Berlin’s Jewish Museum sacks an employee for describing Israel as an apartheid state

Stefan Steinberg
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Berlin’s world renowned Jewish Museum has fired one of its tour guides for telling the truth about the state of Israel. The guide, Udi Raz, who announced the dismissal publicly on Instagram, had referred to Israel as an apartheid state during his guided tours. In the entry on the social network Raz stated: “I used the term ‘apartheid’ during my tours to describe the human rights situation in the West Bank.”

The sacking of Raz is yet another example of the systematic repression by the German government, media and politicians, assisted by Israeli surrogates, directed against Jewish opponents of the genocidal policy in Gaza being carried out by the Netanyahu regime. Udi Raz is an executive member of the Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East. Just two weeks ago, another board member of the organisation, Iris Hefets, was detained by German police, for walking alone across a Berlin public square with a sign bearing the text: “As a Jew & Israeli Stop the Genocide in Gaza.”

In referring to Israel as an apartheid state, Raz was merely reiterating the standpoint of a number of organisations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Israeli human rights group B’Tselem, which have all used this term to describe Israel’s denial of basic democratic rights to Palestinians.

The blatant disenfranchisement of all Palestinians was inscribed in Israeli law in July 2018 when the Knesset in Tel Aviv approved its “Nation-State Bill,” which declared that the “right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is overseeing the present campaign of war crimes in Gaza, personally spelled out the consequences of the law, declaring that Israel is “the national state, not of all its citizens, but only of the Jewish people.”

In addition to the organisations listed above, many Jewish academics and public figures have also denounced Israel’s decades-long discrimination of Palestinians. The designation “apartheid regime” was used by the Israeli-born historian and professor of Holocaust and genocide studies at Brown University, Omer Bartov, who in August this year initiated a petition, which stated: “There can be no democracy for Jews in Israel while Palestinians live under an apartheid regime.”

The petition was signed by over 2,000 academics, clergy and other public figures. Following claims in the media and social networks that the appellation apartheid in relation to Israel amounted to antisemitism, Amos Goldberg, professor in the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, affirmed that describing Israel’s treatment of Palestinians as “apartheid” was not antisemitic.

The latest organisation to come under fire from the media and German politicians from across the political spectrum is the school students’ environmental movement Fridays For Future (FFF), which in May denounced Israel as “officially an apartheid state.” Most recently its leading figure, Greta Thunberg, has in ritual fashion been denounced as “antisemitic” after a blog was posted featuring Thunberg and supporters combining the call for “Climate Justice Now” with the slogans “Stand for Gaza” and “Free Palestine.” Thunberg and the central leadership of Fridays For Future have repeatedly and vehemently refuted all the accusations of antisemitism made against them.

Nevertheless, following a barrage of criticism from the German establishment, Luise Neubauer, the head of the FFF, disgracefully capitulated to the pressures and

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attacked Thunberg. Claiming to speak for the German section of Fridays for Future, Neubauer said in an interview with the German weekly *Die Zeit* that she was "disappointed that Greta Thunberg has not yet said anything concrete about the Jewish victims of the massacre on October 7" and announced she would consider an end to the German section's current collaboration with the international leadership of FFF.

The dismissal of Udi Raz is not the first such case in the history of the Jewish Museum in Berlin. In June 2019 the then director of the Jewish Museum, Peter Schäfer, was forced to resign following a vicious campaign alleging he was also guilty of antisemitism. The trigger for Schäfer's resignation was the accusation that under his management, the museum supported the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

The accusation referred to a tweet from the press section of the Jewish Museum pointing to an article in the *taz* newspaper. The latter dealt with a protest by 240 Jewish and Israeli scientists against the resolution passed by the German parliament (*Bundestag*) on May 17, 2019, which condemned the BDS movement and declared it to be antisemitic. The reactionary resolution was supported by deputies from all the governing parties, including the Green Party and the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

The resolution also had the tacit support of the fascist and rabidly antisemitic Alternative for Germany (AfD), which only abstained in the vote because it had put forward its own motion calling for an outright ban on the BDS.

The Bundestag resolution stipulated that the State of Israel be regarded as a "Jewish collective," whose security is "part of the raison d'être of our country." Based on this definition of the "raison d'être" of the German state, any challenge to or even criticism of Israel and its government is now being interpreted as a crime by the police and judiciary, which are now banning demonstrations and arresting protesters on the basis of displays of the Palestine flag or "Israelfeindlichkeit," i.e., hostility to Israel.

Workers and youth must take heed, The persecution of Jewish and Palestinian opponents of the massacre of civilians in Gaza is an integral part of the German government's campaign to ban not only all criticism of Israeli policy but also to silence all criticism of its own complicity in the genocide now taking place and generally suppress opposition to the existing social order.

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