



***American Jewish Committee***  
*A Century of Leadership*

**Antisemitism  
„Made in Iran“  
The International Dimensions  
of Al Quds Day**

**AJJC**

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# Contents

I	Foreword	4
II	Introduction	6
1.	<b>The Ideology of Hate</b>	8
	Islamic Unity through Enmity towards Israel? – <i>Udo Wolter</i>	8
	Al Quds Day and the Rise of the Islamic Reich – <i>Alireza Nourizadeh</i>	10
	April 2006: A New Conference Against Israel in Tehran – <i>Udo Wolter</i>	12
	Spelling Zionism In Tehran – <i>Reza Bayegan</i>	13
2.	<b>Reacting to Ahmadinejad</b>	14
	Arab Press and Governments React to Ahmadinejad's Anti-Israeli Invective: A Summary – <i>Jochen Müller, Udo Wolter.</i>	14
	A Response to Ahmadinejad: Questions of Strategy – <i>Walid Salem</i>	16
	Press Release: Statement on Ahmadinejad – <i>Iranian Dialoge Circle Berlin</i>	18
3.	<b>International Dimensions of Al Quds Day</b>	19
	Overview – <i>Arne Behrensen</i>	19
	Lebanon – <i>Mira Dietz</i>	20
	Turkey – <i>Deniz Yücel</i>	23
	Berlin – <i>Claudia Dantschke, Udo Wolter</i>	25
	London – <i>Mark Gardener</i>	27
	United States – <i>Yehudit Barsky</i>	29
4.	<b>The Anti-Al Quds Campaign in Berlin</b>	31
	Three Years of Campaigning – <i>Berlin Alliance against the International Al Quds Day</i>	31
	October 2005 Protest Call: Together against political Islam and Antisemitism!	34
5.	<b>Contributors</b>	36

## I. Foreword

Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, there have been three cornerstones of Iranian state ideology: animosity toward the West, the destruction of Israel and hatred toward Jews. This publication reveals the systematic misuse of antisemitism and anti-Western ideology by the Iranian government to promote Iranian ambitions to become a leading regional power. Our goal is to offer insights into Iranian political ideology, thus explaining more fully the clear and present danger to global security from a nuclear armed Iran.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who was elected as president of Iran in 2005, has given speeches and interviews that continue to demonstrate the continuity of anti-Western, anti-Israeli, and antisemitic ideology in the Iranian regime. As the essays in this book demonstrate, President Ahmadinejad's denial of the Holocaust and calls for the destruction of Israel has its roots in the state-sponsored ideology instituted by the Mullah regime. The current political crisis in Iran is more than a conflict instigated by a single, allegedly irrational political leader. President Ahmadinejad is not a political accident. He is representative of a whole political generation and a product of its ideology.

A highly illustrative example of this state-sponsored ideology of hatred is the political tradition of Al Quds (Jerusalem) Day celebrations. This holiday was proclaimed by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 and has been marked ever since on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan by the Iranian regime and its supporters in Teheran, Berlin, London and other cities worldwide. Year after year, the demonstrators chant slogans coined by the Iranian regime and its spiritual leaders calling for the annihilation of the State of Israel. The disgraceful international display of hatred, which until recently has often gone unrecognized by the general public, did not begin after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's election as Iranian president in 2005. It has been a lynchpin of solidarity among supporters of the Iranian regime for nearly three decades.

of grass-root and non-profit organizations in Germany, among them the Berlin office of the American Jewish Committee, have been watching closely the growing dissemination of hateful ideology promulgated by the Iranian regime. In 2005, a group of concerned observers launched the "Berlin Campaign against International Al Quds Day," to mobilize those who refuse to tolerate "antisemitism made in Iran" spreading in the streets of Berlin and other cities on Al Quds Day.

The Berlin campaign group achieved international success in 2005 by contacting several dozen universities and other institutions that falsely list Al Quds Day as a religious holiday on interreligious calendars, to inform them about the antisemitic nature of Al Quds Day. Many of the publishers contacted, from Harvard University to [www.interfaithcalendar.org](http://www.interfaithcalendar.org), were grateful for the information and immediately deleted the reference.

The cooperation between the "Berlin Campaign against International Al Quds Day" and the AJC Berlin office resulted in the idea to chronicle at greater length the concept, history and manifestations of an annual propaganda event whose sole purpose is to incite hatred against Jews.

We invited authors from capitals around the world to report on the ways in which the Iranian regime directs a global campaign of hate against Israel and Jews. We would like to extend a special note of appreciation to Berlin-based journalists Arne Behrensen and Udo Wolter for their work on the conception, organization, and editing of the material, to Toby Axelrod and Sandra Lustig for their translation work and to Stephen Jacob for his editing assistance.

In Iran, the Jewish presence has a long history marked by a fruitful co-existence between Jews and their Muslim neighbors. Sadly, since the ascendancy of the autocratic regime of Iranian mullahs, the propagation of antisemitism and hatred of Israel has become a widespread tool in the regime's struggle to maintain power both

government negates thousands of years of a rich Jewish heritage, instrumentalizing the Palestinian cause to achieve its own political goals.

What has also become apparent in the process of preparing this publication is the encouraging number of Iranians at home and abroad who actively oppose antisemitic propaganda. Supporters of democracy within the Iranian society and among Iranian exiles are an essential part of the process of attaining peace in the Near East and Mideast.

We are grateful to Arne Behrensen and Udo Wolter for their work on the conception, organization, and editing of the material, to journalists Toby Axelrod and Sandra Lustig, who readily agreed to translate it on short notice, as well as to Stephen Jacob for his editing assistance.

The information presented in "Antisemitism Made in Iran" is not well-known to many readers. This brochure is intended to create more public awareness of a campaign of hatred that can only be stopped by uniting forces in civil society, including politicians, non-governmental organizations, Iranian opposition leaders, and experts on the region. It is time to judge the Iranian regime by its own words. It does not harbor well for the fate of peaceful coexistence in the Mideast unless more pressure is exerted on the Iranian government to stop waging a propaganda war against Israel. We hope these essays will better gird all of those dealing with Iranian partners, whether at negotiation tables or at the soccer stadium, with the knowledge of the ideology of hatred driving Iranian political ambitions.

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Sergey Lagodinsky, Advisor to the Director  
The American Jewish Committee / Lawrence & Lee Ramer  
Center for German - Jewish Relations  
Berlin, June 11, 2006*

## II. Introduction

In 2003, we formed the Berlin Alliance against the International Al Quds Day to oppose this annual demonstration of antisemitism in Berlin. From the outset, our alliance has been a heterogeneous coalition of dissident Iranians in exile, experts on Islamic ideology, and of left-wing and civic initiatives active against antisemitism, racism, and right-wing extremism. Participants have included people of various political and ethnic backgrounds with differing views on the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. We see our intervention against Al Quds Day as an opportunity to set an example by bringing together and consolidating our different perspectives and experiences in a common fight against Islamism and antisemitism. We do not want to be a single-issue movement against Al Quds Day, but rather want to further critical social debate as well as civil demonstrations on Islamism, the Iranian dictatorship, and antisemitism. At the same time, we clearly oppose any attempts to misrepresent or reinterpret our criticism of the political phenomenon of Islamism as racist defamation or discrimination against immigrants.

For the third successive year, our campaign against the Berlin Al Quds Day got significant public support and gained national media attention in October 2005, especially after Iranian president Ahmadinejad, preceding preparations for Al Quds Day in Teheran, called for the wiping out of Israel. With this brochure, we would like to present our successful campaign to international readers, and for the first time convey a comprehensive picture of the global Al Quds Day. We hope that our campaign can be an impetus for similar civil alliances to develop elsewhere. This could include – but not be limited to – other cities in which Al Quds Day demonstrations take place, such as London.

We would also like to stress the importance of general support for Iranian dissidents and their struggle against the brutal human rights violations of the reigning theocracy. As you can read in this publication, some of them protest loudly against the antisemitic propaganda of the Iranian regime. With our initiative we want to encourage even more of them to add their voices against

hate and in support of Israel's right to exist.

We are pleased that we were able to win a number of well-known journalists and scholars to contribute to this publication, including Iranians in exile with outstanding expertise on the political conditions in the Islamic Republic.

The first section, written by Udo Wolter, Alireza Nourizadeh and Reza Bayegan, offers an overview of the history of Al Quds Day in Iran, a look at how the antisemitic propaganda of the Iranian regime functions, and details how the Iranian dissidents reacts to it.

The following three essays offer an overview of reactions to Ahmadinejad's infamous "wipe out" speech of October 2005. Jochen Müller and Udo Wolter provide a survey of reactions from Arab governments and media. Walid Salem, from the Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development in East Jerusalem, and a political group, the Iranian Dialogue Circle in Berlin, offer a powerful and critical analysis of Ahmadinejad's speech.

After an overview by Arne Behrensen, the country reports—by Mira Dietz from Lebanon, Udo Wolter and Claudia Dantschke from Germany, Mark Gardner from Great Britain and Yehudit Barsky from the United States, as well as an article by Deniz Yücel on the situation in Turkey—offer insight on the international dimensions of Al Quds Day activities.

The concluding part of the publication describes the highlights of the three years campaign against Al Quds Day in Berlin. It is followed by a documentation of the 2005 Al Quds Day counter-rally.

Last but not least, we would like to express our gratitude to the Berlin office of the American Jewish Committee for its support and cooperation during our activities, as well as for offering us the opportunity to voice our concerns and report about our activities in the form of this publication.

*Berlin Alliance against the International Al Quds Day*

- Anetta Kahane, Amadeu Antonio Stiftung (Amadeu Antonio Foundation),
- Claudia Dantschke and Ali Yildirim, AYPÄ-TV,
- Siamend Hajo, Europäisches Zentrum für kurdische Studien (European Center for Kurdish Studies),
- Arne Behrensen, Udo Wolter, Bündnis gegen Antisemitismus [BgA] Berlin (Berlin Association Against Anti-Semitism),
- Meggie Jahn, Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft Berlin (German-Israeli Society, Berlin),
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- Ahmet Dag, Kurdistan AG in der Freien Universität Berlin (Kurdistan Association of the Free University of Berlin),
- Hamid Nowzari, Vorstand des Vereins Iranischer Flüchtlinge in Berlin e.V. (Board of the Association of Iranian Refugees in Berlin),
- Thomas Uwer, Wadi e.V. - Verband für Krisenhilfe und solidarische Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (Association for Crisis Help and Development Cooperation in Solidarity)

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# 1. The Ideology of Hate

## Islamic Unity through Enmity towards Israel?

### Al Quds Day and the Meaning of Antisemitic Elements in the Ideology of Khomeini and His Companions in Spirit

By Udo Wolter

The western press often has trivialized Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's anti-Israeli and antisemitic tirades since October 2005 as the ideological effusiveness of a fundamentalist hardliner or even of a „lunatic of Tehran“. Likewise they were interpreted as relapses into the blind ideology of the early years of the Islamic Republic. It is true that Ahmadinejad won the Iranian presidential election in June 2005, above all with populist promises of justice and affluence for the poorer population as well as with slogans that called for a return to the „original values of the Islamic Revolution.“ However, it is misleading to believe that images of Israel and the West as enemies played little or no role in the presidency of „reformer“ Mohammed Khatami, who preceded Ahmadinejad. The latter merely voiced, without any diplomatic regard, what has been official state doctrine in Iran since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and which Khatami and others had applied towards Western partners in dialogue. In order to put this in the proper perspective, it is helpful to focus briefly on the meaning of Israel's image as an enemy for the ideological development of the so-called Islamic Revolution. This focus inevitably rests upon Al Quds Day, which is celebrated annually at the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting. It was no coincidence that Ahmadinejad chose to launch his anti-Israeli propaganda campaign with a conference under the motto „A World without Zionism“ on October 26, 2005, Al Quds Day.

Khomeini formulated his ideology largely during his Iraqi exile in Najaf (1965 to 1978). Even then, for instance in his key work *Hokumat-e eslami* („The Islamic State,“ 1970), all the elements are present that one encounters in the propaganda of the Islamic Republic of Iran to this day. In the center of the idea of pan-Islamic unity that Khomeini formulated then is the image of the „West“ as an enemy, which is alleged to be an anti-Islamic conspiracy of the „powers of arrogance,“ with the „great Satan“

USA at its head, and Israel, allegedly the most important country, participating in this conspiracy.<sup>1</sup>

The common Islamic identity that spans all religious schisms and national divisions was constructed first of all against the state of Israel, the alleged cause of all evil and chief representative of the enemies of Islam. Israel's role continued to be emphasized, with revolutionary rhetoric maintained even after a more pragmatic stance came to the fore following the consolidation of the Islamist dictatorship. This became clear, for example, when in 1984 Khomeini emphasized „the brotherhood with all Islamic groups in the world and the global alliance with all Islamic states against Zionism, against Israel and against the colonial powers.“ His close comrade Ayatollah Montazeri defined the „unity of the word“ (*vahdat-e kalame*) thus: „Every single Muslim“ was to be „free ... to act ... according to his own religious doctrine. (...) But they shall be unified against the enemies of Islam, the Zionists, America, the Soviet Union and the West.“<sup>2</sup>

After the victory of the so-called Islamic Revolution, Khomeini, who had returned to Iran from exile in Paris, proclaimed „Al-Quds Day“ on August 7, 1979, using the Arabic and Persian name for Jerusalem:

*„I ask all the Muslims of the world and the Muslim governments to join together to sever the hand of this usurper and its supporters. I call on all the Muslims of the world to select as Quds Day the last Friday in the holy month of Ramadan – which is itself a determining period and can also be the determiner of the Palestinian people's fate – and through a ceremony demonstrating the solidarity of Muslims world-wide, announce their support for the legitimate rights of the Muslim people. I ask God Almighty for the victory of the Muslims over the infidels.“<sup>3</sup>*

Khomeini promoted the international character of Al Quds Day as a day of political struggle against Israel and the „western powers of arrogance“ in several speeches following this proclamation. At first, propagating Al Quds Day demonstrations internationally was part of the strategy of exporting the revolution that Khomeini followed in the early years of the Islamic Republic. Since then, this day is commemorated annually in Iran with mass parades whose character is strongly reminiscent of the obligatory mass marches in the „real-socialist“ dictatorships of the former East Bloc. At the mass rallies, which are staged by the government

<sup>1</sup> See (on this note and the following one): Wilfried Buchta, *Die iranische Schia und die islamische Einheit 1979-1996* [Iranian Shia and Islamic Unity 1979-1996], Hamburg 1997, pp. 52 et seq..

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> This and further speeches and statements by Khomeini on Al Quds Day are documented in English on the home page of the Iranian government television service IRIB: [www.irib.com/worldservicemam/palestin\\_E/10.htm](http://www.irib.com/worldservicemam/palestin_E/10.htm)

in Tehran and other Iranian cities, Israeli and American flags are burned, and slogans like „Death to Israel,“ „Death to America,“ „May Israel be erased from the map,“ and „Jerusalem is ours“ are displayed on banners and chanted by demonstrators.

