

## **Kantor Center Position Papers**

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### **IRANIAN NEGATIONISM AND ANTISEMITIC PROPAGANDA ONLINE: AHMADINEJAD AND HIS LEGACY**

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#### **Executive Summary**

During his two terms as President of Iran (2005-13), Mahmoud Ahmadinejad went further than any of his predecessors in making antisemitic declarations, and became internationally infamous for negating the veracity of the Holocaust. Ahmadinejad's statements received much attention by the media and the international community, but the ways in which Iranian media participated in propagating antisemitism and negationism throughout his presidency, especially the use of the internet, has not been addressed in any systematic manner. Under Ahmadinejad, antisemitism and negationism became a leitmotif of Iran's foreign policy, and they were systematically endorsed, sponsored and disseminated online by the state apparatus as a part of the Islamic Republic's hybrid anti-Zionist and antisemitic political agenda. Since his election in 2013, President Hassan Rouhani has distanced himself from his predecessor's rhetoric and has made a u-turn in Iran's public diplomacy exploitation of antisemitism and negationism. Nonetheless, most of the antisemitic and negationist material produced in the course of Ahmadinejad's presidency continues to be available on the internet and still forms an undisputed part of Iran's state ideology.

#### **Propaganda & the Cyber Sphere**

Iran is reported to hold one of the highest internet penetration rates per capita in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> This might represent the opportunity for a positive development in Iran, and optimistic notions prevailed in studies, including this author's earlier research, which specifically examined the Iranian rapidly growing blogosphere, the Iranian cyber sphere of online self-published journals.<sup>2</sup> The use of the internet by NGOs and social activists for coordination of their activities inside Iran, and civil journalists' online communication with internet users outside the country, contributed to further discussions of the web as an alternative outlet to state controlled media and as a creative forum of dissent.<sup>3</sup> However, annual reports of Human Rights Watch (HRW), Reporters without Borders (RSF), Opennet Initiative (ONI) and news reports<sup>2</sup>-documenting legal persecution and harassment of Iranian bloggers, journalists and social media activists by the state convey a more complicated picture.<sup>4</sup> Other attempts to counter or circumscribe potential challenges involve implicit and explicit efforts like clamping down on internet use, interrupting speed connectivity, limiting access to networked computers; filtering content with software tools and monitoring users' online behavior.

Parallel to suppression of the local media and freedom of speech, Iranian authorities allocate considerable resources to preserve and disseminate the legacy of the Islamic revolution's founding father, ayatollah Khomeini, by means of persuasion and remembrance. A potent component of this legacy is rooted in anti-Jewish sentiments, often epitomized as anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli propaganda.<sup>5</sup> This legacy is widely adopted by the post-Khomeini leadership and prominent Shi'ite clerics.<sup>6</sup> Anti-Israeli slogans, associated with anti-American and anti-Western ideographs are not limited to the cyber sphere. They are also voiced in public demonstrations, displayed on wall murals and missiles and even incorporated into Iranian elementary school books.<sup>7</sup>

Propaganda benefits from computer mediated activity in many ways. It enables speedy and global interconnectivity between individuals and groups; covert communication and anonymity; cost-effectiveness in mass distribution of information; easy replication of materials, and cleavages to bypass international conventions. The internet also provides accessible means for recruitment and fund raising.<sup>8</sup> One example is the Iranian "movement of Justice-Seeking Students" (*jonbesh-e edalatkhahi-ye deneshjuei*), which campaigned online in 2008 for potential donors willing to sell their kidney and donate the money for funding the assassination of

prominent Israeli officials.<sup>9</sup> The same year, this group organized a one day international convention on the topic "The End of Israel" (*payan-e Israel*). The banner posted on the speaker's podium and printed in English read: "Israel must be wiped off the map".<sup>10</sup> Following the event a two part DVD of the convention was marketed online for \$2.<sup>11</sup>

### **Antisemitism and the "Media War": Winning Public Opinion**

In the Islamic Republic's discourse, propaganda (*tablighat*) is frequently attributed to other nations and discussed in relation to an international "net-war" (*jang-e shabakei*) or "media war" (*jang-e rasanei*). Net-war is perceived as one of the most prominent aspects of the broader "soft war" (*jang-e narm*), imposed on Iran by outside powers seeking to intervene in its internal affairs and undermine the Iranian political system in particular and Islamic ones in general. Consequently, Iran's clerical and military elites often consider a defensive net-war, mediated by computers, against a western-directed "soft war", as serious as a military confrontation. Militaristic jargon also prevails among unofficial groups like the Iranian Cyber Army, which promotes "virtual jihad" (*jihad majaazi*) in the form of large-scale disruption of computer networks. Engagement in information warfare, may involve hacking into Web sites and spreading viruses.<sup>12</sup>

Aimed at competing over "public opinion" in more conventional ways, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, is in charge of creating and spreading content in the form of written text, audio and visual files and video and live streaming by operating 8 local TV channels, 12 radio stations, 27 world service channels, and 6 satellite channels in several languages. By employing a wide variety of digital channels via IRIB and other state-run media outlets, the Islamic Republic tends to focus on three major target audiences: local, regional and international. The local audience is comprised of Iranian residents, groups of Iranian expatriates and exiles, and Persian speaking communities in neighboring countries, mainly Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Other target groups in the region are Urdu, Turkish and Arabic speaking communities, especially in neighboring Iraq. Iran's Arabic-language television news network al-Alam began operating online in February 2004 and in January 2009 launched its channel on YouTube. In 2006 the al-Kawthar television channel joined al-Alam in

broadcasting mainly to Arabic speaking audiences in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Other groups of foreign audiences targeted by Iran include non-Iranian Shi'ite populations, Arab speaking populations, non-Arab Muslims and non-Muslims. Particularly with the latter group in mind, Iran officially inaugurated the 24-hour English-language satellite station Press-TV under the motto "news from a different view", in July 2007. Upon its launch, Ahmadinejad expressed hope that the channel would "support the oppressed nations and defend them by exposing the enemy's schemes".<sup>14</sup> Press TV joined Sahar, a universal-television network that launched its English division in 1997 and nowadays operates multilingual broadcasts (in Arabic, Azeri, Bosnian, French, Kurdish, Turkish and Urdu).<sup>15</sup> In February 2005 the involvement of Sahar with antisemitic propaganda was interrupted when the Higher Council for Radio and Television in France banned its broadcasts after airing the television drama "Zahra's Blue Eyes" (*chashmha-ye abie zahra*, 2001). Written and directed by Ali Derakhshi, a former employee of the Iranian Education Ministry, the fictional plot depicted an alleged Zionist campaign for harvesting organs of Palestinian children.<sup>16</sup> Although banned in France, this production later found its way to file and video hosting websites.

