



Statement on the Role of Civil Society Organizations in Sustaining German Genocide Denial

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The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention condemns the persistent efforts by several high-profile German civil society organizations to deny the ongoing genocide in Gaza and to disseminate disinformation and denialist narratives among German political decision-makers.

These efforts must be understood within the broader context of Germany's uniquely close relationship with Israel, rooted in Germany's historical responsibility for the Holocaust. In 2007, former Chancellor Angela Merkel first coined the term *Staatsräson* in this context, proclaiming Germany's responsibility for the existence of Israel and its duty to defend it. The term is understood as a guidance principle for German foreign policy and informs parliamentary decisions, arms exports, and diplomatic positioning. However, it has not found its way into German legislation and therefore entails no legal obligations from German leaders.

While the historical responsibility to ensure safety for Jews after the Holocaust is widely acknowledged in Germany, it has been abused in the past few years to justify unconditional support for an ongoing genocide.

Since the escalation of Israel's military occupation into the mass murder form of genocide, the German media landscape has been carefully crafted to convince the German public and its political leaders of Israel's compliance with international law. Germany's largest media outlets have abandoned their journalistic responsibilities, threatening critical voices and effectively becoming the Israeli government's most loyal mouthpiece. At a moment when both Israel and Germany are appearing before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) – one accused of committing genocide, the

other of facilitating it – denialist and explicitly anti-Palestinian narratives have come to structure political discourse in Germany. This became starkly visible when Chancellor Merz publicly thanked Israel for “doing the dirty work” in its campaign against Iran. Even after an independent UN Commission confirmed that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza, the German Parliament has kept its doors wide open to Israeli lobbyists.

The level of political access enjoyed by supporters of genocide is deeply concerning. A discourse in which genocide denial has become normalized and strategically deployed not only violates international law but also threatens the very foundations of Germany’s democratic state. An increasing percentage of Germany’s population no longer supports their government’s stance, with about 60 percent of Germans believing that Israel’s actions constitute genocide and two-thirds asserting that the country’s foreign policy should not be guided by a crude *Staatsräson*, but first and foremost by international law and universal human rights.

The persistent denialist environment in Germany is thus not self-sustaining. However, it is also not being imposed solely through isolated top-down political decisions and pressure. Rather, genocide denial in Germany is actively produced and institutionalized through a network of Israeli-aligned think tanks, civil society actors, and parliamentary access points that together translate genocide denial into legitimate, respectable, policy-relevant “expertise.” The examples that follow should therefore not be read as aberrations, but as symptomatic of a broader structural pattern.

On 26 November 2025, German parliamentarians were invited to a briefing organized by the Middle East Peace Forum (NAFFO) and the Europe Israel Press Association (EIPA) entitled “Gaza: Genocide Allegations and the Power of Disinformation” (*Gaza: Genozid-Vorwurf und die Macht der Falschinformation*). The event, which took place in the German *Bundestag*, was attended by politicians across different parties, including Social Democrats, Christian Democrats and The Greens. The briefing largely focused on a study by Professor Danny Orbach, historian at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and researcher at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA), an Israel-based think tank. His study “Debunking the Genocide Allegations: A Re-examination of the Israel-Hamas War”, which purportedly aimed to provide independent conclusions based on data collected between October 2023 and June 2025, instead reflects a desperate attempt to discredit UN bodies by selectively dismissing their findings, reframing established legal standards, and presenting politically aligned interpretations as neutral expertise.

The study unequivocally rejects the fact that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. Rather than “independently” examining official leadership statements or the cumulative effect of Israel’s patterns of conduct in Gaza and the West Bank, the

study simply asserts without argument or evidence that genocidal intent could not co-exist with the assumed “precision and restraint” of the Israeli military. This argument demonstrates a remarkable misunderstanding of the crime of genocide, one that maintains that immediate acts of annihilation and mass murder (such as a nuclear attack) are the only possible evidence of genocide. However, in fact, under Article II of the Genocide Convention, genocide is not defined by the military efficiency with which mass murder is achieved or by the carpet-bombing of a population, as the publication suggests. Instead, the Genocide Convention recognizes five acts that can be evidence of genocide, only one of which is killing members of a group. Genocide usually proceeds through controlled violence, incremental destruction, calculated suffering and, as these organizations should be aware, the maintenance of plausible deniability. This was as true during the Holocaust as it is today, and one can find nods to genocide as a process in the writings of Raphael Lemkin as well as in the Genocide Convention itself.

