

UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG

On August 2, 2016, the Student Council of the University of Leipzig adopted the statement below (Number 1) opposing the BDS campaign, which it described as a form of anti-Semitism. The Council's decision drew on a much longer resolution (Number 2 below) introduced on July 9, 2016 by student representatives of the Institute for Cultural Studies at the University that offered rationale for the resolution. The Leipzig resolution is important for the following reasons. It is, as far as I know, the first statement by a German university student council to take a public stance against BDS. Second, support for the resolution came first of all from a department of the Humanities, which is significant as BDS has generally had more support in the Humanities and Social Sciences than in the Natural Sciences, Engineering or Law Faculties. Third, while the resolution passed with a "clear majority," it had support as well from the "Jusos," the youth organization of the left-of-center Social Democratic Party. In view of a long history of leftist antagonism to Israel dating back to the 1960s in West Germany and to 1949 in East Germany, both the content and the origins of the Leipzig resolutions are evidence of a very different stance towards Israel evident among at least these liberal and left-liberal students. For a journalist account of these events, see Benjamin Weinthal's reporting in the Jerusalem Post (<http://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/German-University-students-declare-BDS-anti-Semitic-464596>) and Vijeta Uniyal's report in Legal Insurrection. (<http://legalinsurrection.com/2016/08/read-german-university-student-council-resolution-declaring-bds-anti-semitic/>).

1. On August 2, 2016, the Leipzig University Student Council adopted the following Resolution "Boycott anti-Semitic Campaigns" with a clear majority:

The Student Council condemns anti-Semitic boycott campaigns such as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement and stands against the execution, participation in and promotion of such campaigns and events at the University of Leipzig.

Therefore, the Student Council will not support the BDS Campaign or settings (events, exhibits, demonstrations, etc) in which the BDS Campaign is involved.

We consider international cooperation in scholarship as crucial. As a Student Council we oppose anti-Semitic measures such as disinviting Israeli scholars from conferences in the context of the boycott campaign, and [council will] publicize whenever it happens—thereby contributing to the clarification of the matter and preventing such an occurrence." (translated by Vijeta Uniyal. Also see:

<http://legalinsurrection.com/2016/08/read-german-university-student-council-resolution-declaring-bds-anti-semitic/>) and

<https://www.facebook.com/kulturmeter/posts/1317378594939050>

2. Resolution Introduced to the 9th Meeting to the Leipzig University Student Council on July 12, 2016 by the student representative of the Institute for Cultural Studies (FSR Kulturwissenschaften) concerning "Boycott anti-Semitic campaigns." http://stura.uni-leipzig.de/sites/stura.uni-leipzig.de/files/dokumente/2016/07/bds_amtrag_fsr_kuwi.pdf

Resolution of the Student Representatives of the Institute for the Study of Culture

The Student Council condemns antisemitic boycott campaigns such as the “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions” (BDS) and opposes the implementation, participation and support for such campaigns and meetings at the University of Leipzig. Hence, the Student Council will not participate in the BDS campaigns nor will it support events, exhibits, demonstrations, etc in which the BDS movement participates.

We regard international cooperation as crucial for scholarship. The Student Council opposes antisemitic measures such as the exclusion (Ausladung) of Israeli scholars from conferences in the context of the boycott campaign. When this happens, the Student Council will publicize such actions in order to contribute to education about them and to prevent them from taking place.

At the University of Leipzig we seek greater enlightenment about anti-Semitism in the academic sphere in the academic sphere. We see that effort as a matter of obligation. Part of this obligation must include a clear recognition that the prevention or dissolution of cooperation with Israeli scholars and Israeli institutions due to antisemitic intentions constitutes as serious blow to academic freedom. We regard academic freedom as a great good that must be sustained internationally.

Foundation for the Resolution

On June 30, 2016, in its decision “Against any kind of anti-Semitism,” the Student Council of the University of Leipzig spoke out against all forms of anti-Semitism. This resolution further explains the specific grounds for that statement.

On June 23, 2016, the Global and European Institute of the University of Leipzig sponsored a lecture by the anthropologist Lori Allen of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London and Cambridge University. The author presented her book, “The Rise and Fall of Human Rights. Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine. On the Human Rights Industry in Occupied Palestine.” The book presentation was sponsored by the European Network in Universal and Global History [ENIUGH] in cooperation with the Centre for Area Studies and the Global and European Studies Institute of the University of Leipzig. It was also supported by Stanford University Press and by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research.

