

A FURTHER STUDY OF BIAS IN ARTICLES IN THE *JOURNAL OF GENOCIDE RESEARCH (JGR)*

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An earlier publication in the *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* entitled “Holocaust Minimization, Anti-Israel Themes and Antisemitism: Bias at the *Journal of Genocide Research*,”¹ (JGR) reported ratings by 76 respondents in the field of genocide studies (67 professionals largely drawn from the membership of the International Association of Genocide Scholars [IAGS] and 9 students in Holocaust and Genocide courses in a university in the southern United States).

The results of the above study were powerfully clear: 59% of respondents felt that the articles excerpted from JGR were biased toward minimizing the significance of the Holocaust, 59% judged that the articles were biased towards an anti-Israel position, and 33% evaluated the articles as conveying an anti-Semitic motif.

Understandably, there has been a considerable uproar about the above findings and criticisms addressed to the design of the study.

Following an article by me in the *Jerusalem Post Magazine* in which I reported a summary of the study,² a major criticism was offered in a reply letter to the magazine that was signed by no less than 29 genocide scholars, many of whom are genuinely outstanding in the field, who wrote that the study and the publication about it in the *Jerusalem Post* constituted “character assassination.”³ The same critique also charged the study with suppressing a diversity of viewpoints in the field. The editor of the *Journal of Genocide Research* also personally posted a letter to the *Jerusalem Post Magazine*⁴ in which he dismissed the findings of biases in the JGR as “absurd,” also claimed that my report of the study was “defamatory,” and without hesitation defined the study as a “survey of [the author’s] friends” without recognizing that the majority are bona fide genocide scholars who in almost all cases are past and/or present members of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS). Without in any way referring to the professional article in the *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism*, the JGR editor also questioned why I had published a story in a newspaper rather than bringing it up at what was then a forthcoming conference of the International Network of Genocide Scholars (INOGS) that was to take place in Jerusalem. For the record, I also presented the study at the INOGS conference.

At the conference, the one criticism that was advanced by a member of the audience – a criticism that had also appeared in a critique on the Listserv of IAGS – is that a ‘proper’ study would have given readers the *full* articles to read and only then asked for their ratings. In real life, of course, it is virtually impossible to ask the subjects of such a study to take the time to read the many journal articles fully (almost 200 pages long). What the readers were given were brief summaries, and these included verbatim quotes by the authors of each article. To this date, there have been no critiques of the correctness of these summaries.

Gregory Stanton, a former president of IAGS and a Research Professor in Genocide Studies, also wrote a letter to the *Jerusalem Post Magazine*; “Prof. Charny has done a service to the profession by highlighting the creeping anti-Israel bias that has overtaken global academia, and even invaded the field of genocide scholarship... Prof. Charny never claimed to have conducted an exhaustive study of every article published in *JGR*, but the survey he conducted demonstrates that a majority of the genocide scholars he surveyed viewed the chosen excerpts as anti-Israel and anti-Zionist. There was nothing wrong with Prof. Charny’s methodology.”⁵

The latest critique of the study is a wide ranging article in *Genocide Studies and Prevention* by six of the authors of the *JGR* articles in which they continue their dismissive critiques of the study as unscientific, and as ad hominem attacks on the authors.⁶ I have replied to this critique in an article, “A Reply to *JGR* Prejudices that Wannsee Wasn’t about the Jews, Zionism is Intrinsically Genocidal, and More” which for now until possible publication in a professional journal will be found on the website of the Institute of the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem.⁷

A Further Study of 30 Students

The present additional study reports further results from another 30 students in a U.S. University who are enrolled in one of two courses, “Religion and Genocide,” and “The Violent and the Sacred, Religion and the Problem of Human Suffering.”⁸ The results of their ratings of each article and of the journal as a whole are presented below. In each box, the top line gives the percentage of these 30 students who gave each of the ratings. On the line below, we repeat the percentage found in the original study of 76 subjects. On the third line, we have created an average of the two figures – now totaling the responses of 106 subjects.

Judging from the final evaluations of the Journal as a whole, the present results continue quite clearly the findings of the original study, notwithstanding the fact that the present study involves students who are likely less knowledgeable about the Holocaust and genocide. 70% of the respondents see the *Journal of Genocide Research* (compared to 59% in the first study) as seeking to minimize the significance of the Holocaust, 53% identify the Journal as having an anti-Israel bias (compared to 59% in the first study), and 23% identify an anti-Semitic bias in the Journal (compared to 33% in the first study). Note that this lower figure still means that one out of four student readers of summaries of the articles in a professional journal see it as biased against Jews.

