

**Benjamin Weinthal (Jerusalem Post) und Bärbel Illi (German Israeli Association, Stuttgart) spread lies in a vulgar campaign of defamation.**

*"Who fears the truth about the Nakba in Palestine has something to hide"* – Salman Abu-Sitta

**At the beginning of April the leading international expert in Palestinian refugees and their expulsion from their homeland in 1948, Professor Salman Abu-Sitta undertook a series of speaking engagements throughout Germany.**

The Israel lobbyists Benjamin Weinthal and Bärbel Illi reacted to the events on theme of Palestinian refugees and their right of return with a vicious campaign of defamation against Prof. Abu-Sitta and the Stuttgart Palestine Solidarity Committee. Weinthal is also Europe correspondent for the Jerusalem Post a right wing Israeli newspaper appearing in English. Illi is Chairperson of the German-Israeli Association in Stuttgart.

**The accusation:** the Stuttgart Palestine Solidarity Committee invited Dr. Abu-Sitta, a speaker who allegedly plays down the Holocaust and compares Israel with Nazi Germany. Weinthal quotes a spokesperson of the Israeli Embassy in Germany as "taking this case seriously". The allegations appear in Weinthal's article in the Jerusalem Post from 6th April 2016: [jpost.com/Diaspora/Exclusive-New-York-politician-says-anti-BDS-law-would-penalize-GermanAustria-banks-450365#xtor=EPR-1-\[Newsletter](http://jpost.com/Diaspora/Exclusive-New-York-politician-says-anti-BDS-law-would-penalize-GermanAustria-banks-450365#xtor=EPR-1-[Newsletter)

Prof. Abu-Sitta is alleged to have said during an interview in February 2014 in the Egyptian TV channel Dream 2: "Under the clout of the sword of the Holocaust, which has become a means to inflame the world's conscience, Israel managed to establish its state. Even though decades have passed, Israel is still extorting the world by means of this notion. The revelations that my guest today has made come as a surprise to many: The same country that has extorted the world with its 'holocausts' in Nazi Germany – which was not directed only against the Jews – has perpetrated, and perhaps still is perpetrating, its own holocausts in the Palestinian lands." (translation from MEMRI)

**But the video with English subtitles from MEMRI and the MEMRI transcript tell a very different story. This quotation is not from Prof. Abu-Sitta. These are the introductory words of the TV presenter Mona Salman.**

Links: [youtube.com/watch?v=FrPSb9NMcw](https://youtube.com/watch?v=FrPSb9NMcw)  
[memritv.org/clip\\_transcript/en/4832.htm](http://memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/4832.htm)

In that interview, Abu-Sitta sticks to the facts, describing his discovery that directly after the Israeli state was called into being, Zionist militias set up detention and forced labour camps for Palestinians. **Abu-Sitta is referring to documents from the archives of the Red Cross in Geneva. He published his findings in the Journal of Palestine Studies of the University of California Press. No historian has challenged the results of his research.**

[jps.ucpress.edu/content/43/4/11](http://jps.ucpress.edu/content/43/4/11)

The 2nd quotation in Weinthal's article which is supposed to demonstrate the Holocaust was played down has been crucially shortened. **Salman Abu-Sitta is alleged to have said:** "I found that the Israelis used the same [Nazi] methods on the Palestinians. They had the necessary experience, because the Nazi camps were shut down only three years earlier."

In the MEMRI Documentation, a fuller quotation appears: **"I compared my findings to a book by [Daniel] Goldhagen on Nazism.** I found that the **Israelis** used the same methods on the Palestinians. They had the necessary experience, because the Nazi camps were shut down only three years earlier."

Weinthal's deception becomes even clearer if one considers the Arabic original. MEMRI had already sought to change the meaning of the statement. In Arabic Prof. Abu-Sitta said: "I discovered that the same methods that they used at that time, they used on the Palestinians" (our literal translation). Abu-Sitta did not mention the **Israelis**. What was important for him was only the methods used in the camps.

**With obvious falsification of the quotation, Weinthal attempts to suggest that Abu-Sitta equates the actions of the Zionists with the Holocaust. That is not borne out by the MEMRI translation and absolutely not by the Arabic original.**

Prof. Abu-Sitta consults the Holocaust researcher Daniel Goldhagen to clarify if the methods of Israeli officers in the Zionists' forced labour camps (documented by the Red Cross and in witness statements) displayed similarities to those of the Nazi-fascists in their camps. The MEMRI transcript fails to include this reason given by Abu-Sitta for his research. Abu-Sitta was himself astounded to discover among those in charge of the Zionist camps, officers with German names.

