

# **Suicide bombing is “not necessarily antisemitic”...**

## **Suicide bombing against Jews in Israel is “not necessarily antisemitic”**

### **German Professor Wilhelm Kempf lectures in Dublin about today's antisemitism...**

Wilhelm Kempf, since 1977 professor of psychology at the University of Konstanz in the southwest of Germany, gave a lecture on “Israel-criticism and modern anti-Semitism” at the conference of the International Society for Political Psychology in Dublin, June 14-17, 2009.

Before analyzing his paper in detail, some more information about Kempf. He is not known as an expert in research on antisemitism, rather as psychologist with a background of “peace and conflict” research. As early as 1999 he published a piece on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in comparison with the conflict in Northern Ireland. He compares two incomparable conflicts by ignoring the ideological core of anti-Zionist Islamic antisemitism. He goes so far as to claim that a suicide killing by Hamas on April 6, 1994, in Afula, was not resulting “from the ‘extremism’ of Hamas per se”.

He does not analyze Hamas ideology. Instead he conforms with mainstream “peace research”, which is in fact a strange terminology for people who have no problem with fascist regimes like today's Iran or dictatorships in the Arab World, often driven by religious, Muslim, fanaticism and antisemitic public or political culture (see cartoons in Egypt, Saudi, or

Syrian newspapers etc.).

Kempf is not analyzing antisemitism in the Muslim world to get a closer picture of Hamas ideology. Hamas ideology has been analyzed by Yitzhak Santis from the Jewish Community Relations Council in San Francisco:

“The Cairo Agreement, as it became known, called for a period of calm (tahdiya). Notwithstanding this ‘calm’ Hamas continued attacking Israeli targets, including firing dozens of Qassam missiles from the Gaza Strip into Israeli towns and a number of attacks in the West Bank. Hamas leaders made it clear that this was but a ‘tactical’ move, and they were still committed to their goal of destroying Israel. (...)

During the 1990’s, Hamas emerged as a ‘spoiler’ as it began to use suicide bombers as a means of disrupting the peace process. By the time of the ‘Al Aqsa’ intifada in 2000, Hamas already led the way in a war of terror against Israeli civilians.”

Without any proof or analysis Kempf is arguing that suicide bombing of Hamas is “not resulting” “from the ‘extremism’ of Hamas per se.” This has nothing to do with scholarly research.

Like many Middle Eastern Studies scholars psycholgoist Kempf is obviously not interested in decoding the concept of Islamic Jihad in general or of Hamas ideology in particular—the word Jihad is not even mentioned once in his paper, for example. He is biased and coming from a “peace and conflict” research frame, ignoring any specifics of the so called Israeli-Palestinian conflict e.g. Arab rejection of the 1947 UN plan to build up two separate states and permit a Jewish state in the Middle East. How can he compare this with a typical old-European style religious conflict of Catholics and Protestants, respective England and Ireland?

His silence regarding Arabic, Islamic and Iranian antisemitism can also be seen in a 1994 article where the Gulf War in his

view was used to avoid “non-military” options. He failed to mention anti-Jewish threats against Israel from Saddams and Iraq’s propaganda machinery.

Furthermore: Kempf’s paper, given in Dublin in July 2009, can help us shed some light on today’s mainstream (not only but especially) German scholarship on anti-Zionism and (implicitly) Islamic Jihad and antisemitism as whole. He starts his piece with a short-run through the history of antisemitism, starting with Christianity and ending with Nazi Germany, and he refers to German sociologist Werner Bergmann. Just as a footnote: this historical background is not correct, as it denies the anti-Semitic history of the pre-Christian era, especially Greek-Roman pagan antisemitism (JSA, Journal for the Study of Antisemitism, volume 1, number 1, October 2009, page 30, footnote 5), which has been analyzed by Peter Schäfer, former head of Jewish Studies at Princeton University.

Let’s have a look on other aspects of Kempf’s paper. He says:

“Although we cannot rule out that criticism of Israel’s policy represents a medium in which antisemitic contents can be articulated in a socially and politically correct manner, from a conflict-theoretical perspective we must assume that criticism of Israel could also derive from a variety of other sources.”

