**Statement on Allegations of Anti-Semitism**

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Allegations of anti-Semitism against me have once again arisen – this time in Germany - and in the same circumstances as two years ago when some pro-Israeli elements tried to prevent universities in France from hosting me. I am to speak in Berlin, Freiburg, Bonn and Hamburg.

The accusations are largely directed against BDS internationally and more specifically BDS-South Africa. I am accused of anti-Semitism, directly and by by association as the Chairperson of the Board of BDS-SA. A specific utterly baseless accusation that BDS-SA has called for the killing of Jews is also made by these pro-Israeli elements.

These accusations are part of a hundred of million dollar dollar Israeli government funded operation orchestrated to narrow the parameters of what is possible and even thinkable for those who support the Palestinians in their struggle for justice. The logic of this lobby is quite simple; controversialize support for the Palestinians in areas – including universities – where ignorance sadly reigns, and make life as difficult as possible for university administrations and the entities that hire out venues for Palestine solidarity events. Administrators generally just want to get on with their lives and seldom welcome controversy.

I don’t for a moment believe that those who make these accusations take them seriously. Unfortunately, like Joseph Goebbels (d. 1945), they do believe that if you tell a lie often enough, then people will begin to believe it. I am thus regrettably compelled to yet again set the record straight.

1. Neither I, nor anyone on the staff or board of BDS have **ever** made any statement that could be reasonably interpreted as anti-Semitism. (By “anti-Semitism” I mean the idea that evil or anything negative is peculiar to the Jewish people as an ethnic or religious group).
2. Throughout my life I have consistently opposed all forms of racism. By ‘racism’ I mean prejudice plus power, and the idea that any human character trait or quality – good or bad – can be attributed to a particular race or ethnic group by those in power and be exploited for it. In fact, I argue that the very idea of peculiar races is a scientific absurdity.
3. Racism can take various forms – and to the extent that many Jews (and others) view themselves as a race, anti-Jewishness can also be described as racism. This form of racism has been a deep and insidious evil for much of Christendom’s history.
4. While in Muslim societies anti-Jewishness had never reached the barbaric levels that it had in Europe where it culminated in the killing of approximately 6 million Jews, a number of Muslim societies were also guilty of systemic anti-Jewish discrimination and sadly, anti-Jewish racism is not uncommon amongst Muslims today. As a Muslim, I have expressed my remorse and anger at this, regularly condemned it as an activist and have written about this as an academic. I have spearheaded a campaign against Muslim anti-Semitism.
5. When a people – any people – defines itself in racial or in genetically essentialized terms (e.g., “I am who I am because this is in my blood lines”) and demands to be recognized as such, or they ascribe particular human characteristics or responsibilities as peculiar to them because their ‘blood’ or skin pigmenatation, then this a form of racism.
6. Assigning or assuming particular specific social roles or expectations to people based on the idea of blood lines is also racism. Examples of these are “White people are created to care for Black people,” “All White people are devils,” “The Irish are dumb,” or “Jews are a chosen people.”
7. To elevate one form of racism – in this case anti-Semitism – to a class of its own with a special place in hell reserved for anti-Semites – is actually another manifestation of White privilege. It is also about Europe projecting its anxieties on the whole world. Those are who are genuinely concerned about anti-Semitism as an extension of their opposition to all forms of racism must guard against not elevating this form of racism as a crime worse than others. This is particularly pertinent when in their daily lives Jews do not experience discrimination along the lines that say Black people do. All forms of racism matters but some forms of racism such as anti-Black racism carry enormous political, academic and economic power which can be and are used every day to dehumanize black people.
8. Some Jews are desperately trying to make the current State of Israel synonymous with Jewish identity and to make this a rigid form of orthodoxy which must become a criterion for civilization. For them, to criticize that State of Israel means to criticize all Jews. They have “synonymized” the two (Jews and the State). Many others, including some orthodox religious Jews and anti- or non Zionist Jews, reject this “synonymization.” This logic is akin to the ISIS saying that anyone who does not buy into their particular form of Islam is a *Kafir* (Ar. ‘heretic’), or an Islamophobe who hates Muslims. To buy into this logic (Judaism/Jews = The State of Israel) is to exclude the many Jews who do not agree with the State of Israel (either the idea of a Jewish state or the idea that that State can commit no wrong.)
9. Political Zionism is one mechanism which many Jews in the world today see the as the guarantee of the survival of the Jewish people. Some Zionist would argue “the only way to survive”. Historically it is a peculiarly European phenomenon for which another people, the Palestinians, have had to pay a steep price – in lives, dignity and land. Political Zionists – many of whom have been atheists - conflate this political project with the Biblical idea of God’s promise to the Jewish people – thus the concept of the Promised Land.
10. Communities are, of course, free to believe in notions of God’s promises. However, when we are dealing with other communities who have their own Gods or understanding of God and their own sacred texts then things are bound to get messy. Currently the only mechanisms that we have to enable some conversation to get out this mess is universal human rights, international law and dialogical ethics. (The fact that both states and non-state players regularly resort to brute force to implement their will regardless of these does not render them invalid or useless – particularly not to those concerned with human freedom and justice.)
11. BDS is an international campaign to hold Israel accountable for its numerous human rights violations against the Palestinians. It has **everything to with the consequences** of European anti-Semitism for the Palestinian people but **nothing to do with past record of that European ant-Semitism**. Sadly, below the surface, anti-Jewishness is alive and well in Europe. (And I am soekaing of “Old Europe” not the Europe of recent immigrants.
12. BDS internationally is rooted in and draws its inspiration the successful Boycott movement of the South African struggle against Apartheid. This was a movement in which the German churches and many ordinary German played a significant role. Being Anti-Apartheid, made you anti-white supremacist South Africa; it did not make you anti-South Africa, nor did it mean that you were anti-white people.
13. Singling out Apartheid South Africa for sanctions in the Sixties and the Seventies did not mean that you had a particular hatred for white South Africans. It only means that if you took activism seriously that you realized that you had only 24 hours in a day.
14. The choice of which manifestations of injustice individuals and groups decide to focus on is really there own. Chosing to work on the Burmese oppression of the Rohingya Muslims, does not make one a Burmese hater. Choosing to foucss on issues of gender justice rather than on Black lives matter does not make you anti-Black.
15. BDS-South Africa works with all communities, including the Jewish community, on questions of justice and liberation for the Palestinians. It is part of an international, non-violent movement for liberation of, yes, primarily, the Palestinians. However, in the same way that the end of Apartheid meant the serious possibility for many white racists to become fully human and liberated from their racism, and in the same way that justice for women means the liberation of men, in the same way, the freedom of Palestinians will also mean the liberation of many Zionists from their racism and their fears of the Palestinians.