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On the occasion of Gaza war: Open letter to Chancellor of German Federal Republic, Mrs. Dr. Angela Merkel

January 14, 2009

Dear Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany,

I was in my Iranian homeland when the Israeli Air Force dropped the first bombs on Palestinian houses, on women and children, and on Hamas facilities in Gaza. The media, predominantly controlled by the state, agreed on making the "Zionist occupation regime" responsible for starting the war, and the national television reduced its war coverage to repeatedly showing viewers new heaps of corpses, calling them "Islamic" victims of Zionism. When it became clear that objective information regarding the events could hardly be gained via the Iranian media, I turned to ARD and ZDF, the public TV channels of my German homeland.

I was astonished to encounter equally one-sided war reporting. Moreover, I learned that you, Mrs. Chancellor Merkel, identified Hamas as being "solely and exclusively" responsible for triggering off the war. First, I was frightened and did not believe what I heard, but this message became certitude when I thought back on how you have behaved during your entire period of government vis-a-vis the Middle East conflict. The fact that your SPD Minister of Foreign Affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, has adopted a similar position made your attitude neither more understandable nor more credible. In the meantime, due to substantiated reports and verifiable reconstruction of the events, we know with certainty that the Israeli army caused Hamas to terminate the armistice, which they had maintained assiduously until that point, by destroying a tunnel and killing five Palestinians.

Israel continues waging this war, which began more than two weeks ago. In Gaza, there is nothing but horror and destruction: so far over one thousand dead and several thousand wounded, with the overwhelming majority being children, women, and the weak. Every hour, more dead and wounded are added. What more must happen until we speak of genocide of the Palestinian people? In the meantime, Gaza is called the largest prison in the world and is occasionally also referred to as the new Guernica. Some days ago, the South African Nobel Peace Prize laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu said that Israel's war approximated war crimes. Richard Falk, the Special Rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Commission for the Occupied Territories, who certainly is no Hamas sympathizer, clearly classifies the situation as war crimes, which I consider to be correct.

The civilian population is on the run, but where to? It is encircled on all sides, and Israel's soldiers stop at nothing, not even at attacking UN facilities such as schools, which can clearly be recognized as such. There is no justification for the bombardment of the few shelters and the murder of innumerable people who fled there. Such bombardments blatantly violate international law, as does the entire war. If Hamas has actually used their own people as a

hostage, as Israeli propaganda has constantly stated, they, too, have violated international law. As in the decades that have passed since its establishment, Israel displays no interest whatsoever in international law. The only thing of importance is that its government has a pretext behind which it can mask its infamous actions against its opponents and present Israel as an innocent lamb and a victim who only reacts to aggression.

There is no justification for either Israel's bombs or Hamas' Qassam rockets against Israeli cities. There is no doubt that these Hamas rockets, too, violate international law. I would add that this strategy of Hamas led to a dead end a long time ago, rather than offering the option of a peace perspective for the Palestinian people. But despite this, Hamas continues to enjoy the political confidence of a large percentage of the Palestinians. It must be acknowledged that the twenty-year-old Hamas Charter is the largest obstacle to the organization's being accepted by world public opinion as a political player in the Middle East peace process. The Charter, unfortunately, remains far behind the realities, since it expressly precludes coexistence between the Palestinians and Israel.

I ask you, however, Mrs. Chancellor Merkel whether Israel and its Western allies have offered Hamas the required opportunity to open outward and reform their goals? Without wanting to compare the situation, I ask how long it took the Federal Republic to put the denazification process into place. And how long did it take the SED of 1989 to turn into today's "Leftist Party", despite almost ideal economic and political conditions? It also took the PLO more than two decades to accomplish their political re-orientation despite the Palestinian people's longing for peace.

Unfortunately, Hamas does not appear to possess the patience that is essential for its reorientation. Quite the opposite: I would like to point out that it has literally been deprived of any chance to make a change. In 2006, Hamas won the most democratic elections that the Arab world had ever seen. It was then that Hamas had a historical chance to adapt to domestic and foreign policy realities by taking over the government responsibility for the entire Palestinian people. They also had the chance to follow a path that could have ended the violence and suicide attacks and to start off toward a new peace process. But how did Israel, the USA, the European Union, and you yourself Mrs. Chancellor Merkel react to the democratic election and the Hamas victory? Do you remember?

