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Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by Institute for NGO Research, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[27 August 2019]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Antisemitism in Germany

Antisemitism is a major and resurgent scourge, particularly in Europe, and specifically in Germany. In September 2018, Secretary General António Guterres expressed his concern stating that “the origins of the United Nations itself are rooted in the need to learn the lessons of the Holocaust,” and that being “true to our Charter means combating antisemitism and hatred with all our energy and will.” According to the 2018 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights survey of antisemitism, (the largest of its kind encompassing 96% of the Jewish population in Europe), 8 out of 10 German Jews perceive that antisemitism has increased.

Antisemitism is not a new phenomenon and is manifested in many forms. What has been referred to as a “new” antisemitism includes singling out and blaming the Jewish State. In addition to classical forms of antisemitism, such as tropes targeting Jews as individuals, this “new” antisemitism focuses on denying Jews the right to a nation state and delegitimizing the existence of Israel as the Jewish State.

Recognizing this, in May 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted a new non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism,¹ with Germany being one of its co-initiators. This working definition is meant to serve as a practical tool for different actors, including governments, in combatting antisemitism.

In September 2017, Germany announced its support for the IHRA definition,² with the former Minister of Interior, Thomas de Maizière, declaring that the struggle against antisemitism is a “raison d’être” for Germany.³ Upon adopting the IHRA definition, Germany added an additional sentence, clearly identifying biased criticism of Israel as antisemitic.

On May 17, 2019, the German Bundestag went further, passing a landmark resolution defining BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) campaigns against Israel as antisemitic.⁴ The joint resolution, “Stand Resolutely Against the BDS Movement: Combat Antisemitism,” was supported by the CDU/CSU (The Union), SPD (Social Democratic Party), FDP (Free Democratic Party), and Green parties.⁵ Crucially, the Bundestag called for ending German government funding to groups that promote BDS.

Despite these important steps, both new and classical forms of antisemitism remain prevalent in Germany. While many recognize this phenomenon, leaders and politicians have not yet offered concrete legal measures to combat it.

For instance, during the recent European Parliament elections in 2019, the German neo-Nazi Party Die Rechte (The Right) rebranded a classic antisemitic slogan “The Jews are our misfortune” into “Israel is our misfortune.” On June 1, 2019, the annual Al-Quds-demonstration took place in Berlin. At the rally, individuals called for the destruction of the State of Israel and chanted “Zionism is our enemy” and “child murderer Israel.”⁶

¹ Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, „Declaration of IHRA working definition of antisemitism,“ May 26, 2016: https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf

² German Federal Foreign Office, “International working definition of anti-Semitism supported by the Federal Government,” September 22, 2017: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/kulturdialog/-/229928>

³ Dpa, „Bundesregierung billigt neue Antisemitismus-Definition,“ *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, September 20, 2017: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/kabinett-billigt-neue-antisemitismus-definition-15208055.html>

⁴ German Bundestag, “Bundestag condemns boycott calls against Israel,” 2019: <https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2019/kw20-de-bds-642892>

⁵ German Bundestag, “Stand Resolutely Against the BDS Movement: Combat Antisemitism,” May 15, 2019: <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/101/1910191.pdf>

⁶ Dpa, “Anti-Israel-Demonstration ruft lautstarke Proteste hervor,“ *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, June 1, 2019: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/al-quds-demonstration-ruft-lautstarke-proteste-hervor-16216585.html>

Additionally, there are increasing reports regarding Jewish children and teenagers being targeted and consistently harassed by their classmates because of their religion.⁷

Even Jewish houses of worship are not spared from attacks and according to the reports, every second week, synagogues are attacked in Germany.⁸ The police investigate the perpetrators only in a few cases, and if the incident is brought to court, the rulings often only discuss simple vandalism, “political motivations,” or what has been referred to as “Israel critics.”⁹ The lack of a legally binding definition of antisemitism makes it difficult to prosecute the perpetrators in these cases.

