**[Berlin’s blind spot](https://www.dawn.com/news/1819496/berlins-blind-spot)**

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ABOUT 10 days ago, a joint Palestinian-Israeli creative endeavour titled No Other Land, chronicling the struggle for survival in Masafer Yatta — comprising a bunch of Palestinian hamlets in the West Bank — won the best documentary award as well as an audience award at the 74th Berlin International Film Festival, or Berlinale.

Two of the co-directors, Yuval Abraham and Basel Adra, made brief speeches. Adra noted there was little cause for celebration while his compatriots in Gaza were being “slaughtered and massacred”, and urged Germany to “stop sending weapons to Israel”. Abraham pointed out that while the two of them stood as equals on the Berlinale stage, in a couple of days they would be back in a land where his Palestinian colleague faced institutionalised discrimination. He called for an end to “this apartheid, this inequality”.

Both speeches were applauded by the audience, which included Germany’s culture minister, Claudia Roth. Following a backlash, mainly from fellow politicians, her office ‘clarified’ that she had meant to applaud only the speech of the Israeli half of the duo, and Roth posted on social media that the “shockingly one-sided speeches” were “characterised by a deep hatred of Israel”.

On his way home, Abraham received more than 100 death threats, which prompted him to delay his journey to Jerusalem. In a post on X, he decried the Germans’ “appalling misuse” of a term that “empties the word antisemitism of meaning and thus endangers Jews all over the world”, while acknowledging that his Palestinian colleague in Masafer Yatta was “in far greater danger than I am”.

Germany is the second largest supplier of arms to Israel.

There were other Berlinale controversies, but they mostly revolved around the same theme. US filmmaker Ben Russell, who won an award for a documentary on an unrelated topic, wore a keffiyeh as he accepted his award, and used his remarks to slam the genocide and declare that he stood “for a ceasefire in solidarity with all our comrades”. Other award recipients sported ‘Ceasefire NOW’ messages on their backs.

Why should any of this even be an issue in a purported European liberal democracy? The continent is broadly united in its support for Israel, but there are significant exceptions to an unquestioning embrace of Zionist brutality — notably Ireland, given its own experience of colonial occupation, but also Spain, and to a small extent even Belgium and France. Germany, on the other hand, is the second most prolific supplier of weaponry after the US, and was one of the first states to criminalise almost every form of solidarity with the Palestinian quest for self-determination.

It goes back to German guilt over World War II in general and the Holocaust in particular. There were limits to West Germany’s de-Nazification, but it sought to cover that up by fulsomely backing the Jewish state that emerged in 1948, partly as a direct consequence of the unspeakably horrific Nazi Judeocide. The trend established by West Germany’s first chancellor, Konrad Adenauer has lately evolved into a stance across the political establishment, cultural organisations and the media whereby even the mildest criticism of Israel qualifies as antisemitism.

The targets include prominent anti-Zionist Jews, although Muslims in Germany bear the brunt of accusations — even though some 90 per cent of antisemitic crimes are attributed to the far right. The Alternative for Germany has faced calls for a ban after it was associated with a gathering that drew up a plan for a mass deportation of immigrants, but even Chancellor Olaf Scholz is not entirely averse to a similar idea.

There are concerns that Germany, on its present trajectory, could find itself with the same tendencies of nearly a century ago, but it seems that the fatherland’s elite is more focused on serving as a protector for the deformed entity spawned by its dehumanisation of Jews — the apogee of European antisemitism across the preceding decades that sparked the Zionist impulse in the first place.

Exceptionally percipient Jewish intellectuals in Europe and America, including Hannah Arendt and Albert Einstein, recognised the moral deficiencies of the Israeli state early on. Their warnings went unheeded. That partly explains the rarely wavering Western devotion to its Middle Eastern colonial outpost, which can get away with mass murder while eliciting barely a murmur from its sponsors, benefactors and collaborators. As younger Jews in the US and Europe wake up to the horrors being perpetrated in their name, the dominant fascist elements of Zionism may be doomed in the longer term — as Joe Biden will probably find out in November.

That doesn’t help the Gazans sentenced to death or starvation by the descendants of the victims of Nazism. Nor will German complicity in yet another genocide be readily forgotten or easily forgiven.

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