One has to wonder whether the 300-page study neglected a deeper analysis of genocidal intent because once the evidence is spelled out, intent would be undeniable. After all, what is there to deny about Israel’s former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant claiming that Israel was fighting “human animals” and President Isaac Herzog stating that it was an “entire nation” that was responsible, leaving no room for protected civilians? The criminalization of an entire population is, in fact, in and of itself evidence of genocidal intent.

Out of the eight chapters in Orbach’s study, a total of three are dedicated to casting doubt on the competence, credibility, and methodology of UN bodies, which have condemned Israel’s persistent genocide against Palestinians. The study concludes that all genocide determinations have relied on “misleading statistics, unfounded apocalyptic projections based on weak data, and the conflation of credible and unverified evidence.” Here, BESA applies selective scepticism, insinuation of political bias, and calls for unattainable evidentiary certainty. In doing so, the publication willfully ignores the epistemic standards routinely applied by international courts, which rely on converging sources, corroborated reporting, and inference from patterns of conduct.

A few days before NAFFO’s parliamentary briefing, Christians on the Side of Israel (CSI), a German civil society organization, published its so-called “fact-check” regarding accusations of genocide and famine at the hands of Israel. Purportedly presenting “meticulously researched facts,” the publication is the epitome of genocide denial and rises to the level of complicity, going as far as to claim the “undoubtedly [...] moral, ethical and disciplined” behaviour of the IDF, a military force whose war crimes have been extensively documented and spread all over social media. Even if one disagrees with the genocide determination, the war crimes are impossible to overlook and certainly do not represent a “moral, ethical and disciplined” fighting force acting in accordance with international law.

The “fact-check” begins by denying Israel’s apartheid, claiming that its dual legal system, its endless checkpoints, walls, and systems of segregation, merely provide a “pragmatic” solution to maintaining an ethno-nationalist Jewish state on Palestinian land. This reasoning completely ignores the International Court of Justice (ICJ)’s findings from 19 July 2024 that “Israel’s policies and practices [implement] a separation between the Palestinian population and the [Israeli] settlers” and thus amounted to apartheid. In September 2025, the UN Human Rights Council confirmed this finding.

In an ironic twist, the CSI strictly forbids any comparison to South African apartheid, claiming that any equation of the Palestinian situation with the historical oppression of Black people in South Africa would trivialize the terrorism Israel faces as legitimate resistance against Israel. What the CSI seems to overlook here is that it was precisely South Africa that, “owing to its painful past experience of [such a] system,” identified Israel’s conduct as apartheid.

Although directly citing the Famine Review Committee (FRC), an expert panel that declared a high-level degree of famine in Gaza in August 2025, CSI believes that the charge that Israel is using hunger as a deliberate weapon is “completely unfounded”. CSI argues that there have simply not been enough people dying from starvation for the famine allegations to hold. This argument is misleading: famine can constitute a genocidal tactic not only by causing death, but also by undermining community health, resulting in malnutrition, weakened immune systems, and potentially lifelong negative effects, particularly for children. The scale and impact of hunger cannot be reduced solely to immediate death tolls but must be seen in a broader scheme of creating “conditions of life calculated to bring about [the] physical destruction” of Palestinians.

Separately, while the CSI admits to the “difficult data situation” in Gaza, it fails to acknowledge Israel’s role as the leading killer of journalists in 2025, which created the “difficult data situation” in the first place. Israel alone is responsible for 43 per cent of the journalists slain worldwide in the past 12 months.

Completing their denialist narrative, CSI purports that “unlike actual genocides in history,” Israel’s actions had a specific cause, and that, while a war was indeed taking place, “no arbitrary killing of Palestinians” was involved in it. In an attempt to prove this point, CSI relies on long-debunked Israeli propaganda, arguing, for example, that Israel had arranged for safe zones and humanitarian corridors while omitting that such humanitarian zones were struck by Israel over 100 times in the course of six months. In fact, the research group Forensic Architecture found that, contrary to Israel’s argument at the ICJ, its dishonest use of “humanitarian protective measures” in fact resulted in the killing of even more Palestinians.

