran in December. Iran's subsequent announcement of plans to establish an institution to conduct ongoing "research" concerning the Holocaust indicates that Tehran intends to continue actively promoting Holocaust-denial. The injection of Iranian financing will constitute a significant boost for the denial movement, since denier-organizations are typically small and poorly-funded. An additional boost may be provided by the creation of the new English-language division of the Qatari government-funded Al Jazeera television network, since Al Jazeera has broadcast remarks by Holocaust-deniers.

## About the Authors

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Alex Grobman, Ph.D., president of the Institute for Contemporary Jewish Life and the Brenn Institute, is co-author (with Michael Sherman) of *Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It?* and author of *Rekindling the Flame: Jewish Chaplains in the U.S. Army and the Survivors of the Holocaust* and *Battling For Souls: The Vaad Hatzala Rescue Committee in Post-War Europe*. His most recent book is *Nations United: How the United Nations Undermines Israel and the West*. He was the founding director of the St. Louis Holocaust Museum and Learning Center, and served as director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles where he was the founding editor-in-chief of the *Simon Wiesenthal Annual*. He edited *Genocide: Critical Issues of the Holocaust*; *Anne Frank in Historical Perspective*; and *Those Who Dared: Rescuers and Rescued*.

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## North America

### UNITED STATES

In January, Sheik Fadhel as Sahlani, the leader of a prominent mosque in Brooklyn, was quoted as asserting that the Holocaust "has been exaggerated."<sup>1</sup>

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On February 13, the State Hornet, student newspaper at California State University-Sacramento, published a long letter by Holocaust-denier Bradley R. Smith, director of the "Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust." The letter complained about the "persecution" of Holocaust deniers.

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In February, an article by Holocaust-denier M. Raphael Johnson was included in a packet of

<sup>1</sup> Simon Wiesenthal Center press release, 13 January 2006; Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 18 January 2006.

materials distributed by the American Association of University Professors on the eve of an AAUP conference in Italy focusing on academic boycotts. The Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and Nathan Cummings Foundation, which were financing the conference, then pressed the organizers to cancel the event.<sup>2</sup>

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In April, Holocaust-denier Larry Darby, a candidate for the Democratic nomination for attorney general of Alabama, was a featured speaker at a conference organized by the neo-Nazi National Vanguard in Elmwood Park, New Jersey. The event included a performance by the neo-Nazis, Holocaust-denying teenage singing duo "Prussian Blue." In June, Darby won 44% of the vote in the Alabama race. Darby claims the figure of six million Jews murdered by the Nazis was concocted by "the Holocaust industry," insisting that no more than 140,000 Jews were killed, and most by typhus.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \*

After the Chronicle of Higher Education published an article referring to The Barnes Review, a Holocaust-denial publication, as "revisionist," the Wyman Institute urged the Chronicle to use the term "denier" instead. On June 14, editor Bill Horne replied that the Institute had raised "a legitimate point," and that henceforth the editors would inform their reporters that instead of "revisionist," they should use phrases such as "a group that denies the occurrence of the Holocaust."

\* \* \*

The Institute for Historical Review held its major event of the year at an unnamed restaurant meeting room in Arlington Virginia on July 8. IHR director Mark Weber, and Paul Fromm, director of the extremist Canadian Association for Free Expression, were the featured speakers. Weber spoke about "the Jewish Zionist role in determining American foreign policy," and praised the recent study about the "Israel Lobby" by Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer; Fromm focused on the imprisonment of Holocaust-deniers David Irving in Austria and Ernst Zundel in Germany. According to the IHR, "30 or so" people attended and gave Weber "a standing ovation" after his remarks.<sup>4</sup>

In April, Weber was interviewed on Iran's Sahar Television. In August, he was interviewed by the Teheran Times and appeared on radio station WMEL in Melbourne, Florida, and in November Weber spoke on radio station WKRC in Cincinnati, hosted by Jim Condit, Jr.