In 2009, in an effort to target younger audiences, Sahar announced the finalization of a 3D computer-animated television series entitled "the Child and the Invader," based on a cartoon series aired the previous year on Iranian local television. This cartoon series consisted short episodes (2-4 minutes) focused on a scheming soldier who repeatedly harasses innocent children. Throughout the episodes, the invader – with the Star of David on his army helmet – runs the kids over with his jeep while they are peacefully riding their bicycles, destroys their fields and crops after a hard day's work, steals their sheep, shoots down their kites and so forth. The invader's expression in these cartoon sequels is often perversely joyful at the mere thought of his secret triumph. Confronted with his malice and prevailing provocations, the young boy retaliates and prevails over the soldier's aggression at the end of each episode. The child, as the series' official website elaborated, "symbolizes the oppressed people of Palestine and their Intifada (uprising). The invader symbolizes the regime occupying Jerusalem, including his beastly and cruel acts".<sup>17</sup>

Although the aforementioned televised productions were released during Ahmadinejad's administration, they embodied the mandate of Sahar that preceded his

presidency. The network proclaimed, in an official mission statement retrieved from Sahar's website in 2007, its initial aims : (a) to introduce the Islamic Revolution of Iran to foreign viewers (b) to strengthen solidarity and create an atmosphere of trust and understanding between Iranian Muslims and other nations (c) to confront the influence of non-Islamic cultures (d) to counter the misleading news dominated by the West and Zionism.<sup>18</sup> Sahar's proclamations might shed more light on the general guiding principles of IRIB. Sahar's stated objectives also offer clarifications as to 'the obscure "enemy" referred to on the occasion of Press-TV's inauguration. It points to what the Islamic Republic perceives as the main targets of its counter propaganda, namely Western and Zionist media.

It is important to note in this context, that as a rule Iranian media outlets transmit messages intended for international audiences in a softer and more moderate tone than those designed for local and regional audiences.<sup>19</sup> Significantly, the same moderate strategy is implemented in certain revisions found in official Iranian web portals. This becomes particularly evident in the official website of "the Islamic Propagation Organization" (*sazman-e tablighat-e eslami*). Instead of using the noun "propaganda" or "propagation", which was used in the past and carries a derogatory connotation in the West, in the revised webpage in English this administrative office is introduced under the title of "the Islamic 'development' organization".<sup>20</sup>

### **Creating "News" through Action – Conferences and Spectacles<sup>21</sup>**

On 20 April 2009, the eve of Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day, president Ahmadinejad took center stage of the United Nation's anti-racism Durban Review Conference in Geneva, and publicly denounced Israel as a cruel and racist state. He also accused the Zionists of using the Holocaust as an excuse to steal Arab lands.<sup>22</sup> Ahmadinejad's determination to take advantage of this event – pre-boycotted by Germany, Italy, Poland, the United States and five other countries – was disclosed on the eve of his departure. In a press conference held in Tehran he stressed: "Zionists impose their will for looting nations on the world by controlling the world's power centers".<sup>23</sup> Following Ahmadinejad's speech, the spokesman of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Hassan Qashqavi, also professed this was "a premeditated and precise move" by the president.<sup>24</sup> Iranian-based news outlets lauded their President and were paramount in the coverage of Ahmadinejad's statements that initiated the international media spectacles that followed.

Many Iranian multi-lingual electronic news agencies (such as IRNA, IRIB, FNA, MNA, ISNA, ITNA), operate in the Islamic Republic along with electronic versions of every active daily newspaper and leading magazine. Their extensive coverage of Ahmadinejad's speech at the Durban convention was not an isolated episode, but an apex in the public demonstrations upon which he built his international notoriety. The conference "a world without Zionism" (*jahan bidun sahyonism*) held in October 2005 in Tehran, by the Union of Islamic Student Associations (UISA), received mass exposure in Iranian media. According to reports released online by local news agencies, the conference was initiated by non-governmental organizations and set to highlight a series of events to be held nationally and internationally between 22 October and 13 November 2005, on the occasion of *Ruz-e Quds* ("Jerusalem Day").<sup>25</sup> Amid the events planned, a book fair was organized at the ground floor of Tehran Youth Culture Center (*farhangsara-ye javan*), where an exhibition of 50 titles was held on the topics of Palestine, Zionism and Jerusalem. Other public events devoted to the same topic were reported to have taken place in other cities, and a new website was set for their endorsement.<sup>26</sup>

The central symposium in Tehran was held at the conference hall of the Iranian Interior Ministry. It was promoted by national radio and television, and 5,000 poster-ads throughout the streets of metropolitan Tehran. For the benefit of the international media, the poster-ad displayed the name of the conference in English as well as Persian. Despite its meticulous promotion, the audience of the conference consisted of selected representatives of the government, state officials and members of the Student Basij Organization (SBO), a conduit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps highly loyal to the regime.<sup>27</sup>

Soon after the conference ended, IRIB's news department posted a summary of the president's keynote speech on its official English website under the blaring headline "Ahmadinejad: Israel must be wiped off the map".<sup>28</sup> Within less than 24 hours, this headline prompted an international media frenzy and succeeding diplomatic denouncements. Coupled with Iran's occasional anti-Israeli slogans, pro-Palestinian policies and expedited nuclear development program, this news headline ignited troubling scenarios regarding the Islamic Republic's future designs toward Israel. The international media blaze over his comments was followed by a heated dispute probing into the translation and genuine meaning of Ahmadinejad's exact words; he himself misquoted ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 by saying "the Imam said

the regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the pages of time".<sup>29</sup> The dispute over the exact quote and translation received extensive coverage online, especially by Middle Eastern, Iranian and media pundits outside of Iran. Some considered it a manifestation of the Islamic Republic's clear threat to regional security, others emphasized that it further facilitated the international demonization of the Islamic Republic for precursory attack to be led by the U.S.<sup>30</sup>

This news release came at a crucial time for the Islamic Republic. Two days earlier, on 24 October, the Iranian authorities informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that the local uranium conversion campaign started in August 2005.<sup>31</sup> Identified as a leading player in "axis of evil" by former US president George W. Bush in 2002, and faced with threats of United Nations sanctions over its suspected nuclear program, by late 2005 the Islamic Republic was under extreme international pressure. Occasional reports in the international media were speculating about the possibility of a foreign military intervention in Iran. At the same time, the country was struggling with economic instability.