### Antisemitism in Iranian Propaganda

Especially after Khomeini's death in 1989, under his successor Ayatollah Khomeini in the office of spiritual leader and under Rafsanjani as president of the state, Iran's foreign and domestic policies were given a more pragmatic orientation that included – at least officially – dispensing with the strategy of exporting the revolution. Pan-Islamic appeals to the unity of Sunni and Shiite Muslims were now to be heard mostly on special occasions like Al Quds Day. At the same time, the rhetoric of annihilation directed towards Israel remained as strong as ever. For instance, Khomeini declared in his speech at the Tehran Al Quds Day rally in 1999, „The existence of Israel [is] a tremendous threat for the peoples and states of the region. (...) And there is but one way to solve the problem in the Middle East, namely by shattering and annihilating the Zionist state.“<sup>4</sup>

The official propaganda still regularly employs unambiguous antisemitic images, for example in describing Israel as a „cancerous growth“ or a „festering sore“ in the „body of Islam.“ The singling out of Jews as „diseased alien elements“ in society, well known from modern European antisemitism, was transposed here to the Middle East conflict. This reduces to absurdity the claim in Iran's ceaseless anti-Israel propaganda that Iran differentiates between Zionists and Jews, whom one supposedly respects as adherents to one of the three religions of the book. It is precisely the use of these metaphors that underlines yet again the function of the anti-Zionist/antisemitic elements in Iranian state doctrine to create unity, as shown above. They contribute ideologically to unifying the movements within Islam and to bridging not only the more nationalistically determined differences between Iran and the Arab world, but also those between Iran and the non-Islamic world. In speaking about being victims of the „Jewish-imperialist“ archenemy, one can appeal also to non-Islamic countries, for example, when trying to win potential „anti-imperialist“ allies: „The most important and painful problem confronting the subjugated nations of the world, both Muslim and non-Muslim, is the problem of America. [America] exploits the oppressed people of the world by means of the large-scale propaganda-campaigns that are coordinated for it

by international Zionism. By means of its hidden and treacherous agents, it sucks the blood of the defenseless people.“<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, Khomeini called Israel a „rotten and dangerous tumor“<sup>6</sup> in his speech on Al Quds Day 2000. In 2002, he accused Arabic forces that appeared willing to negotiate with the West and Israel of wanting „to maintain this cancer [Israel] at any price.“ He praised suicide attacks as „deeds of martyrs“ and „the crowning of resistance.“<sup>7</sup>

Such statements are to be heard by no means only from the quarters of Iranian hardliners like the current president. The Al Quds Day demonstrations are in any case supported both by the radical wing of the Islamist regime and the so-called reformists. For example, former state president Ayatollah Rafsanjani, who was always considered moderate during his term of office and is still very influential, said in his address to the Al Quds rally in 2003, „Israel has no future. Those who are counting on a tumor are wrong.“<sup>8</sup> It was also this allegedly „pragmatic“ politician who said openly in 2002 that „the use of an atomic bomb would leave nothing on Israel's soil, while the Islamic world would merely be damaged.“<sup>9</sup>

Even Mohammed Khatami, who for years was held in high esteem by European governments as a moderate politician and partner in the so-called „critical dialogue,“ appeared at the Al Quds Day celebrations in Tehran in 2003 and had his picture taken with a child on his arm who was waving a little flag with the words „Death to Israel.“<sup>10</sup> According to reports from the Iranian news agency IRNA, he did try to strike a moderate tone in that speech.<sup>11</sup> However, in an interview with Swiss television, he emphasized expressly that Israel had no right to exist.<sup>12</sup> He already had spoken of Israel, in his sermon on Al Quds Day in Tehran in 1998, as an „old wound in the body of Islam that cannot be healed“, „a wound that possesses truly demonic, stinking and contagious blood.“<sup>13</sup>

In conclusion, in all factions of the government system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, discourse about Israel is permeated with the same antisemitic images and stereotypes. They are used repeatedly, with only minor variations, in the Al Quds Day addresses. Regardless of the political outlook of representatives of the ruling regime, from „reformers“ to „doctrinaires“, enmity toward Israel is one thing on which they all agree.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from [www.islam-pure.de/imam\\_d/imam0003.htm](http://www.islam-pure.de/imam_d/imam0003.htm) (as it appeared on October 21, 2004, meanwhile the speech, for which the state-run Iranian News Agency IRNA was quoted as source, has been removed from the site).

<sup>5</sup> Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution*, p. 304 et seq., cited from Klaus Holz, *Die Gegenwart des Antisemitismus [Anti-Semitism Today]*, Hamburg 2005, p. 104.

<sup>6</sup> [www.islam-pure.de/imam/imam\\_d/ansprachen/ansprachen2000.htm](http://www.islam-pure.de/imam/imam_d/ansprachen/ansprachen2000.htm) (as it appeared on June 10, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Quoted from [www.islam-pure.de/imam/imam\\_d/ansprachen/ansprachen2002a.htm](http://www.islam-pure.de/imam/imam_d/ansprachen/ansprachen2002a.htm) (as it appeared on June 10, 2006), see also Küntzel, loc. cit. p. 138.

<sup>8</sup> This is emphasized not least by Islamist supporters of Al Quds Day demonstrations, for example in a report on the campaigns in 2003 on the English-language web site *islam-online*, which is one of the most commonly read by an international audience. The quotation by Rafsanjani is verified there: [www.islam-online.net/English/News/2003-11/21/article07.shtml](http://www.islam-online.net/English/News/2003-11/21/article07.shtml). (as it appeared on June 10, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from MEMRI Special Dispatch, January 3, 2002, Former Iranian President Rafsanjani on Using a Nuclear Bomb Against Israel, [www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=iran&ID=SP32502](http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=iran&ID=SP32502).

<sup>10</sup> Source: [www.intelligence.org.il/eng/bu/iran/jerusalem.htm](http://www.intelligence.org.il/eng/bu/iran/jerusalem.htm)

<sup>11</sup> MEMRI Special Dispatch of November 20, 2003, *Iranische Presse über die weltweiten Aktionen zum Al Quds-Tag (Iranian Press on Global Campaigns on Al Quds Day)*, [www.memri.de/uebersetzungen\\_analysen/2003\\_04\\_OND/iran\\_alquds\\_20\\_11\\_03.pdf](http://www.memri.de/uebersetzungen_analysen/2003_04_OND/iran_alquds_20_11_03.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Journalist Richard Herzinger's weblog on [www.zeit.de](http://www.zeit.de), entry on August 6, 2004, „'Moderate' Anti-Semite.“

<sup>13</sup> Quoted from *Jungle World*, May 29, 1998, „Fundis aller Länder, vereinigt euch!“ [“Fundamentalists of the World, Unite!“], [www.nadir.org/nadir/periodika/jungle\\_world/\\_98/05/29a.htm](http://www.nadir.org/nadir/periodika/jungle_world/_98/05/29a.htm).

## Al Quds Day and the Rise of the Islamic Reich

By Alireza Nourizadeh

At the early hours of a cold day in February 1980, a year after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, in the affluent north Tehran Takhte Jamshid Avenue (now renamed as Taleghani after a revolutionary ayatollah, where the US embassy and many of the capital's boutiques, grand hotels and bars were located), the passers-by were witnessing an unprecedented convoy of black Mercedes delivering a group of young men whose faces were covered in Palestinian scarves.

The strange veiled passengers of the diplomatic cars entered the traditionally designed Sina hotel, which, up until a year before, had been the most popular hangout for Iran's leading writers and poets (who would drink there until the early hours of the morning). These were totally different visitors than the hotel had seen since its opening a decade earlier; the first figure to enter through its revolving door was Khalil Alwazir, or Abu Jihad, the second in command of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, who was assassinated some years later by the Israeli commandos in his residence in Tunisia.

The entourage of Palestinians was only joining a much larger group of the „guests“ of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs who had gathered in the hotel to attend what was to become the annual „Conference of the International Revolutionary and Liberation Movements of the World.“ Later these developed into the international conferences held in Tehran every year, dedicated to the Palestinian cause and support of the Intifada.<sup>14</sup>

In 1980, the conference was opened by a speech by Mehdi Hashemi, the brother of Ayatollah Ali Montazeri's son-in-law, who delivered a fiery message from the Ayatollah Khomeini, instigating revolt and disobedience throughout the Islamic world.

The bill for organizing the 1980 conference, around 1 million dollars, was footed by the Foreign Ministry, and included first class tickets and accommodations for every single „delegate“, plus generous gifts of silk Persian carpets to

give a first hand taste of Iranian hospitality.

By organizing this conference at such a time, Khomeini was trying to assure every single Islamic movement of the world—from the PLO and Egyptian militants to the Morus of the Philippines and Fatanis of Thailand—that with him in power they now had a powerful supporter in their bids to take over the government in their respective countries.

However, when Abu Jihad came across a representative of the Liberation Organization of Jazirat Al Arab (Saudi Arabia), who was on the payroll of the Kingdom, Jihad strongly objected to the presence of the Saudi delegation and demanded their departure from the conference, otherwise he would leave immediately.

As most of the revolutionary delegates derived their credibility from their support for the Palestinian cause, they begged Abu Jihad to stay, and unceremoniously threw out the Saudi elements from the hall.

During the course of the conference, the Khomeini regime committed itself to providing unwavering financial and military support to all the organizations whose representatives had attended and pledged their loyalty to the Tehran regime.

The Palestinians in particular were looking to Tehran for unlimited support, because only a couple of days after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the PLO leader had appeared shoulder to shoulder alongside the Iranian revolutionary leaders in recognition of their past help to topple the Iranian monarchy.

However, very much like the Arab leaders, Khomeini would not have anything less than total obedience from the Palestinians in return for his vast financial and military support. So much so that when Yasser Arafat wanted to mediate between Iran and Iraq to end their war in the early 1980s on the argument that the conflict was seriously damaging the Palestinian cause, Khomeini had publicly told him off by suggesting that once his army had defeated Saddam's forces and captured Jerusalem, Arafat would not be allowed to set foot in Palestine.<sup>15</sup>

Arafat had replied to the threat by telling Khomeini through Hashemi Rafsanjani that if the Ayatollah could see a single hair on his palm he can also see the day to capture Iraq and free Palestine.

From then onwards Arafat fell out of favor with Khomeini and his circle and fully sided with Saddam Hussein to the extent

<sup>14</sup> For further information on these conference see the overview following this essay.

<sup>15</sup> Ed. Note: Khomeini had claimed that the Persian Gulf War between Iraq and Iran was only a first step to liberate Jerusalem. After the victory over Saddam, the "holy Army of Jerusalem" would move on to free Palestine. When Khomeini accepted United Nations Resolution 598, which set up a cease-fire with Iraq in 1989, this was a moral blowback for Khomeini himself as well as his allies like the Lebanese Hizbollah, who had built upon these declarations.

that pro-Khomeini elements tried to kill the Palestinian leader on many occasions. Arafat blamed the former Iranian Ambassador to Syria, Ali Akbar Mohtashamipour, of being responsible for some of these attempts on his life. Mohtashamipour also is called the "midwife of Hizbollah" for his role in creating and funding the pro-Iranian Hizbollah in Lebanon, as well as in creating the Islamic Jihad and funding Hamas in Palestine itself. Today he regards himself as a part of the 'reformist' wing, but keeps on organizing and leading the above-mentioned conferences for the support of the Palestinian struggle in Tehran, where all these groups regularly send high-ranking representatives. No wonder that already in the late eighties Hizbollah similarly inflicted heavy losses on Palestinian fighters and leading figures of the PLO in Lebanon during their political and military rivalries with the Amal movement. They did so to show their loyalty to Khomeini, whose „dream" of throwing the Jews of Israel into the sea was on his mind until his death.

It was on the basis of this twisted objective that immediately after his rise to power Khomeini named the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan as Al Quds Day (Jerusalem) and instructed his supporters to advocate the destruction of the Jewish state on the occasion.

While the Tehran regime has always referred to the Jews as followers of the book of revelation who deserve to be respected as a religious minority like the Christians and Zoroastrians, a large number of Iranian Jews—like the famous merchant Habib Elghanian, who loved his motherland—were executed for their religious beliefs and their wealth was confiscated.

Khomeini was clearly an anti-Jewish character; and today, Mahmood Ahmadinejad is undoubtedly following the same ideology of his mentor. Ahmadinejad is a front for a group of the Revolutionary Guards—the Basij—and the intelligence service. They are the ones who paved his way to power. These people believe that Israel is behind all evil and is pushing the USA to attack Iran. They regard the Jews as a people who have no preoccupation but to shed the blood of other nations; and if given the opportunity, they will even make stews with the blood of Muslim children.

While Al Quds Day has lost its gloss among the Iranian people, the Tehran regime still spends around \$20 million per year to commemorate it around the world. The regime also spends substantial sums to organize the hundreds of thousands who attend the annual Al Quds Day rally in Tehran. In order to mobilize the masses, Imams in the shantytowns and villages around Tehran are contacted and organizational committees set

up days before the event. According to the requirements reported by these committees, on Al Quds Day busses are sent to these quarters to drive people to the rally in the center of Tehran after the Friday prayers. The participants from the poor quarters also receive meals and vouchers for food. So only around ten per cent of the participants attend the rally deliberately for political or religious reasons; the rest follow the appeals for Al Quds Day for material reasons.

Many agree that people like Rafsanjani and Khatami are not antisemites; they had, in fact, included Morris Motamed—the only Jewish member of the Majlis—in their entourage when visiting foreign capitals.

However, the ultra-conservative mullahs and radical leaders of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, and the Basij mobilization force and the security organizations, just like the Nazis, regard the Jews as "unclean and undesirable" people who should be exterminated to arrive at a "cleaner world for humanity".

Al Quds Day in Tehran this year was reminiscent of the occasion during Khomeini's rule.

Images of Ariel Sharon and other Israeli leaders were burnt in European capitals and the United States. The Iranian Jews who have immigrated to Israel and are looking forward to returning to their beloved motherland feel extremely scared about this new wave of religious hatred against them.

Ahmadinejad does not make a bone of his intention that given a chance—like the fascists and Hitler—he would send all the Iranian Jews to gas chambers.

The Iranian regime can only tolerate other minorities so long as they behave as slaves to its ideological doctrine of Shiaism. The Jews are right to fear the rise of an Islamic Reich in Iran.

## April 2006: A New Conference Against Israel in Tehran

By Udo Wolter

The Iranian regime holds international conferences on the struggle against the "Zionist Enemy" on a regular basis; recent examples include: "The International Conference of Support for the Intifada and the Islamic Revolution in Palestine" (24 April 2001), „World Conference of Support for the Palestinian Intifada (1-2 June 2002) and „Intifada: a Step Toward Freedom" (19-21 August 2003). Attendants have included high-ranking representatives of Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and Hizbollah, as well as delegations from mostly Islamic states and a diverse range of activists. A common feature of all these conferences was the rejection of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations and the praising of 'martyrdom operations' such as suicide bombings, as legitimate forms of 'resistance'. High-ranking officials of the Islamic Republic called for the annihilation of Israel often enough at these conferences that Ahmadinejad's infamous speech at last October's conference „World without Zionism" is hardly an exception.

Usually these conferences are planned and organized on the direct 'initiative' (by decree in plain English) of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The actual organizer is Hojatoleslam Ali Akbar Mohtashamipour, the secretary of the Support for the Palestinian Intifada Conference Series (see also Alireza Nourizadeh's article).

Most recently the „International Conference on al-Qods (Jerusalem) and support of the rights of Palestinian people" was held from April 14-16, 2006 in Tehran. Conference Secretary Mohtashamipour recalled that the late Imam Khomeini declared the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan as the International Al Quds Day, while addressing the conference participants at the mausoleum of the Founder of the Islamic Republic. According to IRNA, Iran's official news agency, the conference was attended by 600 foreign officials, including 20 parliamentary speakers from Islamic as well as non-Islamic countries like Zimbabwe, Cuba, Sri Lanka and Venezuela. Palestinian representatives of nearly all political camps were present: from the Palestinian Ambassador to Tehran and Fatah officials, to leading figures from the Popular Front for

the Liberation of Palestine General Command, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and of course Hamas leader Khalid Meshaal.

Supreme Leader Khamenei praised suicide-bombings, directing these words to representatives of Palestinian terror groups: „The noble blood of your martyrs has hardened and deepened your resolve and firmness. (...) The Jihadi groups emerged in Palestine and Lebanon and the culture of Jihad and martyrdom was revived ... as a decisive and endless source."

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reiterated that „the Zionist regime is a decaying and crumbling tree that will fall with a storm." Ahmadinejad also referred to his former statements on the Holocaust by claiming that „there might be doubts about the Holocaust, but there are definitely no doubts about the Holocaust happening in recent years in Palestine." He called the new Hamas-led Palestinian government the only legitimate body formed in Palestine in recent years.

The speaker of the Majlis (Iranian parliament), Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, in a meeting with Islamic Jihad leader Ramadan Abdullah Shalah, also expressed his satisfaction over Hamas' victory in Palestine's recent election. Shala emphasized that Islamic Jihad would continue attacking Israel, while Khalid Meshaal confirmed that Hamas would never accept Israel.

One of the main issues of the conference was raising funds for the new Hamas-led Palestinian government after the US and Europe ended their financial support. Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, addressing the closing ceremony of the Conference, said that Iran allocated \$50 million for Palestine. The final resolution reads: „The Conference considers the Zionist regime presently on the soil of Palestine as usurper, unfamiliar, non-native, and foreign to the regional Arabic and Islamic fabric, and legally and legitimately has no right of existence."

A day after the conference a suicide bomber killed 9 people in Tel Aviv in the most serious terrorist attack against Israelis in one and a half years. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack.

(All quotes are taken from the official Iranian news agency IRNA, [www.irna.ir/en/](http://www.irna.ir/en/) )

## Spelling Zionism in Tehran

By Reza Bayegan

In the late 1990s, walking one day in a poor district of southern Tehran, I noticed a slogan on a tumbledown wall in Persian script: „Marg bar Zionism" or „Death to Zionism." There is of course nothing unusual in seeing such a slogan on the wall of the capital of the Islamic Republic. What attracted my attention however was that the word Zionism was misspelled. The inescapable irony here is that anti-Israeli sentiments in Iran go hand in hand with poor education and underdevelopment.

The animosity of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic revolution, towards Israel was part and parcel of his hatred of what the Pahlavi dynasty stood for, that is modernization and advancement. Initially he did not oppose the democratic shortcomings of the political system under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, but did attack the Shah's plans of equal opportunity for women, land reform and also Iran's close relationship with Israel, a country he used to refer to as „a cancerous tumor." By declaring the last Friday of Ramadan as „Al Quds Day," he also aimed to stifle unique Iranian nationalistic values and bring Iranians—who had no common aspirations with Arabs—under the broad umbrella of the Islamic „Omah" or nation. Proud of their rich culture and language, for the past 1,400 years Iranians have vigorously resisted assimilation into the larger Arab-Islamic community.

