



CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST  
& GENOCIDE STUDIES

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

## CHGS News September 2014

### From the Director

#### A Year of Commemorations



As we start a new academic year and with fall approaching quickly, CHGS is preparing for a series of scholarly, instructional and community events surrounding important commemorations: the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps, and the end of World War II, the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, and the 40th anniversary of the genocide in Cambodia.

Public memory of these events is a way of raising awareness of their very occurrence and of honoring its victims and survivors. It is also a means of uncovering little-known aspects of history. But above all, remembrance serves to keep these events before our eyes.

What have we learned from the genocides we especially commemorate this year and from all others? How can we use the knowledge of their unfolding, their causes and their devastating consequences to prevent and respond to current atrocities? We will address these questions through conferences, symposia, film screenings and educator seminars throughout this academic year.

As I am starting my third year (and my third winter!) in Minnesota as the Director of CHGS, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all supporters, partners, engaged students, and also my esteemed colleagues at the University of Minnesota, who provide creative input, expertise and insight to our programs. It is a great pleasure to be able to fulfill our mission with your cooperation.

Alejandro Baer

## Articles

### Is It Genocide? ISIS's violence against the Yazidis



Photo: NBC News

#### Who is ISIS?

ISIS/ISIL, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, is a militant group once affiliated with Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). In February of 2014 Al Qaeda Central (AQC) officially severed ties with the group as they felt they were giving them a bad reputation. In an article for [Foreign Affairs](#) (2-14-2014), Harvard professor Barak Mendelsohn pointed out that the split came about from a lack of shared ideology. Before the attack of the Yazidis in Iraq, ISIS targets had largely seemed to be anyone who stood in their way to creating a caliphate. This was part of the reason AQC had disowned them since attacks on Muslim populations were seen as a step too far even for AQC. Their involvement in the Syrian war has seen them carry out untold violence on peaceful populations that have resisted their advances.

#### Who are the Yazidis?

Numbering approximately 700,000 world wide, the Yazidis are a largely Kurdish ethnic group whose religion is syncretic and are largely concentrated in northern Iraq. The Yazidi religion was founded by an 11th century Umayyad Sheikh and is a mix of Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. This syncretic nature saw AQI label them as infidels sanctioning their killing.

#### Is it Genocide?

ISIS attacks in Syria have largely been indiscriminate. This has, also been the case in Iraq, as the group sought to take control of territories in the two countries and start a caliphate. All of this changed when they encountered the [Yazidis](#) living around the Sinjar Mountains. In early August of this year, ISIS specifically target this group for the fact that they were infidels and even sent the group members texts warning them that they were coming to kill them for being "enemies of God and refusing to repent."

The UN office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that between [35,000- 50,000](#) Yazidis are seeking refuge up in the mountains, which are surrounded by ISIS fighters on every side ready to kill them. It is this incident that pushed the United States government to act in order to prevent a "potential act of genocide." If we look at [article 2c](#) of the genocide convention then the current situation of the Yazidis can be seen as an on-going genocide with the express and stated intention to kill the members of the Yazidi religion. In this iteration of violence, ISIS has expressly stated that their intent is

to kill every member of the religion. Intent is the key ingredient when trying to understand whether a situation is or is not a genocide and this time around, the intent of [ISIS](#) is not in question.

*CHGS will examine ISIS violence in the Middle East with a round table discussion featured below.*

## Events

### **Convert or Die: Persecution of Christians and the Rise of the Islamic State**



Photo: Eddie Potros

#### **A round table discussion with French Author Richard Millet**

Thursday, September 18

3:00pm

Room 710 Social Sciences Building

In recent months Christians in Iraq have been given a seriously stark choice by the terrorist group ISIS- "Convert, pay a religious tax, or die!" Forcing many to flee while others have been tortured and killed. Mainly unnoticed by the media the current crisis has hit peak levels and Iraqi Christians no longer feel safe in their homes or country.

French author Richard Millet will discuss the current situation giving insight into the crisis. Millet has spent many years in Lebanon living among the Christian Maronites his latest work on Middle Eastern Christians will be published in Paris later this year.