In the days preceding the event, the Leipzig Alliance Against Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism pointed out that Allen is a declared supporter of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement,¹ a movement that calls for a comprehensive boycott of Israel and understands itself to be part of “a truly global movement against Israeli apartheid.”² The movement, which was founded in 2005 by Palestinian NGO’s, demands on the basis of United Nations resolution 194 a right of return for all Palestinians who fled or were expelled during Israeli war of independence of 1948/49. On the basis of an exclusive special ruling, one not covered by any UN resolution regarding the

¹ Vgl. URL: <http://mondoweiss.net/2014/10/anthropologists-academic-institutions/> [Stand: 19.07.2016]

² URL: <https://bdsmovement.net/> [08.07.2016]

inheritability of refugee status, the BDS advocates assert that this right of return applies to the descendants of all male refugees as well as their adopted children.³ Following this reasoning, the approximately 9 million people in Israel's population today face, according to the UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Work Agency] about 5 million Palestinian refugees.⁴ Yet, the UN resolution of 1948 makes the readiness for peaceful coexistence a precondition for the return of refugees to Israel. Moreover, the incorporation of 5 million Palestinians in Israel would mean the end of Israel as an independent Jewish state and as a power protecting Jewish men and women.

In view of the fact that Hamas, Hizbollah and the Iranian government openly and ceaselessly express threats of extermination not only against Israel but also against Jews around the world,⁵ the demands of the BDS campaign present an existential threat to Jews. In view of these circumstances, the BDS campaign for the implementation of the right of return for Palestinian refugees and the end of the Israeli occupation can only be described as an effort to abolish the state of Israel.

The BDS movement focuses above all on a consumer boycott and a boycott of Israeli goods, above all from what the BDS movement calls the "occupied territories" of parts of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. The shift of a factory of the Israeli firm Soda Stream from a village in the West Bank to a southern Israeli city in the Negev that was due, in part, to protests against Soda Stream from the BDS movement, is an example of the boycott. In this case, as happens so often, the negative effects of the boycott fall on those for whom BDS claims to speak, namely the 500 Palestinians who worked for Soda Stream and who lost their jobs as a result of the transfer of the factory out of the West Bank.

The BDS campaign for a consumer boycott has found considerable support for it offers identification of individual protest with "a movement." According to BDS, the goal of the boycott is to make consumers aware of the living conditions of the Palestinians "under Israel's occupation and apartheid regime" and thereby to exert economic pressure on "this regime." The academic and cultural boycott is also part of this boycott effort.

In an essay on the distinction between criticism of Israel, on the one hand, and anti-Semitism, on the other, the social and political scientist Samuel Salzborn describes the BDS movement as "an example of an influential anti-Semitic campaign against Israel which can be structurally distinguished from criticism of Israel."⁶ In this regard, Salzborn writes that the BDS movement not only delegitimizes and demonizes Israel. It also applies double standards to it. "The BDS campaign errs in so far as it operates with double standards. This is the case because the boycott campaign is conducted against a democracy [Israel, JH] but not an authoritarian state, does not demand that the Palestinian groups cease their barbaric suicide-murder attacks or the firing of missiles and rockets at [Israeli] civilians, and calls into question Israeli defensive efforts against this terrorism."⁷

³ URL: <http://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees> [Stand: 19.07.2016]

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Antisemitismus und Antizionismus in der Charta der Hamas URL: <http://goo.gl/Wpcl93> [Stand: 08.07.2016]

⁶ Salzborn, Samuel: "Israelkritik oder Antisemitismus? Kriterien für eine Unterscheidung. In: *Kirche und Israel. Neukirchener Theologische Zeitschrift*, 28. Jahrgang, Heft 1.2013, p. 11. URL: http://www.salzborn.de/txt/2013_Kirche-und-Israel.pdf [Stand: 08.07.2016]

⁷ Ibid.

The Leipzig Alliance against anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism also points to the projective collective view of the Israelis in the thinking of the author: “Lori Allen supports and actively calls for the academic boycott of universities and academic institutions in Israel. Her declared goal is to prevent academic dialogue with all scholars active in Israel. In so doing, her agitation incorporates all individuals active in Israel into a collective detention [*Kollektivhaft*]. The subsumption of the individual under the collective is evidence of a deeply völkisch understanding of criminal law, according to which only the actor but not the act is to be condemned. In so doing, BDS moves into the cultural realm of National Socialism. Both condemn the Jews not for what they do but rather for what they are. In expressing this form of thinking, Lori Allen becomes an open enemy of the free expression of ideas and association in the academy.”⁸

Anti-Semitism and BDS: Delegitimation, Demonization, Double Standards

Although the anti-Semitism that is at the core of the BDS campaign is not hard to recognize, many present it as legitimate “criticism of Israel [Israelkritik].” In view of the fact that the term “Israelkritik” has spread through German society and has penetrated deeply into the political left, its anti-Semitic character has become clear. No such term exists that applies to any other state in regard to the actions of its government. In German, one does not refer to “Amerikakritik” or “Kanadakritik” or “Chinakritik.” “Israelkritik” refers to Israel as a whole and subsumes ultimately the Jews per se, who, according to anti-Semitic logic, must necessarily be at least be boycotted, fought and finally exterminated.