Located in a turbulent region and threatened by the encroachment of hostile cultures, both Iran and Israel have many areas of common interest. For historical, geographic and political reasons, Iran's most natural ally in the whole Middle East is the state of Israel. Beyond Israel, Iran holds the world's oldest Jewish community. Even after the mass migration of Jews from Iran after the Islamic Revolution, Iran is still home to the largest Jewish population in any Islamic country. Iranian Jews who have migrated to Israel have prospered and hold key positions in the government. Moshe Katsav, the President of Israel, was born in the Iranian city of Yazd, and Shaul Mofaz, Israel's Minister of Defense, was born in Tehran. One proof of the irrepressible strength and deep roots of the Jews within Iranian society is that the chairman of Iran's Jewish Council, Haroun Yashayaei—albeit under extreme political pressure—feels confident enough to take to task president

Mahmud Ahmadinejad for saying the Holocaust was a myth, and calls him ignorant and politically prejudiced.<sup>16</sup>

Yet in spite of all these strong ties and affinities between the two nations, the Israeli government and Iranian opposition so far have not been able to form a fruitful alliance. One important factor contributing to this failure is a lingering hostility towards Israel harbored by some backward forces within the Iranian opposition.

Many members of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq Organization (MKO), who conducted a violent fight against the Shah in the years leading to the Islamic Revolution and now are bitterly opposed to the rulers of the Islamic Republic, were trained in Libya and Lebanon and were brothers in arms with the PLO and other anti-Israel terrorist organizations. Their ideology, an amalgamation of fanatical Islam and Marxism—regardless of tactical shifts and strategic alliances that they are capable of making from time to time—is inimical to Israel and the democratic values of modern Western civilization.<sup>17</sup> The Mujahideen's classmates in terrorist training camps of the PLO and PFLP were the Marxist members of Iranian People's Fedayeen Guerrillas. Up to this day they pride themselves in having had the opportunity to fight the „Zionist enemy" alongside their Palestinian brothers.<sup>18</sup>

An opposition to the monopoly of the hardliners has emerged in the past decade from within the Iranian ruling establishment in the form of the reform movement. The spiritual leader of this movement is Mohammad Khatami, the former president. This political force that at one point seemed quite promising turned out to be a flash in the pan. In the June 2005 pseudo-democratic presidential election, people voted for Ahmadinejad not because they knew him or trusted him, but because they were totally disgusted with the hypocrisy and incompetence of Khatami and his political descendents. The attitude of the reformers towards Israel is not very different from that of the hardliners.

In a recent interview reprinted by Kayhan London (23 February), Ayatollah Hussein-Ali Montazeri, Iran's most prominent dissident cleric and a darling to many reformers, sharply criticized the Islamic Republic and Mahmud Ahmadinejad on the regime's human rights record and suppression of freedom of speech, but went on to say that he agrees with Ahmadinejad's stance on the Holocaust. „I have expressed these viewpoints myself many years ago. Even if we assume that the Nazis slaughtered the Jews, why should Palestinians pay the price? The state of Israel was created by brute force and is illegitimate." Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the so-called moderate former president, has expressed similar views. What is obvious is that the future of Iranian politics does not

<sup>16</sup> BBC News, Feb. 11, 2006, Iran Jews express Holocaust shock: [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4705246.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4705246.stm)

<sup>17</sup> [www.mojahedin.org](http://www.mojahedin.org) The MEK - also known as People's Mojaheddin - rightfully is on the US and EU list of terrorist organizations.

<sup>18</sup> [www.fadai.org/](http://www.fadai.org/) and [www.geocities.com/~fedaiian/](http://www.geocities.com/~fedaiian/)

belong to the so-called reformist movement. Reformists lack the credibility to galvanize public opinion for major democratic change or offer any cogent plan for a modern pluralistic society.

Conversely, many enlightened members of the Iranian opposition, whose attitude represents the aspirations of the modern, forward-looking portion of the Iranian population, show no hesitation in categorically condemning the clerical regime's antisemitic stance. Fighting to reclaim their homeland as a country capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century, they are well aware of the great potential for future cooperation with Israel as the most progressive and democratic country in the region.

In preparation to this article, I managed to ask Dariush Homayoun—the veteran journalist and politician who plays a key role in the most influential Iranian party in exile, The Constitutional Party of Iran<sup>19</sup> — about Ahmadinejad's wild declarations on wiping out the state of Israel. He responded by saying:

Once another mad demagogue declared his 'final solution' and got on with most of his plan. This shows that the world should not shrug off IRI's president as just propaganda for receptive Arab masses. He and his regime would wipe out Israel if they could. It also should make the world more determined to prevent the Islamic Regime from acquiring atomic weapons. Ahmadinejad, by denying the Holocaust, is preparing the ground for something of his own. The Iranian people, as the longest standing friends of Israel, are outraged by such criminal statements.

In an article called „Revealing Errors,"<sup>20</sup> Abbas Milani, the Iranian scholar and director of the Iranian Studies Program at Stanford University, provides ample evidence to support his argument that throughout history Iranians spared no efforts to protect the Jews and particularly assisted them in fleeing from Nazi persecution. Strongly condemning antisemitic statements made by Mahmud Ahmadinejad, Mr. Milani concludes his article by saying that although the nation has been taken hostage by a cruel dictatorship, Iranians should not be made responsible for the conduct of their hostage takers.

In an article published in Kayhan London (23 February 2006), Abdolkarim Lahidji, an Iranian human rights lawyer who runs the Paris-based Iranian League for Human Rights,<sup>21</sup> refers to the Islamic regime's antisemitism as part of the hate campaign of the clerical regime against everyone and everything that does not fit within its narrow-minded ideology and world view.

One of the strong voices amongst the Iranian opposition speaking for modernity, democracy and universal values of human rights is that of Reza Pahlavi, the son of the late Shah of Iran.<sup>22</sup> He advocates a total separation of religion and government and a political system that considers no one as a second-class citizen. In an interview with Fox News in January 2006, Reza Pahlavi referred to Ahmadinejad's comments as „disgraceful" and „abhorrent" to the vast majority of the Iranian people. It is quite significant that in the same interview Reza Pahlavi goes on to say that „what Iranians desire is nothing less than modernity, freedom and economic opportunity."<sup>23</sup>

An Iran that is economically prosperous and politically democratic would no longer be a natural breeding ground for fascism and fanaticism. Through a campaign of hate-mongering and xenophobia, the regime intends to deflect attention from its own decadence and incompetence. The majority of Iranians however are intelligent enough not to swallow what the state-controlled media is telling them, and in spite of many restrictions, turn to the Internet and to the Farsi service of Radio Israel and other international media for reliable information.

Like the rest of the world, Iran is not immune to the disease of antisemitism. But today antisemitism as well as anti-Americanism, are state policy on the part of the clerical government. Falsification, fear and fanaticism are essential to the survival of the Islamic Republic. To bring freedom to Iran, one needs to make a greater effort to reach the ears and intellect of its citizens and prepare them for the final moment when they can cast aside the manacles of backwardness and tyranny. On that day of enlightenment, Zionism will not be a misspelled ugly word on a tumbledown wall in a depressed district in Tehran, but understood in all its dimensions by a prosperous nation that begrudges a prosperous homeland for no other nation and generously embraces a pluralistic and peaceful world.

<sup>19</sup> [www.irancpisd.com](http://www.irancpisd.com)

<sup>20</sup> [www.iranian.com/AbbasMilani/2006/February/Black/index.html](http://www.iranian.com/AbbasMilani/2006/February/Black/index.html)

<sup>21</sup> [www.ldh-france.org/](http://www.ldh-france.org/)

<sup>22</sup> [www.rezapahlavi.org/](http://www.rezapahlavi.org/)

<sup>23</sup> [www.rezapahlavi.org/audioidio/fox10706.html](http://www.rezapahlavi.org/audioidio/fox10706.html)

## 2. Reacting to Ahmadinejad

### Arab Press and Governments React to Ahmadinejad's Anti-Israeli Invective: A Summary.

By Udo Wolter and Jochen Müller (MEMRI)

While the anti-Israel and antisemitic comments of Iranian President Ahmadinejad sparked outrage in Europe and the USA, Arab governments reacted hesitantly to the speech he delivered at a conference marking Al Quds Day. One exception was the chief negotiator of the Palestinian Authority, Saeb Erekat, who immediately and unmistakably condemned Ahmadinejad's statement that Israel must be wiped off the map. „This is unacceptable to us," he was quoted in the liberal Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz. „We have recognized the state of Israel and we are pursuing a peace process with Israel, and ... we do not accept the statements of the president of Iran."<sup>24</sup> Certain political analysts from the Middle East point out that Ahmadinejad's uncompromising stance sheds light on the differences between Iran and other countries of the region. The former Egyptian diplomat and foreign policy advisor Mohammed Wahbi criticized his government's silence, suggesting Ahmadinejad's statement ruined prospects for peace in the region.<sup>25</sup>

The Arabic press, too, initially refrained from commenting. Excerpts of Ahmadinejad's speech appeared on the front page of many Arabic newspapers without commentary. Only following western reactions of outrage and after Ahmadinejad's additional anti-Israeli statements did some of them add remarks, sometimes sympathetic, sometimes critical. By the end of last October, the Egyptian state newspaper Al-Ahram was clear in its accusation, suggesting:

[Ahmadinejad] was not thinking when he made these statements, or perhaps he was imagining that he was still in his fanatical days of youth and not yet president of Iran... If the Iranian president feels concerned about the Palestinian

lands, then it is best for him to withdraw from the three islands of the Emirates that Iran has occupied for over ten years. It is best for him to stop interfering in Iraq's internal affairs.<sup>26</sup>

But at the same time, a lead article in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Jumhuriyah*, which is close to the government, said the western capitals revealed, through their anger, that they „perceive the world with an Israeli eye."<sup>27</sup> Along similar lines, journalist Nawaf Al-Zarwa wrote the following in the Jordanian newspaper *Al-Dustour* in mid-December, after Ahmadinejad questioned the Holocaust:

Whenever someone carefully broaches the subject of ‚Israel' or the ‚Israeli occupation' and Israel's extermination war against the Palestinians, or if a researcher, intellectual or high level politician like the former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahatir and the Iranian president attempts to criticize the measures of the Zionist state or to question the Holocaust, the American-Zionist media opens fire on them and accuses these researchers, intellectuals or politicians of racism and antisemitism.<sup>28</sup>

Some papers, while urging understanding for Iran's situation, carefully included the critical observation that Ahmadinejad's statements damaged Iranian and ultimately Palestinian interests. The Jordanian newspaper *Al-Ra'y*, also linked to the government, already had noted – following Ahmadinejad's remarks on Al Quds Day – that no one could tell „whether the Iranian president's remarks on Israel on ‚wiping Israel off the map' were merely a slip of the tongue or simply deliberate. Whatever the case, Ahmadinejad's remarks have caused an additional problem for Iran."<sup>29</sup> In much clearer apologetic undertones, columnist Abdul Wahab Badrakhan wrote in the London-based newspaper *Al-Hayat*:

Undoubtedly, Ahmedinejad's statement that Israel is like a ‚cancer', after he called for wiping it off from the map, in addition to his proposal to transfer it to Germany or Austria, provokes the American-European West, which spent the last five decades covering up for Israel's crimes and offering all support to illegal and inhumane violations used to implant Israel in the middle of the Arab region. After the Arabs stopped fighting it and even stopped condemning its existence, the Iranians extract slogans, considered outdated and obsolete, to remind the West and Israel that the historical facts are not what they portray and work hard to estab-

<sup>24</sup> PA's Erekat: Iran's anti-Israel statement is ‚unacceptable', Ha'aretz, 27.10.2006.

<sup>25</sup> Arthur Max, Arab States Mum on Iran's Israel Remarks, Associated Press, 27. October 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Arab press torn on Ahmadinejad call, BBC News, 30. October 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Supra.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Dustour, 14.12.2005.

<sup>29</sup> See footnote 3.

lish. (...) Ahmedinejad's statements might deserve Western condemnation, but it is difficult for the Arabs to endorse this condemnation even if they did not line up in support of the Iranian President.<sup>30</sup>

Ahmadinejad's statements on the Holocaust rekindled the debate about how this issue is viewed in Arabic lands, where many commentators take relativist positions or put such positions on an equal basis with scholarly knowledge. An example is the comment of Zain Al-Abidin Al-Rukabi in the newspaper Al-Sharq Al-Awsat that the Holocaust is „an historical fact," which nevertheless is „marked by countless additions, embellishments, exaggerations" and that Israel „makes use of and instrumentalizes it in a nasty and racist manner."<sup>31</sup>

One of the most well-known and renowned Arabic journalists, Hazem Saghieh, opposed this widespread tendency in the newspaper Al-Hayat with a remarkable critique:

Most importantly, the ‚culture' of denying the holocaust... has grown to occupy a dominant position in the public Arab and Islamic life. Although the issue was about to come to an end and be confined to narrow margins that gather utter fanaticism with utter retardation, the heavy poisoned Iranian rain blew on us and was welcomed, quite avidly, by the eager Arab deserts.

The issue is now no longer restricted to narrow margins. The reason is that [Ahmadi]nejad, regretfully and painfully, is the President of the Republic elected by millions of Iranians... Ushered by some writings of the former Syrian Defense Minister Mustapha Tlas, or some letters and instructions of Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, the library of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah abounds with long excerpts drawn from Protocols of the Elders of Zion, The Jewish Peril, and other yellow pages intermingled with mythical visions about martyrdom and graves...

The ailment is swelling up from the heart of the societies to the decision makers therein. It is not a coincidence that the elements of the bloc spreading and disseminating the above mentioned ‚ideas' are those same elements who promise us salvation from occupations and darkness to a brighter and more glowing horizon. It is also not a coincidence that the same bloc represents an anti-modern sensitivity...<sup>32</sup>

*Detailed excerpts from these and other Arabic media on this theme can be found at [www.memri.de](http://www.memri.de) in:*

MEMRI Special Dispatch - Die Holocaust-Debatte in den arabischen Medien [The Holocaust Debate in Arabic Media], January 4, 2006.

MEMRI Special Dispatch - Arabische Reaktionen auf Ahmadinejad, [Arabic reactions to Ahmadinejad], December 12, 2005.

MEMRI Special Dispatch - Arabische Stimmen zum UN-Holocaust-Gedenkttag [Arabic Views on the UN Holocaust Memorial Day], November 23, 2005.

## A Response to Ahmadinejad: Questions of Strategy

*By Walid Salem*

Personally, as a Palestinian working responsibly for the last thirty-one years, including five years in prison as a political prisoner, it is very difficult for me to continue as if nothing has happened when hearing a President of an Islamic State returning to the 1960's and 1970's slogans calling for the elimination of Israel. At that period, these were the slogans of the Arab nationalist movements (and also the Palestinian armed Marxist organizations). Today, these slogans have become Islamist political propaganda resurrected by the Iranians and different political movements that use Islam as their announced ideology.

The dangers of such slogans lie not only in their role in incitement, but also in the fact that they express a lack of strategic vision about the following issue, which also relates to post-disengagement issues in Palestine, namely: How do we deal with the so-called „Jewish question" in the Israeli-Palestinian and also in the Israeli-Arab/Islamic context?

The first point in this regard is the question of „the Jewish question" itself: Do we in the Middle East ask ourselves about this question? With the exception of a book written a few years ago by the Lebanese journalist Joseph Samahah, I have not seen other Arabic writings that recognize the „Jewish question," not only as a European question, but also as an Arabic/Islamic one.

The second point is built onto the first: if the „Jewish question" is recognized, then its phenomena should be discussed. In this regard, very frank questions need to be asked: Were the rights of the Jews throughout the ages guaranteed in Arabic and Islamic countries? If the answer to this question is yes, then why did the Jews of these countries emigrate to Israel? Was it only Zionist propaganda? If it was only Zionist propaganda that led to the migration to Israel, then why do at least a portion of those who came to Israel from the Arabic and Islamic countries adopt right-wing positions towards the Palestinians and Arabs? Moreover, what have Arabs and Islamic countries done in order to maintain good relations with these Jews after they migrated to Israel? These questions need frank answers; and if we continue

<sup>30</sup> Al-Hayat, 12.12.2005

<sup>31</sup> Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, 24.12.2005.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Hayat, 24.12.2005; see also Zvi Bar'el, After 'poisoned Iranian rain', Ha'aretz, January 1, 2006.

justifying oversights, the results will only be further deterioration in the Israeli/Palestinian and Israeli/Middle Eastern relations.