In addition to antisemitism present within Germany, the German government also provides funding to radical anti-Israel NGOs that routinely use antisemitic motifs in their demonization of the Jewish State and the Jewish people to spread their agendas worldwide. Contrary to NGO claims that they are engaging in “legitimate criticism” of Israel, the rhetoric, publications, and activities of these NGOs often violate accepted standards, including the IHRA definition of antisemitism.¹⁰ However, despite the extensive evidence of NGO antisemitism, Germany’s adoption of the IHRA definition, and the motion against federal funding for BDS related NGOs, Germany continues to fund these groups.

For instance, the German government provided an unknown amount to the Palestinian group Kairos Palestine for a 2017-2020 project: “It can be done differently: unite the youth and establish peace education.”¹¹ Kairos Palestine uses theological language to deny the Jewish historical connection to Israel, rationalizes and trivializes terrorism, and promotes BDS.

Similarly, Germany, via its international development funding arm GIZ, partners with “Islamic Relief Palestine” on development projects the West Bank and Gaza.¹² On June 19, 2014, Israel’s Defense Minister declared IRW to be illegal, based on its alleged role in funneling money to Hamas, and banned it from operating in Israel and the West Bank.¹³ According to news reports, the decision was made after “the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet), the coordinator for government activities in the territories, and legal authorities provided incriminating information against IRW.”¹⁴

German governmental funds are also provided to the Palestinian NGO Al-Haq, a leader of anti-Israel “lawfare” and BDS campaigns.¹⁵

⁷ Gudrun Mallwitz and Isabell Jürgens, “Jüdischer Schüler gemobbt,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, June 28, 2018: <https://www.morgenpost.de/berlin/article214707911/Juedischer-Schueler-gemobbt.html>

⁸ Dpa, “Jede zweite Woche Attacke auf Synagoge in Deutschland,” *Welt*, March 31, 2018: <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article175045211/Antisemitismus-Jede-zweite-Woche-Attacke-auf-Synagoge-in-Deutschland.html>

⁹ “Antisemitismus-Forscher: Problem liegt auf staatlicher Seite,” *MIGAZIN*, May 28, 2019: <http://www.migazin.de/2019/05/28/antisemitismus-forscher-problem-liegt-auf-staatlicher-seite/>

¹⁰ German Federal Foreign Office, “International working definition of anti-Semitism supported by the Federal Government,” September 22, 2017: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/kulturdialog/-/229928>

¹¹ Civil Peace Service, Projects “Es geht auch anders: Jugend vereinen und Friedenserziehung etablieren,” Status on 1. Quarter of 2019: <https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/projekt/es-geht-auch-anders-jugend-vereinen-und-friedenserziehung-etablieren>

¹² Islamic Relief Palestine, „Gaza TVET Institutions Celebrate the 2017 TVET Week,“ March 5, 2017: <http://irpal.ps/en/2017/05/03/gaza-tvet-institutions-celebrate-2017-tvet-week/>

¹³ “Israel bans Islamic Relief Worldwide from West Bank due to Hamas ties,” *The Jerusalem Post*, June 19, 2014: <http://www.jpost.com/Operation-Brothers-Keeper/Israel-bans-Islamic-Relief-Worldwide-from-West-Bank-due-to-Hamas-ties-359934>

¹⁴ NGO Monitor, “Islamic Reliefs Alleged Hamas Links Implicate European Funders,” June 24, 2014: http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/islamic_relief_s_alleged_hamas_links_implicate_european_funders

¹⁵ Civil Peace Service, Project „Steter Tropfen: Training und Theater vermitteln Jugendlichen gewaltfreie Alternativen,“ Status on 1. Quarter of 2019: <https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/projekt/steter-tropfen-training-und-theater-vermitteln-jugendlichen-gewaltfreie-alternativen>

The UNHRC should encourage Germany to enhance its transparency and accountability in order to avoid funding to radical and antisemitic NGOs. Germany must also be encouraged to uphold the UN values of combating antisemitism and review both its domestic and international aid policies regarding the promotion of antisemitism. Additionally, Germany should utilize the IHRA definition as a legally binding definition in order to effectively combat antisemitic crimes.
