

How to deny the Iranian threat? The ZfA summer school 2009

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The summer school on anti-Semitism of the Berlin Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA) invites

Dr. Clemens Heni, Post-Doctoral Researcher, The Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism (YIISA), YALE University

The Berlin Center is again organizing a troubling and controversial conference/summer school on antisemitism. It equates homophobia with anti-Semitism, and, much worse, it is in denial if it comes to Islamic anti-Semitism in general and the Iranian threat in particular. The German center does not even pretend to deal with the biggest threat to world peace and Israel's very existence: the horrible scenario if Iran goes nuclear.

The Berlin Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA), headed by Prof. Wolfgang Benz, is organizing a "summer university on anti-Semitism" early in September this year. What can we expect some 9 months after the controversial conference last December, when the Center equated "Islamophobia" and anti-Semitism? Did the Center change its approach to anti-Semitism? Well, the program reads like this: eight lectures about topics like right wing extremism, music and anti-Semitism, left anti-Semitism, youngsters and anti-Semitism, political theory and

anti-Semitism, Israel and German media, today's anti-Semitism, or everyday Jew hatred. These lectures are combined with 16 workshops, including the same topics, and also soccer and anti-Semitism, teenagers with a "migration background" and teaching the Holocaust, or the same teenagers and their relationship to "Israel-hatred". Not a single lecture or workshop takes today's threat seriously: Islamic anti-Semitism and/or the Iranian threat. The Center is in denial if it comes to Islam.

Those teenagers are called "teenagers with a migration background". Of course the center wants to refuse to use the term "Muslim youngsters". But 'teenagers with a migration background' is ridiculous: they do not mean atheist youngsters migrating from southern Switzerland, Hindus migrating from West India, Christians coming from Argentina, or even Jews from Venezuela. They are all migrants to Germany, but they are not the focus. Why is the Center not talking about "Muslim teenagers and Islamic anti-Semitism"? Why is there not a single lecture or workshop on the Iranian threat? Israel and the Jews are threatened by Iran and Ahmadinejad himself. The threat is an existential one for the Jewish state and the reason is irrational Islamic anti-Semitism. The Berlin Center just denies this threat.

Another aspect is problematic: one of the workshops is about Homophobia and anti-Semitism. Homophobia is of course a serious problem around the world. The center, however, announces this workshop like this: "Prejudices against homosexuals and Jews have striking parallels and are interchangeable for hundreds of years now", including the "Blood Libel." This is just another way of trivializing the Holocaust and anti-Semitism. No one denies the horrible history of homophobia, and also the killing of thousands of homosexuals during Nazi Germany. To claim, however, that anti-Semitism is interchangeable with homophobia, is wrong and dangerous. It looks like another form of trivializing the

Holocaust. Jews have been singled out because of their Jewish heritage, or even, in Germany especially, because of their "blood." No homosexual was killed because of his/her blood. No one in Germany was urging the world to "clean the world" of homosexuals. There was no blood libel against homosexuals, but against Jews, and Jews, no one else, have been accused of being "Christ-killers" for 2000 years.

The world conspiracy, the protocols of the elders of Zion, or anticapitalist anti-Semitism, also called anti-Mammonism in some aspects, and of course anti-Zionism and the refusal to allow Jews to have a Jewish state, are also incomparable elements of the specifics of anti-Semitism. Why is the Center saying that homophobia is the same as anti-Semitism? After having said that Islamophobia (whatever this means) is the same as anti-Semitism at their December conference, the Berlin Center is still trying to trivialize genocidal anti-Semitism. The worst aspect, however, is the fact that the center is still not focusing on Iran. Why are they not interested in analyzing today's anti-Semitism, read: anti-Zionism, mostly deriving from Islamic anti-Semitism? Why is the Center trapped by right-wing or left-wing extremism, and ignoring the real threat to today's Jewry: Islamic Jihad and Muslim anti-Semitism? Why is the Center not dealing with German Middle Eastern Studies and anti-Semitism? The Berlin Center confuses anti-Semitism with 'prejudice'. They compare topics unworthy of comparison. They just deny the Iranian threat – imagine a summer school on anti-Semitism in the US early in 1939 dealing with anti-Semitism in the early 19th century and ignoring Hitler and the Germans. Or think at least about an international briefing of scholars, politicians, and activists in early 1939 dealing with European security questions and not talking about Germany. And then compare with the ZfA and their refusal to focus on German-Iranian relations, the Iranian threat, and Islamic anti-Semitism in general.