“Holostory and Other Lies”: Spanish-Language Antisemitism on Facebook

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INTRODUCTION

One of the many damning revelations from Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen during her Congressional testimony on October 5 was that the platform
devotes 87% of its research and resources on fighting misinformation to English-language content when only 9% of its users are English speakers. The lack of content moderation over hateful content in languages other than English has helped fuel global conflicts such as the civil war in Ethiopia.

And it appears Facebook’s efforts in Spanish are also problematic. ADL found antisemitic content that clearly violates the platform’s hate speech policy—in one example, an animated video about Holocaust denial that has been up for five years. In just a cursory review of Spanish language posts on the platform, we collected 25 Spanish-language antisemitic posts that were posted by groups with a total of 666,728 followers and viewed 55,911 times. These startling numbers indicate the damaging reach of even a modest number of posts.

Although there are nearly 500 million Spanish speakers all over the world, serious questions must be asked about whether Facebook and its parent company, Meta, devotes enough resources to content moderation in the language.

Research shows Spanish-language content moderation on Facebook is lagging. The human rights nonprofit Avaaz found that Facebook applied warning labels to 70% of misinformation about Covid-19 in English compared to only 30% in Spanish. Advocates have been pushing Facebook to provide transparency on the size and scope of its Spanish-language moderation teams to no avail.

Facebook, like most major social media platforms, prohibits harassing people based on identity characteristics including race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc. The company’s hate speech policy also forbids "designated dehumanizing comparisons, generalizations, or behavioral statements (in written or visual form) that include...Jewish people running the world or controlling major institutions such as media networks, the economy, or the government." Facebook also explicitly prohibits Holocaust denial. The content collected here includes blatant examples of conspiracy theories
about Jewish people operating global cabals, stealing land, and extracting reparations from countries to accumulate money and power.

ADL has been documenting Facebook’s inaction against antisemitic content through our Online Holocaust Denial Report Card and Online Antisemitism Report Card. In the former, Facebook earned a D despite its explicit ban on Holocaust denial content and it received a C- on the latter. The full extent of antisemitic Spanish-language content on the platform is unknown, but judging by the posts ADL easily found, it is yet another instance of the world’s largest communication platform failing to perform its due diligence in removing hate speech.

HOLOCAUST DENIAL
Three stills from an animated video about Holocaust denial posted on October 2016. Credit: Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI).

- This nearly seven-minute-long animated video was first posted in October 2016 and has yet to be removed. It calls the Holocaust “Holocuento,” which translated into English means “Holostory,” a fiction maintained by Jewish people for selfish ends. The video repeats claims started in the decades after World War II that Jews fabricated evidence of their genocide to garner sympathy, collect reparations, and facilitate the alleged illegal acquisition of Palestinian land to create Israel. At the 5:49 mark, the video depicts a cow, with spots representing the map of Europe, whose udder is attached to a milking machine emblazoned with the Star of David. The machine is operated by a stereotypical Jewish man with a big nose and wearing a black suit and yarmulke. The suction of the machine has a swastika and “Holocaust” written in capital letters and proceeds to literally drain the milk and life of the cow. We see multiple scenes of Jewish men inhaling Zyklon B, a cyanide-based pesticide invented in Germany during the early 1920s that was used to kill more than one million Jews in gas chambers, and suffering no ill effects. There is also a scene in the video when a group of Jewish men holding a casket—marked with the Star of David and the word “Holocaust” and equipped with gun barrels—fires at a village in Palestine.
Holocaust denial is hateful disinformation, a willful distortion of the historical record. To perpetuate the lie that six million Jewish people did not die at the hands of Nazis is as deceitful as saying Covid-19 is a hoax or the 2020 U.S. presidential election was fraudulent. That this video can still be seen after five years is an egregious example of Facebook's anemic content moderation against antisemitism.

- **A 50-minute video posted in March 2018** with the title “Auschwitz... The Great Lie” attempts to debunk the fact that Jews were systematically killed in gas chambers and later cremated. The video manipulates survivor's testimonies and uses computer animation of gas chambers to convince the viewer that what was done in the concentration camp Auschwitz was a myth. The final part of the video juxtaposes a picture of Deborah Lipstadt, historian and nominee for U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Global Anti-Semitism, with a poster of the movie “Denial,” as an attempt to show that people who question the Holocaust have their right to free speech violated. The film is the account of Lipstadt's five-year legal battle against a Holocaust denier in which her legal team in Britain had to prove the Holocaust occurred.
A post from March 2019 shows a picture of a person wearing a shirt featuring the Star of David on the sleeve with a card tucked underneath. The picture's caption reads, “Israel cannot continue to use the Holocaust to justify its crimes against Palestine,” accusing the nation of exploiting genocide to play the role of victims and advance a colonial agenda. The hashtag #Holocuento (Holostory) accompanies the post.

