Desiring Memorials

Jews, Muslims, and the Human of Citizenship

Sultan Doughan

> And when you burn our last
> body. And our olive trees turn
> into ashes. Will you build a memorial for us,
> like you have done so many times
> throughout history, that
> promises that this time it will
> truly NEVER happen AGAIN?
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> DALIA VAKILI, Palestinian-German activist and researcher, May 2021

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1 Introduction[1]

In summer 2020, BLM protestors toppled, beheaded and drowned colonial statues in the US, the UK and South Africa. These events have a longer history. Anti-racist groups have eyed the presence of colonial monuments more critically over the last decades. This is unsurprising given how the racial logic that grew out of colonialism, slavery and genocide continues to inscribe present day social relations and institutions (Lewis and Stevenson 2013; Siddique and Skopeliti 2020; Simpson 2014; Fowler 2020). Scholars of colonial history

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hold that something from the time of slavery itself remains experientially real and tangible in the present (Sharpe 2016; Manjapra 2018). These relics have an "afterlife," a concept Saidiya Hartman develops to account for the "racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago" during slavery and that still have effects on African-Americans today (Hartman 2008, 6).

Commentators have pointed to Germany's "working-off-the-past" (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) as a successful model. Financial compensation is central for mitigating and repairing historical injustice; it acknowledges that slavery has contributed to, or even founded, the nation-state in unequal ways. Susan Neiman's work stands out here (Neiman 2019, 8), for Neiman, reparations paid to survivors of the Holocaust are the major factor in Germany's post-WWII success story (ibid 2019, 308–27). But historians and activists working in Germany today trouble this purported 'success' by pointing out unrepaired colonial crimes and the memorialized presence of colonialists and/or racist terms in public spaces (Zimmerer 2011).[2] Despite Holocaust awareness, or perhaps because of it, scholarly pleas for a renewed "memorial culture," understanding colonial history and its long-term effects remain marginalized in Germany (Rothberg and Yildiz 2011; Zimmerer and Rothberg 2021). Susan Slyomovics provides a more complex account of German reparations, detailing how Jewish survivors were compelled to "monetize their pain" and how being counted as human in the aftermath of the Holocaust remained a hierarchical bureaucratic issue (Slyomovics 2014).

But beyond reparations, how do Jews count as human in Germany? And how are Muslims, as an emerging minority, counted as humans in Europe today after Holocaust memorialization? The notion of the "human" in human rights discourse, as Hannah Arendt reminds us, cannot be separated from the modern institution of citizenship, because it is citizenship that establishes the "human" as the rights-bearing subject of the modern state (Arendt 1973). Arendt's critique, however, fails to address the fact that certain subjects remain outside the realm of the human, regardless of citizenship. Is there an enduring racial logic re-emerging that connects to a longer standing crisis of citizenship?

I ask these questions in relation to multi-ethnic Berlin, the city with the largest Turkish and Palestinian communities in Europe. From 2015 to 2016, I accompanied social workers at a lower-tier high school (a *Gesamtschule*) on their annual trip to the Auschwitz Memorial. The organizers of this voluntary

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2   See also the initiative Berlin Postcolonial for their advocacy on changing street names from German colonialists involved in the genocide of the Nama and Herero: http://justlisten.berlin-postkolonial.de/en/street-names?fbclid=IwAR2xmUB8FsshIwptVNk6nmIM3tZczunKXFJnwRPpxrQvrURNd8oteGd7RgU.

trip, a German-Turkish-Palestinian team, framed it as an opportunity for "building a common humanity." Although the team insisted on a universal humanity, certain political, ethnic, and religious differences challenged this frame. By describing the educational methods, commemorative sessions, and encounters between participants as Muslims and Jews, I will show how Muslim and Jewish difference emerged and troubled this notion of "humanity"—or helped create it.

I first address the increased securitization of Muslims in Germany and adumbrate the role of Holocaust memorialization. Holocaust memorialization is predicated upon a notion of repair that requires the ritualized collective and individual performance of the promise: "Never again!" By repair, I refer to *Wiedergutmachung*, meaning reparations. But *Wiedergutmachung directly* translates to "making good again," denoting efforts to right the wrongs of history. Here I take this term to interrogate citizenship as a ritualized practice of repair. I situate this practice as within and contributing to the secular frame (Asad 2003; 2020). I argue that these practices re-organized citizenship to be consistent with secular Western-Christian notions of humanity, which thrives on the differential deployment of the figure of the Jew and the figure of the Muslim. Here, I suggest that Holocaust memorialization extended the site of secular governance. Holocaust memorials notwithstanding, an older genealogy of antisemitism has emerged as an enduring presence of an unrepaired racial relationship.

2   Holocaust Memorials and Migration after German Reparations

Memorials, permanently fixed sculptural and topographical forms of remembrance, emerged in Europe after the spatial re-organization of soldier cemeteries during WWI (Mosse 1991). Holocaust scholar James Young (1994; 2002) describes how the planning of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial and the debate preceding its construction were events of commemoration: Memories and questions were brought to the fore in these early stages, allowing for reflexive consideration of how Holocaust memorials emerge at specific times and in relation to specific political needs (see also Marcuse 2010).

Germany's national Holocaust Memorial in Berlin was inaugurated in 2005 after ten years of debate over its form and function (Cullen 1999; Dekel 2013;). Reparations for Nazi-forced labor provided closure for the newly reunified German state and established new political institutions, such as the Foundation for Remembrance, Responsibility, Future (EVZ), an institution primarily responsible for adjudicating reparations but also in preserving

Holocaust memory.[3] The memory of the Holocaust has become part of a larger and accepted narrative about Germany as a model of tolerant liberal-democracy (Aguilar 2018; Peter 2010). Holocaust memorials shape public urban spaces across much of contemporary Europe in unprecedented ways, and more are being constructed even in countries with anti-immigration policies (Tollerton 2017).

