



Rede

von Dr. Michael Blume

***Conspiracy Myths against  
Yazidis - On Genocide &  
Antisemitism***

an der Anglia Ruskin University  
in Cambridge

Donnerstag, 20. Februar 2020

- Thank you very much for the invitation to speak to you today in the very city where Charles Darwin earned his bachelor in theology.
- It is very special to me to meet many friends I had the privilege to work with such as Mirza Dinnayi, Rabiaa El Garani and Ryan D'Souza.
- My name is Michael Blume and it has been an honor for me to lead the Special Quota Project of the State of Baden-Württemberg. With this program, my team, including Mirza and Jan-Illhan Kizilhan, and I were able to evacuate a total of 1.100 mainly Yazidi women and children from Kurdistan-Iraq to Germany.
- I had been asked by the Minister President of our State, Winfried Kretschmann, to evacuate these people. We were able to do it and in the meantime, other States and Cities joined the effort. Personally, I did this as a scholar of religion, as a Christian, as a father of three and with the support of my wife, who is a Sunni Muslim.
- The cooperation of religions and our common fight against terror, violence and the conflicts to come are my main concerns and the reason I want to speak to you today.
- Many of the beneficiaries of the Special Quota Project impressed us with their enormous strength; they are not – and I want to emphasize this – victims, they are survivors.

- Internationally, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nadia Murad is the best known beneficiary. But many other women have also raised their voices against terror:
- Farida Khalaf, Salwa Rasho, Dalal Khairo, Necla Mato and Lamiya Bashar – just to name a few. They all decided to go public and to act as human rights activists, especially in the name of religious minorities and for women's rights.
- Together with friends such as the journalist Duzen Tekkal and the barrister Amal Clooney, they supported public information, criminal investigations and the pursuit of justice against the self-declared Islamic State, against Daesh.
- Especially the children move us with their will to live and also with their hunger for educational advancement. I do not hesitate to acknowledge with gratitude that the Yazidi people are part of Germany's future and that they are already contributing to our society.
- In the spring of 2018, I have been appointed as the State Commissioner against Antisemitism for the state Baden-Württemberg. And I wish that the fate of the Yazidis and other religious minorities in the Middle East had nothing to do with this old and vicious hate.
- But unfortunately, Antisemitism is an important part of Daesh and extremist ideology, of Yazidi suffering and of the dangers ethnic and religious minorities are facing in the 21st century.

- Why is this the case? With the ban on the printing of Arabic letters from 1485 to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Islamic world lost its long leading role in the evolution of civilizations. And with the discovery of rich oil deposits, numerous societies from Saudi-Arabien to Iran, Iraq and Lybia to Russia, Venezuela and many more, have turned into authoritarian rentier states, monopolizing wealth for small elites, promoting conspiracy myths, stalling education and developing their societies far too slowly.
- Instead of honest self-criticism, anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist conspiracy myths have been preached decades before the founding of the state of Israel. Anti-Semitic allies of the German National Socialist Regime such as the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Amin el-Husseini spread hate and violence against alleged Jewish conspirators and all those they deemed to be co-conspirators. With the pogroms in Hebron in 1929 and Baghdad in 1941 began the displacement of up to 900.000 Jews from the Arabic world. Historians are just beginning to understand this as the very beginning of a century of anti-minority violence, expulsions and genocide.
- With the radical uprisings of 1979 – the year 1400 of the Islamic era – both in Saudi Arabia and Iran, Antisemitism also turned against their own oil rentier regimes. Since then, literally every minority and every political movement has been accused of belonging to “Zionist conspiracies”. This is as dumb as it is dangerous to anyone accused.

- For example, the brave Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai has been attacked brutally and has been forced to flee her homeland Pakistan from antisemitic conspiracy myths and subsequent terror. Thankfully, she found support and safety here in the United Kingdom.
- Furthermore, the climate crisis fuelled the conflicts, increasingly destroying the livelihoods of farmers along the Eurasian Axis from Northern Africa through the Levant, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey right to the Far East, leading to rural exodus, religious and ethnic conflicts, extremism and civil wars. I have been there and I can only call out to the world community: the old settlement areas of the Yazidi and other religious and ethnic minorities are directly affected by climate change. And wherever water gets scarce and fields are no longer tillable, hate and violence is directed first against smaller and weaker groups.
- UK Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, to me one of the most important religious scholars of our time, has warned impressively and rightfully: *'Antisemitism endangers everyone because the hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews.'* Today's radical Islamic as well as political anti-Semites are attacking ethnic and religious minorities worldwide, just as the German National Socialists persecuted and murdered millions of Jews together with the mainly Christian Roma and Sinti.
- Those last months, we have had another series of antisemitic terrorist attacks ranging

from Halle to New Jersey and New York to Gaboru, Quetta and, this very night, to Hanau near Frankfurt. These very diverse extremist networks are connected by the old conspiracy myths of Antisemitism. And if we do not stop it, this hate will never be satisfied!

- Today, anti-Semites and racists are globalizing their anger and radicalizing themselves through the Internet. This is a threat to Jewish communities and the State of Israel as well as to all liberal democracies. But it is also a direct threat to ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle and Far East, from the Yazidis to the Bahá'í, from the Sunni Rohingya in Myanmar to the Ahmadiyya in Pakistan and the Shiite Hazara in Afghanistan.
- I can only agree with the grim but realistic outlook Vian Dakheel gave us concerning the Yazidis and other religious minorities in Northern Iraq and Syria. Let us see what is going on: The very climate zone where all of our world religions emerged is now on fire.
- Conspiracy myths do not solve any problems; Antisemitism is a dangerous poison to any group and culture. This has been true to my own people and this is true to right- and left-wing-extremists, to Muslims, Non-Religious, Buddhists and Hindus abroad.
- I am therefore appealing to all people of good will and especially to the remaining liberal democracies: let us stop buying oil and gas from authoritarian and regularly anti-Semitic regimes. Let our farms produce less climate-killing meat and more renewable energy. Let

us fight anti-Semitism wherever we find it – also, but not only, for the sake of our Jewish and Israeli friends. And above all, let us stand by the side of the minorities persecuted by conspiracy accusations, such as Yazidis, Druzes, African Jews and Christians, and give them security and shelter.

- You might be surprised to hear that I agree with Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne in a kind of frustration with national politics. Even in the remaining liberal democracies, parliaments and governments are attacked by racists and anti-Semites via digital media. Our Special Quota project became possible because it was not designed in Berlin, but in the regional capital of Stuttgart. For the future, I do hope for more NGOs, regions and cities going forward to accept humanitarian refugees, to invest in renewable energies and to face the primary lie of Antisemitism: That there is no hope.
- I ask my Muslim and Yazidi friends to invest massively in education, especially in the education of girls and women. Religions will only survive in large, intercultural cities with modern schools and strong mothers. None of us will win the future by turning to idealized pasts without science and knowledge. And there will be no way to overcome extremism and antisemitism without stopping violence in communities and in families immediately.
- I have often been asked why we should not lose all hope in the face of this global resurgence of Antisemitism, climate crisis and hate. But I can only answer you from our

experience in the Special Quota Project for vulnerable Women and Children: Let us never give in to hopelessness because every single life is worth the effort.