Table 1. Results of Judgments of Seven Separate *JGR* Articles and Journal as a Whole (N=76)**Line 1 N=30 Line 2 N=76 Line 3 N=106**

Question and Topics	No.	Legitimate Critique	Minimizes Holocaust	Anti-Israel	Anti-Semitic	None of the Above
3. 1948 War of Independence		13% <u>3%</u> 8%	40% <u>36%</u> 38%	30% <u>76%</u> 53%	7% <u>32%</u> 20%	23% <u>19%</u> 21%
4. Nazi Propaganda for Arabs		21% <u>9%</u> 15%	48% <u>49%</u> 49%	41% <u>22%</u> 32%	21% <u>33%</u> 27%	10% <u>36%</u> 23%
5. International Human Rights Law		20% <u>10%</u> 15%	63% <u>61%</u> 62%	10% <u>14%</u> 12%	30% <u>28%</u> 29%	10% <u>27%</u> 19%
6. Yad Vashem Narrative		37% <u>9%</u> 23%	30% <u>46%</u> 18%	23% <u>44%</u> 39%	10% <u>25%</u> 18%	10% <u>35%</u> 23%
7. Holocaust and UN Law and as Archetype		37% <u>14%</u> 26%	67% <u>67%</u> 67%	0% <u>11%</u> 6%	10% <u>34%</u> 22%	7% <u>17%</u> 12%
8. Transport for Hungarian Jews		37% <u>15%</u> 26%	27% <u>62%</u> 45%	7% <u>7%</u> 7%	20% <u>41%</u> 31%	20% <u>21%</u> 21%
9. Holocaust and Nakba		30% <u>10%</u> 20%	30% <u>52%</u> 41%	60% <u>75%</u> 68%	37% <u>35%</u> 36%	7% <u>15%</u> 11%
10. Journal as a whole		30% <u>22%</u> 26%	70% <u>59%</u> 65%	53% <u>59%</u> 56%	23% <u>33%</u> 28%	7% <u>18%</u> 13%

Note 1: The percentages are based on how many of a group of subjects chose the given option. Since respondents were encouraged to choose more than one response, the total percentage for each row is greater than 100 percent.

Line 1 N=30 Beginning students Southern U.S. University

Line 2 N=76 Original study, 46 invited responses, plus 30 responses resulting from inadvertent notice on IAGS Listserv

Line 3 N=106 All subjects to date

Note 2: The article reporting the research in the *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* discusses eight articles, but the study questionnaire addressed only seven of these articles. The article by Gerhard Wolf that denies that the Wannsee Conference addressed the Final Solution of the Jews was not included in the study because it was published after we had already completed the questionnaire. However this article is such a powerful exemplification of the *JGR* biases that I added it to the discussion, and now Gerhard Wolf has also participated in the response of the authors.

At the same time, there also are differences between the results from this group of students and the earlier larger group that was composed predominantly of professionals in the field of genocide studies and only 9 students from a course devoted to the Holocaust.

In respect to Holocaust minimization in the seven articles and with regard to the Journal as a whole, there are much higher percentages of respondents who see the Journal as offering legitimate scholarly investigations and critiques of the meaning of the Holocaust. At the same time, there is a considerable though not an exact similarity between the ratings of anti-Holocaust, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic biases. In fact, surprisingly, these students rate the Journal *overall* even more strongly as minimizing the Holocaust, though along the way they give much less critical ratings with regard to two articles. 'Only' 27% consider the article on the transport of the Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz as a statement minimizing the Holocaust, and 30% evaluate the article comparing the Holocaust and Nakba as minimizing the Holocaust – although 60% attribute to this article an anti-Israel bias. As noted, these lower percentages are curious given that the same subjects then give an even stronger rating of the Journal as a whole as minimizing the meaning of the Holocaust.

Even so, with respect to articles where the percentages identifying a bias are smaller –less than half - it remains entirely legitimate to ask whether it is professionally and ethically acceptable to have percentages of nearly one-third or even one-fourth of the readers who judge an article as promoting a bias. One can argue -- as some of the critics to date have - that since so many do not see the Journal as biased, it means the opinion that the Journal is fine 'wins' in the electoral college.' But the question still remains whether we agree to a professional journal drawing as many judgments of bias as it does when one out of three or four readers judge it to be biased.

When we go on to look at the judgments of articles and the Journal, there are so many instances where articles are rated as minimizing the Holocaust, or against Israel, or anti-Semitic, and when ratings of the Journal as a whole are so critical, the conclusion that the Journal is biased is inescapable.

As to the significance of the Holocaust for the United Nations declarations (United Nations Convention on Genocide and United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights), over 63% and more of the students view the two articles which deny the influence of the Holocaust on the passage of either declaration as minimizing the Holocaust, results that are almost exactly the same as in the original study.

When it comes to perceptions of the Journal and its articles with regard to the State of Israel, there is a much lower percentage of respondents in this additional group who interpret the article most concerned with the Israel War of Independence as biased. In the larger group (N=76), mainly of professionals, 76% rated this article as anti-Israel, while among the present student group ‘only’ 30% gave it such a rating.⁹ But when the students are asked to evaluate the Journal as a whole, 53% (compared to 59% in the first study) define the Journal as showing an anti-Israel bias – a not so different result at all.

When it comes to the touchy motif of a possible anti-Semitic bias, once again there is a reduced percentage in the present group of students – 23% compared to 33% of the original group who identified a possible anti-Semitic bias.