My third point centers on the strategy towards Israel. Do Ahmadinejad and others of his ilk think that this kind of propaganda helps Palestinians? Do they, on the other hand, help Israel to integrate in the Middle East? Or does their attitude just help to increase those trends that call for Israel to be part of the West and to disconnect itself with Eastern culture and ties, except those ties of hegemony and dominance? Do such statements help bring peace to the Middle East, or more hatred and violence and proliferation of nuclear weapons? Does Ahmadinejad hope to use these weapons in order to eliminate Israel? Moreover, does he realize that an Israeli response might bring about the elimination of Iran and probably other Middle Eastern countries? Why are we giving momentum to militarization and a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction instead of peace? What kinds of strategies are these? What do they say about our leaders?

The fourth point regards our roles in solving the "Jewish question". Of course the greater part of this problem was created in Europe, but as the Jewish State was established in the Middle East, it falls upon us to answer the question: Will we accept the challenge of integrating Israel into the area? Alternatively, do we want to create new problems just because we do not bear the responsibility of creating the original problem? Even if the creation of Israel was not our direct responsibility, it is still our overall humanitarian responsibility to find a common solution to the „Jewish question" rather than to resolve the suffering emanating from the establishment of Israel by causing anguish for the Jewish people! These are issues that Ahmadinejad did not think of because his very blind strategy does not acknowledge the humanity of the opposing side.

The fifth point ponders whether these actions reflect Islam. Is this the tolerant Islam that all average citizens know, the Islam that recognizes the „other"? Is this the Islam that promotes equal rights for all people whatever their religion, color, gender, etc.? These blind ideologies have nothing to do with Islam. They only create the opposite of what Islam stands for: they create hatred out of religious differences and thereby religious wars.

On all of the above points, moderate Muslims are called upon to raise their voices. Moderate Muslims must be vociferous against blind strategies, and instead should call for a real and intensive discussion about the „Jewish question" and about Israel's position in the Middle East. Without such deep and fruitful discussion, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict will not be completely solved.

*The article was published first November 1, 2005 at MidEastWeb for Coexistence [www.mideastweb.org](http://www.mideastweb.org) and republished on November 8 in the Lebanese newspaper "The Daily Star".  
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## Press Release: Statement on Ahmadinejad

*By the Iranian Dialog Circle in Berlin  
(Iranischer Dialogkreis Berlin)*

We are appalled by the statements of „our“ President Ahmadinejad about the state of Israel and the Holocaust. Even if we are critical of some political developments in Israel, we find the repeated statements of Ahmadinejad unacceptable and shocking.

Therefore, we, the members of the Iranian Dialog Circle that has been involved for years with transmitting Iranian culture and politics in Berlin, distance ourselves fully from all anti-Semitic and inhumane statements of the Iranian government. The statements of Iranian officials do not at all represent the opinion of the majority of Iranians, and rather distract attention from the manifold examples of positive relations between Iranians and Jews. For centuries, Jews have lived in Iran and have contributed enormously to the culture of the country. The connection goes back to biblical times. The Persian Kyros made it possible for the Jews exiled to Babylon to return to their homeland and to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. He was even referred to in the Bible as „God's Messiah“ (Isaiah 45,1). The Babylonian Talmud also bears witness to the close relationship between Jews and Iranians. The works of Jewish poets of the Middle Ages, such as Shahin Shirazi or Imrani, are part of classical Persian literature. In the past century, when Jews were exposed to so much hostility and persecution, Jewish Iranians were able to live undisturbed in their homeland. For the most part this remains the case today, demonstrated by the fact that despite a rapid decrease in the Jewish population since the 1979 Revolution, Iran's Jewish community remains the largest in any Islamic country. Jews are not only present in Iranian public life, but they participate actively in interfaith dialog within Iran. Basic texts of the Jewish faith, such as the „Ethics of the Fathers“ (Pirke Avot), or works of Jewish philosophers such as Martin Buber, have been translated into Farsi and are available in Iranian bookstores. This makes it even more regrettable that the irresponsible utterances of the Iranian president once again disseminate worldwide a one-sided image of the Iranian people.

The statements of Ahmadinejad also deserve condemnation because so many Jews of Iranian background live in the State of Israel today. They have become more influential in recent years. Witness the fact that Moshe Katzav, born in Iran, became president of Israel. Likewise, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz was born in Iran. The influence of Iranian-born Jews also is seen in the cultural world. One outstanding example is the writer Dorit Rabinian, a winner of the Jewish Book Award, whose novels deal with themes of Jewish life in Iran. Another is the popular singer Rita, whose repertoire always includes Persian songs.

Numerous associations of Jews with Persian roots serve to nurture the culture of their former homeland. Furthermore, Iranian culture is part of the academic curriculum at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, represented by an internationally renowned faculty.

We believe that it is exactly this strong presence of Jewish Iranians and the nurturing of Iranian culture in Israel that offers an opportunity to affirm friendly ties between Jews and Iranians, independent of political relations between the State of Israel and Iran. We thus urge Iranian officials to revise their hostile attitude towards Jews around the world, and hope that positive relations between Iranians and Jews will continue to develop.

*Kambiz Behbahani, journalist  
Iranian Dialog Circle, Berlin  
Berlin Dec. 14, 2005*

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### 3. International Dimensions of Al Quds Day

#### Overview

By Arne Behrensen

The hegemonic claim of Khomeini's Islamist ideology is universal, which is why events are held around the world each year on Al Quds Day. Whether this day of antisemitic propaganda is commemorated in a given country, by whom and in what manner, depends on the specific national context.<sup>33</sup>

One of the most likely factors that determine the form and extent of Al Quds activities is the proportion of the Shiite Muslims in the overall population. In Muslim countries with a Sunni majority, Shiites are often subjected to greater social and political exclusion and more frequent violent attacks. It was these Shiites in other countries that the Shiite regime in Iran wanted to influence with its strategy of "exporting the revolution". Accordingly, demonstrations are now held on Al Quds Day in cities in Pakistan<sup>34</sup>, Bahrain<sup>35</sup>, and since 2003 in Iraq<sup>36</sup> as well. But Iran's most successful example of exporting the revolution is the formation and rise of Hizbullah in Lebanon. For this reason, the following country reports will begin with an essay from Beirut.

The next essay on Turkey demonstrates that the Al Quds organizers are not always exclusively Shiite Muslims linked to the Iranian regime, but occasionally originate from other political and religious groups.

Demonstrations to mark Al Quds Day in Western countries are compared to Teheran and Beirut relatively small and for the most part organized and attended by Shiite Islamists loyal to the ideology of Khomeini. The reports from Great Britain, Germany and the USA analyze the local organizational structures behind the Al Quds events and the various forms of their activities. It is

worth mentioning that similar actions also take place in other Western cities, such as Toronto, Canada<sup>37</sup>.

What is remarkable about International Al Quds Day is that the people who are supposed to benefit from its propaganda do not hold demonstrations themselves. There have been no reported demonstrations in the Palestinian Territories in the past few years. There was, however, a joint Al Quds Day statement in 2003 by the Sunni Hamas (which is descended ideologically from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood) and the smaller Islamic Jihad (which looks to the ideological heritage of Khomeini and is massively supported by Iran). According to a media report these two terror organizations announced that there would be more suicide attacks: "The real conflict arena, for those who wish for Jihad and martyrdom, was in Al Quds, Palestine and the occupied Arab lands, which witness the daily shedding of Mujahideen blood, the statement concluded."<sup>38</sup>

Unlike in the Palestinian Territories, Al Quds Day rallies and demonstrations are held by Islamist organizations every year in countries in South and Southeast Asia, such as Bangladesh<sup>39</sup> and Indonesia<sup>40</sup>.

Demonstrations in African countries, especially in South Africa and Nigeria, deserve a closer examination. In South Africa, demonstrations on Al Quds Day are regularly held in Cape Town. As Islamist websites proudly reported, after the 9/11 attacks, thousands of people from various ethnic and religious backgrounds attended a Palestine Solidarity March to the local U.S. Embassy on Al Quds Day in December 2001. Only 300 people took part in the demonstration on the following Al Quds Day in November 2002, but the march was led by children disguised as suicide bombers or armed Hizbullah fighters. As the demonstration took place less than twenty-four hours after the Al-Qaeda killing of fifteen tourists (three of them from Israel) in Kenya, this march in Cape Town was met with a storm of criticism in the South African press.<sup>41</sup> In South Africa, the demonstrations are also organized by a Khomeinist organization supported by Iran. The South African *Qibla Movement* was formed in the 1980s and propagated the aims of the Islamic revolution in Iran within the anti-Apartheid

<sup>33</sup> An affirmative overview of international activities marking Al Quds Day is given by Mansoor Limba: Imam Khomeini's International Quds Day: From Street Marches to Cyber-Demonstrations, (Paper presented at the International Conference on Imam Khomeini's Thoughts in the View of World Thinkers, Tehran, June 1-2, 2004), [www.geocities.com/icpikw/cyberquds.html](http://www.geocities.com/icpikw/cyberquds.html).

<sup>34</sup> Bush threat to world peace: speakers: Al Quds Day observed in twin cities, in: *Dawn – The Internet Edition*, November 22, 2003, [www.dawn.com/2003/11/22/nat2.htm](http://www.dawn.com/2003/11/22/nat2.htm).

<sup>35</sup> Bahrainis Hold Quds Day Rally, *Al Jazeera online*, 29. Oktober 2005, [www.aljazeera.com/News%20archives/2005%20News%20Archives/October/29%20n/Bahrainis%20Hold%20Quds%20Day%20Rally.htm](http://www.aljazeera.com/News%20archives/2005%20News%20Archives/October/29%20n/Bahrainis%20Hold%20Quds%20Day%20Rally.htm).

<sup>36</sup> [www.intelligence.org.il/eng/bu/iran/je\\_apb.htm](http://www.intelligence.org.il/eng/bu/iran/je_apb.htm).

<sup>37</sup> [www.cpcml.ca/Tmld2001/TMLD228.htm#6](http://www.cpcml.ca/Tmld2001/TMLD228.htm#6).

<sup>38</sup> *The Palestinian Information Center – Daily News*: Hamas-Islamic Jihad issue joint statement on Quds Day, Nov. 22, 2003, [www.palestine-info.co.uk/am/publish/article\\_3348.shtml](http://www.palestine-info.co.uk/am/publish/article_3348.shtml).

<sup>39</sup> [www.jafariyaneews.com/nov2k2/30\\_bangla.htm](http://www.jafariyaneews.com/nov2k2/30_bangla.htm).

<sup>40</sup> [www.tempo.co.id/hg/nasional/2003/11/22/brk.20031122-01.uk.html](http://www.tempo.co.id/hg/nasional/2003/11/22/brk.20031122-01.uk.html).

<sup>41</sup> Outrage as 'suicide bombers' hit Cape Town, in: *Independent Online*, 29.11.2002, [www.iol.co.za/index.php?click\\_id=6&art\\_id=ct20021129214338612B5162757&set\\_id=1](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?click_id=6&art_id=ct20021129214338612B5162757&set_id=1).

movement.<sup>42</sup> The *Qibla* sees the struggle against Israel as a continuation of the South African struggle against Apartheid – an idea that figured prominently in the Iranian regime's anti – Israel propaganda for many years, but also shared worldwide by other political and religious groupings, as became especially obvious during the massive anti-Israeli and antisemitic disturbances at the UN Anti-Racism Conference in Durban, South Africa.<sup>43</sup>

In Nigeria, Al Quds Day demonstrations take place each year in the Northern federal states where the population is predominantly Muslim. Because of the disputed introduction of the Sharia in some of these states, there have repeatedly been bloody confrontations between Muslims and Christians in the past few years, which have led to many deaths. Among the competing Muslim organizations in Northern Nigeria, the militant *Muslim Brotherhood* led by Ibrahim Al-Zakzaky, a follower of Khomeini, is the main sponsor of the Al Quds Day activities.<sup>44</sup> In 1999, according to the organizers, up to a million people demonstrated in Zaria on Al Quds Day.<sup>45</sup> Al-Zakzaky's *Muslim Brotherhood* is thus one of the few examples of movements inspired by Khomeini that also manage to attract large numbers of Sunnis. Again in late October 2005, 25.000 people supposedly attended the Al Quds Day demonstration in the Northern Nigerian city of Kano, which would mean that the demonstration in Nigeria to mark this global antisemitic propaganda day was the largest after those in Iran and Lebanon.<sup>46</sup>

The following reports focus on a number of important countries. It is essential to keep in mind that the actual scope of Al Quds Day activities goes far beyond these regional examples.

## Lebanon

By Mira Dietz

"The problem is that many people in Lebanon forget that Israel exists. Or they don't want to know. Or they do not see Israel as an enemy, a threat, and a danger. That's why they only talk about Syria."<sup>47</sup> Hassan Nasrallah, General Secretary of Hizbullah, could hardly have given a clearer explanation of the importance of Al Quds Day in Lebanon for the party. The event is meant to turn attention toward Jerusalem, which – according to Hizbullah – is to be liberated from Israeli occupation as the third holiest city of Islam.

Particularly since Syria has come under harsh criticism in connection with the investigation of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005, Hizbullah is deeply invested in clarifying the existential difference between the Syrian "brotherland" and the "eternal enemy," Israel.

"On Al Quds Day we renew our vow regarding Jerusalem, its people, its cause and its Imam: it will remain in our consciousness, our concern, our struggle and our goal."<sup>48</sup> With such statements, Nasrallah makes it clear that Hizbullah's goal is not only to retrieve Lebanese prisoners from Israeli jails and bring the Israeli occupation of the Shebaa farms to an end. (Hizbullah as well as the Syrian government continue to claim that this small region belongs to Lebanon, even if the UN has refuted this claim, so that the farms can be contested only as a part of the Golan Heights between Syria and Israel.) Rather, to this day the Party sees its task as eradicating Israel and bringing Jerusalem under Arab-Muslim control.<sup>49</sup> Al Quds Day serves as a high point of its antisemitic ideology.<sup>50</sup> With and beyond this ideology, the Party addresses its own members, the Lebanese people and their government as well as the countries of the region and international political powers.

<sup>42</sup> Concerning the attempt of the Qibla Movement to gain influence among the Moslems of South Africa, cf.: Annelie Botha: PAGAD: A Case Study of Radical Islam in South Africa, in: *The Jamestown Foundation: Volume 3, Issue 17* (September 8, 2005), [www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369781](http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369781).

<sup>43</sup> An overview on South African anti-Zionism and its relation to the struggle against Apartheid gives the anti-Zionist activist Na'eem Jeenah: Palestinian Solidarity in South Africa, 2001, [http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/religion/IE/institutes/institutes\\_JSJR\\_Ms\\_Palestinian\\_.html](http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/religion/IE/institutes/institutes_JSJR_Ms_Palestinian_.html).

<sup>44</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood in Nigeria ([www.islamicmovement.org/](http://www.islamicmovement.org/)) should not be confused with the Sunni Moslem Brotherhood in Arab countries. Shedrack Best: Nigeria: The Islamist Challenge: the Nigerian 'Shiite' Movement, in: Monique Mekenkamp, Paul van Tongeren, Hans van de Veen: Searching for Peace in Africa – An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Management Activities, 1999, [www.conflict-prevention.net/page.php?id=40&formid=73&action=show&surveyid=1#author](http://www.conflict-prevention.net/page.php?id=40&formid=73&action=show&surveyid=1#author)

<sup>45</sup> Short Report by the London *Islamic Human Rights Commission*: [www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=458](http://www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=458).

<sup>46</sup> [www.dawn.com/2005/10/29/int2.htm](http://www.dawn.com/2005/10/29/int2.htm).

<sup>47</sup> Hassan Nasrallah in an interview on the Lebanese station New TV on January 18, 2006.

<sup>48</sup> Conclusion of the speech by Hassan Nasrallah on Al Quds Day 2005, printed in the Lebanese daily newspaper Al-Safir on October 29, 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Amal Saad Ghorayeb points out that this goal is explained both in religious and Arab-nationalist terms (Amal Saad Ghorayeb: Hizbu'llah. Politics and Religion, London: Pluto Press, 2002, p. 161et seqq.).

<sup>50</sup> See Ester Webman, "Anti-Semitic Motifs in the Ideology of Hizbullah and Hamas," Project for the Study of Antisemitism, Tel Aviv University, <http://ict.org.il/articles/articledet.cfm?articleid=51>. Contrary to rumors, the Hizbullah denied any involvement in a conference of Holocaust deniers planned for Beirut in March 2001. But on the other hand, Mohammed Raad, then head of the Hizbullah parliamentary faction, told the Lebanese newspaper The Daily Star that the content of the conference was completely in accord with the Party (The Daily Star, March 24, 2001. Regarding the conference, which in the end was banned by the Lebanese government, see also Götz Nordbruch: "An attempt to internationalize the denial of the Holocaust," in: International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Annual Report, Jerusalem, 2001, p. 9-11).