In effect, the CSI puts forward a “cause and effect” justification for Israel’s conduct, blaming Hamas and its alleged use of civilian infrastructure and “human shields” for the mass killing of Palestinian civilians. Even if these claims were accepted as true or accurate for the sake of argument, they are legally irrelevant to the identification of a genocide. The unlawful conduct of an armed group does not negate civilian status and protection under international law, nor can it justify collective harm to a protected group. Historically, narratives that shift responsibility for civilian destruction onto the victim population’s (supposed) political or military actors are well-documented features of genocidal discourse.

In early December 2025, Berlin hosted the 13th Germany-Israel Strategic Forum, a political conference organized by the European Leadership Network (ELNET), the Forum of Strategic Dialogue, and the German Federal Academy for Security Policy (BAKS). ELNET is dedicated to strengthening ties between Europe and Israel and has been working tirelessly to facilitate arms deals between Germany and Israel. A travel program for defence policymakers included a visit to view two weapons systems on which they later voted favourably. ELNET presented this as its own lobbying success. More than 51 members of parliament travelled to Israel with ELNET during the last legislative term. No other organisation has financed trips for more members of the Bundestag.

Besides debating Germany’s potential role in institution-building in Gaza and the further intensification of security and defence cooperation, ELNET participants highlighted the importance of (re-)gaining control over public information spaces. Israeli and German attendees agreed that, to win the battle against “visual emotionalization” (diplomacy lingo for “people have feelings about genocidal content”), Israel would have to strengthen its international communication capabilities.

These concerns are not confined to the German political sphere. Rather, they reflect a broader transatlantic strategy aimed at gaining control over relevant narratives and information environments. It thus comes as no surprise that only two months after Netanyahu declared that “[w]e have to fight with the weapons that apply to the battlefields in which we’re engaged,” with social media and especially TikTok being “the most important ones,” a consortium of anti-Palestinian investors has effectively taken over all U.S. operations of TikTok.

Another network deeply involved in genocide denial and politics is the German-Israeli Society (DIG) (*Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft*), which receives annual public funds to support its activities, including grants from the Federal Foreign Office amounting to approximately €550,000 for the 2024 financial year. Just one day after commending Germany’s reinstated arms exports to Israel in November 2025, the DIG called on Germany to withdraw all funds from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Citing an Israeli

government report, DIG claimed that UNRWA held close ties to Hamas and thus could not be financially supported. However, upon request by the UNRWA Commissioner-General, Israeli authorities failed to bring forward credible evidence for the alleged widespread Hamas infiltration.

In fact, UNRWA undertakes its own security measures to ensure that its work is not politicized and acts decisively where claims are supported by evidence. For example, in response to the allegations that emerged following the terrorist attack of 7 October 2023, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), the highest investigative body in the United Nations, conducted a thorough investigation, which resulted in the dismissal of nine UNRWA employees. By contrast, broader assertions of systemic infiltration or control of UNRWA by Hamas remain unsubstantiated.

The above-named civil society studies and “fact-checks”, while constituting a small part of a wider network of organizations, expose an agenda of narrative construction through which genocide denial in Germany is actively produced and legitimized. This results in a self-reinforcing ecosystem in which Israeli-aligned lobby organizations, think tanks, and civil society actors generate denialist “expertise,” while German political institutions absorb, amplify, and normalize these narratives within parliamentary and policy-making spaces.

In this symbiosis, organizations deliver the pseudo-arguments that German politicians rely on to legitimize an otherwise untenable political stance. In return, these organizations are rewarded with public funding or privileged access to Parliament. By financing, platforming, and politically endorsing actors that discredit UN bodies, ignore well-established legal standards, and engage in genocide denial, Germany has turned its back on an international legal order that was created in large part due to the horrors it produced.

The Lemkin Institute of Genocide Prevention calls on public authorities in Germany to immediately halt all active financing, dissemination, and legitimization of genocide denialist propaganda masked as critical expertise. We further urge the German government to withdraw public funding and end privileged parliamentary access for organizations and initiatives engaged in genocide denial and the systematic discrediting of international legal institutions. We remind Germany and all its political bodies of their obligations under the Genocide Convention, including the duty to prevent and punish genocide and any forms of complicity. Above all, we call on the German state to end its complicity in the genocide against Palestinians, including through arms exports to and uncritical diplomatic support for the state committing genocide.