

The 'Jewish' Museum fuels the anti-Jewish climate in Germany

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An anti-BDS resolution by the German Parliament (Bundestag) is defamed by anti-Israel scholars, both Jewish and non-Jewish. The "Jewish" Museum Berlin tweeted in favor of a rather pro-BDS article. The "Jewish" Museum Berlin has a long list of anti-Israel activities and now faces truly sharp criticism from the Central Council of Jews in Germany and the Jewish community in Germany.

The Jewish Museum Berlin is a well-funded, state sponsored institution that attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. Located in the multicultural neighborhood of Kreuzberg in western Berlin, it has become a symbol of anti-Israel agitation in the mainstream of German cultural and political institutions.

We face two opposite developments in the Federal Republic of Germany: The elites in politics have become aware of antisemitism in all its forms and the German Bundestag, including fractions of the ruling parties (the Conservatives, CDU/CSU, and the Social Democrats, SPD), and the opposition (the Party of the Greens and the Liberal Party) – with the exception of the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the Party of the Left – has passed two resolutions against antisemitism and BDS respectively, the first on January 18, 2018, the latest on May 17, 2019. (Dozens of parliamentarians of these fractions, though, refused to vote in favor of the anti-BDS resolution from May 2019.) The latter

is an explicit anti-BDS resolution and urges politics on all levels to not allow BDS groups or pro-BDS groups to have events in their accommodation. The resolution makes a direct relationship between BDS and antisemitism, which is crucial and important.

On the other side we have the academic, cultural and political NGO elites who are rather pro-BDS and play antisemitism down or fuel it, while pretending – of course – to be against antisemitism. Who wants to be an antisemite? Well many people are antisemitic, while pretending to be not antisemitic.

That makes pro-BDS academics and activists run riot. Two resolutions fight that resolution. One joined statement, signed by 16 Middle East and Islam “experts,” was published in the mainstream weekly Die Zeit. In it, they claim that BDS should be accepted as “freedom of speech” – although they correctly quote that one of the three cornerstones of the BDS movement is the “right of return” of Palestinian “refugees” and all their relatives since 1948.

That would destroy the Jewish state of Israel – but they seem to be embracing that idea or do not care about it. Among the supporters are Gudrun Krämer, professor of Islamic Studies at Free University Berlin, known for her pro-Islamist approach and her support of the “Global Mufti,” as they call him, leading Sunni Islamist and antisemite Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Another one is a pupil of Krämer, Achim Rohde, who embraced anti-Zionist superstar Edward Said and antisemitic author Jacqueline Rose from the UK (who published in a book by Princeton University Press, “The Question of Zion,” the grotesque lie that maybe Hitler and Herzl joined the very same concert of Wagner music in Paris in 1896; Hitler was born in 1889) at the very end of his doctoral dissertation which was about gender in Iraq. Muriel Asseburg from the influential “German Institute for International and Security Affairs” (“Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP),” one of the biggest thinks tanks of its kind in Europe, supports the joined

statement as well.

June 6, the official account of the Jewish Museum Berlin tweeted #mustread and linked to an article of the daily tageszeitung (taz) by Middle East correspondent Jannis Hagmann, who reported positively about the two pro-BDS resolutions. JTA correspondent in Germany Toby Axelrod reported about this in the Times of Israel (TOI) as well. She refers to the head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Josef Schuster, who said that he wonders how “Jewish” the Jewish Museum still is and that the institution is “out of control.”

Head of the Jewish Museum is 75 years old historian Peter Schäfer, who is not Jewish. On June 12, 2019, in an interview with the leading online news page in German language, Spiegel Online, Schäfer twines about the Jewish Museums stance towards BDS and Israel, he pretends to be pro-Israel but does not at all say that BDS supporters are all a priori antisemitic. His claim that he supports the “right of Israel to exist” is nothing but claptrap – taken the antisemitic events and tendencies in his house. He even says that the invitation of an Iranian official was “naïve” – because the Iranian antisemite defamed Israel at the event in Persian –, but Schäfer does not step down as head of that troubling institution after such unbelievable invitations.

