

An Imam In Malmö Attends A Kristallnacht Commemoration, Is Roundly Criticized

by Hugh Fitzgerald

An imam from the Swedish city of Malmö for the first time attended the city's Kristallnacht Holocaust commemoration event. The story is [here](#).

The planned attendance Saturday night of Salahuddin Barakat, founder of Malmo's Academy of Islam, at Malmo's synagogue is an important milestone in interfaith work designed to curb anti-Semitism in the city, according to the local rabbi, Moshe David HaCohen.

Last year, HaCohen and Barakat, who is Sunni, attended a Kristallnacht event in the nearby city of Lund. But this year, the 81st anniversary of the series of pogroms that erupted in Germany and Austria in 1938 and marked the first use of wide-scale violence by the Nazis against Jews, will be the first Muslim-Jewish commemoration in Malmo itself.

Malmo, where about a third of the population is Muslim, has seen frequent anti-Semitic harassment and violence, mostly by people from Muslim countries, against the city's 800-odd Jews.

"We are in a situation where the Jewish community is dwindling, it's not simple," HaCohen said. But the imam's attendance, which HaCohen says is exposing Barakat to "criticism" from some of his own congregants, "is an important sign we're on the path to better coexistence," he said.

The imam and rabbi have held multiple events since 2016,

which HaCohen says has helped improve the atmosphere for Jews.

HaCohen's logic here escapes me. The fact that Barakat was criticized by his own congregants in Malmö for the simple act of attending a ceremony marking the anniversary of Kristallnacht was not "an important sign we're on the path to a better coexistence." It was the exact opposite: a disturbing sign that Muslims did not want their imam, much less themselves, having anything to do with the recognition of Jewish suffering, for the same reason that Muslim students in French schools have balked at studying, or having others study, the Holocaust: anything having to do with Jewish suffering can thereby increase sympathy for the Jews, perhaps even sympathy for Israel, and for many Muslims, that will never do.

How did the "multiple events" the rabbi and the imam held over the last few years in Malmö – what were they, exactly? – help "improve the atmosphere for Jews"? There is no evidence for this; all the evidence – the steady decline in the Jewish population, by about 5% a year, during the very years when Barakat was attending all sorts of interfaith events, including a joint "study hall" held for Jewish and Muslim students, tells the real story. So do the attacks, including a Molotov cocktail thrown at the central synagogue. So does the long mayoralty of Ilman Reepalu, who during his tenure made virulent attacks on Jews as supporters of Israel. Reepalu claimed "We accept neither Zionism nor anti-Semitism. They are extremes that put themselves above other groups, and believe they have a lower value." So Zionists are akin to antisemitism in his view, by "putting themselves above other groups." During an interview with Al-Jazeera, Reepalu criticised Malmö's Jewish community for its support for Israel, stating that "I would wish for the Jewish community to denounce Israeli violations against the civilian population in Gaza. Instead it decides to hold a [pro-Israeli] demonstration in

the Grand Square [of Malmö], which could send the wrong signals.” Reepalu also insisted, in the face of clear evidence to the contrary, that there had been no physical attacks on Jews in Malmö. And then he added that if there had been any such attacks, they would have been carried out by “right-wingers.” He was insistent on defending Muslims no matter what.

The “atmosphere for Jews” in Malmö, despite HaCohen’s attempt to put an optimistic slant on it, is only getting worse. For why else would Jews be leaving the city, where their families have lived for many generations?

But what else can HaCohen say? He doesn’t want to discourage an imam who has apparently been displaying a certain decency toward Jews. Barakat is morally ahead of his congregants who appear ill-inclined to emulate his outreach to Jews. HaCohen can only hope that eventually the imam will win over more of them, to behave better toward the Jews still remaining in Malmö, even though it will be a tough slog, given that dozens of verses in the Qur’an teach Muslims to fear and hate Jews.

Last month, Swedish authorities revealed that in 2018, anti-Semitic incidents there reached a new record tally of 280 following an increase of 53 percent over 2016. The report did not offer any details about perpetrators’ identities.

Of course the report “did not offer any details about perpetrators’ identities.” Everyone in Sweden, save perhaps for former Malmö mayor Ilham Kripalu, knows who they were: they were Muslims, who brought with them to Sweden, undeclared in their mental luggage, the deep antisemitism that is such an important part of their faith.

Perhaps HaCohen should wait to praise the supposed usefulness of Imam Barakat’s attending this Kristallnacht commemoration until after it is over. If Barakat continues to be the object

of criticism from his own congregants, then he, and HaCohen, will have their disturbing answer: the Muslims of Malmö are deeply rooted in their antipathy to Jews, and no imam is going to persuade them to change their minds, or acknowledge, even in the slightest, Jewish suffering in the past.

When Sweden admitted huge numbers of Muslims during the last two decades, no one in the government thought to consider the effect this would have on Swedish Jews. Those Jews have reacted to the Muslim presence, and the consequent attacks on them that make many feel intolerably insecure. Swedish Jews been voting with their feet, leaving Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, for Israel, America, Canada, Australia. A productive community of doctors, researchers, professors, entrepreneurs, has been exchanged for a community of people who have no desire to integrate into the larger society, have no interest in adopting "Swedish values," but do have a great interest in taking advantage of the many benefits that the generous Swedish welfare state lavishes upon its Muslim economic migrants, who are past masters at milking the system. They obtain free or highly subsidized housing, free medical care, free education, unemployment benefits (even without having first been employed), family allowances, and more.

It's been quite a trade-off. It would be nice to think that by this point, something had been learned from Sweden's brief and unhappy history with its Muslim migrants. But so far, to judge by the country's continuing to admit hundreds of thousands of Muslims, little has. In Stockholm they are still whistling in the dark.

But this bit of news just in gives one hope: the latest poll in Sweden, published in Aftonbladet on November 14, gives the Sweden Democrats, the anti-immigrant [that is, anti-Islam] party, the lead over the Social Democrats, with a 7% jump in support since 2018. Perhaps there is hope after all.

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