

The MAHG program stands with Ukraine and the people of Ukraine, who are facing an unprovoked Russian military invasion and a massive cyberattack, accompanied by a campaign of vicious propaganda and misinformation. Still, Russian president Vladimir Putin is unashamed in declaring that the goal of the invasion is to destroy the Ukrainian state, framing it himself in this way as a genocidal war. Putin also said that the war is meant to "denazify" Ukraine and thus ensure "peace." This weaponization of the past by Putin is not at all new, as we witnessed when he was invited to speak at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem two years ago, in January 2020, in the Fifth World Holocaust Forum. There, Poland was the main target of his distortion of the history of World War II and the Holocaust. Now, Putin's manipulation of the past presents as a Nazi the Jewish president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, whose family members faced Nazi violence and fought against the Nazis. We have seen this weaponization of Holocaust history and memory many times in the last few years in various contexts, targeting Jews around the world as antisemites and presenting victims of mass violence as aggressors and threats to "security" and "peace." Putin himself has cast the genocidal attacks against millions of civilians in Syria by the Assad Regime and Russian forces as a pursuit of "peace" and a war on "terrorists." Putin justified Russia's invasion of the Crimea and territories in eastern Ukraine in 2014, as well as ongoing violence since then, with a similar distortion of the factual historical record.

In a political atmosphere where academic research and scholars are under attack everywhere in the world today for uncovering, teaching, and publishing the truth about mass violence, we call on our friends and colleagues in Holocaust and Genocide Studies around the world to talk, teach, post, write, and insist on the truth about the past and the present. Do not remain silent about Putin's unprovoked attack against Ukraine and the people in Ukraine. The unprovoked violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and the alteration of established borders by force is the very definition of a crime against the peace, and is an assault on us all. Now is the time to shout, "never again"!