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# Rouhani's Holocaust Comments on CNN Spark Controversy

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Posted on **September 26, 2013** by **Arash Karami**

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Yesterday, *Fars News* published a partial transcript of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's comments on the Holocaust from his interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour, headlined, "Exclusive: [CNN Fabricates Iranian President's Remarks About the Holocaust](#)." The article, which was also published on *Fars English* and meant for a foreign audience, has gone viral and claims that CNN had "added or changed" parts of Rouhani's comments on the Holocaust.

As a new president who is supposed to usher in a new era domestically and abroad, Rouhani has been expected by American journalists to distance himself from his predecessor's offensive rhetoric, particularly in the area of Holocaust denial. It was said by some who attended the journalists breakfast with the Iranian president on Wednesday that one of the few aspects of the private breakfast that Rouhani was willing to go on record about was indeed his condemnation of the Holocaust.

After the *Fars News* article was published, [CNN released the transcript of the interview](#), accompanied by the full [55-minute video](#) of the interview and a link to the raw footage on [YouTube](#). Rouhani's Persian and the interpreter's live translation can be heard at the same time. Rouhani's presidential website also released [a transcript in Persian of the CNN interview](#).

CNN's English transcript appears to match the live interpretation of the interview, while Rouhani's website's transcript in Persian matches what Rouhani said. While *Fars News* accurately points that that Rouhani never used the word "Holocaust" (he used the term "genocide"), the outlet appears to have had only partial access to the interview, as it accused CNN of adding parts which were indeed in the interview.

My translation of Rouhani's comments on the Holocaust to Amanpour's question follows. (This portion starts at 28:58 on the [YouTube video](#).)

Rouhani: I have said before that I am not a historian and when it comes to speaking of the dimensions of historical events, historians should explain and discuss it.

But in general, I can say that any crime that is committed in history against humanity, such as the crimes committed by the Nazis, whether against Jews or non-Jews, from our viewpoint is completely condemned. Just as if today a crime is committed against any nation, religion, ethnicity or belief, we condemn that crime or genocide.

Therefore, what the Nazis did is condemnable. The dimensions of it which you say, is the responsibility of historians and researchers to make those dimensions clear. I am not a historian myself.

However, this point should be clear: If a crime took place, that crime should not be a cover for a nation or group to justify their crimes or

oppression against others. Therefore, if the Nazis committed a crime, and however much it was, we condemn that, because genocide or mass murder is condemned.

From our viewpoint, it doesn't matter if the person killed is Jewish, Christian or Muslim. From our viewpoint, [it] does not make difference. Killing an innocent human is rejected and condemned. But this cannot be a reason for 60 years to displace a people from their land and say that the Nazis committed crimes. That crime [too] is condemned; occupying the land of others is also condemned from our viewpoint.

As Israeli-Iranian analyst Meir Javedanfar has noted, the supreme leader and hard-liners in Iran "see the narrative of the denial of the Holocaust as the 'Achilles heel of the Zionists.' It is a [weapon which they believe hurts Israel](#) because it undermines the justification for its existence." While, unlike his predecessor, Rouhani has rejected Holocaust denial, his leaving open the question about the number killed during the Holocaust is still not condemnation enough for some.

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You handled a delicate subject nicely.

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