<sup>2</sup> Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 13 February 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Associated Press, 7 June 2006

<sup>4</sup> www.ihr.org

According to the IHR, "young activists have been distributing IHR flyers on college campuses," including the University of Arizona.<sup>5</sup>

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The *Melbourne Herald Sun* reported on August 6 that actor and film director Mel Gibson had links to the Australian League of Rights, a group that denies the Holocaust. Gibson reportedly had supported the political candidacy of the ALR's Rob Taylor, when he ran for local office in northern Victoria in 1987. A former ALR leader, Charles Pinwill, confirmed to the Sun that both Mel Gibson and his father Hutton "were interested in some of our ideas."

*New York Post* investigative reporter Philip Recchia revealed on August 21 that Gibson and his father, Hutton Gibson, in recent years attended an ALR dinner. An ALR publication described their attendance as the "sensation" of the event, and ALR director Don Autherlonie "didn't deny Gibson's attendance when contacted last week" by the Post. Gibson spokesman Alan Nierob told the Post that Gibson "has never heard of" the ALR.

In the past, Gibson has declined to clearly repudiate his father's Holocaust-denial. In a February 2004 interview on ABC Television, Gibson was asked by Diane Sawyer about his father's Holocaust-denial statements. Gibson replied: "He's my father. Gotta leave it alone, Diane. Gotta leave it alone." In a March 2004 interview with *Reader's Digest*, Gibson was asked by interviewer Peggy Noonan, "The Holocaust happened, right?" Gibson responded by minimizing the uniqueness and enormity of the Holocaust, saying: "Yes, of course, Atrocities happened. War is horrible. The second World War killed tens of millions of people. Some of them were Jews in concentration camps. Many people lost their lives. In the Ukraine, several million starved to death between 1932 and 1933."

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Over Labor Day weekend, the extremist American Free Press newspaper and the Holocaust-denying *Barnes Review* magazine held a Holocaust-denial and conspiracy conference in Washington, D.C.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [www.ihr.org](http://www.ihr.org)

<sup>6</sup> [www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)

## **Europe**

### **AUSTRIA**

On December 20, an Austrian judge reduced the three-year jail sentence imposed on British Holocaust denier David Irving, permitting him to go free after serving thirteen months by converting the remainder of his sentence to probation. Irving had been arrested while visiting Austria in November 2005, and prosecuted for speeches he had delivered in Austria in 1989. The appeals judge, Ernest Maurer, said the sentence should be reduced because the statements for which Irving was prosecuted were made “a long time ago, 17 years,” and because the judge did not expect Irving would repeat the crime.

Judge Maurer has ties to the extreme-right Freedom Party of Jorg Haider, and was chosen by the party to serve on the board overseeing Austria's public broadcasting network. Maurer has previously issued favorable rulings in lawsuits filed by Haider against those who had criticized him for justifying Nazism.<sup>7</sup>

\* \* \*

Former Austrian Parliament member John Gudenus was prosecuted for making statements on Austrian Television in 2005, suggesting that the Nazi gas chambers may not have existed. In a court session in April, Gudenus backtracked, saying he doubts there were gas chambers in Greater Germany, but acknowledged that there were some in Poland.<sup>8</sup>

### **CZECHOSLOVAKIA**

Antonin Cermak, 21 was convicted of Holocaust denial in January for slogans he yelled while heckling an anti-Holocaust denial march in Prague.<sup>9</sup>

### **DENMARK**

On April 2, Al-Jazeera Television broadcast a meeting between Arab and Danish student groups, following the controversy over cartoons about Muhammad. During the meeting, Arab Students

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<sup>7</sup> New York Times, 21 December 2006; Associated Press, 20 February 2006; Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 5 September 2006

<sup>8</sup> Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 26 April 2006

<sup>9</sup> Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 17 January 2006

