

Open Letter to German President of the Bundestag

On December 3, the German group „International Society for Human Rights” (ISHR) will award several media prizes (5000€ altogether) in a day-long event hosted in the Berlin based office of Schleswig-Holstein, a German Federal Land south of Denmark. The patron of this event will be Dr. Norbert Lammert, President of the German Bundestag. The event is part of a series of ISHR called “teaching dictators lessons”. In fact however, ISHR is known for its own right-wing extremism, including anti-Semitism and Israel-hatred.

Prof. Menno Aden from the directorate of ISHR will give a welcoming speech, and will also be on the symposium in the afternoon. Aden was chairman of an Evangelical-Lutheran church until 1996, and is well known for his right-wing activism. Worse, in an interview with Islamist journal “Muslim Markt” in January 2009 he praised Ahmadinejad’s Christmas greetings to the Christian world in 2008, urging the world to become more religious. Not a single word about Iran’s anti-Zionist anti-Semitism. Muslim-Markt has been making anti-Semitic propaganda for years, e.g. urging its readers to boycott Israel. Not a word about this from Prof. Aden. Again, in June 2009, Aden gave the same people a video-interview which can be seen online, saying, for example that “homosexuality is a sin” and “absolutely intolerable”.

Wow! What kind of human rights prize are they offering? For human rights in Iran. As we know, Ahmadinejad said at his infamous speech at Columbia University: “there are no homosexuals in Iran”. (Read: “If I find one, I’ll kill him...”)

Let’s have a look at some more examples of the controversial

and anti-human-rights activism of that group. One of the members of the Jury for those media prizes is Prof. Dr. Alfred de Zayas, who praised Norman Finkelstein's anti-Semitic book «Beyond Chutzpah. On the Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History» in a review.

Zayas is known for his anti-Israel activity during his time as the former Secretary of Human Rights at the UN. For neo-nazis in Germany Zayas is a hero. They quote him often in the Internet, because, among other things, he wrote about imagined "crimes of the allies against the Germans" during World War II. After the war in Lebanon in 2006 he called for a "totally embargo on selling weapons to Israel".

I am curious about the reasons why the President of the German Federal Parliament, Dr. Lammert, is supporting the event of such a group like ISHR, represented by several anti-Semitic activists, among whom I just focused only on Prof. Dr. Alfred de Zayas and Prof. Menno Aden. One of the participants of the event will be Saba Farzan, a young Iranian-born student from Germany. She is member of the Liberal party in Berlin (FDP) and was among the speakers at another Iran event last weekend, too.

It is a serious problem if people, while focusing on Iran, forget to ask whether or not activists are anti-Semites or right-wing extremists. Prof. Aden is also director of a right-wing extremist group, called "Staats- und Wirtschaftspolitische Vereinigung" (SWG) (State and political-economic Association), co-founded in 1962 by former NSDAP member Hugo Wellems, who also worked in Goebbels' propaganda ministry.

It is truly a scandal that a group like ISHR with their members of board of trustees and directory, Zayas and Aden, not merely tolerated but even *supported* by the second most powerful man in Germany, the President of the Bundestag.

An organization like "International Society for Human Rights" (ISHR) with a jury member like Prof. Zayan, who pled for stopping all military support for Israel, is far from being a serious forum for a human rights prize on Iran. Rather, it is an organization with homophobic, anti-Israeli, German nationalistic representatives and even chairmen of organization which had been founded by former NSDAP members. An organization such as ISHR with such representatives is worthy to be fought.

To be awarded by such an organization should be regarded as shameful.