Richard Miller will speak in French and English with a translation by Bruno Chaouat, Chair of the Department of French & Italian, and Monica Kelly, JD, PhD.

This is the first and long-awaited visit of Richard Millet to the United States. Millet is the author of over twenty books of fiction, a prolific essayist, and a beacon of the contemporary French novel. His essays have provoked robust debate in Europe. His eclectic writings include autobiographical novels that explore questions of origin, mourning and dereliction. His most recent work is on Charlotte Salomon, a German Jewish artist murdered at Auschwitz.

## Our Mothers, Our Heimat, Our Holocaust: "Ordinary" Nazis on German Television 1984-2014



Still from Generation War 2013

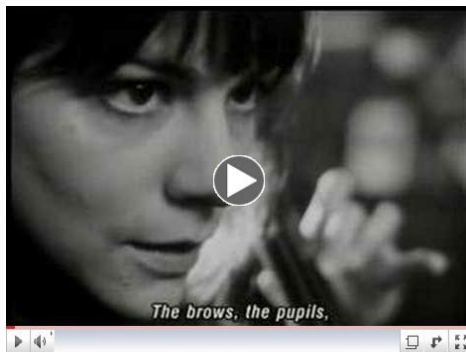
### A Lecture by Ofer Ashkenazi

Monday, September 22

4:00 p.m.

1210 Heller Hal

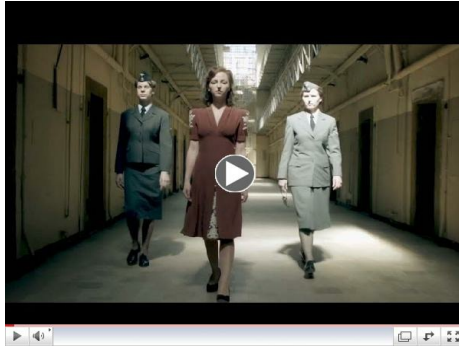
Edgar Reitz's groundbreaking TV drama "[Heimat](#)" aired 30 years ago in an attempt to "take back" German history from the American entertainment industry. Going back to this drama -- and to the sequel and prequel Reitz directed during the past decades -- Professor Ashkenazi will suggest in his lecture that "Heimat" subtly provided a revolutionary portrayal of World War II as a framework in which "German" and "Jewish" categories have been melded together to create a new nation (or a genuine alternative to "American" imperialism). In emphasizing this process, he will look at more recent productions, such as "[Generation War](#)," to argue that Reitz's implicit notion of German-Jewish symbiosis has been replicated in later mainstream TV dramas. The transformation of this image, however, replaced the self-criticism (or self-mockery) of "Heimat" with a melodramatic affirmation of Germany's "cure" from its violent past.



Heimat-Trilogy (Heimat / Heimat II / Heimat 3) -  
Deutscher Trailer mit engl. UT

[Ofer Ashkenazi](#) is professor in the department of History at Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Ashkenazi received his PhD in

History from the Hebrew University and was a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota. During 2013-2014 he taught classes on the 'visual turn' in the study of history, cultural aspects of the Great War, film history and Nazism.



GENERATION WAR Movie Trailer

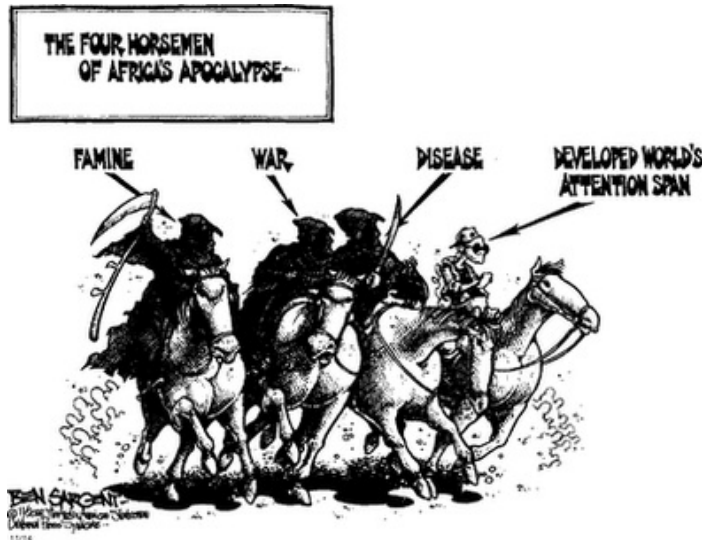
His research interests include Central European cultural and intellectual history, modern visual culture, and Jewish urban experience in twentieth-century Europe. He is currently working on a research project that examines the works of filmmakers and photographers who emigrated from Germany during the 1930s. It explores the influence of the experiences, the intellectual paradigms, and the artistic imagination of the Weimar era on the development of various national cultures in post-1933 Europe, the United States and Israel.