My fieldwork involved observing tolerance projects aimed at combatting Islamic extremism in immigrant neighborhoods. One September morning, a social worker from a school in the Reinickendorf neighborhood called the *Tolerance Training Center* to book a workshop in preparation for their trip to the Auschwitz Memorial. Reinickendorf, an immigrant and historically working-class neighborhood, was hitherto unknown to me. My entrance into this project therefore was based on a misrepresentation of their Auschwitz Memorial trip in online media.[4] Therefore, I had wrongly assumed that the excursion was concerned with combatting "Islamic extremism" among immigrant students. But the trip was, in fact, a part of the school's effort to develop a college-prep curriculum (higher-tier schools typically organized such trips). I learned later that the school had a small immigrant population (compared to others in the area), half of the students received social welfare and most students graduated after tenth grade.

In 1998, the newly elected German government acknowledged migration as part of the German social fabric for the first time. Although guest worker programs had contributed to labor migration to Germany since the 1960s, the status of Turkish guest workers was one of impermanence (Göktürk, Gramling, and Kaes 2007; Chin 2007; Mandel 2008). Earlier, the government had accepted and expedited the naturalization of ethnic Germans immigrating from Eastern Europe on the basis of a blood right to German citizenship, as well as mostly Soviet Jews based on historical repair for the crimes of the Holocaust (Laurence 2001). These circumstances precipitated a heated debate as to whether Middle Eastern labor migrants, refugees, and their descendants (most of whom were born and raised in Germany) would also be eligible for citizenship. The German parliament eventually reformed its citizenship laws in 2000 to allow for children born on German soil to become German by birth (*jus soli*) if one of the parents had been in Germany for more than eight years earning a regular income.

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3   https://www.stiftung-evz.de/eng/home.html.

4   https://www.bild.de/regional/berlin/auschwitz/spd-fraktionschef-saleh-besucht-mit-berli
ner-schuelern-auschwitz-29661550.bild.html###wt_ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google
.com%2F&wt_t=1624931393040.

The German citizenship reform coincided with the eruption of the Second Intifada. The Palestinian diaspora in Europe became more visible as it openly protested Israeli annexation policies. After the 9/11 attacks, the discourse of citizenship for former migrants shifted once again to a concern about Islamic terrorism. The German Ministry of the Interior introduced the category of "Islamic extremism" in 2006 as part of a "national dialogue" at the German Islam Conference (Amir-Moazami 2011). Consequently, starting in 2011, civic education projects were funded to combat Islamic extremism among teenagers in immigrant neighborhoods.[5] The nascent liberalization of German citizenship merged with security concerns and reintroduced conditions on citizenship for Middle Eastern immigrants (Amir-Moazami 2016; Yurdakul 2008).

Despite a generalized growth in anti-Semitism, European governments have proposed reforming Islam and tightening migration, arguing that these are specific sources of an unrefined anti-Semitism. Protests organized by Palestinian mosque communities that gave way to anti-Jewish outbursts such as invoking *Khaybar,* a seventh century battle in the Arabian Peninsula that involved the Prophet Mohammed fighting two Arab-Jewish tribes, circulated in media outlets as evidence for an anti-Semitism rooted in Islam.[6] The Ministry of the Interior diagnosed these anti-Semitic outbursts as forms of Muslim supremacy over non-Muslims, specifically Jews as *dhimmis,* that is as an inferior religious community subjugated to sharia.[7] Anthropologist Matti Bunzl (2005) challenged this discourse, stating that Muslim youth perceive Jews as part of the European establishment and precisely not as a minority. A discourse of "imported anti-Semitism," as Esra Özyürek observed (2016), has given way to radicalization prevention programs.

The figure of the Palestinian specifically emerges as a political troublemaker. Anna-Esther Younes argues that the discourse of this "new anti-Semitism" has been mobilized with geopolitical interests in Israel-Palestine and accords a specific place for the figure of the Palestinian within the racialized figure of the

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5   http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/themen/heimat-integration/dik/ag_praeventionsarbeit_eckpunkte_anlage.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1.

6   During the writing of this article in May 2021 pro-Palestine protestors of the organization "Palestine Speaks" in Berlin reported the same problem. Their peaceful and Jewish co-organized pro human rights protest was largely ignored in German public media. The media focuses on isolated incidents of anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic statements in order to make the claim that "people with migration-backgrounds" import a specific antisemitism to Germany and that Germany needs to deal with that, if necessary by denying the right to naturalize.

7   https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/antisemitismus/307771/islamischer-antisemitismus.

Muslim. She notes that a number of "state/transnational/multiple stakeholder conferences from 2000 onwards added a new dimension to … today's Muslim in Germany" by identifying the figure of the Palestinian as the exemplary anti-Semite (Younes 2020, 252). The figure of the Palestinian is constructed as the one that "incites and propels anti-Semitism and manipulates other[s] … to do the same" (ibid.). The Palestinian shifts the problem with "Muslim anti-Semitism" to a political question about Palestinian self-determination and the status of Israel. Rather than engaging this as an issue of sovereignty and self-determination it is publicly framed as "Israel-related antisemitism" based on Muslim sentiments and Islamic atavism.