He then introduces his concept of “War frame” and “Peace frame”, in Israel and Germany. Like many so called liberals or leftists in Germany he claims that the result of World War II has been “never again fascism, never again war”. It’s interesting what conclusion Kempf proceeds to draw:

“Support for the victims of National Socialism, which implies a tendency toward unconditional solidarity with Israeli policy and a weakening of the Peace Frame. This can go as far as turning into a War Frame: (never again fascism,

therefore war), as was the case (in part) in the Gulf War discourse 1990/91 (Kempf, 1994).”

I myself was part of so called German “peace rallies” in 1991. I was naïve and uninformed. Months later, at a reading of Lea Fleischmann’s “Gas” in the city of Stuttgart, finally I got the message: Jews had been threaten to death by (German made) Gas, coming from Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. Lea Fleischmann, who made aliya in 1979, told us naïve and intolerant German “peace” friends what it means to collaborate with or to appease a regime like that of Saddam Hussein. Taking this personal experience into account, I find Kempf, who is more than 20 years older than I am and who cannot claim naivety in the early 1990s, and his statement highly ideological and problematic. He speaks in a very negative tone about “unconditional solidarity with Israeli policy” – read: He knows maybe sometimes much better than the Jews who to achieve peace, right?

Kempf goes on, next quote:

“Support for human rights worldwide, which implies a tendency to refrain from supporting at least some aspects of Israeli policy, and includes expressing solidarity with the Israeli peace movement and at least a certain degree of empathy with the Palestinian side.”

OK, I see. Israel is not for human rights, at least not always, this is the message. Kempf is not going into any detail of human rights in Israel, nor is he referring to Hamas, the PA or aspects of human rights violation in the Gaza strip since the take-over by Hamas in 2007. The entire ideology of Kempf’s “peace frame” is obvious in his following statement:

“Rejecting a statement like the one in example No. 4 (“Israel wages a just war against the Palestinians”) may be motivated by anti-Semitic prejudice. But a participant’s

rejection of this statement does only indicate that he does not follow a pro Israeli War Frame. Whether he rejects the statement due to anti-Semitic prejudice, whether he rejects it due to a pro-Palestinian War Frame or whether he does so due to a Peace Frame remains open: Since – from a pacifist point of view – every war is evil there does not exist something like a “just” war and even from a pro Israeli Peace frame this statement would be accepted, therefore.”

“Every war is evil” –is a typical German point of view. Considering that Germany lost two wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though they achieved their main goal: the destruction of European Jews. Kempf, however, finds every war evil: this ipso facto includes the war against Nazi Germany, logically spoken. Furthermore it includes today’s War on Terror (“say good bye Taliban”) under George W. Bush, though Obama prefers bowing for Saudi Kings and speaks no longer of a War on Terror.

Kempf obviously has drawn the wrong lessons from National Socialism: it’s not “never again war”, it’s “Never again Fascism” (or National Socialism). What are we to do with Islamic fascist regimes like Iran? Such a question does of course not occur on the radar of mainstream German scholar Wilhelm Kempf, who spoke in July 2009 about peace, war, antisemitism and Israel without mentioning once the genocidal threat of Ahmadinejad and Iran against the Jewish state of Israel.

Kempf is arguing in a hardly scholarly way:

“Similarly, the acceptance of a statement like the one in example No. 5 (“Israel is exclusively responsible for the emergence and perpetuation of the Middle East Conflict”) may be motivated by anti-Semitic prejudice. But a participant’s acceptance of the statement might as well result from a pro Palestinian War Frame.”

Someone who likes the Hamas or the “Palestinian War Frame” in

this view *might* be motivated by antisemitism; in fact *it is* concrete support for a fascist organization like Hamas, which wants to wipe Israel off the map (with military, personnel and economic help from Tehran). The next paragraph in Kempf's remarkable piece goes like this:

"The same holds even for the statement in example No. 6 ("The Palestinian suicide attacks are an appropriate means to combat Israel"), which takes sides with the Palestinians and involves military logic, but as long as it is not associated with the denial of Israel's right of existence, its acceptance does not necessarily embody any anti-Semitic content."