Presented by the Department of German, Scandinavian & Dutch. Sponsored by: The Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies, the Center for German & European Studies, the Department of History and the Center for Jewish Studies.

## Eye on Africa

### Compassion Fatigue and the ride of the African Horsemen of the Apocalypse

By Wahutu Siguru



Ben Sargent. Universal Press Syndicate

As a student studying genocide and mass atrocity in the media, I often wonder whether we as consumers of the news can only take one atrocity at a time or if the media only thinks we can handle one at a time? Over the past year, I have watched as reporting on the atrocities in the Central Africa Republic, South

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CHGS presents [International conference: Neutral Countries](#)



Sudan and the campaign #BringBackOurGirls gain momentum only to lose it as quickly as it was gained.

Now, almost all the news sources are focused on the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and it appears that the watchful eye of the media has moved away from the other hotspots. Apparently the news outlets have come to a consensus that we the audience have suffered from what Susan Moeller calls [compassion fatigue](#) and have moved from the black (famine) and red (war) horses of the apocalypse, in CAR and South Sudan, to the white horse (often referred to as infectious disease) of the apocalypse in West Africa. Compassion fatigue dictates that the news will only report on stories that resonate with an American audience and thus a focus on West Africa fits this understanding since two recent Ebola patients were American and that another patient who is British were airlifted to the UK for [treatment](#). The shift to the white horse of the apocalypse has also seen the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) make an appearance in the news this month and not for the on-going hostilities.

This new focus, however, should not be conflated necessarily as a concern for what the disease is doing to Liberian families and rural populations. This focus has been, almost singularly, how Ebola may affect the U.S. Thus Ebola is not seen as dangerous because of its brutal effects on Liberian, Guinean, and/or rural west African populations, it is dangerous because it may show up on these [shores](#) which is a trope that has been accurately critiqued as not only [misinformed](#) but as inherently [racist](#) as well. As someone that studies representation of atrocities in Africa in the media, this type of sensationalizing is one that is familiar. The creation of a sensational story sells newspapers and increases circulation numbers-only one horseman at a time. All four will cause too much panic and eventual disengagement.

As the academic year begins, this column will continue to highlight the flash-points across the continent. There will also be updates on the positive actions being taken in these dangerous areas, such as the continued peace efforts by several countries to end hostilities in South Sudan. It is my belief that this year will mostly be one of improvements more than it will be about renewed hostilities. However, two countries need to be on our radars this fall. The first country to keep an eye on is Nigeria as it prepares for elections in the spring and reports of soldiers blatantly refusing to obey orders to deploy against [Boko Haram](#) due to its being outmatched (in terms of weaponry) by the group. The other is Lesotho, which seems to either have barely missed a coup (at best) or (at worst) the coup plotters were testing the waters and may attempt another coup later.

*Wahutu Siguru is the 2013 & Spring 2015 Badzin Fellow in Holocaust and Genocide Studies and PhD candidate in the Sociology department at the University of Minnesota. Siguru's research interests are in the Sociology of Media, Genocide, Mass Violence and Atrocities (specifically on issues of representation of conflicts in Africa such as Darfur and Rwanda), Collective Memory, and perhaps somewhat tangentially Democracy and Development in Africa.*

## In Memorium

### Remembering Professor Hernán Vidal

#### [and the Shoah](#)

Find out more by clicking [here](#).