3   A {Secular} Pilgrimage for Humanity?

When I first met Majd, the main organizer of the Reinickendorf school trip, he explained that the social workers did not identify a particular problem group for this memorial project. Instead, the Auschwitz Memorial trip was about "humanity" and "universal ethics," about what it means to be a good person and a tolerant citizen, and it was for all students regardless of ethnic background. I was intrigued by the fact that two of the social workers were descendants of Turkish and Palestinian immigrants—and the only Middle Eastern employees on the entire social worker team.

The social workers also rejected the idea that this was a trip aimed at coming to terms with Germany's past specifically as a way of being recognized as German. During the trip, Ahmet said jokingly that this was a 'secular pilgrimage' for everyone invested in a common humanity. The pilgrimage analogy was telling, because it pointed out that the Holocaust was not simply an event in history, but a lived ritual. And although it was said jokingly, there was a kernel of truth in it, in the way Majd framed the trip:

> We don't want to moralize; we offer a platform for more tolerance, democracy, freedom. We want to approach this history as a universal human history. A history that is not about one designated group of victims and one designated group of culprits; we also do not have a specific ethnic or religious group in mind that needs to be targeted.[8]

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8   Based on fieldnotes.

Majd denationalized Holocaust history by disregarding the historical culprits and victims and turning it into 'universal human history.' The trip was organized in a specific order. Majd and Ahmet advertised it to the student body in the classrooms, saying this would not be an easy trip and not everyone would be able to bear going to such a horrible place, but that it would be meaningful, because this history had a lesson in it for everyone. Interested students were asked to write a letter of motivation. Then there were additional meetings, usually after school or during breaks. Morals and ethical practice, and the concern for personal political action, stood at the center of Majd's preparations. Toward that end, he had even read parts of Hannah Arendt's *Eichman in Jerusalem* with the students in order to demonstrate how a well-educated and hard-working man had orchestrated mass murder without feeling guilty about it.

Majd assured me the trip is about humanity, about a wager that some might perhaps understand society differently afterwards. When the students read Arendt, they do not read it as a text about a by-gone German past; they read it as a text about a human issue, he explained. Although Majd was engaging with the heart of modern German history, he took this as an occasion for forging a more universal form of belonging. I sometimes wondered if he was fleeing German particularity and his own Palestinian background by constantly emphasizing humanity and voicing a "we," or if, by universalizing this history, he was in effect attempting to access it as a German of Palestinian descent.

In 2004, the EVZ Foundation, which manages reparation funds for forced labor, tasked a committee of academics to formulate policy recommendations on how to ensure integration and civic participation among immigrants. The recommendations open with a prognosis that "cultural pluralism is increasingly marked by globally shaped fundamentalist discourses of exclusion." In such a context, German history can become "even more relevant" by acquiring a new task: it needs no longer "come to terms with" or "work off" its past but put this very history to work fending off totalitarian ideologies. According to this report, the Holocaust can be more than a national history of victims and perpetrators; it can play a role in cultural integration more generally, because Germany's positive "democratization history" since 1945 provides grounds for identification. The report seeks to consolidate a new relation with Germany's past by expanding the notion of responsibility for Germany's history *and* constitution as a shared universal value among "immigrants and autochthons" (Ohliger et al. 2006, 23). After reparations were delivered, the Holocaust was treated as a closed off chapter in a longer German history providing the liberal democratic substance for everyone residing in Germany. The report recommends a reframing of the Holocaust as a lesson about human rights and European norms as a universal value, exemplified by the Reinickendorf case.

The universalization of Holocaust memory notwithstanding, German particularity and national ownership of the Holocaust is still at work. Rosa Fava's empirical research (2015) discusses how an older generation of German educators constructs a genealogical lineage of proximity to the Holocaust in order to exclude their students of immigrant backgrounds. Damani Partridge (2010) describes how monumentalizing the Holocaust has severed ties with contemporary racism in Germany. Partridge points out a dynamic between ethnically German teachers and German students of Turkish and Palestinian descent, which positions the latter as refusers of an exclusive memorial practice. Similarly, Özyürek (2018) understands this exclusionary dynamic to account for the normative emotional attitudes of "German memorial experts" vis-à-vis participating students of migrant descent at the memorial site.

The binary division between "Germans" and "German-Turks/-Palestinians/-Muslims," articulated in the above research, can be grasped through the framework of secularism. Holocaust commemoration is part of this framing and has been internalized as universal and neutral, even by non-ethnically German educators, such as Majd and Ahmet. In the last two decades, the shadows of the secular have been foregrounded by controversies about the place of religion in public life, particularly with reference to Islam and Muslims in Europe. The controversies have laid bare secular attitudes, sensibilities, and affects, as anthropologist Saba Mahmood (2009) pointed out. They have shown that the secular and secularism are not neutral concepts that simply remain in place once traditional and religious practices are removed (Mahmood 2015). The secular and the religious are not one another's opposites, but each involves a varied set of practices that involve the physical body, the notion of death and the human (Asad 2003).

In the context of Holocaust commemoration, the actual death of several million Jews and others is teleologically re-organized. Holocaust memorials abstract and represent Jewish death as vital for liberal democracy and the future of the nation-state. Jewish death is folded and organized within secular (teleological) time as leading to a better worldly state, one that promises a humanity qua citizenship and human rights, because of the genocide of European Jewry and always in relation to it (see also Meister 2012).

This promise is taken up in ritualized practices of commemoration, and any deviation from what has become the norm—a refusal to engage, incorrect emotions, or the lack of the ethnic genealogy—is perceived as a disturbance. This makes Holocaust commemoration an exemplary phenomenon of how citizenship, as a universal category that promises equal rights, has developed into a ritualized practice of local belonging excluding certain forms of difference and experiences.