**Abu-Sitta himself points out that his area of specialization is Palestine not Germany. He makes clear that**

**he makes strictly no statements about the Holocaust.** It is important to note that **MEMRI (Middle East Media Research Institute), upon whose documents the entire allegations are based, is in no way a neutral observer but takes sides with the state of Israel. Among the founders are several long-standing members of the Israeli secret services.** So the reason behind the changes of meaning in the video subtitles becomes clear. In the introductory words of the presenter, words are put in the mouth of Prof. Abu-Sitta. In the introduction, MEMRI claims that Abu-Sitta said: „They did it the same way it was done against the Jews in Auschwitz“. But reading the transcript that follows, one learns that the presenter made that claim. It is nowhere to be found in the statements of Prof. Abu-Sitta. Thus MEMRI is attempting to manipulate the reader.

Furthermore, the transcription contains several clear distortions. All in all it makes an unreliable impression. The Arabic word for supervised is translated as "survived", Pressure become "clout", 500 documents become "555" and so on. **On the youtube-page, the Video is entitled: Palestinian Historian Salman Abu-Sitta: Israel Perpetrated Holocaust against the Palestinians. This is in no way borne out by the words of Abu-Sitta in that interview.**

How the German-Israeli Association chairperson Illi comes to the conclusion that Abu-Sitta is a Holocaust denier is a secret known only to her.

We conclude, however, that Benjamin Weinthal, the Jerusalem Post, The German-Israeli Association - Stuttgart and its representative Bärbel Illi have used a series of false claims to initiate a disgusting smear campaign against Prof. Abu-Sitta and the Stuttgart Palestine Solidarity Committee. The Israeli embassy has absolutely no grounds for taking legal action against the committee or against Prof. Abu-Sitta and for this reason, they will not take this step. We consider the threat by the embassy spokesperson as quoted in the Weinthal article to be an ugly attempt at intimidation and to conceal the Israeli war crimes in Palestine which are happening daily. These crimes are now becoming more well known and are documented in dozens of scholarly works and press reports.

Weinthal is well known for his aggressive campaigns against events that are critical of Israel and for seeking to hinder freedom of opinion and public discussion. Just recently, he and the German Israeli Association in Ulm sought to stop an address in the Volkshochschule (adult education centre) in Ulm. This began with completely groundless accusations of Antisemitism and other defamations. Main speaker at the event was Arn Strohmeier whose theme was Antisemitism, Philosemitism and the Palestine Conflict. Weinthal and the German Israeli Association were unable to prevent the meeting in the Volkshochschule.

The attack on Prof. Abu-Sitta and the Stuttgart Palestine Solidarity Committee is most likely connected with the Stop the Boycott Conference organised by Yedioth Ahronoth and Ynet on 28th March in Jerusalem. Taking part were high-ranking politicians and security experts.

One speaker, the Israeli Minister for Security, **Yisrael Katz** issued a threat that was clearly understood by leading BDS-activists as a death threat against them. Katz spoke in Hebrew of targeted civil elimination of activists. Elimination is a synonym for killing. At the same time, he named **Omar Barghouti**, founder of the BDS movement.

**But let's deal with the real issue of the article by Weinthal in the Jerusalem Post.**

Weinthal claims that the Landesbank Baden-Württemberg (LBBW), which has an office in New York City, has come under pressure in the State of New York because the Palestine Solidarity Committee has an account with the LBBW. According to Weinthal, pressure is also being exerted against the Commerzbank and the Wiener Erste Bank in Austria. He writes of numerous attempts to persuade banks to close the accounts of solidarity groups.

According to Weinthal, it is illegal in the United States for Palestinian solidarity groups to support the BDS movement (initiated by Palestinian civil society.) The description of this legislation is rather vague. There is no indication of how it could create difficulties for banks.

Legislation passed in January by the New York State Senate prohibits the state from signing contracts with or investing in those who call for a boycott of Israel. The legislation covers dealings of the state of New York. It does not forbid calling for a boycott: that would contravene the first amendment which protects free speech. We are currently unaware of any further proposed legislation.

**Our position is clear:** an important part of our work is to disseminate information about human rights violations of the state of Israel. We demand that these violations of international law must not be promoted by cooperation with or support of institutions or companies which practise racism and the policy of Apartheid. Here we clearly conform with international law. This is true in exactly the same way for the BDS movement which springs from Palestinian civil society and is supported by numerous Jewish initiatives worldwide.

Attia Rajab, spokesperson PalästinaKomitee Stuttgart e. V.  
Stuttgart Palestine Solidarity Committee