The international media spectacle of October 2005 transformed the newly elected Ahmadinejad overnight from an unknown head of state into a household name. The Iranian authorities might have anticipated the international reactions to the conference "A World without Zionism," or perhaps its propaganda temporarily backfired. But from that moment, officials in Tehran must have been aware of the possible international fallout,<sup>32</sup> while Ahmadinejad's public statements further legitimized the Islamic Republic's antisemitic campaign online and a series of additional international media spectacles. In March 2006 Iranian electronic news outlets reported that members of the SBO were coordinating a special seminar entitled: "The Holocaust: a Myth or Reality[?]" (*holocaust: afsaneh ya vagheyat*).<sup>33</sup> In the two-hour seminar furnished by the Faculty of Engineering at Tehran University, students of the medical sciences division met with American representatives of the anti-Zionist Jewish sect of Neturei Karta ("the guardians of the city"), a dissent ultra-Orthodox faction objecting to Jewish sovereignty over the Holy Land. The group's visit received extensive coverage in Iranian media, accompanied by photographed press conferences, interviews and headlines such as "Jews pray for the immediate dismantlement of the Zionist regime".<sup>34</sup> However, members of the delegation strongly rejected reports by Iranian media of their participation in a conference on the Holocaust, and reiterated that they had never heard of such a conference.<sup>35</sup> The visit

of Neturei Karta representatives, as underlined by MNA's English news report, meant to "set the record straight", or rather counter diplomatic allegations denouncing Iran for inducing antisemitic propaganda.<sup>36</sup> By stressing the distinction between "antisemitism" or "anti-Judaism" and "anti-Zionism", the Islamic Republic was exploiting this visit to substantiate its legitimacy to advocate the second on humanitarian grounds of its support for the Palestinian struggle.<sup>37</sup>

However, the Islamic Republic frequently fails to uphold this distinction. Antisemitic propaganda and Holocaust denial figure prominently in media visual forms, and supposedly "anti-Zionist" caricatures and illustrations appearing in Iranian leading daily newspapers are characterized by classic antisemitic motifs and elements based on prejudiced stereotypes of "the Jew/s".<sup>38</sup> In the past decade this tradition was not only translated through digital techniques on the web, but globally promoted new kinds of slander under Iranian sponsorship.

### **The Visual Effect**

Graphic media has played a pivotal role in the Islamic Republic's propaganda for the past several decades. Visual imageries were highly advantageous in staging the Islamic revolution (1979), and the subsequent war with Iraq (1980-1988).<sup>39</sup> This legacy is nowadays being transmitted to the internet in many different ways. Most often Iranian state propaganda is distributed by complicated networks and web-portals maintained by cultural and social institutions, organizations and centers, which proclaim their impartiality, objectivity, independent operation or non-affiliation with the Iranian government. Tebyan.net, for instance, is the multi-lingual web-portal of Iran's Institute for Culture and Information. In its web-statement the institute proclaims that it is legally independent, yet it is affiliated with the Islamic Propagation Organization, which is also responsible for the Mehr News Agency and Tehran Times.<sup>40</sup> Such amalgamative netting enables the Islamic Republic both to multiply its textual as well as visual propaganda on the internet and carefully communicate its messages to suit specific audiences.

In October 2005, the UISA, in collaboration with the Iranian House of Cartoons (*khaneh-ye karikatur-e Iran*) and a local photography museum, announced the launch of the international contest of cartoons, paintings and graphic works under the main theme of "a world without Zionism". The contest, which was part of the events denoting the 2005 *Ruz-e Quds*, had two tracks: one for school children below

18 and the other for professionals above 18. The sub-themes of the contest, as presented in the website of Iran House of Cartoon (IHC), were as follows: the world without America, a mirage called Israel, futurism and fighting Zionism, aspirations of a Palestinian pupil, and the Intifada and Palestinian liberation.<sup>41</sup> The artworks were posted on the by-now defunct website ([zionot.ir](http://zionot.ir)) and two other mirror sites.<sup>42</sup> In retrospect, this initiative can be seen as a preliminary attempt to launch an ideographic propaganda online.

Several months later, in February 2006, the leading Iranian newspaper Hamshahri managed to attract world attention announcing its plan to hold an international cartoon contest on the subject of the Holocaust.<sup>43</sup> The contest, as well as the subsequent award ceremony and public exhibition, was administered by Hamshahri with the collaboration of the IHC, both of which are maintained by the Tehran municipality. On its website ([irancartoon.ir](http://irancartoon.ir)), the IHC invited artists from all over the world to send up to five satirical cartoons about the Holocaust. The internet was a crucial forum for advancing this event, as selected cartoons were regularly displayed on the website for viewers' comments. By the time the contest ended, early in November 2006, a total of 227 cartoons, illustrated by artists from 32 countries, were gathered for an album posted in the gallery section on site. Out of the 227 caricatures, 30% were illustrated by Iranians, 15% by Brazilians, 14% by Arabic speaking Middle Easterners, and 10% by Europeans.

Relating to this cartoon collection, Manfred Gerstenfeld and Hildegunn Hansen stressed that it "shows once more how antisemitism and anti-Israelism overlap. Cartoonists mingle supposed Israeli and Jewish characteristics in their pictures." They further indicate that the cartoons from Muslim countries illustrate Jews as ultra-Orthodox while those from other countries depict Israeli soldiers. Still, in both cases "the Jew/Israeli" appears as male. Following Arie Stav and Joël Kotek's seminal works on antisemitic stereotypes in Arab cartoons, in this collection Gerstenfeld and Hansen identify most of the prevalent antisemitic stereotypes of Jews that nowadays are associated with Israelis as well. These stereotypes combine both classical and new antisemitic prejudice such as Holocaust inversion, the alleged "pernicious Jewish influence", ostensible Jewish avarice, Holocaust exploitation and denial, deicide, conspiracy theories of world domination, blood libel, infanticide and zoomorphism.<sup>44</sup>