## Demonstration of Military Strength

With thousands of uniformed militia (including children), battalions marching in lockstep, and demonstrations of special units showing off their military training with rappelling exercises – all this against a backdrop prepared for days in advance, with an extremely efficient system for maintaining order that sends men and women into the observer stands and only permits residents in the surrounding buildings – Al Quds Day in Beirut in 2005, as in the previous years, is a perfect demonstration of military strength. It is so perfect that it hardly matters that none of these fighters carries a weapon. This was not always the case; in 1994, the Party ran into problems when the Lebanese Security Council decided that armed demonstrations were illegal. Today, with their unarmed military rallies, the Hizbullah underscores its claim that weapons are to be used only in the struggle against Israel and are not aimed at the Lebanese.

It is not only the thousands of Hizbullah members present, bussed in from across the country, who are supposed to be impressed with their organization's show of strength: the demonstration is oriented just as much toward the politicians in attendance and toward the television viewers (the festive proceedings are broadcast worldwide live via satellite over the Hizbullah channel Al-Manar for hours, while other Lebanese channels report about it fully in the evening news). Usually, the Iranian Ambassador is not the only dignitary sitting beside General Secretary Nasrallah on the tribune on Al Quds Day. He is also flanked by representatives of the Lebanese president, the prime minister and the president of the parliament as well as representatives of the most important parties, the army and security forces. The variety lends the event a non-partisan character. The fact that in 2005 neither Prime Minister Fuad Siniora nor the party of Hariri's son Saad – which is in conflict with Hizbullah over its position toward Syria – sent representatives to the event held in the Shiite outskirts of Beirut was immediately seen as a political statement. Whoever attends Al Quds Day, the most important annual demonstration by Hizbullah, testifies at the very least to his respect for the Party, which is a powerful force on the plane of domestic politics, too. Since the parliamentary elections of June 2005, Hizbullah also has been involved in the government; but with its pro-Syrian stance, the party frequently takes positions explicitly opposed to the other governmental powers.

## Keynote Address for Supporters and Opponents

Standing behind bulletproof glass and wearing his black turban, Hassan Nasrallah, General Secretary of Hizbullah since 1992, cannot be missed. Nasrallah, who carries the title "Sayyed,"

suggesting he is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, embellishes his long speech with broad gestures. Facing him, standing on the highway that bears the name of his son Hadi – killed in 1997 in a skirmish with Israeli troops in southern Lebanon – are thousands of supporters who hang on his every word. "The people drink up this speech of the 'Sayyed'; they are convinced by his words and remember them. They adopt his words as their own. (...) The population, convinced of the injustice in the world, listens to 'Sayyed,' who gives them strength, pride and security," writes the pro-Syrian Newspaper Al-Safir.<sup>51</sup> In fact, Al Quds Day not only serves to strengthen Party followers in the ideology of their struggle against Israel and "martyrdom" and to provide them with an intoxicating communal experience; the mass rally on the last Friday of the month of Ramadan is also an opportunity to take a stand on questions of national and international politics. In his speech, Nasrallah wastes no time linking his positions on current events (such as the death of Yassir Arafat in 2004, the UN reports on the implementation of UN Resolution 1559, and the murder of Rafik Hariri one year later) with the obligatory conspiracy theories of "resistance" against Israel.

The Lebanese media follows these statements closely; the speech is reprinted virtually in its entirety and is commented upon in the following days by politicians of all stripes. In the eyes of the public, Hizbullah's domestic and foreign policy positions are hardly uncontroversial, even though Hizbullah "liberated" southern Lebanon from Israeli occupation in 2000 with its terror campaign in the name of "national resistance". And Shiite supporters are not the only ones who give the movement credit on this point.

But many Lebanese are just as angry about Hizbullah's insistence on its right to be armed (as the only militia not required to give up its weapons after the Civil War, in reference to the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon), and with its insistence on placing the insignificant Shebaa farm territory under Lebanese supervision, as they are with Hizbullah's repeated military provocations against Israel.

## A controversial political player

"What did and do the Hizbullah demonstrators shout? 'Death to America!' and 'Death to Israel!' In other words: Death to us. (...) It has become clear that Israel is not the only danger for the region, its inhabitants, its souls, its property and its affluence. We are opposing something else entirely: stupidity, paired with high aspirations. We want to prevent the realization of their plans and the plans of their supporters."<sup>52</sup> These comments of Lebanese journalist Dalal al-Bizri in the London-based newspaper Al-Hayat reflect the opinion of a growing number of her fellow citizens.

<sup>51</sup> Al-Safir, October 29, 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Hayat, November 6, 2005.

Al-Bizri points out that Hizbullah itself, which so vehemently protests American influence in Lebanon, is steered by powerful forces from abroad, namely Iran.

In his speeches on Al Quds Day, Nasrallah always refers to Khomeini as the creator of this day; and in fact, Iran's deployment of Revolutionary Guards to Lebanon in 1982 was not the country's only act of decisive influence on the founding of the Party. To this day, Iran supports Hizbullah politically and financially.<sup>53</sup> The model of the Islamic state remains another reference for Hizbullah, even if it has insinuated for several years that such a state cannot be established in Lebanon at the moment.

The aggressive and antisemitic statements of Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad, who was elected in 2005, represent the ideology of the "Party of God" – even if its General Secretary, in his speech on Al Quds Day, does not touch the subject out of fear of international protest. But Nasrallah did not miss the opportunity to meet with Ahmadinejad in January 2006 on the Iranian president's first official visit to Damascus.

Many Lebanese saw the provocations by the "world champion of negationist theories in all categories"<sup>54</sup>, as Ahmadinejad was described in the Lebanese daily newspaper *L'Orient-Le Jour*, just as critically as they did Hizbullah's demonstrations of power on Al Quds Day. True, there is a broad anti-Israel consensus in Lebanese society. Antisemitism is rarely criticized in Lebanese media. But increasingly, voices are heard favoring a pragmatic relationship with the neighbor to the south. In a commentary on Al Quds Day 2005, Ghassan Tuani, publisher of the largest Lebanese daily newspaper, *Al-Nahar*, argued expressly for stationing the Lebanese Army on the border with Israel – that is, in the very region whose military "protection" laid the foundation for Hizbullah's interdenominational and non-partisan reputation. This Greek Orthodox journalist thus indirectly questioned the legitimacy of the "Party of God." In his commentary, he refers to the religious significance of Jerusalem for Christians, too, and expresses the hope that the city's divine inspiration would lead all "Parties of God" to become "god-fearing."<sup>55</sup>

Yet, while many now look upon the Hizbullah and its staged Al Quds Day in Lebanon with suspicion, the mobilization of the Party has become a motivating reference elsewhere in the region. Al Quds Day in 2005 was celebrated in Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon and Syria, as it was in Bahrain or Damascus, where demonstrators also protested international pressure on Syria. Among the party's active tasks abroad is to help organize

Al Quds Day programs worldwide, and to disseminate images of these events via its television station Al-Manar. Hizbullah's antisemitic and anti-Israel rhetoric as well as its militant terrorist activities represent worldwide the ostensibly successful national and Islamist "resistance" against Israel. With its annually repeated call to demonstrate, Hizbullah gains an international following that can serve as a lobby against international pressure to disarm (intensified with UN Resolution 1559). "Jerusalem Day" has become "Hizbullah Day."

<sup>53</sup> According to western diplomats in Beirut, the Hizbullah receives about \$100 million annually from Iran (International Crisis Group: Lebanon: Managing the Gathering Storm. Middle East Report N° 48, December 2005, p. 16).

<sup>54</sup> *L'Orient-Le Jour* on Ahmadinejad, January 20, 2006.

<sup>55</sup> *Al-Nahar*, October 28, 2005.

## Turkey

By Deniz Yücel

The Turks' largest worry is certainly not the existence of the State of Israel. In contrast to people in many other Islamic countries, Turks do not blame Israel or "Zionism" summarily for every problem. This has less to do with Turkey's relationship to Israel than with its relationship to the Arab world. Since the Kemalist revolution in the 1920s, Turkey has oriented itself towards the West; and more importantly, modern Turkey developed particularly by emphasizing its differences from the Arab world. It is not that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not interest anybody, or that people do not sympathize with Palestinians. Rather, the issue does not mobilize large masses of people in Turkey or unify all of Turkey's political forces.

However, it would be incorrect to conclude that antisemitism does not exist in Turkey. In the early phase of the Republic, Turkish Jews were suspected of disloyalty, as were members of all other ethnic or religious minorities; in the 1930s and 1940s, a poll tax on non-Muslims as well as occasional pogroms induced a large part of Turkish Jewry to emigrate to Israel. In antisemitic discourse in Turkey, the State of Israel also took the place of so-called "International Jewry," and Turkish leftists joined with the Islamist and extreme nationalist spectrum in putting the "battle against Zionism" on their agenda. But these developments are more readily comparable to those in European countries than to those in Arab ones.

The specifically Turkish variety of antisemitism in turn – the paranoia about converted Jews who, camouflaged as Muslims, allegedly control both state and society – has nothing to do with Israel. Even for political Islam, which began to form in the late 1960s with Necmettin Erbakan's *Milli Görü* movement (out of which the Refah Party later developed), the subject of Israel always held a less prominent place on the agenda than did other topics – such as the earlier battle against communism, followed by the fight against head scarves ban in state institutions.

All this explains why Al Quds Day did not find greater resonance in Turkey or in Turkish communities across Europe. Nonetheless, once an Al Quds Day did cause a furor in Turkey: on January 31, 1997, Bekir Yıldız (of Erbakan's Refah Party), mayor of Sincan, a small town in the Ankara district, staged a

"Jerusalem Night." He praised the Islamic headscarf as a "banner of honor," while Muhammed Riza Bagheri, Iran's Ambassador to Turkey, appealed to the audience of about 500 to fight against Israel and the US and recommended introducing Sharia Law in Turkey. Afterward, a play about the oppression of the Palestinians was performed.

This event was to be the end of the rule of Erbakan, who, thanks to a coalition of his Refah Party with Tansu Çiller's True Path Party, had become prime minister in June 1996 and had sought a reorientation of foreign policy. His first trips abroad were to Islamic countries, including Iran. The army brass, who consider themselves the custodians of Kemalism, had been waiting for just such an opportunity as the one in Sincan as an excuse to push out Erbakan, whom they despised. On the morning of February 4, 1997, tanks drove through Sincan; the threat of a coup was not to be misunderstood.

What incensed the Turkish public was not the call for Israel's annihilation, but the play, which was seen as an incitement to rebellion. And the public was angry about the presence of the Iranian ambassador as well as the Hizbullah and Hamas flags that decorated the auditorium. This was believed to be the ultimate proof that foreign countries controlled Erbakan's government. Soon afterward, the army coerced Erbakan to resign; then his party was banned.

The second generation of *Milli Görü* functionaries associated with the current Prime-Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan learned their lessons from the events of February 1997. From then on, they pursued policies of moderation and supported closer ties to the European Union, hoping this tactic would reduce the influence of the military. After separating from the Erbakan wing, Erdoğan's new *Party for Justice and Development* (AKP) won the parliamentary elections in late 2002, and his first trips abroad were to Western European states.

If and when Al Quds Day was commemorated in the years after the events in Sincan, the known organizers came from circles outside of *Milli Görü*, especially people associated with the magazines *Kudüs* (Jerusalem) and *Haksöz* (Word of God, or Word of the Law), as well as the website *kudusyolu.com*, all of which serve as platforms for radical Islamist, antisemitic and anti-American authors, and are independent of individual organizations. The goals of *Kudüs* and *Haksöz* include uniting Muslims in the struggle against Israel and the USA, and overcoming the traditional discrepancies between Sunni and Shiite Muslims.

One of the prominent figures in this spectrum is Ahmet

Varol, a columnist of the inflammatory Islamist daily *Vakit* (banned in Germany since early 2005) for which Selahaddin E Çakirgil, also editor-in-chief of *Haksöz*, also writes. Another prominent figure is Nureddin İrin, who was sentenced to a long prison term in 1997 because of his role in the events of Sincan and his membership in the Turkish spin-off of Hizbullah. Burhan Kavuncu is also in this circle. Like many other cadres of the right-wing extremist Gray Wolves, he turned away from Turkish ethnic nationalism in the 1980's. While most of those listed above at that time supported the program of a "Turkish-Islamic synthesis," Kavuncu went further with a small group of like-minded people. They then considered themselves anti-nationalistic followers of a universal political Islam, with the Islamic Republic of Iran as their model. The most conspicuous figure, however, is Hakan Albayrak, a young writer and journalist, once a rebellious leftist intellectual, who, impressed by the Bosnian war, turned to political Islam. Finally, Yalçın İçyer (a.k.a. „Cumali Hoca“) should be named; living in Essen, Germany, he is imam of that city's *Verein für kulturelle Dienste am Menschen* (Society for Cultural Services to Mankind).

The Internet portal [haksoz.net](http://haksoz.net) leads to Germany as well: its domain is registered in Duisburg. While [kudusyolu.com](http://kudusyolu.com) is reserved for its own writers, [haksoz.net](http://haksoz.net) presents itself as a politically broad-based portal, featuring texts by leftist and left-liberal authors from Turkey and other countries.

The power of this spectrum to mobilize, however, is limited. For instance, in October 2005 only a few hundred people took part in the demonstrations on Al Quds Day in Istanbul and the Kurdish town of Batman; and beyond the Islamist propaganda, the Turkish media did not take note of them. The event in Istanbul, where Kavuncu, Varol and İrin spoke, was organized by the *Al Aqsa Society for Help, Solidarity, Education and Culture* (Aksader), and the one in Batman by the *Society for the Right to Free Thinking and Education* (Özgür-Der). Both organizations belong to the spectrum around *Haksöz*.

The organizers avoided any mention of the Iranian origin of Al Quds Day, since Turkish Islamists learned from the events in Sincan that the link between Al Quds Day and Iran could be dangerous. However, there is no evidence that the circle around *Haksöz*, *Kudüs* and *Vakit* are guided by Iran – in contrast to the Turkish subsidiary of Hizbullah, which was founded by Iran in the 1980s, and then infiltrated by the Turkish intelligence service. At the end of the 1990s (some say, after it had fulfilled its role in fighting against the PKK), it was broken up along with the other militant Islamic organizations. This, however, did not stop remnants of these groups from carrying out the

terrorist attacks of November 2003 in Istanbul in cooperation with Al Qaeda.

When it comes to Turkish Islamists in Germany, those who seize on Al Quds Day also follow an Islamist anti-imperialist strategy and thereby aim to create coalitions with decidedly anti-American leftists. According to the moderate Islamist daily newspaper *Yeni afak*, Selahaddin E Çakirgil (who writes for *Vakit*, as mentioned above) spoke at an Al Quds Day event in Cologne in October 2005 – alongside Wilhelm Langthaler, the speaker of the *Antiimperialistische Koordination* (Anti-imperialist Coordination) from Vienna, which considers itself as part of the left. Also involved were the Duisburg-based *Organisation für die Würde und Rechte des Menschen* (Organization for the Dignity and Rights of Man), which is counted as part of the radical wing of Milli Görü , and the multilingual Internet portal [mizan.de](http://mizan.de), which is close to *Haksöz*.

The most important Al Quds Days in Germany in recent years, however, took place in Berlin. The Turkish born brothers Yavuz and Gürhan Özo uz, who run the Internet portal [muslim-markt.de](http://muslim-markt.de), played an important role. This Internet portal is a good example of a European Islamism formed independently of Islamist organizations in the countries of origin. All of the texts on [muslim-markt.de](http://muslim-markt.de) are in German; Islamic services of all kinds are offered, even a matchmaking service; and application forms are available for parents who want their daughters released from swimming instruction at school. "We are ‚fundamentalist Islamists‘ in Germany" is the title of a book that the brothers Özo uz have published, and one might add that these are German Islamists, and as such the campaign against Israel is an important field of agitation for them.

But the Al Quds Day events also have helped trigger a long overdue debate on antisemitism among Turkish immigrants in Germany. On the occasion of the Berlin demonstrations, but also after the attacks on the Istanbul synagogues, representatives of Turkish organizations as well as private individuals spoke out against the antisemitism found in Turkish society. Still, as the considerable success of the feature film "Valley of the Wolves" showed recently, much remains to be done.