At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, one user compares the number of Italians who died from the coronavirus and were cremated to the number cremated at Auschwitz during the Holocaust. The user claims that the figure from Auschwitz is exaggerated—despite technological advancements after 70-75 years, the capacity to cremate bodies in Italy during 2020 was only 400 bodies a day. That, the user contends, is a much lower figure than what was
reported about Auschwitz during the 1940s (of 4,756 a day). The user writes, "Now I am letting you think for a moment, don't get upset at me, I am only presenting you with numbers. Someone is lying and exaggerating and it's not me." Once again, the word “Holocuento” is used to cast doubt on the historical record and serve as a way for other antisemitic users to find such content.

- This video interview posted in August 2018 with Holocaust denier Roger Guy-Dommergue claims the Holocaust is a hoax, and arithmetically impossible because the Jewish population in Europe at the time of World War II was three million, not six million. Spanish captions at the end of the video state that the Jewish population was practically the same before the war and two years after it ended. Additionally, he claims Jews were killed in gas chambers that nobody saw. Guy-Dommergue implies that millions of dollars are invested in Holocaust propaganda and that Jews are gangsters.

- A July 2020 video narrated in English with Spanish subtitles tries to debunk the fact that six million Jews died in the Holocaust. The video shows alleged newspaper articles from different time periods conveying that the number has been used by Jews for 100 years as a propaganda tool to present themselves as victims. The caption the user posted next to the video reads, “The lie of the six million Jews. Few will take the time to learn what world we live in.”

At the 0:38 mark, the video’s captions read (in English with Spanish subtitles), “This is one of the many evidences that shows the Holocaust myth, although science has already shown that the Holocaust is false, there are people who still believing [sic] the false myth, largely without information about Adolf Hitler or his government.”
Later, in the same video, at 1:02: “In following newspapers different countries like Rusia [sic], Poland, Bulgari [sic], Rumania and Greece are accused of ‘Kill, persecute, to hound, humiliate, torture, starve and to massacre’ 6 million Jews in different contexts and different years. We understand now that the number 6 million, is a Kabbalist number, the Jewish/Zionist community was looking to accuse a country for killing 6 million Jews [sic], thus carry out their plans, they tried for almost 100 years on several fronts like this newspapers without success, finally, with the defeat of Germany, they managed to accuse for this ‘propaganda plan’ called ‘Holocaust’ to Adolf Hitler and his government.”

**PLAN ANDINIA**

*Plan Andinia* is a conspiracy theory claiming that Jews want to establish a second Jewish state, a Zionist one, in the Patagonia region, located in Argentina and Chile. This hoax is portrayed as a “secret plan,” and like many antisemitic conspiracy theories, is anchored in the tropes of Jewish people hoarding power, money, and influence. The modern version of the Plan contends that Israeli tourists are soldiers in disguise traveling to Patagonia on reconnaissance missions to stake out the land and draw maps for a future second State of Israel. South America is a popular destination for young Israeli backpackers after they

*English video with Spanish subtitles posted on July 2020 purporting the Holocaust is a myth.*
complete their compulsory service in the Israeli Defense Forces. Their tourism reinforces the fictitious Plan.

Other examples of Plan Andinia content on Facebook:

- An account created in 2013 with 7,500 followers called **No to the Plan Andinia**, an attempt to stop Zionists from taking over Patagonia.
- Fake “**documentaries**” narrating this conspiracy theory and reposted on multiple accounts.
- In March 2021 an “**investigative reporting**” piece was posted on a page with 146,000 followers claiming Jews, George Soros and International Zionists activists are attempting to take over the Patagonia.
- A **group with 1,800 users created in** 2018 to “alert the population about the theft of our Patagonia in the hands of Jewish Zionism…”

A **5-minute video** posted on October 2021 uses an image of the Happy Merchant asking, “What is Israel Planning in Patagonia?”
This post from December 2015 claims to show the fictional transformation of the map of Chile (red) since 1946 into one that is erased by the State of Israel in the present (blue). The caption states: “How would you feel? It’s not happening here, but it’s happening now!”
A persistent antisemitic myth is that Jews possess extraordinary power to harm or control people outside of the Jewish community. Jewish people are depicted as manipulating world governments, banking and financial institutions, and controlling the media and entertainment industries. A frequent target for this myth is the financier and philanthropist George Soros, who is of Hungarian Jewish heritage and a common bogeyman of the far right. Conspiracy theorists claim Mr. Soros funds Black Lives Matter, antifa, and migrant caravans to sow chaos.