Throughout the competition, various motives were presented to justify holding this propagandist exhibition. The prime motive depicted the event as a counter attack against the cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad, published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, in late September 2005. On 23 February, the *Tehran Times* published the vitriolic opinion column of Ahmad Rami, a Swedish-Moroccan best known for mixing antisemitism, Holocaust denial and anti-Zionism on his website, Radio Islam. In his column, Rami argued that the publication of the anti-Islamic cartoons in the Danish press was a Jewish conspiracy meant to trigger a clash of civilizations between Muslims and Christians.<sup>45</sup> Another set of motives addressed freedom of speech, artistic freedom and the desire to advance peace and justice among international artists by advocating religious courtesy. The organizers of the Holocaust cartoon competition set out to prove that when it comes to freedom of speech, Western countries also impose limitations: Holocaust denial is taboo, but blasphemy of Islam is tolerated.<sup>46</sup> Another set of motives stressed solidarity with the Palestinians in particular, and with "the oppressed people" in general, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The director of the IHC and curator of the Holocaust exhibition, Masoud Shojai-Tabatabai, seized every opportunity to voice his opinion and promote what he defined as "the biggest cartoon competition in the world on the Holocaust".<sup>47</sup> While he rejected the allegations accusing him of antisemitism on the English section of the IHC website, in an interview with Hamshahri from February 19, Shojai-Tabatabai referred to the "artificial legend of the holocaust" (*afsaneh-ye sakhtegi-ye holocaust*).<sup>48</sup> He also expressed a similar notion in a filmed interview with Danish journalist Karsten Kjaer, director of the documentary *Bloody Cartoons* (2007). Shojai-Tabatabai was asked if he thinks there is a taboo on the Holocaust in the West. In the presence of a colleague interpreter, Shojai-Tabatabai steadily and quietly replied: "Yes. In reality the Zionists have made up a fairytale claiming that six million Jews were killed".<sup>49</sup>

Beyond the international controversy, the 2006 International Holocaust contest enabled the Islamic Republic to establish one of the most comprehensive antisemitic databases of digital graphics online in less than a year. The exhibition also traveled across the country. In May 2008, for instance, it was hosted by the Culture and Islamic Guidance Department of the city of Qom.<sup>50</sup> The international Cartoon Contest further motivated the Shahid Shahbazi Cultural Institute and SBO of the University of

Science and Technology, to jointly publish an illustration book entitled "Holocaust" in 2008. This collection of cartoons by the leading Iranian caricaturist Maziar Bijani, accompanied with notes "on the holocaust myth" by Omid Mehdinejad, was marketed online and later blogged (holocaustcartoons.blogfa.com), and displayed on social media, including twitter and Facebook.<sup>51</sup>

### **Iranian Negationism**

Today, anti-Israeli campaigns have become a common basis for post-Holocaust antisemitism and negationism, that is, the denial of the systematic genocide of Jewish communities in Europe during World War II. Mark Weitzman underlines that post-Holocaust antisemitism, disguised under an anti-Israeli veil, is one of the dominant ideological foundations of right-wing extremist global movement.<sup>52</sup> Relating to Europe, Kotek indicates that "Anti-Zionism has become a civil religion in Belgium. Its credo is that the Palestinians are always right and the Israelis are always wrong".<sup>53</sup> Dave Rich further elucidates on the financial gains involved by asserting, "The idea that Holocaust denial can be a central part of the struggle against Israel has long been the basis of a sustained marketing campaign by neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers to potential sources of funding and support in the Arab and Muslim world".<sup>54</sup> While anti-Zionism provides the glue that binds negationists together, in the case of the Islamic Republic, the roles are being reversed as the rising post-Holocaust antisemitism and negationism of Ahmadinejad's presidency have become the main ideological capital of its anti-Israeli propaganda online.<sup>55</sup>

The Islamic Republic's negationist and antisemitic propaganda is not assembled on particular websites, but permeates the general discourse and can be found throughout various platforms of communication, information sharing websites and web-portals. For instance, the article "the Shoah myth and the holocaust industry" by Mehdi Alikhani is hosted on the official website of the Islamic Revolution Document Center, and is also to be found on the Tebyan network website of the Islamic Propagation Organization and Fars News Agency.<sup>56</sup> Mohammad Taieb's article "holocaust: the gold hen of zionists," published by Jam-e-jam, the official organ of IRIB with a daily circulation of more than 450,000 readers,<sup>57</sup> is displayed on Bashgah Net; yahood.net and available on hawzah.net maintained by the Computer Research Center of Islamic Sciences (CRCIS).

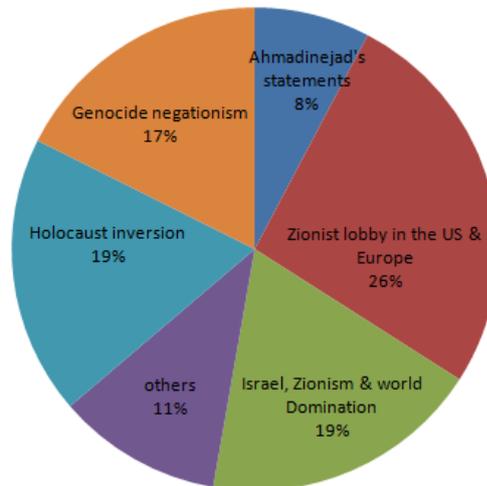
The CRCIS was established in 1989 and went online in 1999. The center's prime objective was the promotion of Islamic culture through the use of modern technology. The center's headquarters are located in the city of Qom, the heartland of Islamic-Shi'ite scholarship and the CRCIS's board of directors is appointed directly by the Islamic Republic's spiritual leader the ayatollah Ali Khamene'i. Apart from developing "Islamic software", uploading Qur'anic exegesis and spreading pan-Islamic ideology, CRCIS projects also accommodate anti-Western and antisemitic propaganda disseminated by affiliated websites (such as howzah.net and bashgah.net), and replicated further by unaffiliated forums, news groups, blogs and individual websites (such as shahbazi.org; yahood.net; military.ir and the now disabled auschwitz.blogspot.com). These and other examples to be further presented, attest to ways in which information hosting and online communication enable Iran's state apparatus casual dissemination of propaganda on a global scale.

Operating from Qom, the Hawzah Information Network (*paygah-e etela' resani-ye howzeh*), is a modern computerized form of the traditional Shi'ite religious seminary (*al-hawzah al-'ilmiah*, or "enclave of knowledge"). It provides a database of Islamic studies; theological archive of books, journals and articles; news and information about Islamic centers; FAQs, and direct communication between net-users and prominent clerics of the religious seminaries in Qom.<sup>58</sup> The databank of hawzah.net hosts over 50,000 documents (compared with 22,423 in 2009) on various issues, from Islamic commentaries and Shi'a philosophy to interviews with Iranian parliament members and translated articles from the foreign press.