As previously noted, Table 1 concludes by presenting average percentages that include all 106 subjects. The bottom line message is that looking at the results of all the subjects – 67 professionals and 39 students - these numbers are more than enough to raise serious questions about JGR’s biases.

Conclusion: A Further Personal Response

In the original report of the study in the *Journal of Antisemitism*, I quoted one distinguished leader in genocide studies who wrote me:

Thank you for taking on the anti-Israel, antisemitic leftists who have taken over editorship of the *Journal of Genocide Research*.

In further fact, I had notes from several other veteran genocide scholars that they had already discontinued their subscriptions to *JGR* because of its runaway biases.

My own personal conclusion – along with my *yes* continuing to be a member of the organization that sponsors *JGR* (the International Network of Genocide Scholars [INOGS]) and continuing as a subscriber to *JGR* – is that there is an important lesson for *all of us* as to how ill winds of prejudice

can blow through even lofty well-intentioned efforts. Just look at the history of many ‘progressive’ movements in our world which went on to become openly destructive.

It is clear to me that many meaningful and creative studies have been published in *JGR*, and that they warrant our further respect and study. But there is little question in my mind that a basic policy revision is called for with much increased vigilance against prejudices towards any and all peoples.

References

¹ Charny, Israel W. (2016). Holocaust Minimization, Anti-Israel Themes, and Antisemitism: Bias at the *Journal of Genocide Research*. *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism*, see upcoming Vol. 7, No. 1. <http://jsantisemitism.org/images/journals/articles/Holocaust-Minimization-Anti-Israel-&-Antisemitism-at-JGR.pdf>

This article can also be seen on the website of the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem at http://www.ihgilm.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Holocaust_Minimization_at_the_Journal_Genocide_Research.pdf; or

on the website of Genocide Watch <http://genocidewatch.net/2016/06/08/letter-from-steven-baum/>; or on the website of Alliance Against Genocide

<http://againstgenocide.org/2016/06/08/letter-to-genocide-scholars-from-steven-k-baum/>

Both Genocide Watch and the Alliance Against Genocide include a letter by Steven Baum, Editor of the *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* that was published in the listserv of the International Association of Genocide Scholars.

² Charny, Israel W. (May 27, 2016). Genocide Scholars Who Minimize the Holocaust and Some Who are Coming to Town. <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Genocide-scholars-who-minimize-the-Holocaust-and-some-who-are-coming-to-town-455021>. The article can also be seen on the website of the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, Jerusalem at <http://www.ihgilm.com/2016/06/26/genocide-scholars-who-minimize-the-holocaust-and-some-who-are-coming-to-town/>

³ Letter by 29 scholars (June 17, 2016). Holocaust ‘Minimized.’ *Jerusalem Post Magazine*, Letters to the Editor. See the website of the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide at <http://www.ihgilm.com/2016/06/26/genocide-scholars-who-minimize-the-holocaust-and-some-who-are-coming-to-town/>

⁴ Moses, Dirk (June 10, 2016). Letter to the Editor. *Jerusalem Post*.

⁵ Stanton, Gregory (June 24, 2016). ‘Minimization Revisited.’ *Jerusalem Post Magazine*, Letters to the Editor. See the website of the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide at <http://www.ihgilm.com/letter-from-gregory-stanton/>

⁶ Goldberg, Amos; Kehoe, Thomas J.; Moses, A. Dirk; Segal, Raz; and Shaw, Martin (2016). Israel Charny's Attach on the *Journal of Genocide Research* and its Authors: A Response. *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, Issue 2, Vol 10, Article 4. <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp/vol10/iss2/4>

⁷ Charny, Israel W. (2016). A Reply to *JGR* Prejudices That Wannsee Wasn't About the Jews, Zionism Is Intrinsically Genocidal, and More. <http://www.ihgilm.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Rejoinder-to-JGR-Critique.pdf>

⁸ The nine students included in the original sample were studying a course on Holocaust and genocide, and the additional 30 student on whom we are now reporting were enrolled in other courses on religion and genocide. All of the courses were at the University of Alabama and were taught by veteran genocide scholar, Professor Steven L. Jacobs. The students were invited to participate voluntarily in the study in exchange for extra credit. They completed the questionnaires privately and submitted them to an independent survey company, kwiksurveys.com, and then informed their professor that they had done so.

⁹ There is no question whatsoever about the devastation of the Arab community in Palestine in 1948. However, from a point of view of historical justice, one must consider that, along with several instances of shameful genocidal massacres by the Israelis such as at Deir Yassin and Lod as well as a variety of crimes against humanity by Israeli fighters, the bulk of Arabs left Israel at the urging of seven converging Arab armies so that they would not be in the way of their attack. There is overwhelming evidence including from Arab sources. Thus, according to Syria's Prime Minister, Khaled al Azm after the war, "As early as the first months of 1948 the Arab League issued orders exhorting the people to seek a temporary refuge in neighboring countries, later to return to their abodes in the wake of the victorious Arab armies and obtain their share of abandoned Jewish property." The above information is attributed to the Research Group for European Migration Problems (January/March 1957). *Research Group Bulletin*, 5 (1).

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