Wow! One has never heard such an excuse for suicide bombing. Palestinian suicide bombers killed several hundred Jews, especially since the second Intifada starting in fall 2000. The goal of every suicide killer was and is to kill as many Jews (Israeli) as possible. Who on earth can claim, as Kempf does, that the acceptance of suicide attacks "does not necessarily embody any antisemitic content"? This is itself an antisemitic statement. Killing Jews is not necessarily anti-Semitic? OK, Kempf is probably an ordinary non-Jewish German with no relatives in Israel, he does not really care about victims of suicide bombing in Israel. For a scholar it is nonetheless hard to believe that Kempf seriously believes that killing Jews via suicide attacks is not anti-Semitic. I do not get this 'argument.'

That's not all. He goes on to say:

"As Zimmermann (2002, 2) has pointed out, even NS-comparative criticism of Israel can gain different meaning, depending on the intention behind it. A statement like in example No. 7 ("What the Israelis do to the Palestinians resembles what the Nazis did to the Jews") may either result from a Peace Frame and aim at warning Israel not to abandon the high moral standards of Jewish culture, or it may result

from a pro Palestinian War Frame and aim at delegitimizing Israel, or it may result from secondary antisemitism and aim at trivializing the Holocaust.”

Kempf is a supporter of the so called “standpoint” theory (which is mostly deriving of a postmodern feminist angle, but can also be used in a postmodern cultural relativist and anti-Zionist view), read: it always depends on your point of view. Comparing Israel with Nazis might be bad if you are Jewish and your grandmother hardly survived Auschwitz. Scholars like Kempf claim for a Palestinian or an anti-Zionist Jewish peace activist or a non-Jewish Western scholar, such comparisons can help Jews NOT to lose their own “high moral standards of Jewish culture.”

This kind of philosemitism is in itself antisemitic. Kempf refers to Israeli historian Moshe Zimmermann, quoting a piece from 2002.

Kempf does not tell the story and scandal behind: Zimmermann was accused by historian Anat Peri, who was a former student of Zimmermann, to compare the Israeli Army (IDF) with the Schutzstaffel (SS) of Nazi Germany. Peri wrote this on August 24, 2001. Zimmermann sued her, but a Jerusalem court said Peri is right in her accusation, the court decided on March 25, 2004. Zimmermann indeed compared the IDF special forces with the “Waffen-SS.” Also according to the EUMC every comparison of Israel with National Socialism is anti-Semitic (“Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli Policy to that of the Nazis”). Kempf, on the other side, refers to an Israeli historian who lost a lawsuit in Israel exactly with reference to this very comparison. The Zimmermann case clearly indicates that antisemitism can be part of University based departments, whether in Israel, in Germany or elsewhere in the Western world. Kempf is in support of Zimmermann in until today, rejecting any substantial analysis of the antisemitic impact of Zimmermanns equation or comparison of the SS and the IDF. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) as well a German Jew are

aware of this, in 2005 a Haaretz report reads:

“Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, sent a letter to Hebrew University President Prof. Menachem Megidor demanding a public response to statements made by the head of the university’s German studies department, Prof. Moshe Zimmerman. According to the letter, Zimmerman compared Israel Defense Forces soldiers to Nazis. University authorities in effect failed to say a thing to Zimmerman. Moreover, the university rector, Dan Rabinowitz, demanded that the former leader of the Jewish community in Berlin, Dr. Alexander Brenner, apologize for his statement that ‘there are professors at the Hebrew University who compare the behavior of IDF soldiers to the behavior of SS soldiers.’ “

By supporting Moshe Zimmermann’s comparison of the Waffen-SS and the IDF Professor Wilhelm Kempf is attacking Jews and Holocaust survivors like Abraham Foxman and Alexander Brenner, who both did publicly criticize Zimmermann.

A final example from Kempfs lecture in Dublin 2009. He writes:

“Fourth: Also the response to statements which overtly contain anti-Semitic content and/or provoke anti-Semitic sentiments is often not unambiguous. Although the acceptance of the statement in example No. 8 (“It would be preferable if the Jews would leave the Middle East”) implies the delegitimation of the Jews and the denial of Israel’s right of existence, even a hard core Neo-Nazi, who fears that “the Jews” might return to Germany might reject it.”