In December 2015 the hawzah.net databank hosted 249 documents referring to the keyword "Holocaust" (in comparison with 135 in 2009). The bulk of documents (176) appear under the category "magazine-articles". In 51 of the 176 magazine-articles "Holocaust" is associated with the keyword *dorugh* ("lie", "falsehood", "hypocrisy"); *afsaneh* ("myth", "fable", "fiction", "charm") or *ostureh* ("fable", "myth").<sup>59</sup> Crossing "Holocaust" with the keyword "Israel" resulted 125 hits, with "Zionism" produced 65 results and with "Jews" and "Jewish" 52 entries. Magazine-articles on the hawzah.net databank range from short reports to long pseudo-academic historical reviews retrieved from different periodicals, published by various Iranian-based centers; most of them originate in Qom and have their own websites. For instance, the monthly *Akhbar-e Shi'ian* dedicated to issues pertaining to the Shi'a world is published by the institute of Shi'ite Studies. *Pegah-ye hawzah*, defined as a

cultural, social, political and economic fortnightly, is issued by the Islamic Propagation Office of the Islamic Seminary of Qom.<sup>60</sup>

**Table 1: Distribution of magazine-articles about the 'Holocaust' on hawzah.net (2015)**



The table presents the dominant antisemitic categorizations associated with the keyword "Holocaust", in magazine-articles posted online in hawzah.net:

\***Ahmadinejad's statements** (8%), include selected quotes from his speeches and announcements in international conventions, local conferences and media interviews regarding Israel and the "myth of the Holocaust", most of which were debated at length in the international media as well. Occasionally, the articles hail Ahmadinejad's resilience for enduring international denunciations, and standing up for the oppressed people, especially the Palestinians.

\***Zionist lobby in the U.S. and Europe** (26%), articles in this category associate the "myth of the Holocaust" with alleged undue Zionist and/or Jewish influence on U.S. and European politics, domestic and foreign policies, world media and entertainment. Despite an emphasis on the "Zionist lobby" the discussions predominantly identify global Jews as its members. Translated reviews that focus on the same notions plainly contain the term "Jewish lobby" in Persian. The same tendency recurs in references to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which appear in Persian under several titles,

including the *Protocols of the Jews*. A large portion of articles in this group are preoccupied with the subject of Jewish domination in the western film industry. While some attribute movies, such as the 2007 production *300*, to a global Jewish conspiracy to disparage the Persian legacy and heritage, others posit ways in which Hollywood is assisting in creating the myth of the Jewish Holocaust. Another set of articles focuses on the European sense of freedom of speech and emphasizes the Jewish (alleged) objection to holding conferences on the Holocaust and supposed reluctance to investigate the subject historically. Most often the articles base their premises on bogus historical research manufactured by renowned Holocaust deniers. Works cited in this category include, for instance, Henri Ford's *The International Jew*; "Awakening: The Unspeakable Influence of Jews in America" by David Duke, former leader of the Ku Klux Klan; materials from the website of Jeff Rense, an American conspiracy theorist who endorses, among other topics, Holocaust denial and 9/11 conspiracies.

**\*Israel, Zionism & world domination** (19%) encompasses conspiracy theories articles, most of which posit that Zionism, Israel, communism, Marxism, imperialism and capitalism are instruments in the diabolical scheme of ostensibly global Jewry, against Christianity and Islam. This category is very similar to the previous one; however in these set of articles, Israel is specifically mentioned while in the other category it is not. This group also includes selected speeches of Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Palestinian references. Among the works cited in this category are *The Trial of Israeli Zionism* by the French Holocaust-denier Roger Garaudy, published in Iran by *Kayhan* in 2005/2006, and an obituary following his death in 2012.

**\*Others** (11%), This category includes translated reports from foreign newspapers and magazines regarding the Holocaust, such as summaries of Pope Benedict XVI sermons, a pre-election report of Barack Obama's visit to *Yad Vashem* in July 2008; Hawzah news and calendar events. This category also includes one rare exception of the entire collection, an interview with an Iranian MP cleric who argues against the continued preoccupation with the Holocaust in Iran.

**\*Holocaust inversion** (19%), relates to accounts that either portray the Zionists/Israelis /Jews as Nazis or ascribe the term "Holocaust" to other people. Most often the term is associated with the Palestinians, twice with Lebanon in the context

of the Second Lebanon War of July 2006 and once with the Shi'ite community of Pakistan.

\***Genocide negationism** (17%), Articles and reviews of this category clearly negate the mass and systematic killing of Jews during WWII and the existence of gas chambers. All of them refer to writings of known European Holocaust deniers and speak in their defense, while discrediting and ridiculing accounts of Holocaust survivors like Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel. The most cited source is "the gas chambers in the Second World War: a myth or reality?" by the French Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson.

One of the most conspicuous features in this online archive (which applies to the entire antisemitic campaign of the Islamic Republic online during 2005-2009), is the excessive advocacy of "historical revisionism" promoted by pseudo-academic Holocaust-deniers. In the course of Ahmadinejad's presidency, the Islamic Republic embraced the world's most renowned negationists as its main sources of reference and authoritative voices on the subject of the Holocaust. Convicted Holocaust-deniers like Faurisson and Georges Theil (also known by the pseudonym Gilbert Dubreuil) were both convicted in France under the act of crimes against humanity; Gerald Fredrick Töben, twice convicted for "defamation of the dead" and inciting hatred online both in Germany and Australia, and Garoudy, tried in France for endorsing negationism – conducted frequent visits to the Islamic Republic, even prior to 2005. These and other Holocaust-deniers were extensively quoted and interviewed by Iranian online media outlets. Banned in their countries of origin, George Michael notes, Holocaust-deniers find fertile ground in Middle Eastern countries, where there are hardly restrictions on hate speech or liability, that is as long as it does not concern Islam or local regimes.<sup>61</sup> For Holocaust deniers, cooperating with the Islamic Republic facilitated public exposure, translation and distribution of their volumes and papers in book fairs by Iranian publishers and commercial websites (ketabroom.ir; adinebook.com; irmc.ir).

For the Islamic Republic, European and American Holocaust-deniers – similar to the anti-Zionist Jewish radical sect of Neturei Karta – were highly valuable ideological assets. They were beneficial in erecting international media spectacles that the Islamic Republic was presenting. Perhaps the most notorious display in that respect was the international conference titled "Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision" (*barresi-ye holocaust: cheshm-e andaz-e jahani*).<sup>62</sup> The two-day event was held by the Iranian Foreign Ministry's Institute for Political and International Studies

(IPIS) on 11-12 December 2006, and hosted the biggest public gathering of Holocaust-deniers in the twenty-first century. This gathering gave impetus to the expansion of "historical revisionist" literature in Iran, a growth sustained further by the quantity and content of magazine-articles uploaded on hawzah.net at the time. Global Holocaust-deniers also contributed to TV productions, like the antisemitic documentary series "Merchants of Myth," (*sowdagaran-e afsaneh*), aired on Iranian educational Channel 4 at the outset of 2006, and soon after uploaded on video hosting sites.<sup>63</sup>

Under pseudo-academic revisionism, global Holocaust-deniers introduce to the Iranian public – who for the most part is hardly familiar with the subject of the Holocaust – a new repertoire of a well-known "evil". As "enemy images" of Iran's long time bitter rival, Saddam Hussein, faded away along with his regime in 2003 and execution in 2006, and old imagery associated with anti-Western and anti-Americanism have perhaps worn out during the past thirty seven years – exploiting the Holocaust to further vilify "Zionists" or "Israelis," seems like a relatively easy task for the propaganda machine of the Islamic Republic.