4   Commemorating the Holocaust as Palestinian-Muslim

One morning just before the trip, a teacher entered the social workers' office and complained about a student called Muhammad. He had been active in all the preparations, but kept losing the consent form. In addition, he would ask the teachers if he could wear his Palestinian keffiyeh on the trip and if he could bring his Palestinian flag to wrap himself in it while walking through the memorial site, adding that he had heard Israelis would do that. He also required prayer time, if necessary at the memorial site, especially when the visit was to go on all day. Ahmet described Muhammad as a troubled kid: His father was a Palestinian refugee from Lebanon, but his parents were divorced. On his maternal side, his grandmother was German and the grandfather Turkish, but Muhammad was not raised in any Muslim tradition; he spoke neither Turkish nor Arabic. Yet he used Islamic references to self-style as a pious Palestinian-Muslim, something Majd described as a provocation.

The teacher then leaves the office and a moment later a young man enters. Majd jumps up from his chair and offers it to the tall youth who, despite his size, has a childish face and wears a shy expression. "Please sit down, Muhammad! I would like to introduce you to Sultan," says Majd. Muhammad seems embarrassed, avoiding eye contact. Majd insisted that he sit down. I say hi and stretch my hand out to introduce myself more formally. "No, please no handshake," he says apologetically. Majd ignores this failed encounter, but I can see that Angela, the social worker intern, is shocked about his refusal.

Ahmet, Majd and I sit around Muhammad's chair, staring at him; he does not look up, just looks down at his shoes. Majd explains that we would all be very happy if he joined the trip. He says that Muhammad would be a great participant and also important for my research, since I too ask questions about historical responsibility among young people with diverse backgrounds. Muhammad looks up and brings himself to say, "Well, if it's okay that I bring my Palestinian flag," just to look down again. "We'll see about this as we go along," says Majd and hands over the consent forms. Muhammad nods and smiles, promising to return the forms soon.

I have difficulty understanding the insistence on the Palestinian flag, so I ask everyone in the room about its significance. Ahmet clarifies that "flags are a general problem at the site. They are generally not allowed, but some bring Israeli flags. No one can bring a German flag, it is a highly charged site and Poles as well as Jews have very sensitive reactions to seeing a German flag at Auschwitz." Angela, seemingly angry, exclaims that:

> This is exactly the problem with German guilt! A German person is simply guilty and cannot articulate herself anymore; she is just supposed to feel guilty. But what are Israeli flags doing there? That does not seem to be a problem, even with all the politics and violence going on in the Middle East! But as a German you are not in a position to say anything against that.

Angela's comment erupted like a volcano and, given how infuriated she sounded, no one dared to respond. It was unclear whether Angela meant that no one is telling Israelis not to bring flags or no one is daring to stand up to violent Israeli policies. Or whether Angela simply wanted to state that the "no flag rule" should be more consistent and applied to all flags. I did not ask for clarification, but I could see the power of Muhammad's suggestion. By stating that he would bring a Palestinian flag, he had made us understand that there was a problem in the kind of Holocaust commemoration framed as a trip for 'humanity' and yet allowed for—only very specific—expressions of state-nationalism.

The Israeli flag in Auschwitz, although a national symbol, also demonstrated that Jews survived the genocide in a state-form. It could be seen as an expression of victory over Nazism and as a positive telos for Jewish life. As such, it could offer some relief from German guilt and fascism, perhaps a repair. With Muhammad's addition of the Palestinian flag, however, he prompted a reminder that Palestinians were connected to this history in tragic ways, and that the story was not over yet because of Palestinian expulsion from historic Palestine. Muhammad's suggested visible presence as a Palestinian in the space that Majd continuously construed as a memorial for universal humanity, pointed to the difficulty of Palestinians being a part of this "humanity" like everyone else. In hindsight, I recognize that Muhammad's provocation was connected to a larger question of Palestinian belonging. The proposed performance of Palestinianness at the Auschwitz Memorial disrupts the neat organization of a linear progressive history that promises belonging qua humanity, not just in Germany (Abu El-Haj 2015).

The notion of belonging has attached itself to national history with regard to migration in Europe. Granting citizenship to migrant populations has triggered a debate about national belonging and foreclosed a discussion of group-differentiated rights in Europe as such (Geschierre 2009: 24). Calls for integration of new citizens act as an "appeal to history as the mold of the nation," official memory in the service of molding an emotional bond with the nation; and by doing so forecloses other histories and forms of life (Geschierre 2009, 25). Peter Geschierre warns of such efforts, by pointing out how history in

the service of the nation becomes "a condensed version, more or less fixed," proving precarious and controversial. He questions these culturalist pleas as a "return of memory-history," a history shaped by strong emotional appeal and is fixed in meaning.

Yet memory-history is not just simply internalized and related to in homogenous ways, as the memorial incidents of summer of 2020 show. Memorial sites—as spaces that extend and consolidate secular governance in public— are vulnerable to disruption and attack when a dominant memory-history is contested as not representative of certain groups, realities and experiences (Preciado 2020). I understand Muhammad's provocation as a disruptive protest that brings the 'afterlife' of the human into the present. Hartman, mobilizes afterlife to point out enduring inequalities and persistent racial relations in the contemporary US. Hartman's contention is not that Blacks in the US still are enslaved, but that living in the afterlife of slavery is to live in a future created by it (Hartman 2008:133). This future, she points out, "is the ongoing crisis of citizenship." A crisis generated by the disparity between its "sublime ideal of freedom" and the "facts of blackness" (Ibid.). By bringing traditional and national material objects such as the keffiyeh and the flag as evidence of Palestinian existence in lieu of a narrative into the memorial site, I see Muhammad pointing to a multifold crisis of citizenship within and outside of Europe. The genealogy of this crisis involves Jewish communities in Europe before the Holocaust, who could not be neatly incorporated in emerging nation-states after the fall of the Christian Empires (Katz 1998; Nathans 2004). I see Palestinians living, as a people without a state, in a future created by European nation-state building that prompted Jews to settle in historical Palestine.