You reacted as requested by the Israeli government: with the immediate stoppage of all funds for the autonomous Authority occupied by PLO functionaries. Thus you and the European Union, followers of the despicable Bush administration, incited the PLO functionaries and the corrupt autonomous administration, with its marginally democratically legitimized president Mahmud Abbas, which was dependent on external funds, against the Hamas government. The release of these funds was dependent on the demand for Hamas to change its Charter and abjure violence. This demand, unrealizable at short notice and which required no less of Hamas than to deny its own identity overnight, established a pretext that masked the insidious policy of *divide et impera*. The rest is well-known. Palestine was divided de facto into the West Bank and Gaza. The "moderate" PLO government of Mahmud Abbas in the West Bank, which was in fact, however, no longer legitimized, had been muzzled in the meantime by generous cash allowances. It was made a puppet government, while the systematic isolation of the Gaza Strip punished 1.5 million Palestinians with an inhuman fate in the largest ghetto mankind has ever seen. This happened only because they had voted for Hamas.

Ms. Chancellor, you share personal responsibility for Israel's systematic and comprehensive blockade politics in the Gaza Strip, for this inhumane policy of starving the civilian population. Facing a policy that betrays all democratic ideals left Hamas any no alternative but to radicalize and see its only hope in expanding its arsenal of primitive Qassam rockets, which from a military perspective are more of a symbol than a weapon. This politics of Israel and the West inevitably incited the current war, which the Israeli government had obviously carefully prepared long beforehand in order to launch it at the turn of the year when half of the world's people were sitting around their Christmas trees.

Israel's governing party *Kadima* now insists on the destruction of all tunnels, which ensured the survival of the people in Gaza, but probably also the weapon supplies for Hamas. The government requires the destruction of all tunnels before they agree to the armistice demanded by the UN, so they can continue the murderous blockade politics in Gaza. You, too, Mrs. Chancellor Merkel, pursue the same goal. Your Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Steinmeier, travelled there, but not in order to make the two sides comply with the UN, resolution. He expressly intended to offer German help to make sure that the tunnels were closed from the Egyptian side in order to establish – in accordance with the Israeli government's request – as he put it, "the prerequisite for an armistice" (i.e. Israel's blockade politics).

Is it your desire, Mrs. Chancellor, and that of your Minister of Foreign Affairs in the name of the German people, to see to it with the continuation of the blockade policy, that - after an armistice - Palestinian children and mothers in Gaza get no more food, and hospitals and the entire medical supply system break down even more completely? By the way, the overextended pretext of the "prevention of weapons supplies" is a farce. If Hamas had been able to use the tunnels for extensive weapon supplies, it would have long supplied its fighters with bazookas, which can easily be transported through the tunnels. It would then have stopped the Israeli ground offensive by destroying their tanks.

In my opinion, Israel's war in Gaza represents a new fact in history: The fifth-strongest army of the world wages an air, sea, and ground war against a small, defenseless people. The army destroys power supplies, water supplies, fires at hospitals, and refuses access to ambulance teams to city quarters fired at by the army despite protests by the ICRC. It bombs UNRWA convoys transporting relief supplies for the civilian population and heedlessly disregards the resolution of the UN Security Council, which called for an immediate stop of military actions. And all of this happens before our eyes, before the eyes of the entire "civilized" world. There are no protests by your government and those of other states. Yet in many other cases, they do not hesitate to protest or call for sanctions – as for example in case of human rights violations committed by the PR China and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Moreover, concerning their manipulative reporting on Israel, the selected journalists are eagerly trying to ask for an understanding of the Israeli army's crimes instead of objectively reporting on the cruel consequences of the war. It is alarming that the ARD talkshow team of "Anne Will" dismissed a planned programme about the war in Gaza, in all probability due to political pressure. In my opinion, this was a hard blow to freedom of the press and democracy in Germany. As a result, it is no coincidence whatsoever that German public barely takes a step, although Israel is about to commit genocide in Gaza before our eyes.

The frightening indifference in this country, Mrs. Chancellor, may also be due to Hamas and the Palestinian population who supports it being systematically demonized by almost all German politicians, as well as by the media. There is no report or no comment to be heard

on German radio and television in which the name of Hamas is not preceded by the words "radical Islamic". I cannot remember, however, that the Israeli government or even militant settlers being characterized as "Zionist" in the context of news programmes. With the uniform phraseology of the "radical Islamic Palestinian group" – probably dictated from "above" – Hamas appears per se as ideologically indoctrinated and aggressive, even when its fighters fall victim to Israeli bombs. In these linguistically subtle connotations, even civilian victims of Israeli attacks seem to be acceptable collateral damage, if at the same time – as happens regularly – fighters of the "radical Islamic" Hamas are purported to have been in the proximity of the victims.

