



Israel-Haters at the University of Zurich: The Government Must Answer Further Questions

The Zurich Cantonal Council is dissatisfied with the cantonal government's response regarding a lecture given by a well-known Israel-hater and anti-Semite at the University of Zurich. Although the cantonal government had reprimanded the university's rector, it otherwise hid behind his evasive statement in its response. This is not enough for the three cantonal council members, who had already submitted the first written inquiry. Therefore, in a second inquiry, they are now demanding more precise answers from the government.

By Sacha Wigdorovits

In early May, [Mazin Qumsiyeh gave a lecture at the University of Zurich](#) at the invitation of the Palestinian student organization. He is a professor at a university in the West Bank, where terrorists are revered as martyrs. Qumsiyeh himself is also known for his hate propaganda against Israel. As expected, he gave free rein to this propaganda at the University of Zurich.

In response, Zurich FDP cantonal council member Linda Camenisch, along with Tobias Infortuna (SVP) and Markus Schaaf (EVP), asked the cantonal government for its position on the university administration granting hospitality to a Palestinian activist known as an anti-Semite and an Israel-hater.

In its response, published in September, [the Zurich cantonal government did reprimand the university's rector](#) and demanded that he "pay closer attention to the vetting of speakers prior to events." Otherwise, however, the government largely confined itself to statements from the criticized university administration, which did little to clarify the outstanding issues.

Camenisch, Infortuna, and Schaaf were not willing to let the matter rest. They note that the government's response is largely "based on information from the University of Zurich and leaves key questions unanswered." Therefore, in a second written inquiry, they are now demanding that the cantonal government provide "a more precise and complete response" to their questions regarding Qumsiyeh's presentation.

Among other things, the three cantonal legislators would like to know how and by when the university administration intends to implement the more rigorous vetting of guest speakers required by the cantonal government.

She is also interested in where, in the university administration's view, "the line



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between academic freedom and freedom of expression and impermissible content lies” and how it “distinguishes between extreme positions and anti-Semitic statements.”

The background to these questions is the fact that, during his lecture at the University of Zurich, Qumsiyeh made 16 statements demonizing the State of Israel and spread ten gross falsehoods. “Anyone who portrays Israel as a colonial enterprise whose very existence is illegitimate denies the Jewish people the right to self-determination,” the three cantonal councilors write in their current written inquiry. “How is such a position compatible with the UZH Code of Conduct?”

It remains to be seen whether Zurich’s Director of Education, State Councilor Silvia Steiner, will once again rely on the information provided by the university administration—which has come under criticism—when responding to the renewed inquiry from the cantonal council. Or whether, as a former public prosecutor, she will order an investigation into the matter herself.