This is another cultural relativist approach to minimize antisemitism by hypothetically inventing wrong cases. If Kempf was aware of Neo-Nazi ideology in Germany he knew that they agree with Palestinian extremism. The answer is: they want the Jews to leave Israel, destination is not Germany, rather the Mediterranean sea. It is ridiculous to invent a Neo-Nazi who

might reject this example No. 8 (“It would be preferable if the Jews would leave the Middle East”), but it helps Prof. Kempf to downplay anti-Zionist antisemitism. In fact German Neo-Nazis made propaganda for a rally in the heart of Berlin in January 2009, literally saying (like all other anti-Israeli rallies): “Stop the Holocaust in Gaza”.

This case study of a lecture of a typical German scholar indicates the following: even hardcore anti-Jewish activism like suicide bombing or the comparison of Israel with Nazi Germany are seen as not entirely antisemitic. Without saying here, he follows his colleague (one of the few scholars on antisemitism Kempf is quoting, by the way), Prof. Werner Bergmann. See Interview with Prof. Bergmann in Neue Zuericher Zeitung, February 9, 2009. He claims that Muslims just were in fear for their relatives in Gaza, etc. He does not explain what the slogans “Death to the Jews” and “Olmert is a son of a dog” have to do with worry about family in Gaza. In consequence, he says, it is something totally different if German leftist or right-wingers are against Israel, compared to anti-Israel hatred of Muslims. Really?

This is the end of serious research on antisemitism, if we always say: it depends on your standpoint! ‘If you are a Jew and killed in such an attack – bad for you. If you are a Western scholar who seeks peace and a bi-national Israel, it’s fine’, for example. Kempf goes so far as to say it is also not necessarily anti-Semitic to compare Israel with Nazi Germany. He does not give a single argument. To compare the only democracy in the Middle East and the most human army in our world, as a British Col. Richard Kemp most recently said at the UN in a hearing on the Goldstone report, with the worst regime ever, National Socialism, is the most extreme (not only but also ‘academic’) form of Jew-hatred. To say, as Kempf does, such comparison ‘might be made with bad (antisemitic) intentions, but not necessarily so,’ was beyond my horizon, before having read Kempf’s piece. Such a downplaying of

genocidal antisemitism is fashionable.

Such a comparison is not just anti-Israel antisemitism, it's also part of, to use Dovid Katz's word, "Holocaust Obfuscation," a tendency mostly associated with the Baltics and Eastern Europe to compare crimes of the Soviet Union with the unprecedented crimes of the Germans and their friends and followers in Lithuania and elsewhere. To use the reference of Nazi Germany and the Shoah, because the Shoah is the core of National Socialism, to 'help' Jews not to give up their "high moral standard," is an absurd, and extremely horrifying argumentation. It denies any specifics of the Holocaust— it is Holocaust obfuscation.

Wilhelm Kempf is a typical German scholar who always wants to differentiate between good and bad anti-Zionism, so to say. One of the worst examples he refers to is proof for his own producing of antisemitism: he literally claims that not every comparison of Israel with the Nazis/Germans is antisemitic. He insinuates that some people using this 'argument' just want to help Jews not to lose their "high moral standard". In fact every comparison of the Jewish state with National Socialism is antisemitic!

His reference is Israeli historian Moshe Zimmermann who just lost a lawsuit in 2004 exactly on that topic, comparison of the IDF special forces with the Waffen-SS. The fact that Kempf's research did not prompt a scandal at the conference of Political Psychology in Dublin this July, and the fact that his research is well funded e.g. by the biggest academic research foundation in Germany, "German Research Foundation" (DFG), are proof of his mainstream attempt to downplay antisemitism, and, even worse, to produce antisemitism by claiming at least two things: first he says that it is not necessarily antisemitic to support suicide bombing; second he says that not every comparison of Israel with Nazi Germany is antisemitic. Number one and number two are typical examples of

antisemitism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and Prof. Kempf contributes with his kind of research to this fashionable form of resentment.