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Germany, Shame on You and Your anti-BDS Resolution

- To understand - Analysis and debate -



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By Gideon Levy. Published on May 19, 2019 on Haaretz website.

Germany has just criminalized justice. A blend of warranted guilt feelings, orchestrated and taken to sickening extremes by cynical and manipulative Israeli extortion, caused the federal parliament on Friday to pass one of the most outrageous and bizarre resolutions since the end of World War II. The Bundestag has defined the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement against Israel as anti-Semitic. Benjamin Netanyahu and Gilad Erdan rejoiced. Germany ought to be ashamed.



Visitors walk inside the glass dome of the Reichstag building, the seat of the German lower house of parliament Bundestag in Berlin, Germany, January 12, 2018.

From now on, Germany will consider every supporter of BDS to be a Jew-hater ; saying "the Israeli occupation" will be like saying "Heil Hitler." From now on, Germany cannot boast of its freedom of speech. It has become an agent of Israeli colonialism. While some are indeed anti-Semites, the majority of BDS supporters are persons of conscience who believe that an apartheid state deserved to be boycotted. What's anti-Semitic about that ? The majority of parties in the Bundestag supported the resolution, including that of Chancellor Angela Merkel, the conscience of Europe. How sad. So paralyzing are the guilt feelings, so effective the propaganda.

Does Merkel think that Daniel Barenboim - the musical director of the Berlin State Opera and the principal conductor for life of its orchestra, the Staatskapelle, a prime example of an artist who is committed to conscience and morality, a proud Jew and embarrassed Israeli, the co-founder of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, an Israeli patriot, yes patriot, who fears with every fiber of his being for the future of the country of his youth - is also an anti-Semite ? Barenboim may not explicitly support BDS, but for years he has quietly boycotted Israel's concert halls. He cannot bring himself to play for Israelis when, less than a one-hour drive from the auditorium, a nation is groaning under the occupation. That is his noble way of expressing his protest. Merkel is his friend. She undoubtedly admires his sense of justice. What will she say to him now ?

What will the German legislators say about those who call to boycott the products of sweatshops or of the meat industry ? Will they criminalize them as well ? What about the sanctions on Russia, over its invasion of Crimea ? Why is one occupation worthy of a boycott and another of cheers ? What did Germans think about the sanctions on South

Africa ? What is the difference ?

It's permissible to call for a boycott against a tyrannical regime ; in fact, it's obligatory. It's also permissible to think differently, to think there is no Palestinian people and no occupation, only a chosen people in the promised land. But to criminalize justice-seeking Germans as anti-Semites ? I know a few of them, and they have absolutely nothing in common with anti-Semites. One more push from the Erdans, and BDS will be designated as a terrorist organization.

Guilt feelings are always a bad counselor. This time they turned out to be a particularly terrible one. Germany is not a country like any other. It carries a deep obligation to the state of the Jews. It is duty-bound to contribute to its security and its growth, but that duty must not be allowed to include moral blindness and automatic license for Israel to do whatever it wants and to scorn the resolutions of the international institutions that were established in the wake of the war that Germany instigated. Germany has a duty to support Israel, but like any true friend it must also do everything possible to prevent it from being an evil state. Fighting opposition to the occupation is not friendship.

Germany may supply Israel with submarines, but it must also place ethical demands on the state. On the margins of its guilt toward the Jews, it also carries an indirect moral responsibility for the fate of the people that lives in the land to which the Jews fled from Germany in terror and in which they created a state. Germany also has an obligation to those who would not have been deprived of their land and their rights if not for the Holocaust. This people has been living for decades under the Israeli boot. Germany must aid in its liberation.

In passing this resolution, the Bundestag did not do right by Israel, by justice or by international law. Only the Israeli occupation profited from it. The Bundestag does not have to support BDS, it's permissible to object to the boycott movement, but to criminalize it as anti-Semitic, especially in Germany ? The "other Germany" betrayed its duty to its own conscience-driven civil society, to the Palestinians and also to Israel.

Gideon Levy

Haaretz Correspondent