Union Chairman Ahmad Al-Shater referred to the Holocaust as “the imaginary Holocaust.” Al-Shater also referred to Holocaust-denier Roger Garaudy “and what happened to him” as an example of alleged Western misbehavior. Regarding David Irving, Al-Shater said: "The world-renowned English intellectual, who was recently tried in another country, and was sentenced to three years in jail, although the whole world recognizes him as a great and reliable intellectual, who does not say things that are baseless. He relies on documents. I cannot recall his name, but he is a great English intellectual, a university professor, who refuted the Holocaust. So, he was sentenced in Geneva, in a country that is not his own, in violation of all international laws."<sup>10</sup>

## FRANCE

In January, George Theil, a 65 year-old former adviser to the extremist National Front party, was convicted of denying the Holocaust for having said on French Television that the Nazi gas chambers were "a fantasy." He was sentenced to six months in jail and a fine of over \$12,000, as well as payments to eleven parties who sued him. In 2001, Theil was likewise convicted of Holocaust denial and sentenced to a prison term of three months plus a \$10,000 fine.<sup>11</sup>

\* \* \*

Robert Faurisson was convicted by a Paris court in October of Holocaust denial, after he said on Iranian Television that no gas chambers were used by the Germans to kill Jews. Faurisson was given a suspended sentence of three months and fined about \$9,500.

## GERMANY

Gerhard Rudolf, 42, went on trial in November in a Mannheim court for denying the Holocaust. During the trial's opening session, Rudolf declared that the Holocaust is "a gigantic fraud." Rudolf had written an article in 1991 claiming the Nazis did not gas Jews in Auschwitz, and was sentenced to 14 months in prison in 1995. He fled Germany to avoid jail and sought political asylum in the United States. That request was rejected, and Rudolf was sent back to Germany in November 2005 to serve his original sentence. He now faces up to five additional years in prison on the new charge, which involves using the internet spread Holocaust-denial and racial hatred.<sup>12</sup>

Ernst Zundel, 67, continued to stand trial in Mannheim during 2006 on charges of denying the Holocaust. Zundel, who born in Germany, lived in Canada from 1958 until he was deported to Germany in 2005 because of his Holocaust-denial activity. That activity included hosting radio

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<sup>10</sup> www.memri.org

<sup>11</sup> Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 4 January 2006

<sup>12</sup> Reuters, 14 November 2006

and television shows, publishing books and pamphlets, and managing a web site.

## GREAT BRITAIN

The English chapter of the international literary rights group PEN said that it "deplores" the prison term of three years given to David Irving for denying the Holocaust in Austria. It called on the Austrian government "to quash his sentence." It said that "contentious issues" should be addressed "through debate and ridicule rather than through suppression by law."<sup>13</sup>

\* \* \*

The British newspaper *The Observer* revealed that British Muslim leader Asghar Bukhari, a founder of the Muslim Public Affairs Committee, contributed to David Irving's legal fund in 2000. In a letter at the time, Bukhari promised to urge Muslims to support Irving's efforts to "expose certain falsehoods perpetrated by the Jews." In response, Bukhari told *The Observer* that he was "motivated by anti-Israel sentiments rather than anti-Semitism."<sup>14</sup>

## NETHERLANDS

The Christian Union Party, which has three (out of 150) seats in the Dutch Parliament, in June proposed legislation to criminalize the "denial, trivialization, approval or justification of genocide and crimes against humanity," punishable by fines and a maximum of one year in prison.<sup>15</sup>

## RUSSIA

A report in January by the Moscow-based Holocaust Foundation and the Moscow Bureau on Human Rights found that Holocaust-denial is widespread in Russia. There are at least four Russian web sites that are devoted to denying the Holocaust, according to the report.<sup>16</sup>

## UKRAINE

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.englishpen.org/news/davidirvingjailedfordenyingthe/>

<sup>14</sup> Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 20 November 2006

<sup>15</sup> Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 7 June 2006

<sup>16</sup> Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 20 January 2006