### **Summary**

During the first decade of the twenty first century, the Islamic Republic has managed to earn itself the dubious position of top promoter of antisemitism and negationism in the digital age. The infamous televised statements of president Ahmadinejad between 2005-2009, regarding Israel and the Holocaust, have generated a series of international spectacles that allowed the Islamic Republic to communicate its messages more overtly in the international arena. In Iran, his proclamations also legitimized and directed resources toward an exceedingly antisemitic and negationist campaign. The internet has evolved as major locus for this campaign, which is disseminated online in various shapes and forms by news agencies; electronic journals, magazines and newspapers; online television channels; official websites; institutional web-sites, online portals and social media. Two recent examples are a translated article (from Arabic) depicting Jews as the most bloodthirsty people in human history that was published on 18 April 2015 in the Iranian news website *Alef*,<sup>64</sup> and the online launch of the second international Holocaust cartoon contest that concluded in May 2015, on the backdrop of finalizing the deal with Iran on its nuclear program.<sup>65</sup>

This paper focused on official antisemitic and negationist Iranian propaganda on the internet. Despite the multiplicity and diversity of state affiliated websites, several features can be identified in relation to the ways in which they continue to disperse antisemitic and negationist propaganda. One prominent feature is the casual integration of such materials on state-run/sponsored/authorized websites. Commentaries, pseudo-historical reviews, short reports and other forms of texts and images containing hate-materials, are archived on Iranian-based educational, scientific, cultural and social institutions. Another recurrent feature is the replication of the same antisemitic materials through different internet platforms. Such repetitions assist both in presenting a consistent message and reaching wider audiences online. Most of the official websites of the Islamic Republic are multilingual, designed to appeal to wide target audiences of net-users on the international, regional and local arenas. However, negationist materials are usually directed to local and regional audiences, rather than Western audiences, which are generally addressed in a more moderate tone. An additional feature is associated with online promotion and marketing of "revisionist" accounts by renowned global Holocaust-deniers as sources of reference and authority on the subject of the Holocaust.

Since the election of President Rouhani and the diplomatic efforts of his administration to bring Iran's nuclear standoff to an end, the scope of Iranian antisemitic activity and Holocaust denial seem to have decreased to some extent. However, the legacy of his presidency is imprinted in cultural and educational websites and together with the ever growing accessibility to the internet continues to assimilate on the World Wide Web and into Iranian society.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on data retrieved by *the Internet World Statistics* (updated in December 2014), Iran's internet penetration is rated fifth in the Middle East, after Israel, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Lebanon, [www.internetworldstats.com/me/ir.htm](http://www.internetworldstats.com/me/ir.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Masserat Amir-Ebrahimi, "Performance in Everyday Life and the Rediscovery of the "Self" in Iranian Weblogs," *Bad Jens* 7 (September 2004), <http://www.badjens.com/rediscovery.html>; Fereshteh Nouraie-Simone, "Wings of Freedom: Iranian Women, Identity and Cyberspace," in Fereshteh Nouraie-Simone (ed.), *On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in the Global Era* (New York: the Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2005): 62-80; Nasrin Alavi, *We Are Iran: The Persian Blogs* (Portobello Books, 2005); Liora Hendelman-Baavur, "Promises and Perils of Weblogistan: Online Personal Journals and the Islamic Republic of Iran," *The Middle East Review of International Affairs* 11: 2 (June 2007): 77-93.

<sup>3</sup> Nima Mina, "Blogs, Cyber-Literature and Virtual Culture in Iran," George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, *Occasional Paper Series* 15 (December 2007): 1-38; Babak Rahimi, "Internet and Politics in Post-revolutionary Iran," in: Mehdi Semati (ed.), *Iran: Media, Culture and Society: Living With Globalization and the Islamic State* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008): 37-56; Annabelle Sreberny and Gholam Khiabany, *Blogistan – The Internet and Politics in Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Deibert, Ronald J. and Nart Villeneuve, "Firewalls and Power: An Overview of State's Censorship of the Internet," in M. Klang and A. Murray (eds.), *Human Rights in the Digital Age* (London: Cavendish Publishing, 2004): 111-124; Faris, Robert and Nart Villeneuve, "Measuring Global Internet Filtering," in Ronald Diabert et al. (eds.), *Access Denied: the Practice and Policy of Global Filtering* (The President and Fellows of Harvard President, 2008): 5-27.

<sup>5</sup> David Menashri, "Iran, the Jews and the Holocaust," *Country Report*, released by the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism (2005), [www.tau.ac.il/Antisemitism/asw2005/menashri.html](http://www.tau.ac.il/Antisemitism/asw2005/menashri.html). See also: D. Menashri, "The Jews of Iran: Between the Shah and Khomeini," in Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz (eds.), *Antisemitism in Times of Crisis*, (New York University, 1991), pp. 353-371.

<sup>6</sup> Meir Litvak, "The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holocaust: Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism," *The Journal of Israeli History*, vol. 25, num. 1 (March 2006), pp. 267-284. For further reading see also: William F.S. Miles, "Indigenization of the Holocaust and the Tehran Holocaust Conference: Iranian Aberration or Third World Trend?" *Human Rights Review*, (2008), *online first*.

<sup>7</sup> According to Naghmeh Sohrabi, these public spectacles have become by now "tedious state rituals that reveal nothing but the anti-imperialist and anti-Western past of the Islamic Republic", see Naghmeh Sohrabi, "Conservatives, Neoconservatives and Reformists: Iran after the Election of Mahmud Ahmadinejad," *Middle East Brief*, 4 (April 2006), [www.brandeis.edu](http://www.brandeis.edu).

<sup>8</sup> For further reading see: Kathy Crilley, "Information warfare: New Battlefields Terrorists, Propaganda and the Internet," *Aslib Proceedings*, vol. 53, No. 7 (July/August 2001), pp. 250-264.

<sup>9</sup> For further reading see: Mohammad Zarghami, "Iran: Hard-Line Students Announce Bounty on Israeli Leaders' Heads," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (11 March 2008), [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org).

<sup>10</sup> *FNA* (21 May 2008). [www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8702310926](http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8702310926).

