

German Petition Supports Israel's State Rights



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German Chancellor Angela Merkel has decided not to support a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state—and 16,000 people have signed a petition to support her.

When the declaration emerges during the opening week of the UN General Assembly in New York in September, Merkel will carry with her thousands of handwritten signatures in support of Israel.

Harald Eckert, chairman of Christen an der Seite Israels and European Coalition for Israel, launched the grassroots campaign. He expects the petition to gain momentum over the summer and spread to other countries in Europe.

So far, the Netherlands, Italy and Czech Republic are in agreement with Merkel in opposing a unilateral declaration. But many European Union member states are still undecided.

In a speech during a symposium in the German Bundestag in Berlin on Wednesday, MP Gitta Connemann said the pro-Israel stance has broad support. She also expressed her regret that the German Parliament last summer issued a statement in support of the Gaza flotilla, asking Israel to lift the naval blockade of Gaza.

“This was a misjudgment on the part of the German Parliament and today we should know better,” Connemann said, noting that another flotilla would probably be harshly criticized by the German Parliament.

Connemann is one of several co-chairs of the German-Israel

friendship group in the parliament and was the official host of the conference in Berlin, which was organized by European Coalition for Israel and Initiativ 27 Januar.

Professor Gert Weisskirchen, a former member of Bundestag and chairman of the historical OSCE conference against anti-Semitism in 2004, said supporting Israel is the foundation stone of any German government, but this is not only the policy of a political elite: it is supported by the grassroots, as expressed here today.

In his speech he suggested a "peace now" campaign in opposition to the unilateral declaration in the UN: "This campaign should call upon the PA to immediately return to the negotiating table, avoid any unilateral steps and respect Israel as a Jewish state."

Dr. Cynthia Wallace from Geneva, the keynote speaker at the symposium, outlined the legal foundation of the modern state of Israel by explaining the historical process that led to the re-constitution of the Jewish state.

"The UN partition plan in 1947 did not create Israel. The legal rights of Israel were recognized by the international community in April 1920, when the Balfour Declaration was incorporated into International Law and later confirmed unanimously by the League of Nations," she said.

"Today the legal aspects of the conflict between Israel and the Arabs have been distorted by half-truths and twisting of facts. Israel stands on solid legal ground which can be examined by anyone with some basic knowledge of law and history."

ECI director Tomas Sandell wrapped up the symposium with an explanation of why his group wants to raise awareness regarding Israel's legal rights at a time when the emphasis is on the creation of a Palestinian state.

“Unilateralism does not lead to peace. Only a negotiated agreement between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority based on historical facts and International Law can create a just and lasting peace,” Sandell said. “As for the future status of Jerusalem, the only way to share the capital is to keep it under Jewish sovereignty as the undivided capital of the Jewish state. History proves that only under Jewish rule has the capital been kept open for people of all faiths.”

The next ECI symposium on Israel’s legal rights will take place in Rome at the end of June.