The Auschwitz Memorial then, although a site of memory-history, does not simply foreclose other memories and rituals from entering—but indeed it provokes them. Historian Pierre Nora, who provides the basis for Geschierre's account of belonging through history in Europe, writes that sites of memory exist, because there are no real, embodied and lived, forms of memory anymore (Nora 1989:7) and because of the "deritualization of our world" (Nora 1989:12). As memorial sites have become folded into ritualized practices, memorials fill a void in a "deritualized world." But memorials also offer the ground for older and counter rituals to take new shape, such as Muhammad's performance of Palestinianness. Hendrik Kraay (2004) describes how monuments in nationalizing Brazil were regularly subverted by indigenous processions, turning rather petrified official memory into arenas of ongoing lively contestation—not by putting up counter-statues, but by entering the space and performing embodied ritualized practices at odds with Catholicism and the European aspirations of the elites.

Muhammad's provocation replicates what some Israelis perform as ritualized practice at Holocaust Memorial sites. His announced performance is a refusal to be pacified by memory-history. For Palestinians, as many of my interlocutors reported, the events of the Nakba[9] (catastrophe) in 1948 remains an ongoing experience of expulsion from Palestine exacerbated by mechanisms of silencing in Europe, specifically in Germany (Bulbeisi 2020). Hence, Palestinian protests, both collective and individual, provide ways of reconnecting with the experience of catastrophe, memorializing this in public when there is no official space to attach these memories onto. During field research in Berlin, Palestinian community organizers explained to me that each new wave of violence in Israel-Palestine reminds them of their earliest experiences of violence as Palestinians and connects them with their parents' and grandparents' narratives of displacement. Although there is a vast literature remembering the Palestinian condition (Sa'di and Abu Lughod 2007), many of these stories circulate either within the intimate space of the family or in literature, occasionally theater, but rarely in public space (El-Qasem 2018).

The denial of the forced expulsion from their homeland speaks of the precarious legal statuses Palestinians live in (Tize 2020; Esmeir 2003). The Nakba is difficult to delineate as a single event in history, not least because expulsion from Palestine remains a reality to this day (Bashir & Goldberg 2019; Khoury 2019:xiii). The notion of Nakba refers not only to the spectacular violence of 1948, but also to the enduring circumstances of living as stateless persons, which has shaped being Palestinian since 1948 (Feldman 2007). In the current predicament, displacement and the hopes of return remain ongoing. Protest, therefore, offers an opportunity to push against what Palestinians see as 'the ongoing Nakba' (*an-Nakba al-mustamirra*).

In Germany, the Nakba, as a foundational memory for Palestinians, is considered detrimentally opposed to Israel's existence as a Jewish homeland, since Germany's purpose of existence (*Staatsräson*) is tied to the state of Israel (Anonymous 2020). This leaves Palestinians in Germany in a particularly difficult predicament—not because they stand outside of European history, but because they remain dispossessed of a citizenship that could acknowledge their experience. Instead, Palestinian protest and the condemnation of Israeli policies that subjugate Palestinians and Palestine remain a charged issue and

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9 Nakba, Arabic for catastrophe refers to the defeat of the Arab Armies in 1948 and the (subsequent) massacres and expulsions of Palestinians from villages and towns of what has become the national territory of Israel. Although other wars were differentiated and given new names, such as an-Naksah (the setback) in 1967, they are by now folded into the Nakba as the original event of collective loss and displacement.

connect to the discourse of "Israel-related Antisemitism." As the Palestinian experience is intimately tied up with the fate of European Jews, it complicates the secular teleology of the Holocaust as leading to more just and liberal nation-states.

In the absence of official Palestinian sites of memory, protests can at once point to a specific incident such as the commemoration of martyr deaths, as Lori Allen points out (2006), or a specific past event in history such as May 15, the official Nakba day organized by the PA as a rally, as Amahl Bishara writes (forthcoming). As such, the protests take the shape of lived, embodied and restless memorial spaces, desiring a place in which this experience can be laid to rest. Palestinians as a desiring collective memorialize their own displacement in the absence of any viable state sovereignty, official history, and canonized literary tradition (Embaló, Neuwirth and Pannewick 2001).

Muhammad's proposed symbolic protest disrupted the linear narrative and became something akin to a threat, for both Angela and Majd, exposing their own ethnic positioning, as white Christian-German and Palestinian-Muslim-German. Given the broader historical context and contemporary politics, these positions could not simply melt into a 'common humanity' but existed within ongoing tensions over the meaning and effects of the Holocaust for Palestinians, Muslims, Jews, and Christian-Germans. This tension echoes throughout Europe, but it has severe repercussions for Palestinian belonging in Germany because it poses a challenge to a post-Holocaust morality, as Sa'ed Atshan and Katharina Galor explored (2020).

Muhammad's entrance into the conversation as a Palestinian-Muslim also brought to the fore the different stakes in commemorating the Holocaust at Auschwitz. Majd disengaged from national guilt, insisting instead on the universality of Holocaust history. For Majd, the Holocaust needed to be understood beyond nation-state projects and ethno-religious particularity. The possible entrance—or threat of entrance—of the Palestinian flag or Muhammad's keffiyeh, however, showed that some particularities retained a certain power to provoke a strong affective reaction.