<sup>11</sup> *IQNA* (27 September 2008). [www.iqna.ir/fa/news\\_print.php?ProdID=300165](http://www.iqna.ir/fa/news_print.php?ProdID=300165).

<sup>12</sup> Farvartish Rezvaniyeh, "Pulling the Strings of the Net: Iran's Cyber Army," *Tehran Bureau*, (February 26, 2010). <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2010/02/pulling-the-strings-of-the-net-irans-cyber-army.html> and J.W. Baker, "Iran: The Cyber Nation – Timeline of Every Hack," *Xpat Nation*, June 18, 2015 <http://www.xpatnation.co/iran-the-cyber-nation-timeline-of-every-hack/#.Z33M92j9a>.

<sup>13</sup> Retrieved from the official website of *Al- 'Alam*, [www.alalam.ir](http://www.alalam.ir) (August 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Press-tv (02 July 2007), [www.presstv.ir](http://www.presstv.ir) and also *ISNA* (03 July 2007), <http://isna.ir/ISNA/NewsView.aspx?ID=News-953414&Lang=E>.

<sup>15</sup> Sahar network also reports of having seven international offices in Islamabad, London, Delhi, Paris, Arbil, Sarajevo and Baku.

<sup>16</sup> The dramatic series is also known as "For You, Palestine". For more details, see: "France Bans Iran's Sahar-tv for Airing Antisemitic Programs," *MEMRI – Special Dispatch*, no. 868 (23 February 2005),

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www.memri.org. For the United States Government response, see: *Voice of America News* (30 January 2005), [www.voanews.com](http://www.voanews.com). For response in Iran, see: *MNA* (11 March 2005).

<sup>17</sup> [www.child-invader.com](http://www.child-invader.com).

<sup>18</sup> <http://setv.irib.ir>; <http://tehran2007abu.irib.ir>.

<sup>19</sup> In his review of Ahmadinejad's anti-Israeli statements Joshua Teitelbaum argues the same technique applies to the Iranian president as well. Joshua Teitelbaum, *What Iranian Leaders Really Say about Doing Away with Israel – A Refutation of the Campaign to Excuse Ahmadinejad's Incitement to Genocide*, (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2008), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> The holder domain of the Islamic Development Organization's website [www.ido.ir](http://www.ido.ir), is also registered under the old name of the Islamic Propagation Organization.

<sup>21</sup> The phrase "creating "news" through action" was adopted from Leonard W. Doob, "Goebbles' Principles of Propaganda," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 14, no.3 (Autumn 1950), pp. 424-426.

<sup>22</sup> The Durban Review Conference (also known as Durban 2) took place between 20 and 24 April 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland. It evaluated progress towards the goals set by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. For further reading see the official website: <http://www.un.org/durbanreview2009>. See also *FNA-Fars News Agency*, (20 April 2009), <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8801311278>. For Ahmadinejad speech, see: <http://www.president.ir/fa/?ArtID=15978>.

<sup>23</sup> *FNA*, (19 April 2009); *IRNA - the Islamic Republic News Agency* (22 April 2009).

<sup>24</sup> *FNA*, (20 April 2009).

<sup>25</sup> *Ruz-e Quds* (also known as the "International Quds Day") is held annually since 1979 on the last Friday of the month of Ramadan, commemorating the opposition to Israel's control over Jerusalem. *MNA* (October 4, 2005), [www.mehrnews.ir/en/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=237660](http://www.mehrnews.ir/en/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=237660).

<sup>26</sup> *Hamshahri online* (27 October 2005). [www.hamshahrionline.ir](http://www.hamshahrionline.ir); *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*, (01 November 2005).

<sup>27</sup> See the official announcement of the public relation office of the *Association of Islamic Students Societies* from 19 October 2005 at <http://www.uics.ir/newsid.php?newsid=9> and also reports on *Mehr News* (04 October 2005); *FNA* (23 October 2005) and *Hamshahri* (27 October 2005).

<sup>28</sup> According to early reports in the Iranian media, the conference was scheduled to take place between 8:00-12:00. The mentioned announcement was released online by IRIB on 01:34:13 Tehran Time (26 October 2005) [www.iribnews.ir](http://www.iribnews.ir).

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.irdc.org/fa/content/4803/default.aspx>.

<sup>30</sup> Ethan Bronner, "Just How far did they go, those words against Israel?" *The New York Times* (June 11, 2006); Scott Macleod, "We do not need attacks," *Time* (September 17, 2006); Juan Cole "Ahmadinejad: "I am not antisemitic" Palestinians should Decide on Two-State Solution" in his blog *Informed Comment – Thoughts on the Middle East, History, and Religion* (26 June 2007), [www.juancole.com](http://www.juancole.com); Edward S. Herman & David Peterson, *Hegemony and Appeasement: Setting Up the Next U.S.-Israeli Target (Iran) for Another 'Supreme International Crime'*, (ColdType, 2007), pp. 4-6; Teitelbaum, *Ibid*. For more references online see the extensive converge on wikipedia "Mamoud Ahmadinejad and Israel," <http://en.wikipedia.org>.

<sup>31</sup> "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Report by the Director General of the IAEA Boards of Governors*, (18 November 2005), p. 4, [www.iaea.org](http://www.iaea.org).

<sup>32</sup> In his instructive briefing Trita Parsi, for instance, indicates "the international backlash has taken Tehran by surprise", see Trita Parsi, "Under the Veil of Ideology: The Israeli-Iranian Strategic Rivalry," *Middle East Report* (09 June 2006).

<sup>33</sup> The 2006 visit of *Neturei Karta* representatives to Iran was one out of several visits paid by members of this group to the Islamic Republic. On the "Holocaust: a myth or reality" seminar see the announcement on the Public Relations website of the Tehran University of Medical Sciences: <http://publicrelations.tums.ac.ir/news/detail.asp?newsID=770> and *Iranian Quran News Agency (IQNA)*: 7 March 2006), [http://www.iqna.ir/FA/news\\_detail.php?ProdID=45254](http://www.iqna.ir/FA/news_detail.php?ProdID=45254).

<sup>34</sup> *FNA* (5 March 2006); *FNA* (6 March 2006); *Iran Daily* (07 March 2006); *MNA* (5 March 2006).

<sup>35</sup> <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8412150673>.

<sup>36</sup> The complete headline reads "Anti-Zionist Rabbis in Tehran to Set the Record Straight," *MNA* (05 March 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Jeff Weintraub, "Antisemitic imagery becomes respectable again - A cartoon roundup from Engage," on his weblog *Commentaries and controversies* (17 September 2006), <http://jeffweintraub.blogspot.com/2006/09/antisemitic-imagery-becomes.html>.

