



Confronting Holocaust Denial

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One day In 1994, living in Ede, a small town in Holland, I got a visit from my half-sister. She and I had applied for asylum in Holland. I was granted one, she was denied. The fact that I got asylum gave me the opportunity to study. My half-sister could not.

In order for me to be admitted to the institute of higher education I wanted to attend, I needed to pass three courses: language, civics and history. It was in this preparatory history course that I, for the first time, heard of the Holocaust. I was 24 years old; my half-sister was 21.

In those days, the daily news was filled with the Rwandan genocide and ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia. On the day that my half-sister visited me, my head was reeling from what happened to 6

million Jews in Germany, Holland, France and Eastern Europe. I learned that innocent men, women and children were separated from each other. Stars pinned to their shoulders, transported by train to camps, they were gassed for no other reason than for being Jewish. It was the most systematic and cruel attempt in the history of mankind to annihilate a people.

I saw pictures of masses of skeletons, even of kids. I heard horrifying accounts of some of the people who had survived the terror of Auschwitz and Sobibor.

I told my half-sister all this and showed her the pictures in my history book. What she said shocked me more than the awful information in my book.

With great conviction my half-sister cried: "It's a lie! Jews have a way of blinding people. They were not killed, gassed nor massacred. But I pray to Allah that one day all the Jews in the world will be destroyed."

My 21-year-old sister did not say anything new. My shock was partly at her reaction in the light of so much evidence and partly because of the genocides of our own time. Growing up as a child in Saudi Arabia, I remember my teachers, my mom and our neighbors telling us practically on a daily basis that Jews were evil, the sworn enemies of Muslims whose only goal was to destroy Islam. We were never informed about the Holocaust.

Later in Kenya, as a teenager, when Saudi and other Gulf philanthropy reached us in Africa, I remember that the building of mosques and donations to hospitals and the poor went hand in hand with the cursing of Jews. Jews were said to be responsible for the deaths of babies, epidemics like AIDS, for the cause of wars. They were greedy and would do absolutely anything to kill us Muslims. And if we ever wanted to know peace and stability we would have to destroy them before they would wipe us out. For those of us who were not in a position to take arms against the Jews it was enough for us to cup our hands, raise our eyes heavenward and pray to Allah to destroy them.

Western leaders today who say they are shocked by the conference of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

of Iran denying the Holocaust need to wake up to that reality. For the majority of Muslims in the world the Holocaust is not a major historical event they deny; they simply do not know because they were never informed. Worse, most of us are groomed to wish for a Holocaust of Jews.

I remember the presence of Western philanthropists, nongovernmental organizations and such institutions as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Their agents brought those they thought of as needy medicine, condoms, vaccines, building materials--but no information on the Holocaust.

Secular and Christian donors and relief organizations did not come with an agenda of hate, but neither with a message of love. This was surely a missed opportunity in the light of the hate-spreading charities from oil-rich Muslim countries.

The total number of Jews in the world today is estimated to be around 15 million, certainly no more than 20 million. In terms of fertility, their growth can be compared to that of the developed world, and in terms of aging too.

On the other hand, the Muslim population is estimated to be 1.2 to 1.5 billion people, and it is not only rapidly growing but also very young. What's striking about Ahmadinejad's conference is the (silent) acquiescence of mainstream Muslims.

I cannot help but wonder: Why is there no counter-conference in Ri-

yadh, Cairo, Lahore, Khartoum or Jakarta condemning Ahmadinejad? Why is the Organization of the Islamic Conference silent on this?

Could the answer be as simple as it is horrifying: For generations the leaders of these so-called Muslim countries have been spoon-feeding their populations a constant diet of propaganda similar to the one that generations of Germans (and other Europeans) were fed that Jews are vermin and should be dealt with as such. In Europe, the logical conclusion was the Holocaust. If Ahmadinejad has his way, he will not wait for compliant Muslims ready to act on his wish.

The world needs conferences of love, a promotion of understanding of cultures and antiracist campaigns, but more urgently the world needs to be informed again and again of the Holocaust. Not only in the interest of the Jews who survived the Holocaust and their offspring, but in the interest of humanity in general.

Perhaps the first place to start is to counter the Islamic philanthropy that comes laced with hatred against the Jews. Western and Christian charities in the third world should take it upon themselves to inform Muslims and non-Muslims alike, in the areas where they are active, about the Holocaust.

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