Islamic Studies scholar and Orientalist Michael Kreutz, blogger tw24 as well as publicist Alex Feuerherdt and journalist Michael Wuliger from the leading Jewish weekly Jüdische Allgemeine have criticized the pro-BDS joined statements by Jewish and non-Jewish scholars and activists.

One of the Israeli-Jewish supporters of the 240 people, who signed another joined statement against the German Bundestag’s anti-BDS stance, is Amos Goldberg. He is a perfect example, how academic antisemitism work these days. His post-colonial or universalist approach can illuminate the distortion of the

Shoah by universalizing it. In 2012, Goldberg wrote about the new exhibition at Yad Vashem from 2005 and rejected the focus primarily on antisemitism when dealing with the Shoah.

It seems as if Goldberg is not shocked about the Holocaust and the “rupture of civilization,” a term he could have learned from historian Dan Diner – who himself has a very troubling anti-Zionist past, check out his anti-Zionist habilitation, and who published studies by hardcore anti-Zionist authors such as Dimitri Shumsky, who is among the 240 agitators in favor of BDS –, whom he refers to in his article. Instead, Goldberg accuses Israel of maybe becoming a kind of “fascist” state, if Yad Vashem as a main representative institution of Israeli society keeps its focus on antisemitism and the Holocaust.

Goldbergs approach is a typical failure of scholarship. It is an universalization of the Shoah and therefore a complete denial of what happened in Auschwitz, Treblinka or Sobibor. Never before, be it antique slavery, middle age pogroms, the colonial and imperial times since 1492 and Christopher Columbus, was there the idea to eliminate an entire people for the only reason to be that people. The Jews were eradicated by the Germans (and their allies) because they were Jews. There was no *cui bono* in the Shoah. There was always a *cui bono* in all imperialist or colonial crimes, no doubt about this. The denial of the unprecedented character of the Shoah, though, is fashionable among black theorists ever since Aimé Césaire, but also among anti-Zionist Jewish and non-Jewish agitators.

The Jewish Museum Berlin hosted anti-Zionist British activist Brian Klug in November 2013, it employs highly controversial Muslim scholars such as Yasemin Shooman, who invited BDS man Sa’ed Atshan in 2018, an event that finally did not take part at the Jewish Museum, but at another location with the same setting, though. Katharina Galor was the moderator, another Jewish supporter of the pro-BDS camp, taken her role in promoting Atshan.

Shooman was a former co-worker at the controversial Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA) at Technical University Berlin, which has a long record of antisemitism distorting activities.

Fighting BDS is a core element of today's fight against antisemitism. Therefore, the German Bundestag did an important step to support Jewish life. This has literally nothing to do with Bibi or the right-wing policies and tendencies in Israel. I myself am a left-wing Zionist intellectual. Period.

People such as Moshe Zimmermann who always pretend to be left-wingers, without defaming Zionism, now support such nasty joined statements. I am wondering what Shimon Stein, former Israeli ambassador to Germany, says to his co-author Zimmermann. Both joined statements even admit that BDS is part of antisemitism in Germany or that it can be used as an antisemitic tool. That is the very nature of BDS, mainly the demand of the right of return of Palestinian "refugees" is antisemitic both in intent and in effect. Not a single "Palestinian" who was born in 1951 or in 2019 has the right to "return" to Israel.

The occupation of the West Bank is a threat both to Zionism and to the Palestinian state, indeed. BDS, though, is an existential threat to all Jews in Israel and abroad – it is a "lethal obsession" to quote historian Robert S. Wistrich's (1945–2015) Magnum Opus from 2010.

The Jewish Museum Berlin's endorsing recommendation to read the very troubling article in the German daily taz indicates that it is not just not a Jewish, but even an anti-Jewish museum. Let us hope that donors and public bodies (tax payers money), including the state of Berlin and federal or other funding, for example, think twice before giving money to such an institution next time. That holds for state sponsored universities and big NGOs or political institutes as well, as long as there are scholars and activists who promote a pro-BDS climate on our campuses, in our newspapers and in our

societies in general.

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