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The Scroll

**GERMAN COURT RULES SYNAGOGUE BURNING IS MERELY ANTI-ISRAEL CRITICISM, NOT ANTI-SEMITISM**

If attacking Europe's Jews over the purported acts of Middle Eastern Jews isn't the definition of historical anti-Semitism, what is?

By Liel Leibovitz

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As our intellectual and moral betters on the left have been informing us for the longest time, anti-Zionism does not equal anti-Semitism. So it only stands to reason that when you burn down a synagogue in Germany, you may be doing it solely as an overly enthusiastic expression of disagreement with Israel's policies.

This was the studious opinion of a court in Wuppertal, a small town in North Rhine-Westphalia. As reported today in the Jerusalem Post, a lower Wuppertal court, hearing the case in 2015, found that three German Palestinians who had torched the local synagogue in July of 2014 did so to draw attention to the Gaza conflict and had merely chosen Molotov Cocktails as their form of justified political speech. Last week, Wuppertal's higher court affirmed the decision, declaring that the attack—that is, the burning of a synagogue approximately 2,700 miles away from the nearest Israeli town—was motivated not by anti-Semitism but simply by a strong but understandable distaste for the actions of some unruly Jews living in the Jewish state.

To most people, attacking European Jews over the alleged acts of completely different Jews in the Middle East is the textbook definition of historical European anti-Semitism. To the court, it was simply a rational if overly rambunctious policy critique. The perpetrators were given suspended sentences.

The last expression of similar anti-Israeli sentiment in Wuppertal occurred in 1938, when Nazis fueled by a passionate distaste for the conduct of Israel—the establishment of which was still ten years in the future—burned down the very same town's synagogue.

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