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk in January condemned the largest private Ukrainian university, the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management (MAUP) for promoting antisemitism and Holocaust-denial. The Ukrainian Ministry of Education asked law enforcement agencies to investigate whether the university's activity is subject to prosecution. In October, Holocaust-denier and former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke lectured at the university at an event marking the publication of a Russian-language edition of his book, "The Jewish Question Through the Eyes of an American."<sup>17</sup>

## **Middle East**

### **IRAN**

A program on Iran Television's Channel 2 on January 5 featured Iqbal Siddiqu, co-founder of the Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought and editor-in-chief of its magazine Crescent International, and political analysts Dr. Majid Goudarzi and Dr. Majid Safataj.

Siddiqu referred to the Holocaust as "the supposed Holocaust." Safataj praised the Holocaust-denying Institute for Historical Review and claimed that its founders "included some Jews and Israelis." He said, "if the Zionists had actually found anyone who had survived the gas chambers and the so-called crematoria of the Nazis, I'm sure they would have interviewed him extensively, and would have produced many programs. But they couldn't find a single person to interview face to face, in order to present a historical documentary to the world. It should be noted that the Zionist film industry has produced many films on the basis of these supposedly historical claims. These are hollow claims." Safataj added: "The Zionists created something out of nothing. First they said three million were killed. Gradually, the number climbed to six million. If the Zionists' claims had not been doubted, the number would probably have reached ten or twenty million."

Asked by the interviewer if he believes that the Holocaust "never really happened," Goudarzi replied: "Look, what they are saying is more false than true. As my colleague has said, if they had even the smallest piece of evidence, they would not sit still, given their great power in the media. Even those who believe that this actually happened doubt the figures. One of the mistakes they made --despite their cleverness-- was to claim that [the Nazis] used Zyklon-B gas. This gas, according to chemists --and I asked before this program, just to make sure-- is a very dangerous gas. It remains in the air and on the skin for a long time. In the photographs they published, German soldiers are seen dragging the bodies of those who suffocated, and they are doing so

<sup>17</sup> Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 26 January 2006 & 25 October 2006

without gloves or masks. If this was true, the German soldiers should also have died. Besides, if six million people had died, wouldn't there be a record somewhere of at least a hundred names?"<sup>18</sup>

\* \* \*

In remarks broadcast on Iran Television's Jaam-e Jam 2 on February 11, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad charged that in the West, "it is a crime to ask questions about the myth of the Holocaust, and about how the false regime occupying Palestine came into being. On the basis of this myth, the pillaging Zionist regime has managed, for 60 years, to extort all Western governments and to justify its crimes in the occupied lands ... How come it is allowed to harm the honor of the prophets in your country, but it is forbidden to research the myth of the Holocaust? ... We proposed the following: If you are not lying, allow a group of neutral, honest researchers to come to Europe, and to talk to people, examine documents, and let people know the findings of their research about the Holocaust myth. You have even prevented your own scholars from researching this issue. They are allowed to study anything except for the Holocaust myth?"<sup>19</sup>

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In March, two Holocaust deniers from Australia, Fredrick Toben and Richard Krege traveled to Iran to lecture on the Holocaust at three Iranian universities, and gave interviews to the Iranian radio network IRIB.<sup>20</sup>

\* \* \*

The Iranian online newspaper Rooz reported on June 9 that Mohammad Ali Ramin, advisor to Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in a meeting with students during his visit to Gilan University in Rasht, Iran, offered four theories concerning the Holocaust:

"The first theory is that, in order to deny the Germans the ability to increase their power, 'the British and Americans present them as a human-burning nation.' The second theory is that the Americans and the British have cooked up this story along with the Zionists, so as to create the state of Israel in the middle of the Islamic world and thus control the Islamic world using the

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<sup>18</sup> www.MEMRI.org

<sup>19</sup> www.MEMRI.org

<sup>20</sup> www.adl.org

pretext of the Holocaust, while also getting rid of the Jews from Europe...

