

# Finkelstein Banned in Berlin: A Democracy that isn't a Democracy

Anis Hamadeh, February 18, 2010

Dr. Norman Finkelstein wrote several books in the field Israel/Palestine/Holocaust and is one of the most sagacious analysts of our time. Similar to Professor Ilan Pappé, he formulates sharp criticism in respect to past and presence of the State of Israel, and both use very rational argumentations and are reliable researchers. Especially since the mass murders in Jenin and in Gaza, these two men and many other Jews (also in Germany) speak out, because they do not want to be counted among supporters of violence by a state that arrogates to itself the right to speak and act in the name of all Jews.

As is known now, both the Heinrich Boell Foundation and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation have canceled Finkelstein talks that were already scheduled in Berlin. While the foundation close to the Green party did not even bother to explain its behavior, the board of the foundation close to the Left party explained its drawback in a media info with the empty statement that such a talk would be "explosive" ("brisant").

What is going on there, one wonders. Does Finkelstein call for violence? Are his views outside legal norms, does he disesteem the human rights? Nothing of all this. On the contrary. The reason for banning him is the veto of groups that seek to avert criticism of Israel, connecting this issue with the reproach of anti-Semitism. This is an old chestnut and not specifically interesting. What is interesting, though, is that the German public buys this nonsense and denies a man, who lost his family in German concentration camps, to talk on German soil, tolerating that he is labeled an anti-Semite for his reflections on violence in Israel. The same thing actually happened only some months ago to the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé in Munich, when the city's Lord Mayor canceled a scheduled talk. Pappé then wrote in an open letter that his father "was silenced in a similar way as a German Jew in the early 1930s".

## The German Self-Conception

So let us revisit the German self-conception and then take a short look at the historical background to understand this apparently great fear that is going around in Germany. Recently, when the Israeli politician Shimon Peres talked on the occasion of the Holocaust Memorial Day in the German Bundestag, he received standing ovations. The few, who did not stand up for their refusal of Peres' and Israel's violent policies, were publically attacked. There is, for example, the quote of a member of the Bundestag: "The Nazi crimes, the Shoa, and the war of annihilation are the original crime of humanity. (...) The Jewish victims of National Socialism are memorized on January 27 in the Bundestag memorial. On this occasion, only they and the reminder of 'Never again!' can be the topic. Everything else in this context is a relativization of the Nazi crimes." It is a quote typical for Germany and reveals the German angst as well as the great danger that goes with it.

The genocide of the Jews in this quote is taken out of any historical context and declared a unique event. Firstly, this reveals a "We (We!) are the greatest" narcissism. Secondly, it reveals a pro-Jewish racism, as if one racism could make up for another one. Not the victims are important, no, the Jewish victims are. The Nazi killing of Sinti and Roma thus is kind of OK. And how much then will the killing of Palestinians be OK if conducted by Jews. Put in a more general way: while calling the genocide of the Jews the "original crime", the unique and incomparable act, every other crime is devalued as being not so important. Finkelstein and Pappé do not fit in here, they disturb the celebration by entering the historical framework, which is all the more embarrassing as they are Jews with family ties to Nazi victims. Banning them shows that in the end even Jewish Nazi victims are not what the whole circus is about, despite all the pathetic oaths and solemn declarations. This is what Germany fears, that people realize that public "Remembering the Holocaust" is a fake and that Finkelstein and Pappé are eloquent and powerful enough to unmask this farce.

Germany has decided to do penance for the Nazi crimes by means of supporting the State of Israel. When it stands in solidarity with the Zionist state, then Germany would fulfil its historical responsibility.

This dogma is not questioned, although it is beyond any logic to support Zionism, of all things, in order to do penance. Beyond logic not in the first place because there had been fruitful cooperations between Nazis and Zionists. (It was in the interest of both ideologies to bring Jews out of Germany.) What is much worse is that violence is not recognized as the problem. Thus Hitler has won in the end, for the violence that made this criminal a criminal in the first place, this violence has not stopped. On the contrary: the compulsive "Never again!" serves as a justification of violence and killing. This works only because the genocide of the Jews was taken out of its historical context and floats around freely.

### **The Israeli Self-Conception**

Both Finkelstein and Pappé write about the missing historical context and this is what people are afraid of, for both use their arguments brilliantly, even compellingly, and they are concerned as Jews whose families have Nazi experiences. Like Goldstone, Chomsky, and some others, the two academics are subject to hate and rejection of the ruling Zionism and its strenuous friends. Finkelstein lives in the USA, where Zionism is even stronger than in Israel, and he does not lead an easy life. Pappé needed to go to exile in England, because life in Israel became unbearable for him. He wrote the book "The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine" in which he clearly shows how the Israeli state was built on heavy violence. Considering that both authors face bans in Germany it is no wonder that there is not much heard of the events around 1948 other than flat stereotypes.

