

Palestinian President Abbas' Holocaust remark and the hypocrisy of Germany's media and political establishment

Peter Schwarz
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A statement by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas comparing Israeli massacres of Palestinians with the Holocaust has provoked from German media outlets and politicians a storm of indignation that would be hard to beat for its mendacity.

At a joint press conference with Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Tuesday, Abbas was asked if he would apologize to Israel on the 50th anniversary of the terrorist attack on the Israeli Olympic team in Munich. Abbas did not give a direct answer, but then said, "Israel has committed 50 massacres in 50 Palestinian settlements since 1947 to this day." He added, "Fifty massacres, 50 Holocausts."

Scholz was visibly angered but did not react. The press conference ended immediately after Abbas' statement. Later, the German chancellor reprimanded his guest via Twitter. "I am deeply outraged by the unspeakable statements of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas," Scholz wrote. "Especially for us Germans, any relativization of the Holocaust is intolerable and unacceptable. I condemn any attempt to deny the crimes of the Holocaust."

Abbas assured the Palestinian news agency Wafa that he did not want to question the uniqueness of the Holocaust during his visit to the chancellery. This is the most heinous crime in modern human history, he said. Rather, he wanted to draw attention to the crimes committed by the Israeli army against the Palestinian people.

Nevertheless, a deafening scream arose. Above all, the Christian Democrats (CDU), who helped numerous high-ranking Nazis find new careers after the Second World War, took the lead:

"An incredible event in the Chancellery" (CDU leader Friedrich Merz); "to remain silent after such a gaffe is unforgivable" (CDU Deputy Matthias Hauer); "the worst gaffe ever heard in the Chancellery" (ex-CDU leader Armin Laschet); "Abbas is a notorious Holocaust trivialiser. And he legitimizes and finances Palestinian terror" (Volker Beck, Greens); "a moral disgrace" (Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid).

The media reacted similarly: "Probably one of the largest

calculated taboo breaks that a president ever committed in the Berlin Chancellery" (public broadcaster ARD); "The Chancellor must show where he stands" (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*); "Abbas has finally exposed himself as an anti-Semitic agitator" (*Augsburger Allgemeine*); "Abbas relativizes the Holocaust ... and Scholz remains silent" (*Bild*).

This cynicism is hard to top. If the opinion makers in Germany really want to fight against Holocaust disparagement and anti-Semitism, they ought to start on their own doorstep. Since the German government openly declared its goal of becoming a military superpower again in 2014, the crimes of the Nazi regime in Germany have been systematically trivialised.

Christoph Vandreier, the chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (SGP), examined this issue in detail in his 2018 book *Why are they back?* We encourage our readers to study this book, which is now more relevant than ever.

When the Berlin historian Jörg Baberowski announced in *Der Spiegel* in February 2014 that Hitler was "not a psychopath" and was "not vicious" because he allegedly did not want to "talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table," the administration of Humboldt University and numerous academic colleagues throughout Germany supported and defended him. The media did not attack Baberowski but instead denounced the Socialist Equality Party (SGP), which was accused of bullying because the party condemned Baberowski's trivialization of Hitler's crimes.

Baberowski's efforts to rehabilitate Ernst Nolte—"Nolte was done an injustice. Historically speaking, he was right"—met with broad support in the media and among politicians. Already in 1986, Nolte tried to justify the Nazi regime, thus triggering the Historians' Dispute, in which numerous well known academics, including Jürgen Habermas, opposed him. Now, apart from the SGP and numerous student representatives, there is no longer any opposition to Nolte.

Even when Baberowski put the Holocaust on par with executions in the Russian civil war—"It was basically the same thing: industrial killing"—this was not considered, unlike Abbas' remark, trivializing the Holocaust.