This Plan Andinia post from October 2014 compares the State of Israel to the Nazi regime. It claims that both are military regimes that: are based on religious ideologies, call themselves chosen people, are warmongers, invaded and occupied territories, and exterminated a people.

GEORGE SOROS, THE ROTHSCHILD FAMILY, AND OTHER CONSPIRACIES

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Other oft-repeated hoaxes of Jewish people bidding for world domination include the Rothschilds and the Federal Reserve, the Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG), the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion, and Jewish control of Hollywood.

- In this August 2021 post, the user posts a video of a compilation of interviews featuring George Soros. At the 3:53 mark, the caption “George Soros Global Elite, He believes he is God and claims he has Control over the Planet” appears, followed by a number of caricatures of Soros. For example, he is depicted as holding the Vatican and the Pope in his hands. One of the final captions in the video states, “George Soros is the true Virus of Society.”

- The caption from a July 2020 post titled “The Rothschilds want the Bank of Iran” reads, “Taking control of the Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the main reasons that Iran is in the United States’ crosshairs. Iran is one of the few remaining countries in the world whose banking system is not under the control of the Rothschilds. Before 9/11 there were seven: Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Cuba, North Korea, and Iran. By 2003, however, Afghanistan and Iraq were swallowed up by the Rothschild octopus, and in 2011 Sudan and Libya also entered his collection. In the case of Libya, the Rothschild bank was established in Benghazi, while the country was at war.”

- A video posted in 2016 (by the same user who posted the previous example), filmed in English with Spanish subtitles, delves into a 1961 speech delivered by known Holocaust denier and antisemite Benjamin H. Freedman. The video starts with Freedman stating, “We are all supposed to know what the Germans did to the Jews, but one might ask what the Jews did before to the Germans and what they are doing to us today.” The speech recites the worst antisemitic tropes on Jewish control of government and media by purporting that Jews represented a small minority, only 2% of the German population, but were overrepresented in the levers of power: 50% of the media industry comprised Jews, 70% of judges were Jewish, and so on. Freedman also
blames Jews for the financial collapse of Germany, calling them “Jewish Bank Gangsters and speculation people.” In addition, he outlandishly claims that Jews introduced immorality into arts and culture through showing homosexuality, adultery, sexual perversion, sadism, and masochism. Freedman falsely asserts Jewish intellectuals wrote books ridiculing Christianity and Jesus, leading to Hitler’s rise to power.

- ADL also found Facebook posts alleging that Jews control Hollywood, most notably a video that originally aired on HispanTV, a Spanish news outlet in Iran, claiming “the Jewish dominance over entertainment seldom gets discussed in mainstream media because Jews also control those media outlets.” Other content includes a video accompanied by the caption “The Jews are the owners of Hollywood” posted by a user with 170,782 followers, and a video posted on February 2020 alleging “Hollywood and the Jews are the biggest lie in humanity.”
An October 2019 post on a page followed by more than 190,000 people states, “Soro's Zionist agenda. On its way to a New World Order” portraying Soros as a combatant aiming to reduce population through laws in: 
Feminism, Islam, Abortion, Pedophilia, LGBT and Euthanasia.”
An October 2021 post attempts to expose Soros as financing immigrant caravans [in the US], LGBT causes, separatism in Catalonia, human trafficking, and abortion clinics in the UK. For this and other reasons, the post alleges, Soros is prohibited from entering his native Hungary.
In a post from November 2021, a picture of what looks like the U.S. Congress shows an image of the Israeli flag surrounded by banners of global firms, including Rothschild & Co. The caption says, "This is what you would see if the government would actually be transparent." The image depicts the antisemitic trope of Jewish control of finance, government, and media.

**PROTOCOLS OF THE LEARNED ELDERS OF ZION**

The Protocols is a conspiratorial document that purports to be the confidential minutes of a Jewish conclave that met during the 19th century. It was produced by the Czar's Secret Police in order to "prove" that Jews were planning world domination.

