**Holocaust denial not a human right, European court rules**

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STRASBOURG, France — Denial of the Holocaust is not a human right, a European court ruled on Thursday, throwing out a complaint by a German neo-Nazi politician.

Udo Pastoers, who served in the local parliament of the northeastern region of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, was convicted in Germany in 2012 after giving a speech in 2010 in which he appeared to cast doubt on whether the Holocaust really happened.

Pastoers, a member of the right-wing extremist National Democratic Party (NDP), lodged a complaint against the conviction with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 2014.

He argued his freedom of expression was violated and his right to a fair trial infringed because the judge at his appeal could not have been impartial as he was the husband of a judge who had convicted him in a lower court.

The ECHR judges ruled unanimously that Pastoers’ complaint that freedom of expression had been violated was “manifestly ill-founded and had to be rejected.”

Its judges also ruled by four votes to three that there had been no violation of the right to a fair trial.

It added an independent court of appeal panel with no links to either married judge had ultimately decided on the bias claim and had rejected it.

According to the ECHR, Pastoers in 2010 gave a speech to the local parliament where he stated that “the so-called Holocaust is being used for political and commercial purposes.”

The court said his speech “was a qualified Holocaust denial showing disdain to its victims and running counter to established historical facts.”

He “intentionally stated untruths in order to defame Jews and the persecution that they had suffered.”

Such statements “could not attract the protection for freedom of speech” offered by the European Convention on Human Rights “as they ran counter to the values of the Convention itself,” it said.

The ECHR is part of the Council of Europe, the pan-European rights body, and can be approached by citizens of its 47 member states once all legal recourse in their own country have been exhausted.