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[HGMV Workshops](#)

[The Holocaust in the Soviet Union](#)

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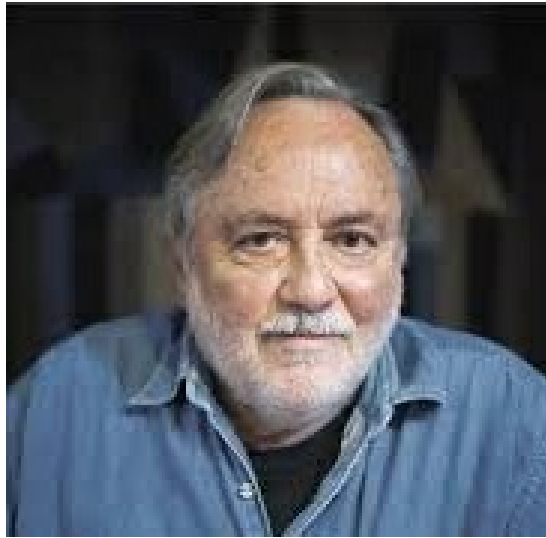
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Professor Vidal, who taught at the University of Minnesota from 1972 until his retirement in 2003, is widely known as an innovative, original, and productive scholar in the field of Latin American studies. The collective impact of his work and influence opened up new fields of intellectual inquiry to which he contributed through his high intellectual standards, independent spirit of inquiry, and unwavering commitment to human rights.

In the 1980s, Professor Vidal undertook a line of research that continued to expand the canon of literary studies and at the same time responded to the tragic reality of Chile, Argentina, and neighboring countries. He began to analyze subaltern or marginal literatures, and questions of authoritarian and military discourse, as they emerged and were answered in plays, songs, films, and other modes of popular culture, as well as in the practices which constitute and transform everyday life. This research resulted in the publication of several books, among them *Dar la vida por la vida: la Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos* [A Life for a Life: The Families of the "Disappeared"] (1982), *El movimiento contra la tortura "Sebastián Acevedo": Derechos humanos y la producción de símbolos nacionales bajo el fascismo chileno* [The "Sebastián Acevedo" Movement against Torture: Human Rights and the Production of National Symbols under Chilean Fascism] (1986, with an updated version published by *Mosquito Editores* in Chile in 1996).

Professor Vidal linked, in a profoundly humanistic way, the practice of literary criticism with the defense of human rights. He will be greatly missed by the academic community.

## Interview

**"There is no political will to combat antisemitism." CHGS Interview with Günther Jikeli**



*Dr. Günther Jikeli is a research fellow at the Moses Mendelssohn Center for European-Jewish Studies at Potsdam University. He is the co-director of the International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism (IIBSA). He earned his Ph.D. at the Center for Research on Antisemitism in Berlin and has served as an advisor to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe on combating antisemitism. In 2013, he was awarded the Raoul Wallenberg Prize in Human Rights and Holocaust Studies by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation and Tel Aviv University.*

**Recent reports indicate that antisemitism is on the rise in most European countries. How do you explain the causes?**

Historically, antisemitism has often come in waves and we are now witnessing a global rise. This has multiple, overlapping causes. Holocaust memory is stirring resentment against Jews, while at the same time the Holocaust is being diminished and equated to all sorts of incidents. Additionally, many people in Western Europe have developed an obsession with Israel, encouraged by a media that disproportionately focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and often disseminates a Manichean view upon it. A study from Germany showed that 90% of those who harbor hostile feelings against Israel also harbor antisemitic feelings. Another major factor for the rise of antisemitism in Western Europe is open hatred against Jews among large sections of Muslim minorities, which is all too often tolerated. In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, we can observe the rise of revisionist and ultra-nationalist parties, whose aim is to honor historical leaders of their country who fought against Stalinism. The problem with that is they were mostly Nazi collaborators and often directly responsible for the mass killings of Jews.

**How do you distinguish between anti-Israel sentiment and antisemitism?**

It depends what the "anti-Israel sentiment" is. If this is criticism of the Israeli government for a particular decision then there is a clear difference to antisemitism. If Jews, and only Jews, are denied a viable nation-state as a people, then it is hard not to see the bias. The dissolution of the State of Israel or a "one state solution" would seriously put all Jewish Israelis (and probably also Israeli Arabs) into danger. Willfully ignoring this threat can be seen as a form of assistance to antisemites.

