

German Music and Cultural Festival Features Antisemitic Academic, But Cancels Over Coronavirus (Part 1)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Achille Mbembe

The German music and cultural festival Ruhrtriennale, which was slated to present a pro-BDS speaker, pulled the plug on its event on April 22 due to the coronavirus crisis.

The Jerusalem Post has the story, by Benjamin Weinthal, [here](#):

“The supervisory board of Kultur Ruhr GmbH today unanimously decided at an extraordinary supervisory board meeting that this year’s edition of the Ruhrtriennale should be canceled due to the corona pandemic,” said the cultural organization in a statement.

That is the not-quite-satisfactory denouement of the scandal created when those organizing the “music and cultural festival” Ruhrtriennale invited Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian “philosopher” who has achieved notoriety for his virulent anti-Israel views, to open the festival.

“Not-quite-satisfactory,” because once the festival was cancelled, the problem of Achille Mbembe as an honored guest also disappeared. One would have wished for the organizers to have issued an apology for inviting him in the first place, and to have promptly disinvited him, instead of waiting to be left off the hook by the coronavirus cancellation.

The event was plagued with allegations that it planned to give a stage to an academic who has stoked antisemitism and supports the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign targeting Israel. The South African-based academic Achille Mbembe signed a BDS petition to boycott Israeli academics from Ben Gurion University.

He has written that “the occupation of Palestine is the biggest moral scandal of our times, one of the most dehumanizing ordeals of the century we have just entered, and the biggest act of cowardice of the last half-century. And since all they [the Israelis] are willing to offer is a fight to the finish, since what they are willing to do is to go all the way—carnage, destruction, incremental extermination—the time has come for global isolation.”

Where should we begin with such a sinister crazed cry of antisemitic hatred? With Mbembe’s phrase “the occupation of Palestine”? By this he means, of course, that Israel, as only the “occupier” of all of Palestine, has no right to exist. Three thousand years of Jewish history in the Land of Israel – that’s nothing to Achille Mbembe, Ph.D., “philosopher” and “historian.” Israel’s existence is the “biggest moral scandal” of our times, because – alone among the peoples of the earth –

the Jews have no right to a state of their own. The Arabs, on the other hand, are in desperate need of a 23rd state – if justice is to be done – in “Palestine.”

Israel's existence is a “moral scandal” because the Jews of Israel dared to defend themselves in three wars that threatened their national existence, and they won. An intolerable outcome. Israel is a “moral scandal” because the Israelis actually fight back when the terrorists of the PLO, Hamas, and Hezbollah kill them, in their homes, on their buses and at bus stations, at restaurants and pizza parlors, at Passover dinners and in schoolrooms. When rockets fly into Sderot and other towns in southern Israel, the IAF goes into action, and destroys the sites from which those rockets had been launched. For Mbembe, this constitutes a “moral scandal.” When Hezbollah digs huge terror tunnels from Lebanon into Israel, in order that its fighters may emerge from them to kidnap or kill Israeli civilians, the Israelis, in one more demonstration of Mbembe's “moral scandal,” destroy those tunnels. When Palestinians throw Molotov cocktails and other explosives, including grenades, at Israeli soldiers guarding the security fence, the Israelis fire tear gas and rubber bullets, in an attempt to dissuade the rioters. If that doesn't work, and some Palestinians manage to make it to the fence and are breaching it, only then do Israeli soldiers use live fire, which is aimed at legs to hamper mobility. If even that doesn't stop the most determined of protesters, the Israelis may shoot above the waist.

Achille Mbembe is outraged that Israel insists on protecting its security fence, and finds the Jewish state's response out of all proportion to the original attack. How much damage, after all, can Molotov cocktails and grenades do?

The “dehumanizing ordeal” that Mbembe claims Arabs in Israel are made to suffer? What ordeal? Every profession is open to them. They work as doctors, nurses, lawyers, judges, professional athletes. They work in radio and television, and

on newspapers. They own restaurants, clothing stores, salons, barber shops. They attend universities with Israeli Jews. They are teachers, from nursery school on up, working alongside Israeli Jews and teaching both Arab and Jewish pupils. They work in, or are patients in, the same hospitals with Jews. They sit in the Knesset, where the Arab Joint List is the third largest party. They serve on the Supreme Court. They represent Israel abroad in the diplomatic corps, even as ambassadors, like the late Ali Yahya and George Deek. They are allowed to serve – though not required to – in the IDF. Does Mbembe know any of this? If he did, would it make any difference? Of course not. He is in the grip of a pathological mental condition – antisemitism – that is impervious to evidence and reason.

