



Due to an appearance by an anti-Semitic and anti-Israel hate speaker: Zurich cantonal government rebukes university administration

It is rare for the Government Council of the Canton of Zurich to publicly reprimand an institution under its jurisdiction. Yet it has now done so, calling on the leadership of the University of Zurich, under Rector Michael Schaepman, to exercise greater diligence in its response to a parliamentary inquiry. The reason for this was Schaepman's approval of an appearance at the University of Zurich by a Palestinian hate speaker known for his anti-Semitic and anti-Israel views. As expected, the speaker used his guest lecture to launch baseless attacks on the Jewish state.

By Sacha Wigdorovits

Mazin Qumsyieh is a biology professor in the West Bank. He abuses his teaching position there to spread Palestinian hate propaganda against Israel under the guise of supposedly scientific topics.

University Rector Schaepman ignored warnings

That is exactly what he did in early May 2026, when he was invited by the Palestine Student Association to give a guest lecture with the pseudo-academic title "Ecology under Occupation – Ökologie unter der Besetzung." The university administration had approved the "guest lecture" despite several prior warnings. It explained that it had urged the organizers to adhere to the University of Zurich's "Code of Conduct." "Discrimination of any kind, hate speech, bullying, sexual harassment, abuse of power, manipulation, violence, and threats have no place at UZH."

16 instances of demonizing Israel, 10 proven falsehoods

Yet, as expected, this is exactly what happened. Based on the verbatim transcript of the "lecture," FokusIsrael.ch counted 16 instances of demonization and delegitimization of the State of Israel by Mazin Qumsyieh and 10 instances of clearly proven falsehoods. When confronted with this, Marcel Niggli, a professor of criminal law at the University of Fribourg, stated "that this likely fulfills the requirements of Article ^{261bis} of the Penal Code"—the so-called anti-racism provision, which criminalizes public hate speech and incitement to discrimination.

Written inquiry from the Cantonal Council

In response to the relevant [article on FokusIsrael.ch](#), FDP cantonal council member Linda Camenisch, together with her two co-signers, Tobias Infortuna (SVP) and Markus Schaaf (EVP), submitted a written inquiry to the cantonal government in the



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cantonal parliament. Together with 18 other council members, Camenisch had already warned the university administration in the run-up to the event and called for the Palestinian activist's appearance to be canceled, arguing that it was incompatible with the values of the University of Zurich.

In their written inquiry to the cantonal government, the three lawmakers requested information regarding University Rector Michael Schaepman's conduct in connection with his approval of Qumsyieh's appearance. In its recently published response, the Zurich cantonal government expressly notes that the first five answers are "based on information provided by the University of Zurich (UZH)."

University leadership shifts responsibility to the student association

This explains why the questions posed by the three cantonal council members were answered only evasively, with references to the university's internal organizational regulations and the framework conditions agreed upon with Qumsyieh for the event. The university administration shifts the blame for the fact that these framework conditions were ultimately not adhered to onto the University of Zurich Student Association. This is because the association assumed patronage of Qumsyieh's performance and thus also bears responsibility for its content.

State Council Accuses University Administration of Inadequate Review

This statement apparently did not satisfy the State Council. At the end of its four-page response, it rebukes Rector Michael Schaepman and the administration of the University of Zurich, stating: "The State Council condemns all forms of anti-Semitism. It is a central concern of the State Council that everything be done to ensure the safety of religious and other minorities. Accordingly, greater attention must be paid to vetting speakers in the run-up to events."

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