According to the Israeli self-conception the Zionist state emerged out of a "War of Independence". In this view, the Jewish victims of National Socialism have created a state to protect themselves and were immediately attacked by their evil Arab neighbors. This version of the story is sacrosanct and is defended with great hysteria, be it in Israel or in Germany, because it does not stand up to a neutral analysis. For when Israel was founded in May 1948, the ethnic cleansing of Palestine had already been going on for half a year. This was called "Plan Dalet/Plan D" and everybody can read about it. Hundreds of indigenous Palestinians were killed and hundreds of thousands were expelled from their villages by Zionist militias. According to the Israeli self-conception many Palestinians went away voluntarily, as if anybody would voluntarily leave their home and property just like that.

International pressure led to the UN partition plan which deprived the native population of a little more than half of Palestine which was to be given to the Zionists. Yet the Zionists were not content with that. They received weapons and took more of the land by force. When they then built a state on this land, they did not do it in agreement with anybody, but unilaterally and surprisingly. The dogma of the "right of existence" was invented so that people would not talk about these events anymore. Here is the seed of the problems we are confronted with until today. It is possible to begin earlier, with the Sykes Picot Treaty or the first settlers from abroad who for the most part did not integrate, but appeared aggressively. One can talk about the British and about Zionist and Arab terrorism, about Jabotinsky and other pioneers. But it is the founding of the state and Plan D which show most clearly why history is escalating until today.

The massacre of Deir Yassin happened in the framework of this plan, it was covered in the world press. Nobody was ever held responsible for this blood-spree and thus a precedence was created which is working until today. Nobody has been taken to account for the mass murder in Gaza, either, and all the other massacres that Israel habitually commits. The Plan D land theft is another precedence, for up to this day the Israeli territory gets wider while the Palestinian territory shrinks. All this is inherent in the biased concept of "right of existence", as are the race laws from 1950 which guarantee all Jews in the world a "right of return" to Israel while the expelled native population had to keep out, an unprecedented act in the long history of the country. Their land and property were confiscated by the new masters who clung to a blood-and-soil ideology. A lot of this reminds one of the Nazis, which by no means is a wonder, when you consider the victim/perpetrator dynamics. It is known that victims, because of their traumas, are prone to become perpetrators and it is so obvious that it takes a whole lot of energy to suppress the respective discourse. It is suppressed, in militarized Israel just like in Germany, it is taboo. For this reason, a government of right-wing extremists in Israel is not a problem. Right-wing extremism is not right-wing extremism, when it comes to Israel.

## The Tip of the Iceberg

The cancelation of Finkelstein's talks are but the tip of a huge iceberg. While these lines are written, Palestinian houses in Barta'a Ash-Sharqiya are being demolished and in Sheikh Jarrah/Jerusalem new land thefts are scheduled. A big historic Arab graveyard is to be confiscated to build a "Museum of Tolerance" on it while in Bil'in the nonviolent resistance against the wall enters its sixth year. The protesters are injured by the army on a regular basis, and also killed. The world press says almost nothing about the heroes of nonviolent resistance, because it does not fit the image. Russian Jews in Be'er Sheva in the Negev have just killed a bedouin boy and heavily injured another, while a group of fundamentalist settlers have injured a Palestinian child in Hebron. About 11.000 Palestinians are kept in Israeli prisons. The "checkpoints" to Nablus have been closed down recently so that nobody can enter. The Gaza fishermen are being shot at by the Israeli navy and Gaza is still under siege. The head of the Dubai police just confirmed that according to police investigations there is a very high probability that the Mossad is behind the murder of a Hamas politician in the Emirates. Every day you can read on [www.theheadlines.org](http://www.theheadlines.org) what happens in the country and that since 1948 there has been no change of the routine. In Germany, the Palästina Portal is one of the sources one can turn to.

Most of what happens remains unknown to us, our media skips most of it, for fear of inciting an increasing "anti-Semitism". It is for the same reason that we are not to listen to Finkelstein and Pappé, for they verify the terrible events and the historical development sketched above. Instead, we are fed with "information" on "terrorism". It is well-known to some of the leading politicians and opinion-leaders that the Israeli policy can only lead to the self-destruction of the State of Israel. Call it a culture of death. Maybe self-hatred is another reason for this behavior, something human rights advocates like Finkelstein and Pappé are labeled by exactly those who display it themselves. But even according to our mainstream dogmas we have a big problem here, for this development is bad for the Jews, too, the Zionists among them and the anti-Zionists.

**Update on Feb. 20., 2010:** After that the two talks scheduled in Munich (on Feb. 24 in the Amerikahaus and on Feb. 25 in the Kulturhaus Milbertshofen) have also been canceled, Norman Finkelstein has decided not to come to Germany. In the meantime he had been invited in Berlin by the newspaper *junge Welt* and was to give a talk on Gaza on Feb. 26. Finkelstein does not want the controversy about his appearances to overshadow the situation of the Palestinians who were the topic of his talks. [www.normanfinkelstein](http://www.normanfinkelstein)

Source: [www.anis-online.de/1/essays/24.htm](http://www.anis-online.de/1/essays/24.htm)