The universalist approach to the Auschwitz visit carried two related rationales: First, verbally, it effected a naturalization into German nationhood, when one was already a citizen, but still marked as Middle Eastern and Muslim. In other words, this framing made Holocaust commemoration accessible despite being differentiated as not Christian-German. Second, it translated a form of German guilt into universal responsibility, which could be shared collectively. During the actual trip, however, there were certain moments where it became clear, despite Majd's efforts, that not everyone was a part of German nationhood. On the way to Auschwitz, we—that is, 20 students, Majd, Ahmet, two

teachers and I—shared the bus with a Berlin youth volunteer organization. Their group included retired patrons and benefactors. One of those, a former employee of the Foreign Office who had also served in the Middle East, approached me, looking for the "Palestinian organizer." Majd had heard the question but did not react. The man directly addressed him, expressing fascination to see a Palestinian organizing a school trip to Auschwitz. Majd nodded, said that he had to look after one student, and disappeared from the conversation. During our first evening in Krakow, a teacher asked why Majd always ordered hot chocolate but never beer. Majd vaguely responded that he does not like to drink. The teacher asked, "Is it because you are Muslim?" Majd nodded and disengaged from the conversation.

5   The Jewish Survivor as a "Normal Person"

One preparation session for the trip was dedicated to meeting a Jewish survivor, Ruth Winkelmann. Her book, *Ruth Winkelmann: Suddenly I Was Called Sara. The Memoir of a Jewish Berliner* (Winkelmann & Bauer 2011), is the coming-of-age memoir of a German-Jewish girl growing up in a bi-religious household. The story culminates in her father's transport to Auschwitz, where he is killed. In fact, Ruth's entire Jewish family was murdered; she and her sister were saved by their mother's *Aryanization request*.

Ruth's presentation at the school centers around her life after the war. There is no mention of Auschwitz in her account, so one student asks her what she thought about Auschwitz back then. She responds that no one really knew about the dimensions of the camps. Another student again asks: "But what do you feel, when you hear the term Auschwitz?" Ruth takes a deep breath and states that she is relieved now but that when watching movies about Auschwitz she usually cried. "It was only after I saw hell with my own eyes that I was freed from fear, and I could get a sense of where my father had died. But there is no repair (*Wiedergutmachung*) for me. I am German and I will remain German."[10] Ruth's answer concerning how she feels about Auschwitz included an assertion of her Germanness. But it seemed that the students wanted to know how Ruth relates to Auschwitz as a Jewish survivor. Yet Ruth's position, from which she had been invited to speak, was possible precisely because she had not been deported like the rest of her Jewish family. Further, she had been cut off from her Jewishness through her mother's Aryanization request and the

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10   Based on fieldnotes from November 2015.

general destruction of Jewish institutions and communal life. Although Ruth had survived her Jewish family and was alive still, a part of her own Jewish personhood had been destroyed.

Ruth then speaks from the position of the German who is bereft of her family, her paternal-Jewish community, and perhaps also bereft of the possibility of recovering her Jewishness. Ruth exemplifies a Germany that bases itself on the loss of things Jewish that it tries to revive, albeit in a way that silences Jewish voices and detracts from Jewish pluralism.[11] Hannah Tzuberi (2020) attends to these governmental efforts as forms of "reforestation." Referring to the German state from the 1990s onwards as a "gardening state," Tzuberi explains how incoming Russian Jews are treated as the life line necessary for rebuilding Jewish life in the image of a new Germany (Tzuberi 2020, 200–202; see also Bodemann 1990; Bodeman 1996, Peck 2007). Ultimately, as Tzuberi brings to the fore, Jewish return is the revival and salvation of Germany.

Tzuberi's "reforestation" metaphor connects back to notion of repair in Ruth's account. Ruth reveals something about repair, namely that the harm and injury bestowed upon her cannot be repaired. In a way, Ruth acknowledged that commemorating the Holocaust or giving a platform to Jewish survivors does not help the actual victims or even resurrect what was destroyed. This destruction—the mass shooting, gassing, burning, and burying of Jewish communities on European soil—demonstrates how Judaism as a lived tradition was brutally removed from life. Despite the financial reparation that Ruth and her mother received, this past form of life cannot be restored to the extent that Ruth herself cannot be (recognized as) Jewish other than through a detour through Holocaust history. This also begs the question if Jews in Germany can be ever perceived as human on terms of their own making.

In the following days, when I asked the students about meeting Ruth, they usually stated that it was interesting because she was a "normal person." I also approached Ahmet about inviting Ruth. Was it so effective after all, given the students' responses? Ahmet explained that what mattered most was that the students meet a Jewish person in the first place. Since most of them don't have any other opportunities to encounter someone Jewish, meaning that Jews remain abstract figures for them, meeting someone Jewish and noticing that she is a normal person is an achievement in itself, stated Ahmet. As a survivor, Ruth had been assigned this double task: to speak from the position of the Jewish experience but also to provide grounds for identification as a normal

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11   https://www.zeit.de/kultur/2021-05/judaism-antisemitism-germany-israel-bds-fabian
        -wolff-essay-english.

person, a human in a recognizable sense. Ruth's emphasis, however, on being German and on having been raised the same as Germans with a Christian mother, undid her Jewish subject-position, at the same time as it provided accessibility and identification.