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<sup>38</sup> See a collection of cartoons from Iranian media, especially from the daily *Kayhan*, on the German website: [www.honestlyconcerned.org](http://www.honestlyconcerned.org).

<sup>39</sup> Peter Chellkowski and Hamid Dabashi, *Staging a Revolution: The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> [www.ido.ir](http://www.ido.ir).

<sup>41</sup> The announcement was also placed on the website of Iran House of Cartoon, [http://irancartoon.ir/news/archives/2005/10/post\\_15.php](http://irancartoon.ir/news/archives/2005/10/post_15.php); also available on <http://kheimh.org>. For the announcement of the Islamic Republic's *U ISA* from October 22, 2005 on their official website: [www.uics.ir](http://www.uics.ir).

<sup>42</sup> The site [zionot.ir](http://zionot.ir) was found operating under a U.S. internet service provider, therefore canceled according to the "guidance on the provision of internet connectivity services" issued by the US Office of Foreign Assets Control, on June 3, 2003. For further reading see Jeremy Raynalds, "Iranian Antisemitic Web Site Hosted in U.S." *Global Politician* (16 November 2005). [www.globalpolitician.com](http://www.globalpolitician.com).

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.hamshahrionline.ir/hamnews/1384/841117/news/shari.htm#s10032>.

<sup>44</sup> Manfred Gerstenfeld, "Ahmadinejad, Iran, and the Holocaust Manipulation: Methods, Aims, and Reactions" *PHAS*, no. 551 (01 February 2007), [www.jcpa.org](http://www.jcpa.org).

<sup>45</sup> *Tehran Times* (23 February 2006); *MNA* (23 February 2006). On Ahmad Rami see: Mark Weitzman, "Antisemitismus und Holocaust-Leugnung: Permanente Elemente des globalen Rechtsextremismus," Thomas Greven und Thomas Grumke (Hrsg.) *Globalisierter Rechtsextremismus? Die extremistische Rechte in der Ära der Globalisierung* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), pp. 15-29.

<sup>46</sup> *MNA* (14 February 2006); *Etemad* No.1186 (14 August 2006), p. 16; *Resalat* No.5938 (16 August 2006), p. 24; [www.iribnews.ir](http://www.iribnews.ir) (02 November 2006); *FNA* (01 November 2006); *Iran*, No.3487 (02 November 2006), p. 24.

<sup>47</sup> [http://irancartoon.ir/news/archives/2006/09/post\\_484.php](http://irancartoon.ir/news/archives/2006/09/post_484.php).

<sup>48</sup> *Hamshahri online*, (19 February 2006)

<http://www.hamshahrionline.ir/HAMNEWS/1384/841130/news/ejtem.htm>.

<sup>49</sup> From Shojai-Tabatabai filmed interview with Danish journalist and director Karsten Kjaer, in the documentary, *Bloody Cartoons* (Denmark, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> *Shabestan News Agency* (27 May 2008), [www.shabestan.ir](http://www.shabestan.ir).

<sup>51</sup> The scale of antisemitic cartoons on Iranian blogs has also increased since the International cartoon contest, see for instance: <http://cartoontalk.blogfa.com> and [www.ansareemam.blogfa.com](http://www.ansareemam.blogfa.com).

<sup>52</sup> Weitzman, "Antisemitismus und Holocaust-Leugnung," p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> Joël Kotek, "Major Antisemitic Motifs in Arab Cartoons - Interview with Joël Kotek," *Post-Holocaust & Antisemitism*, no. 21 (1 June 2004), [www.jcpa.org](http://www.jcpa.org).

<sup>54</sup> Dave Rich, "Holocaust Denial as an Anti-Zionist and Anti-Imperialist Tool for the European Far Left," *Post-Holocaust & Antisemitism*, no. 65 (1 February 2008). Available on [www.jcpa.org](http://www.jcpa.org).

<sup>55</sup> Carmon, *ibid*.

<sup>56</sup> [www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8412160024](http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8412160024).

<sup>57</sup> [www.irib.ir](http://www.irib.ir).

<sup>58</sup> *Pajuhesh va-Hawzeh*, 10 (2002), available via [www.hawzah.net](http://www.hawzah.net); [www.noormags.com](http://www.noormags.com).

<sup>59</sup> In 20 magazine articles out of 39 *afsaneh*, *ostureh* and *dorugh* appear together in association with the keyword "Holocaust".

<sup>60</sup> These publications include articles such as Ibrahim Fayaz, "Baztabha-ye holocaust" *Pegah-ye Hawzah*, 175 (07 January 2006) and "Afsaneh-ye holocaust", *Didar-e Ashna*, 66 (February 2006); "Zionism, Holocaust, Israel," *Yas*, 37 (March 2006); "Amrika, holocaust va-jangha-ye astore'i", *Pasdar-e Eslam*, 295 (June 2006).

<sup>61</sup> George Michael, "Deciphering Ahmadinejad's Holocaust Revisionism," *The Middle East Quarterly*, vol. xiv, no.3 (Summer 2007), [www.meforum.org](http://www.meforum.org).

<sup>62</sup> See for instance *FNA* (25 November 2006); (11 December 2006) and *MNA* (5 December 2006); (10 December 2006), also consists a list of the topics discussed: [www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=419163](http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=419163).

<sup>63</sup> *MNA* (17 January 2008), interview with Faurisson denying the possibility of mass killing in gas chambers during the Second World War: <http://www.mehrnews.ir/NewsPrint.aspx?NewsID=276806>. "Iranian Holocaust-Denial Documentary Series on Iranian TV: 'Merchants of the Myth'," *MEMRI - Special Dispatch*, no. 1566 (2 May 2007).

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<sup>64</sup> The Iranian news website *Alef* is associated with Ahmad Tavakoli, member of Iran's parliament who formerly served as minister of labor and social affairs and president of the parliamentary research center. The mentioned article that luridly revives Passover blood libel is a translated version of the Egyptian journalist Firnas Hafzi's article published in the magazine *Al-kebar* on April 14, 2014. For the version in Persian see: "Cheh quami "khonkharan tarikh-e bashariat" laqib gereftehand" ["Who Are Human History's Most Bloodthirsty People?"], *Alef*, April 18, 2015, <http://alef.ir/vdcgtu9x3ak93t4.rpra.html?267446>. On Hafzi's article see: The Middle East Media Research Institute, *MEMRI Special Dispatch no. 5714*, April 17, 2014, [http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/7940.htm#\\_edn1](http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/7940.htm#_edn1).

<sup>65</sup> See the announcement of IHC on the Iran Cartoon website: <http://www.irancartoon.com/the-second-holocaust-international-cartoon-contest-2015/#>.