The Islamic State recruits have had a high old time torturing, raping, and decapitating Yazidi, Christian, and Shia victims, in Syria and Iraq. Al-Qaeda terrorists have left their murderous mark in New York, Washington, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Muslims have been attacking and killing Christians in, among other countries, Nigeria, Chad, Pakistan, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia. But for Achille Mbembe, these Muslim murders are nothing – he doesn't ever mention them – compared to the horrors perpetrated by mighty Israel. For when Hamas fires rockets into Israel, the Israelis dare to retaliate. Have they no shame?

What are the latest examples of the terrible things Israel does to the Palestinians? It has been donating, out of its own store of medical supplies to Gaza, test kits, PPE, and much else, as well as delivering to Gaza supplies donated by others. Israel handed over to Hamas, in one recent week alone, 88 tons of medical supplies. But so what? Even if Israel has been delivering to Gaza more medical aid than any Arab country, Mbembe knows it should be giving ten times as much as it has done so far. Where, for example, are the ventilators

that Israel has not yet turned over to Hamas, despite the Hamas leader's understandable threat to kill six million Israelis? The Israelis have explained that they have their own severe shortage, which is why for the moment they cannot supply ventilators to anyone, not just the Gazans – they even had to turn down a request for ventilators from the U.K. Achille Mbembe, who understands the depth of Israel's evil, knows better: the Israelis are surely withholding ventilators because they want the Palestinians to die. As for all the medical supplies, including test kits and PPE, Israel has been sending to Hamas – well, that's a typical Israeli trick, sending hundreds of tons of aid just for show.

But let's get back to the Ruhrtriennale at which Mbembe was supposed to have been the main event.

The director of the festival, Stefanie Carp told The Jerusalem Post that "linking Achille Mbembe to antisemitism is grotesque and a disgraceful allegation."

Let's repeat here that example, quoted above, of Mbembe's antisemitism for you, Stefanie Carp. It would not be out of place in the pages of Rosenberg's *Der Stuermer*: **"The occupation of Palestine is the biggest moral scandal of our times, one of the most dehumanizing ordeals of the century we have just entered, and the biggest act of cowardice of the last half-century. And since all they [the Israelis] are willing to offer is a fight to the finish, since what they are willing to do is to go all the way—carnage, destruction, incremental extermination—the time has come for global isolation."**

Carp told the Post that Mbembe has not addressed Israel and the Palestinians in his works. However, the Post located a number of works, including his charge that Israel is worse than the former apartheid regime in South Africa.

Mbembe wrote that "moreover, given its 'hi-tech' character,

the effects of the Israeli project on the Palestinian body are much more formidable than the relatively primitive operations undertaken by the apartheid regime in South Africa between 1948 and the early 1980s."

But there is no "hi-tech" apartheid – no apartheid of any kind – practiced in Israel. Mbembe has apparently never visited Israel, for he would have seen how Jews and Arabs work, study, play, and heal in hospitals together.

Stefanie Carp leaves much to be desired, and deserves to be discharged as director of the Ruhrtriennale festival. Her choice of Achille Mbembe, a figure both pathologically antisemitic and, at the same time, deeply comical (in a Cornell-West sort of way) in his impersonation of a "thinker," writing fashionable academic gobbledygook, to open the festival, calls her judgment into question.

The German journalist Stefan Laurin first broke the story about Mbembe on the website Ruhrbarone. He wrote on April 22 in connection with Mbembe's academic credentials [which are shaky, given that he was constantly having to shift his teaching among a half-dozen schools abroad, but never attained tenure, and finally went to South Africa], Carp, and the supervisory board [of the Festival] that "whoever does not take a clear stance against antisemitism, and for whom post-modern, ideological spinning is more important than a clear stance against hatred of Jews, should go."

For now, Carp is still holding on. Who will she invite for the 2021 Festival? The "towering intellect" Tariq Ramadan? The "woman's rights" advocate and defender of the faith Linda Sarsour? There are so many possibilities.

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