The fundamental goal of the BDS movement, the comprehensive boycott of the state of Israel connects seamlessly to the anti-Semitic boycott campaigns of decades past and explicitly to the National Socialism. The Nazi slogan “don’t buy from Jews” [Kauft nicht bei Juden] here again finds its realization. Hence, the BDS movement often campaigns against individual Jews by placing in the foreground their function, for example as head of a firm. In so doing, it expresses the anti-Semitic motif of the wealthy and powerful Jew who must be fought.

The Jewish political figure Natan Sharansky has referred to the “3-D” model for examining the mechanisms of anti-Semitism. Though he has not elaborated the model in a systematic or theoretical analysis, the model is useful for distinguishing anti-Semitism aimed at Israel from legitimate criticism of Israeli policies. The three “D’s” refer to double-standards, delegitimation and demonization of the state of Israel. They foster anti-Semitism aimed at Israel. The academic boycott of the BDS movement can be placed in this schema.

It is a double standard when Israel alone but no other states are diagnosed. The antagonism of bourgeois states apparently appears only with Israel. The above mentioned term “Israelkritik” points to this double standard. In the BDS logic in general and also specifically in the academic boycott, this double standard emerges in exemplary form because BDS demands that Israel and no other state should be boycotted. In the face of the fact that there are states in which professors have been arrested for expressing their views while Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, the anti-Semitic logic of the

⁸ Flugblatt Bündnis gegen Antisemitismus und Antizionismus Leipzig URL: https://baaleipzig.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/flugblatt_lori_allen.pdf [Stand: 08.07.2016]

BDS movement is virtually immune and unable to explain the selectivity of its indignation.

The delegitimation of the state of Israel is manifest in that its right to exist is denied, the state itself is delegitimized. Thereby, as well, the necessity for Jews to be able to live in security, one that had not been previously realized was also denied. The delegitimation threat, the denial of Israel's right to exist was explicit in the exemplary actions of British scholars in 2015. For their explanation, that the campaign would continue until Israel recognized "universal human rights," meant nothing other than the preliminary denial of Israel's right of existence. Only when Israel would change to satisfy the BDS movement, which in reality would amount to the dissolution of the state itself, would Israel be granted the right which is never discussed regarding other states, namely, the right to exist.

To describe the democratic state of Israel as an "apartheid state" or "regime" as the BDS campaign commonly does, is part of the demonization of Israel. In the academic sphere, this demonization is evident in the demand for an end to cooperation with Israel in the field of military research. That follows from the denial of Israel's right to self-defense and the denial of its necessity which again represents another form of delegitimation. However, above all, demonization lies behind these forms of delegitimation. It appears in the presentation of Israelis as "child murderers," as an "evil" state whose goal consists in depriving the Palestinians of any foundation of existence. Israel is presented as "superpower" [Übermacht] and an "aggressor," terms that are at least a simplification of the Middle East conflict. The demand to deny Israel every form of military support amounts to a demand for the dissolution of the state itself for in view of the ongoing threat, Israel could not exist without being able to defend itself.

In a survey conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation [associated with the Social Democratic Party] more than a quarter of Germans agreed with the following statement: "What the state of Israel is doing today to the Palestinians is, in principle, nothing other than what the Nazis did to the Jews in the Third Reich." Agreement with that statement is, next to a specific form of defense against guilt also part of the above mentioned demonization. Israel as the bad and evil in general must be abolished so that the bad and evil will disappear and a good, beautiful world will be possible. Exterminatory anti-Semitism is evident as well in this expression of demonization. All of the evil in the world is projected onto "the Jews as such." As a result, the good life can only first exist when there are no more Jews.

A fundamental analysis of the mechanisms of anti-Semitism and its manifestations in the BDS movement encompasses certainly more than the "3-D scheme." Yet it suffices to clearly show what kinds of intentions are at work in the BDS movement. For us, Israel's right to exist and its right to self-defense are non-negotiable. When we engage against every form of anti-Semitism and want to explain it, now we must especially and effectively opposed the BDS movement and work against it at the University of Leipzig.

The author [Lori Allen] used the lecture not only to discuss her publication but also to go on the offensive for BDS. As an academic supporter of the BDS campaign, she presented the attainment of its goals as the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to Allen, the conflict could be solved only by the Palestinian's national liberation struggle and not through humanitarian UN projects because such efforts

undermined the Palestinians of their ability to act as a collective subject. With such arguments, Allen not only relativized terrorist violence as an expression of supposed hopelessness. She also found the roots of terrorism in a collective political and cultural condition of the Palestinians supposedly caused by the occupation. Allen thus places the reduction of individual suffering by humanitarian help behind the political project of the national liberation struggle of the Palestinians.

translated by Jeffrey Herf