**Germany Pulls Out Of Durban III Anti-Racism Conference**

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Germany’s Foreign Ministry announced on Friday that it will not take part in the UN-sponsored Durban III antiracism conference on September 22, because of the possibility that the event can be turned into a forum for anti-Semitic statements.

In a statement to *The Jerusalem Post*on Friday, Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said “Germany will not participate in the commemoration event for the 10th year anniversary of the Durban conference.

Germany “cannot rule out that the Durban commemoration event in New York will be misused for anti-Semitic statements, as was the case in previous conferences,” he said.

“Therefore Germany will not participate. This is also an expression of our special responsibility toward Israel,” Westerwelle said.

Anne Bayefsky, a human rights scholar and the principal organizer of a counter-Durban III event, told the Post on Friday, “Germany has done absolutely the right thing in pulling out of the UN's Durban III conference, which is a ‘commemoration’ – a celebration – of UN-based anti-Semitism on a global scale.

“Germany, and other European nations which have already pulled out, need to call on the UK and France immediately to stand with them and against Durban’s unacceptable perversion of the foundational promise of the UN Charter, ‘the equal rights of nations large and small.’” Dr. Dieter Graumann, the president of Germany’s Central Council of Jews, told the Post on Friday that “it was a good and wise decision” that Berlin pulled out of Durban III. “I am very pleased” about the decision and “the government definitely earns a lot of praise and recognition” for it.

“The government showed its true colors and sent a clear signal that should be heard everywhere,” Graumann said. He termed the conference a “disgrace that should not receive any legitimacy” and said Germany showed that “we will not participate in a festival of lies.”

This “sign of consistency and responsibility earns great respect, and hopefully other countries will also” follow this move to boycott Durban III.

Philipp Missfelder, an influential Bundestag deputy who called on his country’s Foreign Ministry in late August to drop its planned participation in the UN-sponsored event, told the *Post*on Friday, “We very much welcome the Foreign Ministry's decision to forgo participation of German ambassadors at Durban III.

“This is the right way and a strong sign against the defamation of our partner Israel,” said Missfelder, who serves as the foreign policy spokesman for German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union in the Bundestag.

Westerwelle was the subject of heavy criticism in the media because he delayed his decision to pull out of Durban III.

The German foreign minister said the decision not to participate was based on “intensive considerations within the federal government.” He added that Germany pulled the plug on its participation in 2009 at the Durban II conference in Geneva because of the “high risk” that the conference could be “politically misused.”

Ten of the UN’s 193 member nations have pulled out of Durban III, including Germany, the US, Canada, Italy, Austria, Australia, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Israel.

Poland and a number of other democracies are wavering about their participation.

Sacha Staswki, the head of the pro-Israel advocacy organization Honestly Concerned, told the *Post* on Friday that “Germany waited long, but not too long. It would have been nice to see Germany being on the forefront of the countries to withdraw from the anti-Semitic Durban III conference, thereby setting an example for the other European countries, but better late than never.”

He added, “I strongly hope that Germany will also stand by Israel when it comes to the next task at hand. A unilateral declaration of a state of Palestine, which is not the result of a negotiated agreement, certainly goes against the German raison d’etat, which calls for Germany to defend the security of the Jewish state, just as it is not in the interest of the Palestinians. As a true friend of the Jewish state, Germany cannot simply ‘drift’ with the majority.”

Stawski, who is based in Frankfurt and is a leading defender of Israel’s security in Germany, said, “True friendship means going against the mainstream, if necessary, and standing up for your friend. In the case of Durban III, Germany finally made the right decision. I hope it will do the same when it comes to negotiating with its European partners this weekend, in terms of finding a common position on Palestinian statehood, and if necessary go against the majority to take a clear position on September 20 in the UN.

“An abstention would not be a sign of friendship.”

Honestly Concerned is slated to hold a conference next month to advance the security interests of Israel. It will take place in Frankfurt and is expected to attract 3,000 visitors, making it the largest pro- Israel European event.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center told the *Post*on Friday that it “commends the German government for pulling out of Durban III. We hope that Berlin, along with the other European Union members, will refuse to provide any further direct or indirect funding for the disastrous ‘Durban Process.’”