Over 122,600 people follow the Nuevo Orden Mundial (New World Order) Facebook page which features a video posted in 2019. One of the initial images in minute
0:28 shows a man with a Star of David in the background who says, “Imagine a secret society whose members meet periodically after creating a dark plan whose final objective is none other than conquering the world. If these conspirators would put in writing the steps to take to accomplish its sinister goal, what we would be reading is something very similar to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion...”

The video goes on about Zionists conspiring to rule the world while set against a backdrop of puppets, insinuating that Jews are puppeteers. Another 2019 post from the same Facebook page is a 10-minute audiobook contending that the Protocols are proof of Jewish world domination, but that the Jewish press prevents further inquiry from skeptics. The narrator defines a “glossary” of terms, defining Zionism as “the global movement for the advancement and care of the political and economic interests of the Jews.” The post also features an image of the stereotypical “Happy Merchant” with the Star of David on his forehead while he devours people.
In March 2019, the “Nuevo Orden Mundial” page with a following of over 120,000 people posted a video labeled the “New World Order” claiming that the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion are at the center of world events and Jews are puppeteers behind media, civil society, government, religion, and the global economy.

The same “Nuevo Orden Mundial” page posted in January 2019, an audiobook of the Learned Protocols of the Elders of Zion was posted featuring a variation of the Happy Merchant with a Star of David on his forehead devouring people.

CONCLUSION

ADL expended little effort finding these examples of clearly antisemitic content on Facebook. Some pieces of content date back several years, meaning untold numbers of people have been potentially exposed to hateful myths about Jewish people. Facebook’s decision to devote the vast majority of its resources to moderating English-language content reflects its ignorance or indifference to how hate traverses city limits, state lines, and country borders. Antisemites looking to evade content moderation can translate their messages of hate into other languages for new audiences and to recruit new followers. As it stands, Facebook’s
hate policies regarding antisemitism provide no real protection to Jewish people all over the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enforce policies on antisemitism and hate consistently and at scale

Platform policies on their own are not sufficient; they require enforcement that is consistent across a digital social platform. ADL recommends that, especially for content such as Holocaust denial, tech companies designate sufficient resources for content moderation. Appropriate training for human moderators, greater numbers of human moderators, and expanding the development of automated technologies to commit as few mistakes as possible when enforcing policies around violative content are worthwhile investments.

Hire more content moderators fluent in Spanish and enlist the expertise of civil society groups representing Latinx communities.

Despite the demands of civil society groups, Facebook has not revealed how much of its resources and research are devoted to Spanish-language content moderation. ADL calls on Facebook to provide more transparency on its Spanish-language efforts. Given that 87% of its resourcing on combating misinformation focuses on English-language content, it is safe to assume that the platform pays scant attention to removing hateful content in Spanish. It is highly doubtful that Facebook employs enough moderators to cover the majority of global Latinx and Hispanic communities. Hundreds of millions of people speak Spanish, a language with many nuances that can be missed by those who lack fluency. Even among (and within) Latin American countries, there are many differences in uses of colloquialisms or slang and wide variances in cultural contexts. Hiring fluent Spanish speakers and employing enough people from each country where Spanish is spoken would help to ensure content moderation takes into account the intent of the user and the larger socio-political environment of the country in question.
The consequences of not having enough content moderators in a particular language can be deadly. Tens of thousands of Burmese Muslims are now missing and presumed dead.

Facebook played a role in inciting genocidal violence in Myanmar; the platform was used to spread misinformation and promote hatred of Muslims. In early 2015, Facebook only employed two Burmese-speaking moderators to cover 18 million users in the country. There was no office or staff located in Myanmar.

Facebook should seek the expertise of civil society groups representing Spanish speakers to better understand the culture, politics, and lives of Spanish-speaking users to bolster content moderation teams and policies. Expert review of content moderation training materials in Spanish can help ensure that moderators are adequately trained to recognize and address antisemitism. ADL and other Jewish organizations representing Spanish speakers could serve as experts who can review such materials.

**Conduct internal research on Spanish-language hate speech and misinformation and permit third-party audits of the platform**

Facebook must conduct internal research as to the prevalence of hateful Spanish-language content on its platform as well as allowing third parties to access its Application Programming Interface (API) in order to share its data and audit the platform. Its API should return publicly posted content and moderation decisions, enable this content to be retroactively searched and proactively streamed, and ensure rate limits are high enough to permit data analysis at scale. This will enable third parties to determine whether efforts by Facebook to address antisemitism actually work.