

German Police Take Down Israeli Flags to Appease Islamist Protesters

10:43 AM, Jan 16, 2009

Germany has been in shock and outrage over an incredibly nasty incident, which took place in the city of Duisburg last Saturday. That day, about 10,000 agitated protesters organized by the radical Islamist Turkish group Milli Gorus, were marching through the city to protest Israel's military campaign in Gaza. Suddenly, when the angry, young, and predominantly male Muslim crowd spotted two Israeli flags hanging from the balcony of a fourth floor apartment building, things turned really ugly.

To the shouts of "Allahu Akhbar" and "Death to Israel", the mob immediately charged towards the building and began throwing stones and other objects at the apartment unit. German police, numbering only 250 men in total, were completely overwhelmed by the situation. For sure, they were able to fend off a first wave of Milli Gorus protesters trying to storm the building by force. However, in an apparent effort to appease the protesters and prevent the situation from spiraling completely out of control, the commanding police officer then ordered one of his men to climb up the balcony and remove the Israeli flag, while several other colleagues entered the apartment by force to take down the second flag.

At the time of the incident, the two tenants--a young German student and his girlfriend who had wanted to show "solidarity with the sole democracy in the region"--were in fact following the Turkish Islamist protest march down on the street to document any instances of anti-Semitism or hate crimes. The [video footage](#) of this incident is deeply disturbing to say the least. After the Israeli flags had been removed, the 10,000 protesters continued their march through the city. It is interesting to note that Duisburg has the highest share of immigrants in the entire Ruhr area (about 17 percent of the roughly 500,000 inhabitants are foreigners, the vast majority of them from Turkey).

German politicians of virtually all political stripes as well as the Central Council of Jews in Germany swiftly condemned the incident, criticized the Duisburg police for their conduct, and demanded a full-scale investigation into the matter. The Duisburg police chief, for his part, posted a statement on the police website on Wednesday saying "I deeply regret that feelings, especially those of our Jewish fellow citizens, were hurt." While such a statement is certainly welcome, one should be careful not to merely portray this serious incident as a matter of "hurt feelings". Doing so would divert political and public attention away from what appears to be the key take-away from this ugly episode: namely that Germany's law enforcement agencies are in retreat while the Muslim mob is on the rise. Just for the record: while still legal in Germany, the Turkish fundamentalist group Milli Gorus has been under surveillance by German domestic security agencies for quite some time. However, it would be a serious mistake to simply put the blame on the overworked and underpaid Duisburg police. There has been no indication whatsoever that the police officers involved were harboring anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli sentiments. Rather, the 250 police appear to have been overwhelmed by the sheer size of the 10,000-strong protest march (a crowd ten times bigger than initially anticipated by the police) and thus made the fateful decision to take down the Israeli flags to appease the Milli Gorus mob. In principle, of course, that decision was dead-wrong. But the real problem is that the police officers in charge did not have the necessary manpower to contain the violent Islamist protesters, to detain them, and to have them prosecuted.

And while even left-wing politicians have now joined the chorus condemning the incident, one must not forget that it has traditionally been political leaders from the left who strongly opposed any attempt to strengthen Germany's law enforcement agencies, both in terms of manpower and equipment as well as in terms of legal competencies and enforcement powers. Furthermore, for purely ideological reasons, left-wing politicians in Germany ignored for too long the problem of rising Muslim fundamentalism among the country's rapidly growing immigrant communities. After all, this dangerous phenomenon ran counter to the left's declared political vision and ideal of turning Germany into a harmonious, peaceful "multicultural society" bringing together immigrants of various background and religious beliefs. In contrast, the German political left has never missed an opportunity to warn about the dangers of right-wing extremism.

This kind of entrenched ideological bias which has either ignored or downplayed the threat posed by Muslim radicals has now come back to haunt Germany. In fact, it is probably safe to say that a hypothetical neo-Nazi demonstration against Israel's Gaza campaign would have either been banned right away or would have been accompanied by such a heavy police presence that the commanding police officer would never ever have thought it necessary to take down two Israeli flags to appease neo-Nazi thugs. The anti-Israel demonstration organized by Milli Gorus was obviously handled in a very different way.