

Wilhelm Kempf (2015): Israelkritik zwischen Antisemitismus und Menschenrechtsidee. Eine Spurensuche. [Criticism of Israel Between Anti-Semitism and Human Rights Considerations – A Search for Clues] Berlin: verlag irena regener, ISBN 978-3936014-33-4, 280 pp., 39.90 Euro

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Empathy with Palestinian families that have lost all their belongings, or even children, through Israeli Defense Force strikes, unites many who disapprove of the Israeli government's policies. In the perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the ranks have closed. The one side sees Israel exclusively in the role of an aggressor that with disproportionate force oppresses Palestinians, understands military strikes against refugee camps and the destruction of houses and dwellings as expansionist power demonstrations by the stronger against the weaker, with whom it therefore expresses solidarity. In the eyes of Israel's unconditional defenders on the other hand, the Palestinians and with them all Arabs, possibly all Muslims, are irrationally acting extremists who have declared a Holy War against Israel and the West.

Also suspicious about the engagement that some display in condemning Israeli security policy is that it is often characterized by a rage that must arouse distrust. Israel's military actions are generalized as actions "of Jewry" and formulated as moral condemnation, often with inadmissible references to the Holocaust.

When does critique of Israeli policy towards the Palestinians cross the border of justifiable criticism and become anti-Semitism? This happens at the latest when prejudices and stereotypes that have nothing to do with the matter to be criticized are used far beyond the specific occasion as an explanation and to assign guilt. As an especial form of anti-Semitism arising from such criticism of Israel, a surrogate of anti-Semitism has become established on a basis of anti-Zionism that has its own function, namely to open up backroads over which anti-Semitism can be expressed using apparently rational arguments.

The question, "is critique of Israel allowed, and if so, how much?" has long affected the public and promotes widespread uncertainty. Therefore, a study is welcome that was financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG), for which psychologist *Wilhelm Kempf* (Professor Emeritus of the University of Konstanz) is responsible, advised by his colleague *Rolf Verleger*, Professor in Lübeck, and 2005–2009 member of the Board of Directors of the Central Council of Jews in Germany (Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland). The first part of the book takes stock of current forms of anti-Semitism and criticism of Israel in Germany in terms of attitude patterns and manifestations. The second part not only presents the data and conclusions based on them, but also uses all the rules of art to clarify the design and the

methods of the survey, and then determines and presents the findings on the structure of anti-Semitic and Zionist attitudes, as well as resentments hostile to Israel, Palestinians and Islam. For readers not specialized in empirical branches of the social sciences the study may be hard to read. For resentment research which lives on differentiated approaches, the study is useful and helpful, however. Once again it shows that the necessary work on anti-Semitism and critique of Israel is not satisfied with declamatory zeal and emotional consternation. The findings of hard to grasp specialized science, the study proves, are indispensable, because they make possible fundamental insights not only for understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also on the structure and effects of prejudices.

Wolfgang Benz