"The third hypothesis relates to the traditional animosity between Christians and Jews. 'The U.S. and Britain, with the cooperation of France, Russia and Germany, and because of their Christian leanings and animosity towards the Jews, initiated the idea of the Holocaust after the Second World War in order to scare off the Jews and send them to what is now Israel in order to get rid of them in Europe and America ... The fourth theory relates to covering up the crimes of the U.S. and Britain. Ramin claimed that Britain killed some 100 million Red Indians in the last 300 years, and the U.S. leveled Hiroshima - which, he said, were the real Holocausts..."

Ramin added: "We do not know whether the Holocaust happened or not and so must find out in order to defend the injured party. My suggestion [is] to set up an investigative committee on this to collect the supporting documents..."<sup>21</sup>

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Announcing the winners of the Iranian government's contest of cartoons mocking the Holocaust, Iranian Culture Minister Mohammad Hossein Saffar-Harandi declared on November 2 that "The Holocaust is a myth and this issue has finally made waves thanks to the action of President (Mahmoud) Ahmadinejad in daring to express himself on the subject and break the Holocaust taboo."<sup>22</sup>

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Iranian Television's Koran Channel broadcast an interview with Dr. Hossein Mozaffar of the Iranian Association for the Defense of the Palestinians, on October 20, in which he said that "Jews turned the figure of 600,000 typhus victims of World War II into Six Million."<sup>23</sup>

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On December 11 and 12, the Iranian Foreign Ministry sponsored a conference of Holocaust-deniers in Tehran, called "Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision." Sixty-seven delegates from thirty countries were said to be in attendance. Featured speakers included former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, French deniers Robert Faurisson and Georges Thiel, and Australian denier Frederick Toben. Several members of the extreme anti-Zionist Jewish sect "Neturei Karta" also took part. An exhibit at the conference showed photographs of dead Jews labeled "Myth" or "Typhus victims," juxtaposed with photos of smiling Holocaust survivors labeled "Truth."

<sup>21</sup> www.MEMRI.org

<sup>22</sup> Agence France Presse, 2 November 2006

<sup>23</sup> www.MEMRI.org

When one Iranian academic, Gholamreza Vatandoust, remarked that "some facts about the Holocaust have been documented," he was quickly denounced by the other participants.

The conference sparked international outrage. British Prime Minister Tony Blair called the conference "shocking beyond belief" and "a symbol of sectarianism and hatred towards people of another religion." German Chancellor Angela Merkel denounced the conference "in the strongest possible terms." The Vatican issued a statement criticizing the conference and describing the Holocaust as "an appalling tragedy to which one cannot remain indifferent." French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy called the conference's claims "unacceptable." Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert characterized the event as "a sick phenomenon."

The White House issued a statement condemning the Holocaust-denial conference in Iran as "a platform for hatred." This was consistent with the position taken in the State Department's 2005 report on global antisemitism, which included instances of Holocaust-denial in various countries as examples of antisemitism.

One result of the conference was that prominent deniers received much more attention from the news media than ever before. For example, David Duke was interviewed on CNN's "The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer," and Mark Weber of the Institute for Historical Review was interviewed on the Sean Hannity Show.

The Iranian news agency IRNA reported on December 14 that the delegates to the Holocaust-denial conference in Tehran decided to establish a "world foundation for Holocaust studies," with Mohammad-Ali Ramin, adviser to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as its secretary-general. Ramin said that "its main office will be in Tehran," but it "will eventually be transferred to Berlin, once proper grounds are prepared."<sup>24</sup>