The idea of a common humanity forged identification. At the memorial site, we held a commemoration for the murdered Jews from Reinickendorf. Standing in front of a destroyed gas chamber, the students read out the names, addresses, dates of birth and dates of deportation. Majd had earlier printed out the names on paper for everyone to see and hold on to, as a way of grasping how Reinickendorf was connected to the Holocaust. The students would later say that they think differently about these streets now, knowing that people had been deported from their own neighborhood, they felt implicated. Mentioning the Reinickendorf street names within the memorial site of Auschwitz created a local intimacy. One ethnic German female student looked up names in the Holocaust data bank, just to discover her own. During reflection time in the larger group, she expressed that she had never believed that someone with her identity could end up in a concentration camp. This feeling of being threatened and potentially under attack was fostered by the visit to Auschwitz in certain ways.

As many students told me after the memorial visit, being deported to a concentration camp could happen to anyone, even to them. When I asked who would deport them to concentration camps, a handful of the ethnically German students expressed fear of Muslims and recent refugees, claiming that many of them were members of sleeper cells, waiting for the right time to take over. One male student, who had written a very sensitive letter about the trip, told me that ISIS was doing social experiments in German society to check "our" security apparatus in order to attack at the right time. Several of the other female students added that they felt disturbed by so many refugees and that their parents were afraid of Muslim men entering the country. One female student stated that her father would be voting for the right-wing extremist, anti-immigration party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) if the refugees were allowed to stay. In these conversations, the terms "Muslims," "ISIS terrorists," and "refugees" were conflated. More importantly, the trip to Auschwitz had authorized the ethnic Christian-German students to speak from the position of the Jewish survivor, this time under attack by Muslims. A normal person, as the students described her, Ruth Winkelmann was just like any other undifferentiated German citizen, a human.

On the way to Poland, I sat next to Muhammad, who did join the trip after all. I asked him why: "What is special about it for you?" "I don't think there's anything special about it," he answered. "I mean, don't we see this happening

all the time in Syria, Iraq, or Palestine? People are being tortured and killed, murdered in wars, not just adults, also children. I don't see a difference or why this should be special." "So why did you join, then?" I asked him. "I joined because I am curious and because everyone tells me that this is special and I want to know what it is that makes it special." He turned his face away, apparently done speaking to me.

Over the course of the trip, however, Muhammad became more reflexive. In our evening sessions, he said that seeing the pictures of the little kids with teary eyes really hurt him. "How could Nazis kill children?" Adding that his German grandmother must have been alive during that time, what was she thinking about all of this? She had never told him; he had never asked. He seemed troubled. Several months later, the students were invited to speak of their impressions to a larger audience and the press. All of them asserted that this should never happen again, but Muhammad took the mic to say: "Look at how we treat refugees today, we put them in camps and lock them up as if they are not humans!" Muhammad broke with the mantra of "never again!" showing that the promise of repair did not deliver in the present, even with issues far less atrocious.

6   The Afterlife of the Muselmann

The visit to Auschwitz Memorial went by calmly. Muhammad had not brought his keffiyeh or Palestinian flag, but did keep announcing that he had to conduct ritual prayer. Majd usually disengaged from this. On the second day, after the commemoration of the Jewish victims from Reinickendorf, we were released for independent strolls. The stroll around the area took us to a small, blackened pond. Four black plaques in English, Polish, Hebrew, and German explained that this pond was used as ash disposal for all the burnt bodies. One of the Polish-German volunteers kneeled down in front of the plaques, crossed himself and folded his hands for prayer for everyone to see.

The Christian prayer at the memorial site reminded Muhammad that his plea to pray earlier was rejected. He exclaimed, "Why is he allowed to pray and I am not!?" directly addressing Majd. Majd explained that the volunteer prayed for the victims of this site and was respectful of their death and then walked off. Muhammad told me that indeed his own prayer was not meant as a gesture of commemoration, but was simply his routine daily prayer. In my follow-up conversations with Majd, he clarified that he does not have anything against Muhammad's wish to pray but that he felt it was a provocation only. He explained that there had been recent terror attacks in France and that it was

not sensible to conduct Muslim prayer in an atmosphere of fear. Majd's answer offered an even wider window on to what was at stake. Majd openly accounted for the context in which terrorist and Muslim had become interchangeable. He had internalized an external gaze onto Muslims, as if inadvertently confirming that Muslim difference is incommensurable with the notion of 'humanity' proposed for the trip. Here, Muhammad's attempt to conduct prayer cannot be seen outside of the racializing gaze of Islamic terrorism. The Palestinian, who cannot subsume his religion to the secular public, emerges as a problem figure and a threat to the site of commemoration as such (lack of respect for Holocaust victims); in him is the suspicion of imported anti-Semitism, he becomes the political troublemaker (Bunzl 2005; Özyürek 2016; Younes 2020). His conduct soils the site.

It is paradoxical that Muslim religious practice becomes a problem at a site that bears witness to how a vexed European history of Jewish political inequality ended in genocide. But the figure of the Muslim is not an outsider to concentration camps. Muhammad's petty provocations and the reactions to them pointed to a renewed afterlife of a different genealogy of the figure of the *Muselmann*. The Holocaust survivor Primo Levi describes the *Muselmann* as the living dead (Levi 1959, 96). Levi does not know why these emaciated men are called Muselmann, but knows that this is the name for the doomed, the already dead, yet biologically still alive just to be selected for mass killing eventually. Giorgio Agamben builds on Primo Levi when he describes the Muselmann as the paradigm for the man lacking dignity. For Agamben, the Muselmann is not located between life and death, but is rather a threshold between the human and non-human (Agamben 2002, 55). Therefore, the Muselmann poses an ethical challenge to being human and exposes the camp as the site of an experiment "in which morality and humanity themselves are called into question" (Agamben 2002, 63). As a limit figure, the Muselmann brings to bear how categories such as dignity and respect lose their meaning, same as the idea of an ethical limit. According to him, the concentration camp is not simply the site of killing inmates. Rather, it is designed to turn them into non-humans stripped of their humanity, their dignity left to decay until they are completely useless for the camp guards and then killed.