Actually you, Mrs. Chancellor Merkel, should know from Germany's historical experience that this kind of demonization of others makes uninformed people blind, destroys their empathy, and makes their own crimes against a real or imagined enemy appear legitimate. This happens all the more effectively, the more prejudiced people are towards their opponents. It was this detestable method that the National Socialists made use of to immunize those Germans who bore general anti-Semitic sentiments against the destruction of the Jewish population. It enabled the Nazis to organize the Holocaust before the very eyes of the German people.

In making these statements, Mrs. Chancellor Merkel, I distance myself categorically from any comparison whatsoever between Israel's war in Gaza with the Holocaust against the Jews – and I want to emphasize this expressly. What I want to make clear with this comparison, however, is that the demonization of Hamas in a Western world where people already generally exhibit anti-Islamic tendencies, provides a smokescreen for Israel to perpetrate anything in the Gaza strip – and not only there – that is forbidden under international law without being punished. I regret to say that in my homeland Germany, the demonization of Hamas appears to be undertaken with particular enthusiasm and often also quite willingly. In this context, I strongly suspect, Mrs. Chancellor, that the political elite in Germany is making an attempt - consciously or unconsciously - to rehabilitate itself at the expense of others for the National Socialist crimes in the eyes of today's generation of Jewish victims. This attitude, which in my opinion is a hackneyed and unacceptable form of accounting for one's own history, determines the entirety of Germany's policies toward the Near and Middle East. It happens in a particularly tragic way concerning the Palestinian people, whose homeland continues to be occupied by the Jewish state of Israel in violation of international law.

According to the claims of the Israeli government, Israel is waging war in Gaza in order to end the bombardment of Israeli cities in the south by the Qassam rockets. As in all past Israeli wars, in the current Gaza operation, the security of the Israeli population is the official goal. However, the security condition of the people in Israel has in no way improved over the past decades; quite the opposite is true. They lead a life in constant fear of unpredictable risks by missiles and suicide commandos, a constant fear of Israel's neighbouring states gaining access to nuclear bombs, and a life in a state that opposes international law like no one else in the world. It is a state that under no circumstances agrees to follow the path of mutual security, ensured internationally by the UN, the EU, and even by the USA. It is a state whose government persistently claims in a litany that only Israel's army has the capability of ensuring the security of the population and therefore cannot rely on any other power or alternative under any circumstances. Leading a life in these similarly inhumane and

derogatory conditions is anything but what the world community should expect of Israel's population.

One cannot avoid the impression, Mrs. Chancellor, that the elite of the Israeli state is less concerned about the security of its own population than about its own apparently solid pretext to implement its ideological goals. At no time has this elite given up the territorial goals of Zionism for the establishment of Erez Israel. An honest and objective investigation into Israel's Palestine politics would support no other conclusion than that this Israeli elite has systematically undermined genuine peace with the Palestinians at all times, both before and after the Oslo peace agreement. Despite all statements, which have only been spread to deceive world public opinion, the elite has never seriously accepted a viable Palestinian state. Israel has always rejected making peace with the Palestinians and the Arab states in the region.

Nothing more than implementation of UN Resolution No. 242 from 22 November 1967 and withdrawal behind the borders of 1967 is required in order to obtain the most comprehensive security guarantees that a state has ever been granted by the world community. But with its policy of refusal, the Zionist elite of Israel prefer to replace one generation of terrorists with a new one: first the "Fatah terrorists" and then the " Hamas terrorists". Obviously, the Israeli elite can live well with their people's constant fear, which is a prerequisite to bind them to a policy of permanent occupation, a gradual carving up and incorporation of the territory the Palestinians have dreamed would become their own state. Thus, such a Palestinian state has never developed, and one day - it appears the Zionists hope - the Palestinians, deprived of their fighting strength and instigated to fight each other by splitting them up in a fratricidal war, will eventually give up the dream of their own state.

Israel's elite has obviously not yet understood that this way is an aberration, and that they will fail if they continue their policy – despite the global instrumentalization of the Holocaust for the legitimacy of its merely ideologically based policy. It is a policy that produces hate and enmity and has no other goal than causing Israel's own population to fear a people who are presented to them as an intractable enemy – which justifies virtually taking them into captivity as a hostage. This will result in making it impossible for the people of Israel ever to live a life in peace with their neighbours. Such a policy merits no support, and the sorely afflicted population of Israel does not deserve such a political leadership as they currently have, especially in view of the Holocaust.

Mrs. Chancellor Merkel, you and political elite of Europe and the United States of America are jointly responsible not only for the suffering of the Palestinians, but also for the suffering of the Israeli population, who lives in constant fear and terror. It is high time to replace this fatal Israel policy with a sustainable one based on genuine economic, cultural, and political co-operation between Israel and its neighbours.

With respect for your office and sincere regards

(Professor Dr. Mohssen Massarrat)