## Berlin

By Claudia Dantschke and Udo Wolter

In keeping with the instructions of Ayatollah Khomeini, Al Quds Day demonstrations have been held in Germany since the 1980s. Little is known about the origins of these events, other than the fact that they were organized from the outset by individuals connected with the Shiite Hizbullah. Until 1995, the main German Al Quds Day demonstration usually took place in Bonn; in 1996, the event moved to Berlin.<sup>56</sup>

The *Islamic Center of Hamburg (Islamisches Zentrum Hamburg - IZH)* has always played a major role in organizing the Berlin Al Quds Day demonstrations. This is where the strands of local Hizbullah subsidiaries come together with the Iranian Ayatollahs. According to the Hamburg Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutz Hamburg), the IZH and its related *Imam-Ali Mosque* are steered and financed by the Iranian government, and the center's director is appointed directly by the religious leader Khamenei.<sup>57</sup> Even a quite benevolent investigation by the Institute for Ethnic Studies (Institut für Volkskunde) of the University of Hamburg determined that among Iranians living in Hamburg, "this institution is feared by individuals and groups from the left-wing and liberal spectrum as the 'long arm' of the Islamic Republic."<sup>58</sup>

This concern is underscored by the fact that according to the Berlin District Court in the so-called "Mykonos" case Kazem Darabi – who was behind the assassination of four Kurdish-Iranian exiled politicians in 1992 in Berlin – also frequented the IZH. According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz), this Hizbullah functionary and agent of the Iranian government also organized the Bonn Al Quds Day demonstrations in the early 1990s. As a head of the Iranian *Union of Islamic Students in Europe* (U.I.S.A.), an organization loyal to the regime, Darabi also played an important role linking the Hizbullah in Germany to the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>59</sup> As early as in 1998, during the Al Quds Day demonstration in Berlin, U.I.S.A. flyers were

distributed to passers-by and to the press from the loudspeaker van. Since then, it appears that the U.I.S.A. has refrained from such publicity acts.

In recent years, the IZH increasingly has tried to present a more moderate image, oriented towards religious tolerance and a "dialog of cultures" – and all references to Al Quds Day activities have been removed from the German language Internet site. Instead, the IZH participates in the annual nationwide "Day of the Open Mosque" and has become a recognized center for interfaith dialog in Hamburg. Even high-level representatives of the Protestant regional church and the Hamburg Jewish community make appearances in the IZH.<sup>60</sup> Following the terror attacks in London and Sharm el-Sheikh in July 2005, the current director and Imam of the IZH, Ayatollah Ghaemmaghami, delivered a religious opinion (Fatwa), in which he "stated unequivocally that, according to Islamic law (Sharia), all forms of terrorism and the killing of innocent people are prohibited."<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, the IZH remains connected to the organizers of Al Quds Day in Berlin, both in content and in structure. While the march no longer is headed by the directorship of the IZH, it did organize the possibility for members to travel by bus to Al Quds Day in Berlin in 2005, according to the Hamburg Senate.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the Berlin Senate Department of the Interior confirmed the close connection between the IZH and the organizers of the demonstration:

One of the two registrants for last year's [2003] demonstration is a member of the board of the *Islamic Cultural Association for Iranians in Berlin-Brandenburg, Inc (Islamische Kulturgemeinde der Iraner in Berlin-Brandenburg e.V.)*. There are obviously close connections between the association, founded on May 20, 2003, and the IZH – connections that follow from the association's statutes. In fact, IZH also owns the property where the association is headquartered and in its new Persian-language internet site, the IZH itself mentions its connection to the association based in Berlin-Tempelhof.<sup>63</sup> According to the Berlin Senate Department of the Interior, the same members of the association registered the Al Quds Day demonstration on October 29, 2005.<sup>64</sup>

The dominant status of the IZH and its influence far beyond Berlin institutions of Arab, Turkish, and Iranian Shiites results from

<sup>56</sup> The organizers have presented photo documentation in the Internet of the Al Quds Days in Berlin since 1999: [www.islamischer-weg.de/demos/qudstag.htm](http://www.islamischer-weg.de/demos/qudstag.htm)

<sup>57</sup> See Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz: Führungswechsel im „Islamischen Zentrum Hamburg“ [Office for the Protection of the Constitution: Leadership change in the „Islamic Center of Hamburg“], January 20, 2004, source: <http://fhh.hamburg.de/stadt/Aktuell/behoerden/inneres/landesamt-fuer-verfassungsschutz/archiv/archiv-2004/fuehrungswechsel-izh-artikel.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Karin Hesse-Lehmann, Die Imam-Ali-Moschee an der Hamburger Außenalster. Ihr Einfluss auf das interkulturelle Zusammenleben. Ein Forschungsbericht [The Imam-Ali Mosque on the Hamburg Außenalster Lake. Its influence on inter-cultural coexistence. A research report], source: [www.uni-hamburg.de/Wiss/FB/09/Volkskul/Texte/Vokus/2002-22/moschee.html](http://www.uni-hamburg.de/Wiss/FB/09/Volkskul/Texte/Vokus/2002-22/moschee.html)

<sup>59</sup> Archiv für Forschung und Dokumentation Iran-Berlin e.V., Verein iranischer Flüchtlinge in Berlin e.V. (Hg.), Mykonos-Urteil in der Strafsache gegen Amin und andere wegen Mordes und Beihilfe zum Mord [Archive for Research and Documentation Iran-Berlin Inc., Association of Iranian Refugees in Berlin Inc. (Eds.), Mykonos decision in the criminal proceeding against Amin and others on charges of murder and aiding and abetting murder], Berlin 1998, p. 207 et seq.

<sup>60</sup> Further prominent guest speakers in recent years included Professor Udo Steinbach, head of the German Orient Institute; Protestant theologian Dorothee Sölle; writer Luise Rinser; Jewish theologian Pinchas Lapide; the late politician of the German Green Party, Petra Kelly; and the former mayor of Bremen Henning Scherf.

<sup>61</sup> [www.presseportal.de/story.htx?nr=706370&firmid=58953](http://www.presseportal.de/story.htx?nr=706370&firmid=58953).

<sup>62</sup> Hamburg State and Municipal Parliament [Bürgerschaft der freien und Hansestadt Hamburg], Document 18 / 3074: Written request of the members of Parliament Nebahat Güçlü, Antje Möller and Dr. Till Steffen (GAL), October 26, 2005 and response of the Senate.

its connection to the Iran-based *Ahl-ul-Bayt World Gathering*.<sup>65</sup> This internationally active Iranian NGO is directly supervised by Ayatollah Khamenei.<sup>66</sup> According to its own website, its goals are the development and promotion of cultural, economic and social conditions of the successors of "Ahl-ul-Bayt"<sup>67</sup> as well as "the unification of Islamic nations to resist various conspiracies and courses of actions of globally arrogant powers."<sup>68</sup> According to experts and constitutional protection authorities, the organization is better described as a religious network for spreading Khomeini's Islamist ideology. The German center of the *Ahl-ul-Bayt World Gathering* is – according to its own statement – the IZH.<sup>69</sup>

For years, the Delmenhorst-based brothers Gürhan and Yavuz Özoguz have fulfilled an important networking and bridging function between the IZH, and various Shiite communities and Hizbullah subsidiaries on one hand, and other Muslim and non-Muslim supporters of the antisemitic message of Al Quds Day on the other. They regularly show up in headlines as avowed followers of the spiritual leader of the Islamist Iranian dictatorship, Ayatollah Khamenei, and the Lebanese terror organization Hizbullah.<sup>70</sup> With their Internet portals [islamischer-weg.de](http://islamischer-weg.de), [islam-pure.de](http://islam-pure.de) and especially [muslim-markt.de](http://muslim-markt.de), they call for participation in the Al Quds Day demonstration, and also provide the appropriate ideological arsenal, including numerous writings of the Ayatollah Khomeini, his successor Khamenei, as well as other leading figures of the "Islamic Revolution". They have dedicated two categories on their website [muslim-markt.de](http://muslim-markt.de) to ceaseless agitation against the existence of Israel: "Boycott Israel" and "Palestine Special". Here, prepared demonstration slogans can be downloaded, which rhyme in German: "Is the world blind and deaf? Israel means murder and robbery!"; "Is the world deaf and dumb? Israel murders children," and so on.<sup>71</sup>

For years, the Özoguz brothers have come to the Berlin demonstration with their association, Islamic Path Inc., Delmenhorst, to support the "brothers and sisters" in publicly presenting the prepared mottos and statements as well as in an organizational sense.

That the efforts of the Özoguz brothers and their Shiite allies also found acceptance among Sunni Islamists became clear at the Al Quds Day in December 2000, when more than 2,000 demonstrators<sup>72</sup> on the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin-Charlottenburg called for "the liberation of Palestine and the holy city of Jerusalem". One year later, after 9/11, the march was diverted to Kreuzberg and its organizers were clearly anxious to make any Hizbullah flags disappear. In November 2002 the activists returned to the Kurfürstendamm with renewed confidence, repeating old familiar slogans ("Death to Israel, Death to the USA"). This time, the rally's closing address was delivered by the Berlin correspondent of Iranian state television, IRIB.

Since 2003, a moderate tone has prevailed, primarily due to a counter-campaign started that year by a broad coalition of civil society groups (see reports about the campaign in the next session), and the ensuing critical media attention. In addition, strict conditions placed on the demonstrators by the Berlin authorities contributed to the moderation. Participants at the 2005 Al Quds Day demonstration were explicitly forbidden to refer to the antisemitic tirades of the new Iranian President Ahmadinejad in an affirmative manner on their posters or slogans.

Because the demonstration organizers clearly had little confidence in their own clientele's preparedness to show restraint, since 2003 the event has been a silent protest. Numerous patrols take strict care that the demonstration guidelines are observed. Meanwhile, the number of demonstrators has shrunk from 1,100 in 2003 to 400 in 2005, while the event is dominated by Khomeini-loyal Berlin Shiites with their local networking figure Yakup Kilic<sup>73</sup>, a musician and employee of the cultural department of the Iranian Embassy in Berlin, as well as representatives of the *Imam-Riza Mosque*<sup>74</sup> of Berlin-Neukölln. Concerning the general character of the demonstration, where marchers are strictly divided by gender, nothing has changed. As always, they carry numerous photos of Khomeini, Khamenei and other dignitaries of the Iranian regime. The Berlin daily newspaper *Tagesspiegel* was justified in commenting, "Their loudspeaker is in Tehran; they demonstrate around the world, including in Berlin, for all those who fanatically cry: 'Liberate Jerusalem, destroy Israel!'"<sup>75</sup>

<sup>63</sup> [www.izhamburg.com/user/farsi/viewcenter.asp?id=133](http://www.izhamburg.com/user/farsi/viewcenter.asp?id=133). Read on February 5, 2006; see also: [www.ikib.net](http://www.ikib.net).

<sup>64</sup> House of Representatives Berlin, Document 15 / 11 864: Written request of the member of Parliament Özcan Mutlu (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen / Green Party), September 17, 2004 and response; on the continuity of the registrants through 2005, see Document 15 / 12 872: Written request of the member of Parliament Özcan Mutlu (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen / Green Party) October 6, 2005 and response.

<sup>65</sup> [www.ahl-ul-bait.org/english/ABOUT-US/index.htm](http://www.ahl-ul-bait.org/english/ABOUT-US/index.htm).

<sup>66</sup> [www.iranexpert.com/2003/jraqishiite18march.htm](http://www.iranexpert.com/2003/jraqishiite18march.htm).

<sup>67</sup> Ahl-ul-Bayt: literally 'house of the prophet', here intended as the party followers of Ali (Schiat'Ali).

<sup>68</sup> [www.ahl-ul-bait.org/english/ABOUT-US/index.htm](http://www.ahl-ul-bait.org/english/ABOUT-US/index.htm).

<sup>69</sup> [www.ahl-ul-bayt.org/english/english.htm](http://www.ahl-ul-bayt.org/english/english.htm): "Institutes & Centers » Europe » Germany » Islamic Centre Hamburg".

<sup>70</sup> Yassin Musharbash, „Mit zwei Klicks per Internet direkt zur Hisbullah" [With two clicks on the Internet, direct to Hisbullah], die tageszeitung, August 17, 2002.

<sup>71</sup> Several even more explicit slogans, such as „Zionisten sind Faschisten / Töten Kinder und Zivilisten" [Zionists are fascists/ they kill children and civilians]; „Zionisten woll'n die Welt / Kaufen mit geklautem Geld" [Zionists want to buy the world / with stolen money] have in the meantime been removed from the muslim-markt website because of the weight of public and governmental pressure on the provider.

<sup>72</sup> Other observers have estimated the total at up to 3,000.

<sup>73</sup> [www.intizar.de](http://www.intizar.de) as well as [www.irankultur.com](http://www.irankultur.com), domain owner query on February 27, 2006:

"Owner Contact: Yakup Kilic, Embassy of I R Iran, Drakestr. 9 b, Berlin, Germany, D-12205, Germany".

<sup>74</sup> What Iran-loyal Islamists could no longer achieve on Al Quds Day 2005, they were able to accomplish in the winter of 2006 regarding the affair of the Mohammad caricatures. On February 11, 2006, exactly the anniversary of the Iranian Revolution, they called for a demonstration in front of the Danish Embassy in Berlin. Directed by Yakup Kilic and the Imam of the Imam-Riza Mosque, Sabahattin Türkyilmaz, some 700 Muslim women and men of various religious and political orientations condemned the "defamation of Islam".

<sup>75</sup> Lorenz Maroldt, „Al Quds-Tag: Das ist uns nicht gleichgültig", [„Al Quds Day: It's not all the same to us"] *Tagesspiegel*, October 29, 2005.

## London

By Mark Gardner

Speakers Corner, at the edge of London's Hyde Park, traditionally has symbolized the British commitment to freedom of speech. Every Sunday, a bewildering assortment of speakers delivers the diatribe of their choice, often to the bemusement or anger of passers-by and tourists. It is, therefore, only fitting that this also should serve as the starting point for London's annual Al Quds Day demonstration, when Central London witnesses a street theatre that has more in common with Tehran or Beirut than it does with red double-decker buses, Christmas shoppers, and unarmed London bobbies.

The innovative minds website provides the most detailed coverage of recent Al Quds Day rallies.<sup>76</sup> It also shows the milieu and broader worldview of the London rally activists, featuring pro-Islamist and anti-Western campaigns, and advertisements promoting pro-Khomenite memorabilia. Press releases after the rally stated that thousands had attended, but it is very likely that the actual attendance was under one thousand, as it has been for a number of years. A much wider than usual array of Islamist groups supported the 2000 rally; but the number of attendees showed no particular rise.<sup>77</sup> The 2004 rally had been notable for a counter demonstration of the *Alliance of Iranian students in London* and Supporters of the Pro-Democracy Movement in Iran; there was no similar protest in 2005.<sup>78</sup>

As in other countries, the London rally attendees appear to be drawn predominantly from the local Iranian Shia community and divide according to sex and seniority. Nevertheless, the demonstrators at the 30 October 2005 rally were promised speeches from a cosmopolitan array of speakers, including Yvonne Ridley, Azzam Tamimi and Rabbi Ahron Cohen of *Neturei Karta*.<sup>79</sup> This mix reflects alliances in London between different strands of Islamist activism, and the eagerness of the ultra-orthodox, anti-Zionist Jewish sect *Neturei Karta* to share a platform with those who would destroy Israel.

Yvonne Ridley is a former Fleet Street journalist who converted to Islam after being taken hostage in Afghanistan in 2001. She is now an impassioned public advocate of the international Islamist cause. Azzam Tamimi has been the spokesman of the Sunni

*Muslim Association of Britain*, a pro-Muslim Brotherhood group that sprang to prominence after its alliance with leftist movements in Britain's anti-Iraq War movement. He has admitted to advising the Hamas leadership, and has publicly praised Hamas suicide bombings.

Rabbi Cohen's speech on the 2005 Al Quds Day rally can be heard on the website of *Neturei Karta*, subtitled "Jews United Against Zionism."<sup>80</sup> Cohen's conclusion begins with the words, "We want to tell the world, especially our Arab neighbors, that there is no hatred or animosity between Arab and Jew. [...] It was only the advent of the Zionists and Zionism which upset this age old relationship." Cohen's speech is also given emphasis on the website report of the *Muslim Association of Britain*<sup>81</sup>, which states, "The crowd made clear distinctions between Jews and Zionists, yelling, 'Judaism: Here to stay; Zionism: No way!'" The denial of antisemitism is a key tactic for Britain's increasingly media-savvy Islamists, and is also beneficial for their partners on the revolutionary left, in particular those who support George Galloway's *Respect Party*. It is, however, the opposite of the current antisemitic trajectory being pursued by the organizers of the somewhat more significant Al Quds rallies in Iran and Lebanon.

The Al Quds Day organizers in London describe themselves as the *Justice for Palestine Committee*, but it is the *Islamic Human Rights Commission* (IHRC), and its head, Massoud Shadjareh, that appear to be the main driving forces behind the event. The IHRC now represents the British wing of the Khomenite tradition, an international network seen in publications such as the originally Toronto-based English language magazine, *Crescent International*.<sup>82</sup> In earlier years, the rally was organized by the *United Islamic Students Association*, a pro-Iranian student group that is now relatively inactive in the UK.<sup>83</sup>

The IHRC's skilled use of the language of western human rights has facilitated its legitimization as a Muslim lobbying group.<sup>84</sup> This is premised upon the tactic of dissimulation whereby the cause of Islam is furthered by the tempering of its message to suit prevailing local conditions.

Nevertheless, the IHRC's very name gives the game away: This is the *Islamic Human Rights Commission*, precisely because it campaigns for Islamic rights, rather than for human rights as defined by the United Nations. This position was made explicit by Shadjareh in an IHRC newsletter in 2000: "Human Rights are the new criterion by which the West considers itself to be civilised and all others as barbaric (...) Throughout the West's history their

<sup>76</sup> [www.inminds.co.uk](http://www.inminds.co.uk).