Gil Anidjar takes on the figure of the Muselmann to make a wider claim about how Europe constitutes itself historically vis-à-vis two enemies, the figure of the Jew and the Muslim (Anidjar 2003). According to Anidjar, "the Jew" is an internal and theological enemy, while "the Muslim" is an external political enemy, marking a theological threshold. By interchanging the term Muselmann with Muslim and collapsing them, Anidjar goes on to say that Muslims are everywhere, at the center and margins of Europe, visible and

invisible and manifest as an image of absolute subjection (Anidjar 2003, 145). Anidjar explains that as absolute subjects to their fates they expose their weakness and passivity to live a life without a "divine spark" (see also Levi 1959:96). According to Anidjar, then, Jews had to be downgraded to the figure of the Muselmann before they died. Muslims, in contrast to Jews, are considered not to have a real God that Christians seek to share with them. This form of dehumanizing negates the theological relationship Christians have with Jews.

The current racialized figure of the Muslim as embodied by Muhammad brings this older genealogy to the fore. Yet with a crucial twist: Muhammad, as a Palestinian-Muslim, is a threat because he is considered potentially aggressive and destructive of various levels of the secular order. In his performance as a Palestinian, he stands for the untamed stateless subject undisciplined by the legal demands of the worldly state-form. As a Muslim who wants to practice his religion publicly, he is a challenge to secular sensibilities and associated with Islamic terrorism. This is compounded by his wish to display Palestinian national symbols and everything about his existence converges together to turn him into a threshold-figure of indistinguishable features, pointing to the 'anti' of European universal humanity and the ongoing crisis of citizenship.

The figure of the Muselmann has an afterlife as a threatening anti-human. This afterlife as the inability to be human in the legal and social sense for non-Christian communities is an older crisis of citizenship. This current afterlife is made possible by a variety of contingent shifts. The current figure of the Muselmann as a threat to humanity is rather brought about by the securitized conditions that make a past specter tangible. The Muslim is now an explicit political reference internal to Europe and connotes the problem with migration, religion and terrorism, and attaches itself through integration and security policies that are placed on Middle Easterners and Palestinians.

7   Conclusion

In this article I have taken the Reinickendorf case to demonstrate how German citizenship remains in crisis after Holocaust memorialization. By centering German-Palestinians as organizers *and* troubling participants, I aim to show that the challenge of citizenship is not one between ethnic Germans and Middle Eastern migrants alone. Rather, the challenge is bound up with secular universality and the discourse of Muslim threat. The case of the Reinickendorf school was, in many ways, exceptional to my broader research. The school was predominantly white-working class, the main social workers were Palestinian and Turkish, and the trip was not funded by any deradicalization program. Yet

even this exceptional case was subject to the larger political conditions and the discourse of Muslim threat.

I have shown this "Muslim threat" as one in which religious practice and their visibility becomes a problem, especially at the site of Auschwitz Memorial, pointing to the memorial site as an extension of securitized secular governance. I have juxtaposed this with Christian prayer passed-off in situ as respectful. Yet, as I showed, Christian prayer was both passed-off as a respectful practice on the memorial site until the student pointed out the double-standard. This, I argue, has more to do with how being German and Christian-secularized was perceived as a universal neutral by the participants. The guest appearance of the Jewish survivor also attested to how students grappled with understanding Jewish difference, which only became legible through Ruth's relation to Auschwitz. Jewish difference, in a larger German context, is related to as palatable, because it can and was rebuilt in the image of a new Germany, and as such extends a Christian-secularized humanity. The idea of identification with Jews as humans and erasing Jewish difference enabled some ethnic German students to imagine themselves under attack.

The figure of the Muslim links up with a threatening specter of the Muselmann, for those who could be read as Muslim, such as Majd or Muhammad. Yet, in my reading I suggest that there is no direct line, but rather that political conditions and historical shifts have summoned the Muselmann. Muslims have come to occupy a position of the internal anti-human, the one whose existence cannot be folded into citizenship. This afterlife, I see as the main crisis with regards to German citizenship, because Muslim difference remains incompatible with the notion of the human despite legal citizenship and despite Holocaust memorialization. In other words, a certain racial calculus of earlier times as lived out with Jewish communities has remained in place and renewed itself through the management and securitization of Middle Easterners as Muslims.

The other direction is the performance of Palestinianness at the memorial site. The figure of the Palestinian, as I tried to show, compounded the problem with Muslim difference in multiple ways. It showed most directly how repair for the Holocaust remains confined to reparations and has not addressed the institutions that have caused injury in the first place, such as the nation-state and citizenship.

The Palestinian condition bespeaks the idea of the human outside of citizenship. On the one hand, statelessness is a real historical experience with legal consequences for most Palestinians and their descendants. But even in the case of my interlocutors, who usually had managed to secure legal status or who were German citizens, the experience and story of being Palestinian

could not be publicly shared, because it stood in diametrical opposition to Germanness. Hence Palestinians themselves remain desiring memorials and demand the promise of human rights after the Holocaust with no avail. With regard to Muslims, Holocaust memorialization is taken as proof that Germany has changed and become tolerant, so if Muslims as a collective are excluded from group-differentiated rights, this is because their religious difference could not be fully subsumed within state institutions. When learning from the Germans, as Susan Neiman suggests for the US, I urge scholars to reconsider how this success story manages enduring racial relations. Holocaust memorialization as a civic practice extends secular governance of religious and ethnic difference in public and remains bound by memory-history.

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