

**Intersections**  
**Holocaust Scholarship, Genocide Research, and Histories of Mass Violence**  
5<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Genocide  
The International Network of Genocide Scholars (INoGS)  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute  
26-29 June 2016  
<http://www.inogs2016.org/>

Final Report  
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Two related issues figured prominently in the last decade in scholarly debates on genocide and mass violence: (1) the tensions between research on the Holocaust and studies on genocide, marked by the questions and perspectives raised in articles and books that contextualized the Holocaust within the broader history of modern genocide; and (2) the links between various events and processes of mass violence and genocides (including the Holocaust), and in particular the place of mass violence in Israel/Palestine within this evolving analytical framework and in relation to an international remembrance culture in which the Holocaust constitutes a focal point of reference.

The 2016 INoGS Conference placed these issues at the center of discussion, giving concrete meaning to the choice to hold the conference in Jerusalem. The conference included an opening evening with a keynote lecture by H.E. Adama Dieng, Special Advisor for the UN Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide, followed by three full days of three blocks of sessions every day with six or seven parallel panels in each—altogether 53 panels. Two additional keynote lectures took place—one by Atina Grossmann and one by Charles Maier—together with two plenary panels and a special plenary session in honor of Yehuda Bauer. For the complete conference program, including bios and abstracts, see <http://www.inogs2016.org/Program>.

This was the largest INoGS conference so far, and the first conference of its kind ever to take place in Israel. 215 scholars made up a truly international group of participants, coming from Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Mexico,

Namibia, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Poland, Rwanda, Senegal, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, the United Kingdom, the United States, Zimbabwe, and of course Israel. Twenty-one scholars—mostly advanced doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows (15)—received travel grants; nine of them supported the participation in the conference of students and scholars from the global south.

The keynote lectures addressed broad questions of both historical and contemporary significance: the challenges of genocide prevention (Dieng), the fates of refugee Jews in central Asia during World War II (Grossmann), and the meanings of overarching narratives about the twentieth century centered on genocide, slavery, and colonialism (Maier). These lectures thus provided a temporal and conceptual frame to interrogate various intersections. One of the plenary panels did just that by focusing on the crystallization of a range of collective traumas and identities after genocide/mass violence among Jews, Palestinians, Armenians, and African Americans. Presentations by Marzuq Al-Halabi, Yair Auron, Aïda Boudjikianian, Susan O'Donovan, and Manuela Consonni illuminated how some of these processes are closely tied to each other, as in the case of Jews and Palestinians, and the complex ways they have shaped (ongoing) nation and state building projects, as in the case of the African American experience in the United States after the end of slavery.

Fruitful discussions of intersections took place also during the parallel panels throughout the conference, tackling topics such as "Examining Mass Violence beyond the National Framework," "Entangled Testimonies: Accounts of Atrocity Survivors in the Twentieth Century," and "Post-Conflict Futures of Israel/Palestine." Talking across disciplinary boundaries added yet another layer that enriched these conversations.

The high level of participants' engagement at the conference was evident in the last day of sessions at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, with 160 participants in attendance (75% of all the participants). This is unusual in the dynamics of conferences of this sort, particularly considering the intense schedule of the preceding three days. Moreover, 50 participants showed up the next morning for the post-conference tours—Yad Vashem (18), the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem (12), and

East Jerusalem (20). And another 20 participants made up half of the audience in the Jerusalem Cinematheque that afternoon for the screening of Director Joshua Oppenheimer's film *The Look of Silence*. It was preceded by a panel titled, "Listening to Silences and Breaking Silences in Accounts of Survivors of Mass Violence in Indonesia and Europe: A Comparative Perspective." Here, too, intersections loomed large. Ran Shauli, who organized and moderated the event, Debórah Dwork, and Kartika Pratiwi were joined by Joshua Oppenheimer on Skype, to talk about the delicate dynamics of recording oral histories of survivors of mass violence. The panel dealt with both the constraints of particular circumstances, such as the threat of recurring violence, and the crucial role of factors such as gender in constructing similar kinds of silences in victims' testimonies and in deciphering their meanings.

It is no secret that many people disagreed with the decision to hold the conference in Jerusalem. During the two-and-one-half years it took to organize the conference, we faced many challenges from all directions. While some felt threatened by the suggestion to link the terms "Holocaust" and "genocide," others advocated boycotting the conference as part of the BDS campaign. Even as these two objections stemmed from very different points of view, both sought to shut down discussion. Yet more than 200 scholars participated, with discussions spilling from the panels to the coffee breaks, lunches, and dinners. A number of Israeli Palestinian scholars delivered papers on core questions in the study of mass violence in Israel/Palestine and its place in the history of mass violence and remembrance cultures in the twentieth century. Furthermore, one panel addressed the burning problem of the assault on human rights organizations in Israel today. Students and faculty members from all Israeli universities and colleges attended, some to present papers but quite a few just came to listen and learn. And finally, if there was some misconceived sense at the beginning of the conference that conflict divided the two professional organizations in the field of Genocide Studies—INoGS and IAGS (International Association of Genocide Scholars)—there remained no doubt by the end of the conference that, to the contrary, mutual respect and collaboration is the rule. Everyone benefited from the conference; the praise of the INoGS Executive Board and the feedback from many participants confirm this.

With old grudges, anxieties, and divides in Genocide Studies now left on the very margins, it is time to look forward to new scholarship and to the next two major conference in the field—the IAGS conference, which will take place at the University of Queensland, Australia, on 9-13 July 2017 (<https://law.uq.edu.au/iags2017>), and the 2018 INoGS conference (location and date still unknown).

For video recordings of the keynote lectures and plenary sessions:

<http://www.inogs2016.org/videos/>

For photos from the conference:

<http://www.inogs2016.org/pics/>

### **Acknowledgments**

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- At the Hebrew University of Jerusalem:
  - The Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry
  - The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations
  - The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism
  - The Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace
  - The Richard Koebner Minerva Center for German History
  - The Faculty of Law
  - The Department of American Studies
  - The Louis Frieberg Center for East Asian Studies
  - The Authority for Research and Development
  - Prof. Louise Bethlehem of the Program in Cultural Studies

- The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute
- The Israel Office of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung
- The Polish Institute in Tel Aviv
- The Armenian Community of Jerusalem
- The Open University of Israel
- The Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University
- The Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

### **Members of the Conference Steering Committee**

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- Dr. Raz Segal, Coordinator of the Committee, Stockton University
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