<sup>77</sup> For the supporters of the 2000 rally see: [www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=94](http://www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=94).

<sup>78</sup> On the 2004 counter rally: [www.iranvajahan.net/cgi-bin/news.pl?en&ty=2004&m=11&d=06&a=7](http://www.iranvajahan.net/cgi-bin/news.pl?en&ty=2004&m=11&d=06&a=7). Motivated by the counter campaign in Berlin, there were critical observers of the 2005 London rally on the blog Harry's Place: [http://hurryupharry.bloghouse.net/archives/2005/10/26/khomeinist\\_propaganda\\_there\\_and\\_here.php](http://hurryupharry.bloghouse.net/archives/2005/10/26/khomeinist_propaganda_there_and_here.php).

<sup>79</sup> [www.inminds.co.uk/quds2005-poster.jpg](http://www.inminds.co.uk/quds2005-poster.jpg).

<sup>80</sup> [www.nkusa.org/activities/Demonstrations/2005Oct30London.cfm](http://www.nkusa.org/activities/Demonstrations/2005Oct30London.cfm).

<sup>81</sup> [www.mabonline.info/english/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=571](http://www.mabonline.info/english/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=571).

<sup>82</sup> [www.islamicthought.org/icit-crescent.html](http://www.islamicthought.org/icit-crescent.html).

<sup>83</sup> [www.uisaeurope.com/isauk/isauk.htm](http://www.uisaeurope.com/isauk/isauk.htm), see also previous article on Berlin.

opponent has remained the same: Islam and Islamic universality." The newsletter continues to explain how the Western idea for universal human rights, proposed by "a leading Zionist," provides an idea of human rights that is the direct opposite of how they would be defined in Islam.<sup>85</sup>

The real politics of Al Quds Day have not deterred a handful of would-be suitors of both left - and right - wing persuasions from occasionally joining the march, but this has only been a minor feature.<sup>86</sup>

Study of the rhetoric, combined with analysis of the personal, ideological, and organizational links of the London Al Quds Day organizers provides a valuable insight into much of the British Jihadi spectrum, and in particular its willingness to work across sectarian and ideological divides.

The IHRC grew out of the *Muslim Parliament*, which was a briefly successful attempt by the pro-Khomeini body, the *Muslim Institute*, to further its attempts at patronage over British Muslims. The Institute's and Parliament's leader, Kalim Siddiqui, had gained notoriety as the man who advised Ayatollah Khomeini to place the death fatwa on British writer Salman Rushdie. Since Kalim Siddiqui's death in 1996 the Parliament is now led by Ghayasuddin Siddiqui (no relation to Kalim Siddiqui), who, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and again after the 7th July 2005 London bombings, renounced his own past rhetoric as having been divisive and dangerous. Siddiqui had dismissed Shadjareh from his chairmanship of the Muslim Parliament's Human Rights Committee, and from his other Parliament posts, in 1997, citing "negligence and mismanagement." This was the catalyst for Shadjareh's founding of the IHRC, in which he continued to perform publicly many of his previous activities.<sup>87</sup>

Given their image as a human rights group, it may not be surprising that the IHRC opposes British and American anti-terrorism legislation; the IHRC's opposition, however, is based in part on the belief that Britain and America may be deserving targets for terrorism, so any attack on a British or American target should not necessarily be declared illegal. An IHRC paper called "Legislating Against Terror or Breaking Dissent?", authored by the Muslim journalist and IHRC advisor Faisal Bodi, declared such attacks would only be "an exercise of the right to self-determination or self defence" against "western hegemony."<sup>88</sup>

The IHRC's belief in the legitimacy of Islamist terrorism is the basis of its campaigning for arrested or convicted "Prisoners of Faith" to be released from prisons around the world. The best known of these is Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, imprisoned in New York for plotting a series of terrorist atrocities across the city. He is closely linked to the group that first bombed the World Trade Center in 1993. Shadjareh's most recent defense of a Jihadi was that of the notorious Abu Hamza al Masri, whom a London court sentenced in February 2006 to seven years imprisonment for incitement to murder.

In London, Iranian President Ahmadinejad's call for the destruction of Israel was criticized by Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, and sparked a demonstration outside the Iranian Embassy by 250 Jews and Christian "friends of Israel".<sup>89</sup> Shadjareh criticized Straw's reaction at the Al Quds Day rally, claiming that Israel had destroyed 400 Palestinian villages without protest from Britain.

The IHRC itself does not engage in the type of outright Holocaust denial that has provoked widespread concerns about President Ahmadinejad's extremism. Its attitude to the Holocaust, however, is to use it as a stick with which to beat Israel.

In January 2001, the group criticized the UK's first Holocaust Memorial Day on the basis that it did not commemorate "the Israeli Holocaust against Palestinians."<sup>90</sup>

Shadjareh drew heavily upon the Holocaust in his comments about the publication of cartoons depicting Mohammed that had sparked rioting and deaths in the Muslim world in early 2006. He warned that their re-publication had exceeded anything done against the Jews in 1930's Europe, and warned that it presaged "systematic violence" against Muslims.<sup>91</sup>

This summarizes the underlying fears of the Al Quds Day demonstration participants in London in 2005. The open hatred was of course directed against Zionists, Israel and the USA, yet this was a demonstration that also went to great lengths to assert that not all Jews are Zionists, and that Zionists should not be confused with Jews. Its propaganda and its world view, however, remain infused by conspiracy theories that owe far more to the notorious antisemitic hoax of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" than they do to Zionism as it is understood and known by practically every Jew: with the exception of *Naturei Karta*.

<sup>84</sup> For IHRC's campaigns like the annual "Islamophobia Award" see [www.ihrc.org/](http://www.ihrc.org/).

<sup>85</sup> Massoud Shadjareh: Human Rights, Justice Et Muslims in the Modern World, 7. May 2000, [www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=10](http://www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=10).

<sup>86</sup> In May 1988, two British far Right organisers from the 'political soldiers' National Front splinter group were photographed on the rally. The Innovative Minds website also shows activists from 'Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism' on a previous rally.

<sup>87</sup> For the history of the *Muslim Institute* until 1998, his successor, the *Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought*, and their differences with Ghayasuddin Siddiqui's *Muslim Parliament* see [www.islamicthought.org/mi-intro.html](http://www.islamicthought.org/mi-intro.html) and [www.muslimparliament.org.uk/history.htm](http://www.muslimparliament.org.uk/history.htm).

<sup>88</sup> Faisal Bodi: Legislating Against Terror or Breaking Dissent? National Anti-Terrorism Laws 1998 – 2001, August 2001, [www.ihrc.org.uk/file/01durbanterrorism.pdf](http://www.ihrc.org.uk/file/01durbanterrorism.pdf)

<sup>89</sup> Jewish News 12/01/06.

<sup>90</sup> IHRC press release, 25/01/01: "Holocaust Victims Forgotten – United Kingdom remembers one holocaust, ignores the rest", [www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=84](http://www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=84).

<sup>91</sup> Shadjareh was quoted on the Mohammed Cartoons by the Scotsman newspaper on February 5, 2006: <http://news.scotsman.com/international.cfm?id=183562006>

## United States

By Yehudit Barsky

Ideological supporters of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Republic of Iran in the United States have adhered to the Iranian political observance known as the Worldwide Day of Al Quds (Jerusalem) since its introduction in 1979. Public demonstrations marking its observance have been promoted by the Iranian regime among Shi'a communities in the United States and throughout the world in its continuing efforts to export its Islamic Revolution.

Since the early 1980s, mosques and Islamic centers throughout the U.S. were funded by the Iranian government-controlled *Mostazafan Foundation* in New York, now known as the *Alavi Foundation*. According to former FBI counterterrorism chief Oliver Revell, US officials have concluded that the Foundation is closely linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards,<sup>92</sup> which are considered responsible for the establishment of the Hizbullah terrorist organization in Lebanon. A number of the mosques that received funding from the Foundation openly espoused support for Khomeini and the Tehran regime and have participated as co-sponsors of Al Quds Day demonstrations.

In the United States, the pro-Iran organization that has traditionally organized Al Quds Day is the *Muslim Students' Association-Persian Speaking Group* (MSA-PSG), which is also known as *Anjoman Islami*. In testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee on Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary Subcommittee in 1999, then FBI Director Louis Freeh described *Anjoman Islami* as consisting of pro-Iran students who serve as a resource to the regime in Tehran:

"There are still significant numbers of Iranian students attending United States universities and technical institutions. A significant number of these students are hard-core members of the pro-Iranian student organization known as the Anjoman Islami, which is comprised almost exclusively of fanatical, anti-American, Iranian Shi'ite Muslims. The Iranian Government relies heavily upon these students studying in the United States for low-level intelligence and technical expertise. However, the Anjoman Islami also represents a significant resource base upon which the government of Iran can draw to maintain the capability to mount operations against the United States, if it so decides."<sup>93</sup>

Throughout the late 1980s and the 1990s, the group

coordinated demonstrations across the United States to commemorate the Ayatollah Khomeini's "Worldwide Day of Al Quds." As was done in the Middle East, the demonstrations would take place on the last Friday of the Muslim month of Ramadan each year. The "Worldwide Day of Al Quds" became the largest public manifestation of pro-Khomeini activity in the United States.

Over the past two decades, material distributed by the MSA-PSG overtly expressed support for the "global Islamic revolution." One of several prominent examples was the 1989 leaflet entitled „Demonstrations of the Worldwide Day of Al Quds" concluding with a statement that supported acts of violence that were legitimized as "military initiatives" against "Zionist usurpers," that is, Israel: "We endorse and support the Islamic military and political initiatives against the Zionist usurpers."<sup>94</sup>

This was illustrated with a picture of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem superimposed over a map of "Palestine" covered with barbed wire and prison bars in the shape of a six-pointed Star of David, symbolic of Israel. The corners of the star were depicted as having been broken and dripping with blood.

The 1989 demonstration cosponsors included representatives from different sectors of the Muslim community: *Council for Muslim Unity*, the MSA-PSG, *United Muslim Women Association Muslim Group*, Detroit branch, *Tawheed Association*, *Islamic International Development Association*, *United Michigan Muslim Association*, *Azari Students Association* and the *Islamic Cultural Society* (ISFS).

Like many other radical Islamic organizations, the MSA-PSG began to use the Internet to organize its followers in the 1990s. Flyers for demonstrations that were held throughout North America were posted in a special section on the organization's web site.<sup>95</sup>

The 1998 Worldwide Day of Al Quds was observed in Washington, D.C.; Dearborn, Michigan; Seattle, Washington; and Toronto and Montreal, Canada. The national flyer for the day quoted the Ayatollah Khomeini: "To liberate Quds (Jerusalem) Muslims must depend on the power of Islam. The day of Quds is a day when all Muslims must concentrate on Islam."<sup>96</sup>

Slogans that were chanted during the demonstration included: "Islamic Revolution—Is the Only Solution," "Quds Is a Muslim Land—Its Return We Demand," "Zionism Is Racism," and an expression of loyalty to Iran's Supreme Islamic Guide, 'Ali Khamene'i: "Our Leader Khamene'i – Long Live Khamene'i."<sup>97</sup>

Organizations that cosponsored the local events included the "Washington, D.C. Quds Committee," which provided as contact information telephone numbers for Bahram Nahidian, a longtime

<sup>92</sup> "U.S. keeps close tabs on Muslim cleric," *Washington Post*, January 1, 2003, [www.hvk.org/articles/0103/51.html](http://www.hvk.org/articles/0103/51.html).

<sup>93</sup> "Prepared Statement of Louis J. Freeh, Director Federal Bureau of Investigation, before the Senate Appropriations Committee on Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary Subcommittee, February 4, 1999, Federal News Service, February 4, 1999.

<sup>94</sup> „Worldwide Day of Al Quds" flyer, May 5, 1989.

<sup>95</sup> „Worldwide Day of Al Quds" flyer for rallies in US cities on January 15, 1999; originally on the MSA-PSG Quds Day website, „[www.msapsg.org/quds](http://www.msapsg.org/quds)," now only at <http://web.archive.org/web/20030902131038/www.msapsg.org/Quds/quds99/images/fquds99.pdf>.

<sup>96</sup> „Download Quds flyers," originally on the MSA-PSG website; [www.msapsg.org/flyers.html](http://www.msapsg.org/flyers.html), PDF document titled "qudsall-1.pdf." Some MSA-PSG documents on Al Quds Day 1998 and 1999 still at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20000304214036/www.msapsg.org/archive.html>

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., PDF document „slogan98.pdf."

pro-Khomeini activist in Potomac, Maryland, and the *Manassas Mosque* in Virginia.<sup>98</sup> In Michigan, the organizers were listed as the "Michigan Quds Committee," and in Seattle two mosques, the *Islamic Center of Portland* and the *Islamic Center of Seattle*, were co-sponsors of the event.<sup>99</sup>

In recent years, proponents of Al Quds Day have been focusing their efforts on mobilizing extremist Sunni Muslims and other supporters of the Palestinian cause to participate in Al Quds Day. In the US, the *Islamic Association for Palestine*, an organization linked to the Hamas terror organization, also promoted and participated in the observance of Al Quds Day.

Following the September 11, 2001 terror attacks that heightened concerns over Islamic extremist activity in Western countries, pro-Iran organizations organizing Al Quds Day have attempted to obfuscate the origins and meaning of the observance by altering the rhetoric, slogans and chants used at the demonstrations to focus on Palestinian rights and to play down connections to Iran.

In recent years Al Quds Day demonstrations in the U.S. have become much smaller. It is hard to know exactly what happened since there is no information on what happened inside the MSA-PSG. Unfortunately, there was no movement to isolate Islamic extremists within Islamic communities; rather the extremists have been portraying themselves as moderates.

Several hundred demonstrators participated in the 2002 demonstration in Houston, Texas that was organized under the name "Worldwide Movement for Justice and Peace" (WMJP). Participants chanted, "Long Live Palestine" and "Death to Israel," and the slogan chanted by American antiwar protestors, "No justice, no peace."<sup>100</sup> Only some dozens of supporters participated in the 2004 demonstration held in Dearborn, Michigan,<sup>101</sup> and a "Rally for the Liberation of Palestine" was organized by the WMJP on Al Quds Day at Houston's City Hall in 2004.<sup>102</sup> The 2005 US demonstration organized by the WJMP in Houston's City Hall similarly focused on Palestinian rights and called upon participants to "voice your opposition to the unjust, illegal, and inhumane occupation of the Holy Land by the usurping Zionist entity."

From these recent developments, it appears that supporters of the Iranian regime will continue to attempt to organize Al Quds Day observances without obviously linking themselves to Iran. At the same time they will also try to co-opt more organizations that are not Muslim to their cause. This serves the purpose of showing that the Iranian regime has a new source of followers for the observance of Al Quds Day. It will also demonstrate that others from a more mainstream part of society are willing to provide legitimacy to their cause.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., PDF document „qudsdc-1.pdf.“

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., PDF document „qudsqa-2.pdf.“

<sup>100</sup> "Groups rally for Palestinians," *Houston Chronicle*, November 30, 2002.

<sup>101</sup> "Arab groups hold Arafat memorial in Dearborn," *Associated Press*, November 12, 2004.

## 4. The Anti-AI Quds Campaign in Berlin

### Three Years of Campaigning

*By the Berlin Alliance against  
the International AI Quds Day*

It all started in Texas in November 2002, when the *Student Movement Coordination Committee for Democracy in Iran* published a public call, requesting that “the freedom-loving and struggling nation of Iran, especially the youth and the students, deliver a crushing response to the promoters of antisemitism and terrorism by boycotting the sham and mandatory demonstration of the so-called Worldwide Day of Ghods (AI Quds Day).”<sup>103</sup> This text alerted the attention of activists of the small, left-wing *Berlin Alliance against Antisemitism*<sup>104</sup> to the AI Quds Day activities in the German capital. Subsequent meetings with experts on radical Islam and Iranian dissidents in Berlin showed that many of them were quite familiar with AI Quds Day activities and their organizers.<sup>105</sup> These meetings resulted in the establishment of our Berlin Alliance against International AI Quds Day<sup>106</sup> in 2003. Since then, we have staged annual rallies to protest against the AI Quds Day march in Berlin.

AI Quds Day in November 2003 marked our first public call for protest against the AI Quds Day march. In addition to the Berlin Alliance against Antisemitism, the sponsors included Anetta Kahane, Chairperson of the *Amadeu Antonio Foundation*, German-Iranian journalist Wahied Wahdathagh, Iranian dissident Mohammed Schams, cabaret artist and actress Parvaneh Hamidi, as well as Claudia Dantschke and Ali Yildirim from the German-Turkish television station AYPATV.

