

Munich university censors lecture by UN Special Rapporteur for human rights who has accused Israel of genocide

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11 February 2025

In the latest act of blatant censorship of critics of Israel's genocidal policy in Gaza, the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU) cancelled at short notice a hall reserved for a lecture to be given by the Italian lawyer Francesca Albanese.

Albanese is the United Nations Special Rapporteur for human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel and was due to give a lecture on February 16 entitled "Colonialism, Human Rights and International Law." Following the official announcement of the lecture at the end of January, it was promptly cancelled by the LMU.

In an email to the organisers, the university stated that the cancellation of the lecture room was due to the political orientation of the lecture, as well as security concerns which could arise due to an expected "clash of opinions."

As early as March 2024, Albanese, in her official function for the UN, declared that she saw "reasonable grounds" for assuming genocide in Israel's military action in Gaza.

Then, in a report issued by the UN last October, Albanese went further, and stated that the actions of the Israeli government following its invasion of Gaza fulfilled all the criteria according to international law for the crime of genocide. The UN report expands on the previous analysis made in March by including the Israeli army incursion into the West Bank.

The preface to the October report notes that Albanese's work

focuses on genocidal intent, contextualising the situation within a decades-long process of

territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing aimed at liquidating the Palestinian presence in Palestine. She suggests that genocide should be seen as integral and instrumental to the aim of full Israeli colonization of Palestinian land while removing as many Palestinians as possible.

Describing the historic persecution of Palestinians as Israel's colonial settler project, the UN report declared that the world was now seeing "the bitter fruits of the impunity granted to Israel. The current situation is a predicted tragedy."

All of the warnings made by Albanese have been completely confirmed by the actions of the Israeli military and government in the months since October.

The censorship of Albanese's lecture was sharply criticised by the Decolonial Practices Group at the LMU, which had invited her to speak. The group issued a statement declaring that

We are deeply concerned about yet another case in which an urgently needed academic discourse on the serious situation in Israel/Palestine is being denied in Germany.

In an open letter to the university management, three prominent professors, including Professor of Ensemble Playing and Violin at the Said-Barenboim Academy Michael Barenboim (son of Daniel Barenboim), also criticised the LMU's decision, stating

that the cancellation of the hall was “a direct affront to the principles of academic freedom and democratic engagement,” which “sets a dangerous precedent, with far-reaching consequences for the German research landscape and its international reputation.”

Albanese herself reacted to the cancellation with a post on X: “When ideology starts to silence people, there is no more freedom.”

The LMU’s cancellation of Albanese’s lecture is the latest in a long line of censorious measures by the authorities in Munich. In September 2022, the Munich city council, a coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Green Party, sought to prevent Pink Floyd co-founder Roger Waters from performing his “This Is Not a Drill” show at the city-owned Olympiahalle. Waters has been a vehement critic of Israel’s persecution of the Palestinian people.

In September 2023, the Christian Social Union (CSU) city councillor and vice chairman of the Trafo community centre, Leo Agerer, cancelled at short notice a lecture titled “Palestine - Israel: What Next?” by the leading Israeli historian Ilan Pappé. Pappé is a university professor and the author of the book *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Already in 2009 Munich authorities censored a talk by Pappé on the situation in occupied Palestine.

At that time Pappé wrote an open letter to the mayor of Munich, stating that “in the 1930s my father, a German Jew, was silenced in a similar manner, and I am saddened to discover the same censorship in 2009.”

This list of attempts by the authorities in Munich to silence all critics of the murderous policy of the Israel government could be extended at length.

An indication of the driving forces behind the numerous efforts to quell any criticism of Israel was provided by a report on the economic and political relations between the state of Bavaria and Israel issued just a few days after the latest censorship measures at the LMU.

Following a meeting between Bavarian and Israeli business and political leaders, a February 7, 2025 report noted that close diplomatic relations between Bavaria and Israel have existed for 60 years. Speaking to the meeting, Klaus Josef Lutz, President of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce for Munich and Upper Bavaria, praised the close bilateral cooperation, declaring: “Against the backdrop of history, German-

Israeli relations are a miracle and a symbol of hope and reconciliation.”

In response, Israel’s Consul General Talya Lador-Fresher also lauded the long-standing links between Bavaria and Israel, noting that the very first Israeli diplomatic mission was opened in Munich only a few days after Israel’s declaration of independence in 1948. She then went on to praise the role played by the former German Defence Minister and later Bavarian state premier Franz Josef Strauss, who approved the first-ever deliveries of German weapons to Israel in 1957.

In a previous meeting last September with the Israeli Consul, the Bavarian Minister for Digital Affairs, Dr Fabian Mehring, went so far as to declare “the Bavarian-Israeli partnership to be part of the DNA of our state.”

The censorship of the United Nations Special Rapporteur for human rights takes place a week before the annual Munich Security Conference. It makes clear that while there may be some crocodile tears shed at the conference over the latest proposal by President Donald Trump to ethnically cleanse Gaza, there will be no change to the German government’s unstinting support for the Israeli government.

The current federal election campaign in Germany has witnessed a deafening silence on the disastrous situation for the population of Gaza following its devastation at the hands of Israel. The only party in the election campaign to raise the issue of the defence of the Palestine people and the prosecution of the war criminals responsible for their plight is the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei.



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