

In supporting Israel's genocide, Germany has learnt nothing from history

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It is becoming increasingly clear that as the German government targets migrants and cracks down on pro-Palestine protests, some lives are more valuable than others

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Earlier this month, amid the unfolding [genocide in Gaza](#), German leaders convened in a Berlin synagogue to mark the [85th anniversary](#) of the 1938 November pogrom that formed part of the genocide perpetrated by Germany against Jews in Europe.

But it seems they have failed to learn from their own history. In a memorial speech for the victims of that night and the Holocaust that followed, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz [affirmed](#) that "Germany's place is on [Israel's](#) side".

Referring to pro-[Palestine](#) solidarity protests, he said: "Any form of [antisemitism](#) poisons our society, just like Islamist demonstrations and rallies," before going on to threaten migrants with deportation if they exhibited antisemitic behaviour.

The German government habitually [conflates](#) Judaism with the Zionist project in Israel, and has adopted a working definition of antisemitism that [includes](#) hatred of or attacks against the state of Israel. Its crackdown on Palestinian solidarity - from [protests](#) to [memorials](#) to [cultural events](#) - and the dangerous curtailment of freedom of speech have been well documented.

But as Scholz's speech revealed, this crackdown also has an [Islamophobic](#), anti-migrant dimension, at a time when the Social Democrat-led government has adopted a hard stance on migration in a desperate attempt to recapture votes from the right.

On 25 October, following a surge in support for the far-right AfD party and a panicked debate about rising numbers of immigrants, the government [agreed](#) on a legislative proposal that would expand police powers to search, detain and deport people without papers.

Two weeks later, a summit between the federal and state governments ended with the [announcement](#) of further cuts to financial support for asylum seekers and the possible [outsourcing](#) of asylum procedures to third countries - a potentially illegal process similar to the [UK's](#) infamous, and ultimately failed, [Rwanda deal](#).

Rights restricted

But for many centre-to-right politicians, this does not go far enough. They frame Palestinian solidarity protests as antisemitic, and instrumentalise them to demand further restrictions of rights.

In a recent [video](#), Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck from the Green Party called on Muslim associations to explicitly distance themselves from Hamas, and threatened deportations and revocation of residency permits for those who voice support for the group.

Meanwhile, Germany's largest opposition party, the centre-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU), is proposing legislation that would increase the sentence for antisemitic crimes, and lead to the loss or denial of international protection for refugees if they commit such crimes, including possible deportation.

Similar moves already seem to be taking place in practice: [Zaid Abdunnasser](#), coordinator of the Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, which was recently prohibited in Germany, reportedly received a deportation order because of his activism.

White, Christian and atheist Germans were never asked to distance themselves from any antisemitic or racist incidents

Under the CDU proposal, people applying for German citizenship would have to pledge their support for Israel's right to exist and could be denied citizenship if they fail to do so, or if they are deemed to have an "antisemitic mindset". Germans who hold dual citizenship and commit an antisemitic crime would stand to lose their German passport if convicted and sentenced to more than a year in prison.

Two weeks ago, explicitly citing pro-Palestine demonstrations, the CDU [demanded](#) the cancellation of a pending law that would make it possible for foreigners to fast-track their citizenship applications. In addition, former justice minister, Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, of the Free Democratic Party has [proposed](#) to limit freedom of assembly to German citizens only.

While German politicians are outdoing each other in blaming antisemitism on immigrants, Muslims, Arabs or anyone who is not white, they conveniently ignore the fact that antisemitism among white, Christian and atheist Germans is actually a widespread problem. More than 80 percent of antisemitic crimes in 2022 were [committed](#) by people on the right-wing spectrum, continuing a trend from previous years.

When it became public in August that Hubert Aiwanger, the deputy governor of the state of Bavaria, had shared [antisemitic propaganda](#) in the 1980s, his party's vote share increased in the following elections, and the government [rewarded](#) him with a fourth ministry.

Historical responsibility

If the German government is genuinely concerned about protecting Jews, it should address antisemitism coming from the majority white, right-wing population, instead of inciting hatred against minority groups. A similar message was recently [conveyed](#) by the Jewish Bund during an action called “You do not protect us” in front of parliament.

Right-wing violence has traditionally gone unchecked by authorities, whether it takes the form of antisemitism or other hate crimes.

The government failed to take any comparable action when it became known in 2011 that neo-Nazis had been on a seven-year [murder spree](#) while shielded by the intelligence service; when from 2014 onwards, tens of thousands of right-wingers started [Monday marches](#) against the “Islamisation of the West”; when a right-wing fanatic fatally [shot](#) nine people with migrant backgrounds in Hanau in 2020; or when a 2023 study [showed](#) that racism against Black people in Germany had risen by nearly 50 percent since 2016, among other examples. White, Christian and atheist Germans were never asked to distance themselves from any of these incidents.

Indeed, it is becoming increasingly clear in both internal and external policy discourses that for the German government, some lives are more valuable than others. The demonisation of (those perceived to be) Muslims or immigrants, and the crackdown on solidarity protests goes hand in hand with Germany’s political and financial [support for Israel](#).

While many countries, including [France](#), are calling on Israel to cease fire amid its relentless military assault, which has killed [more than 11,000](#) Palestinians in Gaza, Scholz has reaffirmed his resistance to any such calls. Instead, his government has [increased](#) arms exports to Israel tenfold over 2022, with 85 percent of the permits granted after the Hamas attack and the ensuing military campaign.

Eighty-five years after the November pogrom, Germany should have learned that a genocide cannot be atoned for by enabling another genocide. Similarly, those who think that stoking Islamophobic and anti-migrant sentiments will fulfill Germany’s historical responsibility to fight antisemitism have learned nothing from history.

The German government must stop paying mere lip service to its commitment to human rights, and drastically change its stance in both domestic and foreign policy.

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P.S.

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