By November 22nd, 291 individuals had put their signatures

under our protest appeal. The list included many distinguished representatives of migrant communities, representatives of Jewish communities and anti-racism initiatives, as well as federal and local politicians – especially from the Alliance 90/The Greens and the socialist PDS.<sup>107</sup> The action sparked great interest from the media. The Berlin State Ministry for the Interior prohibited the AI Quds Day organizers from using the prestigious Kurfürstendamm boulevard in the heart of the main shopping district in the western part of Berlin for their march. They were offered a secondary, less central route.

On AI Quds Day itself, a large group of critical journalists closely followed the Islamist demonstration for the first time, and a small group of protestors organized a counter-rally. The organizers of the AI Quds Day activities had decided to transform their demonstration into a silent march, to avoid attention being focused by critical observers on the usual antisemitic chants. For the first time, the alliance was able to effectively counteract the AI Quds demonstration in Berlin.

The next year, in 2004, we prepared the campaign over a longer period of time and used contacts to our prominent supporters from the previous year. Özcan Mutlu, Member of the Berlin State Parliament for the Green party submitted a written inquiry to the Berlin legislature and by doing so, made AI Quds Day the subject of parliamentary discussion. Udo Wolter, a member of our alliance and a co-editor of this publication, was commissioned by the Federal Commissioner for Integration to prepare a comprehensive study on AI Quds Day.<sup>108</sup> Due to support from our sympathizers (among them the American Jewish Committee), we were able to organize an international conference entitled “AI-Quds Day as an Example of Islamist Ideology.” Among the guests were Professor David Menashri from Israel, one of the world’s leading Iran experts, and Tefwik Alall, a representative of *Manifeste des libertés*, the laical initiative of Muslim citizens in France.<sup>109</sup>

We also established contact with Iranian activists in London who organized a small counterdemonstration to the AI

<sup>102</sup> “Peace and Justice Events Calendar,” *Pacifica.org*, November 2004, [www.pacifica.org/calendar/index.pl?Calendar=rootcalendar&View=Event&DateID=11/12/2004&Repeatid=CRfOTcXmre9TceFRRzo8TxDR](http://www.pacifica.org/calendar/index.pl?Calendar=rootcalendar&View=Event&DateID=11/12/2004&Repeatid=CRfOTcXmre9TceFRRzo8TxDR).

<sup>103</sup> SMCCDI: “Leave Palestine alone, think about us!” November 28, 2002, [www.daneshjoo.org/article/publish/printer\\_462.shtm](http://www.daneshjoo.org/article/publish/printer_462.shtm)

<sup>104</sup> [www.bga-berlin.net](http://www.bga-berlin.net).

<sup>105</sup> One of the founding members of our Alliance, Wahied Wahdathagh, already wrote about the Berlin Quds Day march in 1998: Wahied Wahdathagh and Jürgen Elsässer, “Fundis aller Länder, vereinigt Euch! in: *Jungle World*, May 28, 1998, online: [www.nadir.org/nadir/periodika/jungle\\_world/\\_98/05/29a.htm](http://www.nadir.org/nadir/periodika/jungle_world/_98/05/29a.htm).

<sup>106</sup> [www.against-al-quds-day.org](http://www.against-al-quds-day.org).

<sup>107</sup> See the text of the protest call and list of supporters of the 2003 appeal at: [www.aktion-november.de/en/index.html](http://www.aktion-november.de/en/index.html)

<sup>108</sup> Udo Wolter, “Beispiel AI-Quds-Tag—Islamistische Netzwerke und Ideologien unter Migrantinnen und Migranten in Deutschland und Möglichkeiten zivilgesellschaftlicher Intervention,” November 2004, download: [www.integrationsbeauftragte.de/download/gutachten\\_Quds.pdf](http://www.integrationsbeauftragte.de/download/gutachten_Quds.pdf)

<sup>109</sup> Among the financial sponsors and organizers of the conference were the Heinrich Boell Foundation (associated with the Green party), the social democratic Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Middle Eastern Media Research Institute Berlin, and the American Jewish Committee (Berlin office).

<sup>110</sup> For the report and flyer about the counterrally, go to: [www.iranvajahan.net/cgi-bin/news.pl?l=en&ty=2004&tm=11&td=06&ta=7](http://www.iranvajahan.net/cgi-bin/news.pl?l=en&ty=2004&tm=11&td=06&ta=7).

Quds Day march there.<sup>110</sup> Unfortunately, the courageous group of Iranian refugees in London protested alone. In Berlin, on the other hand, our alliance grew. This time our call for protest against the Al Quds Day also appeared in English and Persian. It was again signed by more than two hundred people.<sup>111</sup>

As in the year before, despite our proclaimed goal to remain open to all political parties, many—though not all—of our initiators main supporters came from the left-wing and Green/alternative political spectrum. We planned our actions along the lines of protests that civil society actors use to confront the Neo-Nazi marches. Such protests traditionally include counterdemonstrations, distribution of printed materials and blockage of Neo-Nazi demonstration routes. We also used flyers and posters to further disseminate our appeal to join our rally against the Al Quds Day march. We especially focused on distributing this material in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin, center of a strong left-wing scene and a large migrant community. Our main message was that antisemitic and anti-democratic endeavors of Islamists threaten not only Jews or mainstream German society, but also the migrants of Muslim background themselves. We chose a broader slogan "Against Islamism, antisemitism, and racism!" to preclude racist free-riders from feeling empowered by our protests.<sup>112</sup>

With the help of the media and prominent supporters, it was possible once again to counteract in no small measure the Al Quds Day march; there were fewer participants than the year before and those who marched, proceeded in silence along a secondary route. On the other hand, only about three hundred protestors joined our counter-rally. It turned out that in contrast to protests against right-wing radicals, the left-wing political activists are hesitant to join protests against antisemitic Islamist actions.

In October 2005, our alliance expanded in two ways. Firstly, the *Kreuzberg Initiative against Antisemitism*, the *Kurdistan Study Group* of the Free University of Berlin, and the *European Center for Kurdish Studies* joined the initiative, which furthered our goal to raise awareness among the Turkish and Kurdish communities in Berlin. In 2005, our manifesto thus appeared for the first time in Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic.

Secondly, the Berlin division of the *German-Israeli Society* (DIG) and the *German-Israeli Youth Forum* joined the alliance. Even before we officially released our manifesto, we had already secured the support of twenty-seven prominent signatories, including a number of active and former members of the German Bundestag from all parties, and many public figures of migrant background, such as Cem Özdemir, Member of the European Parliament, and the well known feminist lawyer Seyran Ate.

The already significant media interest was boosted by Ahmadinejad's notorious call to annihilate Israel, which made our protests against the Al Quds Day in Berlin a major national media event. All television stations reported on it.

Though only about three hundred people attended our counter-rally this time, it was the diversity of the demonstrators that made the protest so impressive. Among the protesters were people of Kurdish, Turkish, and Iranian descent, together with members of the Jewish community and other Berliners. Encouraged by a Jewish cantor, protesters loudly sang a Jewish song of peace, *Hevenu Shalom Aleichem*, when the Islamist marchers passed by. Well-known politicians joined our protests – among them the Green Party Chairman Reinhard Bütikofer, the Liberal Party (FDP) Member of the Bundestag Hellmut Königshaus, Petra Pau and Hakki Keskin, both Members of the Bundestag from the Left Party, Kenan Kolat, Chairman of the Turkish Community in Germany, as well as Cem Özdemir from the European Parliament as a main speaker. A special surprise was a spontaneous intervention by Michael Sommer, Chairman of the German Federation of Trade Unions, who forcefully condemned Ahmadinejad's "wiping out Israel" speech as "incitement to genocide."

We did not place our hopes solely on the influence of prominent politicians. With smaller targeted actions we challenged the Iranian propaganda on various levels. In our letter to more than fifty institutions who listed Al Quds Day on their Web sites as a Muslim religious holiday, we explained the propaganda character of this day. The addressees included universities and interreligious organizations in Britain, the United States, and Australia – among them Harvard University

<sup>111</sup> For the text of the protest call, and the list of initiators and supporters from 2004, go to: [www.aktion-november.de/en/index.html](http://www.aktion-november.de/en/index.html)

<sup>112</sup> The signature of support by the federal chair of the Christian-fundamentalist party of Christians faithful to the Bible (Partei Bibeltreuer Christen) in 2004, as well as other representatives of organizations with racist tendencies the following year, confirms that this fear was unfortunately justified. These signatures were of course refused.

and The Boy Scouts of America. As a result, most of the institutions – such as the leading international interfaith online calendar [interfaithcalendar.org](http://interfaithcalendar.org) – deleted the references to Al Quds Day.<sup>113</sup> This was a major success in preventing the Iranian regime from appropriating religious legitimacy for its hateful propaganda.

All in all, three years of our campaign against Al Quds Day in Berlin have succeeded in raising awareness of the Iranian propaganda imported to Germany. As a result of the public pressure, the organizers of the Islamist demonstrations in Berlin have been forced to moderate their tone and downscale their Al Quds activities. The Al Quds events have lost much of their attraction and the number of participants has continuously declined.

Our campaign has also drawn international attention. Our manifesto attracted signatories from France, Belgium, Great Britain, Turkey, Israel, the United States, Greece, Norway, Sweden, The Netherlands, Austria, Canada, Switzerland, and Finland. Valuable contacts have been made for future alliances against Islamist propaganda. The continuing antisemitic incitement by the Iranian leadership under President Ahmadinejad demonstrates how necessary it is to expand the international network of civil protests against Iranian propaganda. The Al Quds Day 2006 will be the next test for this network in Berlin, London, Toronto, and elsewhere.

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<sup>113</sup> For further details, see: Toby Axelrod, "As Iran calls to destroy Israel, new look at 'holiday' with same goal," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, October 28, 2005, [www.jta.org/page\\_view\\_story.asp?intarticleid=15976&intcategoryid=2](http://www.jta.org/page_view_story.asp?intarticleid=15976&intcategoryid=2).

Pro-Khomeini Islamists on the Philippines wrote about our activities in their newsletter, see: "SMERI researcher's thesis on Quds Day under fire," in: Shajaratun Munta Educational and Research Institute, Newsletter December 2005, [www.geocities.com/smundazirah/issue12.pdf](http://www.geocities.com/smundazirah/issue12.pdf)

## Together against political Islam and Antisemitism!

### Call for protest against the international Al Quds Day 2005

In 1979, the Ayatollah Khomeini called for a demonstration on the last Friday of Ramadan for the "liberation" of Jerusalem (Al Quds) and the destruction of the State of Israel. This year the Iranian government, together with its radicalized Islamist supporters, have called once again for worldwide demonstrations, including ones in Tehran, Lebanon, Berlin, London, Jakarta, and Toronto. The Al Quds Day activities fuel hatred against Jews and strengthen the power of the Islamic dictatorship in Iran and its supporters worldwide. We, the signatories of this call, have different views on the Middle-East conflict, but we are united in our protest against this international day of Islamist propaganda.

Since 1995, an Al Quds demonstration has taken place every year in Berlin; this year it will most probably take place on October 29th. In the early phase of the Al Quds movement, there were direct calls for the destruction of the Jewish state with slogans like "Death to Israel". After increasingly vocal public protests, the organizers of the Al Quds manifestations have been trying to use more neutral slogans as a cover for their real intentions. Nevertheless, Al Quds Day is not a "peaceful" demonstration against Israel! On the contrary, it is the expression of pure hatred—a public manifestation of antisemitism under the cover of criticism of the State of Israel, as well as an attack on universal values of freedom, equality and emancipation.

The ideology of political Islam has become a vehicle to spread antisemitism in everyday Muslim culture, through which youth and children are being intentionally indoctrinated. Antisemitism is not the only form of expression of aggressive Islamist thinking. Other forms of this totalitarian mentality include sexual apartheid and sexual discrimination with its various aspects: homophobia, honor killings, and stoning. Only recently, two minors have been sentenced to death and hanged in Iran because of their sexual orientation. Three brothers, motivated by a misogynist code of honor, are currently under investigation in Berlin for killing their sister, Hatun Sürücü. Their crime is also connected to the social model propagated by the ideology of Islamists, which stigmatizes any self-determined way of life as "profane", "westernized" and "decadent", and furthers a climate of violence among young Muslims in our society.

Neither the looking away of well-meaning multiculturalists, nor the racist reflex of proponents for widening the practice of deportations of foreigners, can be the right answer to this worrisome development. For us, fighting political Islam means first and foremost solidarity with its victims. Everyone who dares to resist the radical Muslims' understanding of society is in danger. The terror acts in Madrid, London, Istanbul, Bali and Baghdad have been clear proof of this threat. They have also demonstrated the close link between the thinking of political Islam on the one hand and the criminal conduct of its adherents on the other.

This is why we are calling out to protest against the Al Quds demonstration in Berlin on October 29th. We also encourage countering Islamic propaganda in other cities and towns on this and other occasions.

#### Initiators:

- Anetta Kahane, Amadeu Antonio Stiftung (Amadeu Antonio Foundation),
- Claudia Dantschke and Ali Yildirim, AYPÄ-TV,
- Siamend Hajo, Europäisches Zentrum für kurdische Studien (European Center for Kurdish Studies),
- Arne Behrensen, Bündnis gegen Antisemitismus [BgA] Berlin (Berlin Association Against Anti-Semitism),
- Meggie Jahn, Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft Berlin (German-Israeli Society, Berlin),
- Gerlinde Gerber, Jugendforum der DIG Berlin (Youth Forum of the German-Israeli Society, Berlin),
- Aycan Demirel, Kreuzberger Initiative gegen Antisemitismus (Kreuzberg Initiative Against Anti-Semitism, Berlin),
- Ahmet Dag, Kurdistan AG in der Freien Universität Berlin (Kurdistan Association of the Free University of Berlin),
- Hamid Nowzari, Vorstand des Vereins Iranischer Flüchtlinge in Berlin e.V. (Board of the Association of Iranian Refugees in Berlin),
- Thomas Uwer, Wadi e.V. - Verband für Krisenhilfe und solidarische Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (Association for Crisis Help and Development Cooperation in Solidarity)

## First supporters

1. Sharon Adler, Editor of AVIVA feminist online-magazine, Berlin
  2. Seyran Ates, Attorney, Berlin
  3. Evrim Baba, Speaker on women's political issues for the Linkspartei.PDS (Left Party.PDS) in the Berlin House of Representatives
  4. Eckhardt Barthel, former Member of the Bundestag
  5. Marieluise Beck, Member of the Bundestag, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (The Greens), Germany
  6. Niloofar Beyzaie, Playwright and director, Frankfurt/M
  7. Jean-Yves Camus, Political scientist, CERA, Paris
  8. Koray Günay-Yilmaz, Journalist, Berlin
  9. Jochen Feilke, President of the DIG (German-Israeli Society), Berlin, former vice president of the DIG, former Bundestag member, Berlin
  10. Parvaneh Hamidi, Cabaret artist, Cologne
  11. Kadriye Karci, Spokesperson for the Federal Association of Anti-Racism, Migration- and Refugee-Politics of the Linkspartei.PDS (Left Party.PDS), Berlin
  12. Sanem Kleff, Educator, Berlin
  13. Dr. Martin Kloke, Schoolbook editor and journalist, Berlin
  14. Kurdistan Kultur und Hilfsverein (Kurdish Cultural and Welfare Association), Berlin
  15. Prof. Manfred Lahnstein, President of the DIG and former Federal Minister, Berlin
  16. Özcan Mutlu, Educational policy speaker for the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Green Party) in the Berlin House of Representatives
  17. Dirk Niebel, Member of the Bundestag for the FDP and vice-president of the DIG
  18. Cem Özdemir, Member of the European Parliament for the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Green Party), Brussels
  19. Petra Pau, Member of the Bundestag, Linkspartei.PDS (Left Party.PDS), Berlin
  20. Michael S. Cullen, Journalist and historian of architecture
  21. Eberhard Seidel, Journalist, Berlin
  22. Silke Stokar, Speaker for domestic affairs for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Green Party) in the German Parliament
  23. Bernd Wagner, Zentrum für Center for Democratic Culture, Ltd., Berlin
  24. Josef Winkler, Speaker for immigration for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Green Party) in the German Parliament
  25. Turgut Yüksel, Member of the City Council (SPD), Frankfurt am Main
  26. Steffen Zillich, Member of the Berlin House of Representatives, Linkspartei.PDS (Left Party.PDS)
- All 274 supporters and photos of the protest rally can be found at [www.gegen-al-quds-tag.de](http://www.gegen-al-quds-tag.de)

## 5. Contributors

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is an Arab studies expert. Since 1993 she has been a freelance journalist for the German-Turkish television channel AYPÄ-TV in Berlin. In 2002/03 she published a widely acclaimed survey "Anti-Democratic Phenomena and Opportunities to Intervene", also focusing on migrant communities in Berlin.

### Mira Dietz

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### Mark Gardner

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### The Iranian Dialog Circle in Berlin

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## Notes

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