## **LEBANON**

In a speech that was broadcast on Al-Jazeera Television on February 3, Lebanese Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said: "A few years ago, a great French philosopher, Roger Garaudy, wrote a scientific book. He did not offend, curse, or insult anyone. He wrote a scientific research of an academic nature, in which he discussed the alleged Jewish Holocaust in Germany. He proved that this Holocaust is a myth. The great French philosopher Roger Garaudy was put to trial. He was offended and humiliated. It did him no good that freedom of expression is considered a human right in France. Why? Because freedom of expression extends to the Jews,

<sup>24</sup> New York Times, 12 December 2006 & 13 December 2006; www.MEMRI.org

but it does not extend to the Prophet of 1.4 billion Muslims. That's hypocrisy." <sup>25</sup>

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On June 29, Lebanon's New Television aired an interview with Norman Finkelstein, author of the book *The Holocaust Industry*. In his remarks introducing Finkelstein, the interviewer said: "The 'Holocaust' is the Jewish term for burning the sacrificial offering to ashes. Never has there been an issue subject to as many contradictions, lies, and exaggerations regarding the number of victims as the issue of the Jewish Holocaust. The number of people killed in the Holocaust was estimated, in the film *Night and Fog* by the French director Alain Resnais, to be between eight and nine million, on the basis of documents invented by the Jews. The number dropped to four million Jews in the Soviet report to the Nuremberg trials. The figure dropped further, to 300,000 victims, according to British historian David Irving, and reached only 50,000, according to Raul Hilberg the Jew."

During the interview, Finkelstein said: "Well, one of the points I tried to make in the book is that there has been a gross inflation of the number of survivors of the Nazi Holocaust. In fact, as all the historians have shown, Hitler's extermination of the Jews was very efficient. It was like a factory, an assembly line. Jews were processed to be murdered. When you have such an efficient system there can't be very many survivors. In fact, the best estimates show that by May 1945, that is, at the end of World War II, about 100,000 Jews had survived the death camps, the ghettos, and the labor camps. If 100,000 Jews survived the camps and ghettos in 1945, then 60 years later - that is, roughly around now - there can't be more than a few thousand survivors still alive. But the Holocaust industry wanted to blackmail Europe in order to get compensation moneys. And in order to blackmail Europe they said there were hundreds of thousands of needy Holocaust victims who were still alive, and they started to inflate the number of survivors in order to blackmail Europe."<sup>26</sup>

## **QATAR**

The Qatar-based television network Al Jazeera launched an English-language news network, Al Jazeera English, on November 15. According to Al Jazeera editor-in-chief Ahmed Sheikh, "the Qatari government covers 75 percent of our expenses."<sup>27</sup> Al Jazeera has broadcast remarks by Holocaust deniers, such as the aforementioned statement on February 3, 2006, by Lebanese

<sup>25</sup> www.MEMRI.org

<sup>26</sup> www.MEMRI.org

<sup>27</sup> Pierre Heumann interview with Sheikh, World Politics Watch, 7 December 2006.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah that “this Holocaust is a myth” and praising French Holocaust-denier Roger Garaudy as “a great French philosopher.”

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

In an interview on Saudi Arabia's Iqra Television on March 9, Saudi cleric Dr. Sa'd Al-Breik defended French Holocaust-denier Roger Garaudy and complained that in the West, "freedom does not extend to anyone who mentions one good thing about Hitler."<sup>28</sup>

## **SYRIA**

In an interview on the U.S. television network PBS on March 30, Syrian president Bashar Assad said: "If you ask many people in the region they would say to you that the West exaggerated the Holocaust. People say there was a Holocaust but they exaggerated it. It's not a matter of how many were killed, half a million, six million or one person. Killing is killing. For example, eight million Soviets were killed, so why don't we talk about them? The problem is not the number of those killed but rather how they use the Holocaust ... Definitely there were massacres that happened against the Jews during the Second World War, but I'm talking about the concept and how they use it. But I don't have any clue how many were killed or how they were killed, by gas, by shooting--we don't know."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> [www.MEMRI.org](http://www.MEMRI.org)

<sup>29</sup> [www.sana.org](http://www.sana.org)