**Is the problem acknowledged by the institutions and the media?**



No, it is usually ignored by the media. However, the wave of antisemitic incidents in Summer 2014 in many European cities has led to strong condemnation by many political leaders and the media.

**Is Germany facing similar problems? Is there more responsiveness to antisemitic manifestations?**

There are no major differences in these questions between the authorities lets say in France and in Germany. The condemnation of antisemitism in all its forms is even stronger by French politicians. Manuel Valls, now French Prime Minister, has declared that anti-Zionism is antisemitism and should not be tolerated. No similar statement has come from leading German politicians (although, Chancellor Merkel should be praised for her firm stand on the issue). However, while antisemitism is condemned in general terms, the political will to combat it is effectively weak. In 2011 a German parliament commission on combating antisemitism recommended several actions that still have not been initiated and antisemitic Muslim groups are tolerated instead of condemned for their rhetoric.

**Your scholarship focuses on antisemitism among individuals of Muslim background in Europe. What are the specific traits?**

Muslim antisemitism is a major factor in the global rise of antisemitism we are witnessing today. It is estimated that in many European countries between 30 and 50% of perpetrators of violent antisemitic acts have a Muslim background (Muslims form less than 8% in any Western European country). Many antisemitic tropes that are popular among Muslims are also widespread amongst the general population, such as "Jews are rich", "Jews control the media, the business world, etc..." In addition, many Muslims refer to Islamic scriptures and to a Muslim identity for their hatred of Jews. "Jews are Muslims' enemies," is a widespread belief among these Muslims. In some social circles, hatred of Jews has become the norm.

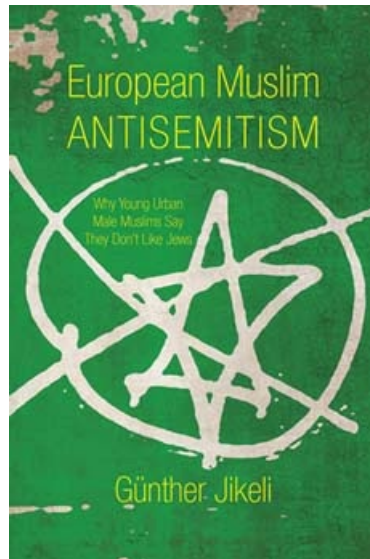
**How do organizations like the International Institute for Education and Research on Antisemitism (IIBSA) combat antisemitism?**

Combating antisemitism is important. Speaking out and not tolerating antisemitism- as well as encouraging people to act as anti-antisemites is of the utmost importance. Education is surely key and we find that younger people are often willing to reflect critically upon their prejudices (of which antisemitism is only one of many). Unfortunately, there are very few grassroots non-Jewish organizations that work in the field. There is the German association Heroes, which specializes in exploring prejudices and authoritarian structures within Muslim families and the IIBSA (with projects in Berlin, London, and Morocco) works both in research and education on these questions. Antisemitism at first targets Jews but what many people fail to realize is that it is also a threat to all democratic and civilized societies.

**Book of the Month**

**European Muslim Antisemitism:  
Why Young Urban Males Say They Don't**

## Like Jews



**By Günther Jikeli**

Publication date: 1/26/2015  
Indiana University Press

Antisemitism from Muslims has become a serious issue in Western Europe, although not often acknowledged as such. Looking for insights into the views and rationales of young Muslims toward Jews, Günther Jikeli and his colleagues interviewed 117 ordinary Muslim men in London (chiefly of South Asian background), Paris (chiefly North African), and Berlin (chiefly Turkish).

The researchers sought information about stereotypes of Jews, arguments used to support hostility toward Jews, the role played by the Middle East conflict and Islamist ideology in perceptions of Jews, the possible sources of antisemitic views, and, by contrast, what would motivate Muslims to actively oppose antisemitism. They also learned how the men perceive discrimination and exclusion as well as their own national identification.

This study is rich in qualitative data that will mark a significant step along the path toward a better understanding of contemporary antisemitism in Europe.

For more information please click [here](#).

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