The political scientist Herfried Münkler, Baberowski's colleague at Humboldt University, openly explained at the time that such a trivialization of Nazi crimes was necessary in order to pursue an aggressive foreign policy. "It is difficult to pursue a responsible policy in Europe if you have the idea that we were to blame for everything," he told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

In this climate, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) prospered. The AfD's trivialization of the Nazi regime is notorious. Just think of Alexander Gauland's comment comparing the Nazi regime to "bird shit" and Björn Höcke's attacks on the Holocaust Memorial. Despite its Nazi apologetics, the party was politically courted, promoted by the media and entrusted with leading parliamentary committees.

With the war in Ukraine, the trivialization of Nazi crimes has assumed new dimensions. The German government is now openly cooperating with political forces that not only downplay these crimes but glorify them.

For example, Ukrainian Ambassador Andrij Melnyk, who reveres Nazi collaborator and mass murderer Stepan Bandera as a "hero," was long treated like a star by the media. Even when Melnyk had to leave his post in Berlin this summer because he publicly denied the murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews, Poles and Russians by Bandera's OUN, leading German politicians mourned his departure.

It is well known that the veneration of Bandera is not a personal trait of Melnyk but official Ukrainian state ideology. There are now 40 monuments to the Nazi collaborator, Mussolini admirer and hardened anti-Semite in the country. The largest, in Lviv, is seven meters (23 feet) high and stands in front of a 30-meter (98-foot) arch. The memorial in Ivano-Frankivsk covers an area equivalent to six football fields.

The elite units of the Ukrainian army are recruited from fanatical neo-Nazis such as the Azov Battalion, which networks with violent fascists all over the world.

But this does not bother the politicians and scribblers who are outraged about Abbas' alleged anti-Semitism. Their moral standards are based on the foreign policy interests of German imperialism and are correspondingly flexible, depending on whether it is an ally or an opponent.

While the comparison of an ally with the Nazis is regarded as a trivialization of the Holocaust and an example of anti-Semitism, opponents such as Russian President Vladimir Putin are constantly equated with Hitler, without any concern expressed from the same quarters. Reports of this nature appear in the German media almost daily. Even the renowned historian Heinrich August Winkler has written a guest article for *Die Zeit* entitled, "What links Putin with Hitler."

The ranting against Abbas is a diversionary manoeuvre directed against the growing popular opposition to German militarism and the war in Ukraine. It is becoming clearer every day that the US, Germany and NATO are waging a proxy war in Ukraine against Russia, which is being fought on the backs of the Ukrainian people.

NATO trains the soldiers, supplies the weapons, selects the targets and has long since been on site with its own specialists. Its goal is not a democratic Ukraine but the subjugation and dismemberment of Russia, which possesses some of the most valuable resources in the world and is to be eliminated as a potential ally of China.

Abbas is a representative of the Palestinian Arab bourgeoisie. In the West Bank, he plays the role of prison guard for Israel and its imperialist allies. His corrupt Palestinian Authority, which is largely funded by the European Union, dispatches its police against rebellious young people and is so hated by the population that Abbas has repeatedly postponed parliamentary elections for 16 years.

If the 87-year-old nevertheless occasionally blurts out his anger, it is because he receives absolutely no thanks from Israel for his services. The negotiations on the promised two-state solution have been stalled since 2014. The more Abbas prostrates himself before the Israeli government, the more brutally it acts against the Palestinian people, in violation of UN and international law.

The Israeli government itself is working unscrupulously with ultra-right and even anti-Semitic forces all over the world. Under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, so many right-wing and nationalist politicians visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial that it was given the nickname "washing machine."

Among the politicians who were washed clean in this way are not only former US President Donald Trump, but also Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán; the head of the far-right Italian Lega, Matteo Salvini; former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, who has compared himself to Hitler; and many others.

The accusation of anti-Semitism has long been leveled against all those who criticize the brutal and illegal policy towards the Palestinians by the government of Israel, which is politically and militarily closely allied with Germany. It is also used to intimidate opponents of German militarism.



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