

# Will Germany Confront Morsi's Holocaust Denial?

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## The Egyptian president's trip to Berlin is an opportunity for the West to call him out on worrisome trends.

**W**hen video footage from 2010 of then-Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi calling Jews "the descendants of apes and pigs" surfaced two weeks ago, it properly focused international attention on the Brotherhood's bigoted ideology. Morsi's comments, after all, are just the tip of the iceberg for the Brotherhood, which has long argued that Egyptian Christians should be barred from running for president, and which recently pushed through a new constitution that denies religious rights to Baha'is and Shiites.

Given that the Muslim Brotherhood is now Egypt's ruling party and Morsi is Egypt's president, the international community must challenge the Brotherhood on its many hatreds to ensure that they are never acted upon. In this vein, Morsi's visit to Germany on Wednesday represents an important opportunity to force him to recant perhaps the vilest example of the Brotherhood's intolerance: its denial of the Holocaust.

Ironically, Morsi's visit will come only days after International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which the German government first established in 1996 and the United Nations later recognized in 2005 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. Although the purpose of Holocaust Remembrance Day is to raise awareness of genocides to prevent them from being repeated, the Muslim Brotherhood used the occasion in 2010 to argue that the Holocaust is "the largest swindling operation in history."

According to the Brotherhood, American intelligence agencies invented the Holocaust "myth" during World War II "to destroy the image of their German opponents" and "to justify a massive war of destruction against military and civilian facilities of the Axis powers." In its revisionist history, the Brotherhood further accused "world Zionists and Israel" of using the Holocaust for "the political and financial blackmail of Germany and other Eastern European countries," claiming that reparations "didn't go to the Holocaust victims or their heirs, but to the Israeli war treasury in the greatest funding operation for the real Holocaust against the Palestinian people." Finally, the Brotherhood invented statistics to argue that many fewer than six million Jews were killed during the Holocaust. "The German

census established that the number of German Jews ranged from 600-700,000 and half-a-million remained when the war ended," according to the Brotherhood's Holocaust history, "And this doesn't include the Jews who died because of natural death, road accidents, and as victims of Allied air raids."

While many dismiss Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood's Holocaust revisionism as offensive rhetoric with little bearing on policy, that is not how Egypt's non-Islamist opposition sees it. When all liberal and Christian members withdrew from the Brotherhood-dominated constitution-writing assembly in November, opposition leader Mohamed ElBaradei explained to Der Spiegel, "We all fear that the Muslim Brotherhood will pass a document with Islamist undertones that marginalizes the rights of women and religious minorities. Who sits in this group? One person, who wants to ban music, because it's allegedly against Sharia law; another, who denies the Holocaust; another, who openly condemns democracy." In other words, the Brotherhood's hateful denial of genocide is the proverbial canary in the coalmine -- an important signal of its deeply intolerant nature that may foreshadow disaster for Egypt's religious minorities domestically, as well as for the future of regional peace.

Indeed, during its first year as Egypt's new ruling party, the Muslim Brotherhood has stoked sectarian tensions repeatedly by blaming Egypt's declining fortunes on its Christian minority. For example, following a January 15 train crash that left 19 dead and over 100 injured, a Brotherhood youth Facebook page emphasized that the train operator was Christian, and proceeded to list other train accidents that involved Christian drivers. Similarly, the Brotherhood has tarred its opponents by posting images of opposition leaders standing with prominent Christians on Facebook and accusing a prominent Christian businessman of trying to launch a coup. And during the chaotic protests of the past few days, the Brotherhood's official website accused Christians of leading "Black Bloc," an anonymous group that has been clashed violently with police.

Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood has stated repeatedly that it intends to end the 1979 peace treaty with Israel. In this vein, the Brotherhood's legal committee announced in November that it was drafting legislation to unilaterally amend the treaty, and a top Brotherhood foreign policy official told a closed salon that Morsi was "cancelling normalization with the Zionist entity gradually." Most alarmingly, in recent months, the Supreme Guide twice called on Muslims to launch a "holy jihad" for Jerusalem.

Given Germany's central role in combating Holocaust denial as a mechanism for preaching tolerance, it should not forgo the opportunity to press Morsi and his Brotherhood colleagues on their hateful views. Morsi, after all, is coming to Europe hat-in-hand, asking for billions of dollars to bail out Egypt's struggling economy. German officials and media should therefore expect Morsi to behave like a responsible leader who understands the painful realities of history, and not like a hateful ideologue that seeks to revise it. By forcing him to choose now, Germany might be able to divert Egypt from its current trajectory towards intolerance and conflict.

*Eric Trager is the Next Generation fellow at The Washington Institute.* ❖

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