

## *Authoritarian anti-Antisemitism*

Peter Ullrich

### Abstract

Much has been written about the events of 7 October 2023, including about what they brought to light, such as the lack of empathy for the victims of the Hamas attack on the part of sections of the campist Left. And yet, the friend-enemy binary is not only to be found among the campist troops of Israel's opponents. On the contrary, the second-order Middle East conflict quickly reached a new level. In a downright "[moral panic](#)", there was soon a tendency, mirroring the above, to suspect antisemitism behind every expression of (pro-)Palestinian perspectives and demands and of compassion for the Palestinian victims of Israel's war in Gaza (which quickly ceased to be a legitimate response and turned into a genocidal war crime), and ultimately, to impute an antisemitic motivation to every form of activism against what's going on in Gaza.

What is new about the current constellation is the scope and depth of this misguided anti-antisemitism and, in particular, the degree to which it has become bureaucratized — and hence the degree to which the debate over the Middle East conflict has become the object of [juridification and securitization](#). This means that the space of what is considered to be debatable in public is increasingly being governed by (quasi-)law, monitored by law enforcement agencies and treated as a problem of social order rather than a political problem. Only obliquely is this about fighting actual antisemitism, and involves other aims as well. Above all, it is a trend that is attaching to other illiberal tendencies, embedding itself in and reinforcing an authoritarian turn, even if not always intentionally. That is why I call it [authoritarian anti-antisemitism](#). The (geographical/political) focus of the presentation will be Germany.

## *Academic freedom, the authoritarian turn and the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism*

Sindre Bangstad

### Abstract

Academic freedom involves the freedom of academics to research, teach and disseminate without external interference from political authorities, university administrators, corporate or religious interests, and institutional autonomy for universities. For authoritarians old and new, the universities constitute a liberal “enemy”, and control with the educational sector is seen as central for the advancement of hegemony. It is in this context that the contentious working definition of antisemitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2016, and some 45 countries to date, has emerged as a focal point for assaults on academic freedom in a number of liberal democratic states, and most significantly, in the USA. Heavily criticized by academic scholars, the definition can be seen as a tool for lawfare against scholars working on Palestine or scholars with a Palestinian background in particular. In this lecture, I will present findings from ongoing research on the impact of the IHRA definition on academic freedom since Oct 7, 2023. I argue that we must distinguish between the definition itself, its reception and the IHRA regime that is specific to political and societal contexts. I suggest that the mechanism of self-censorship that it induces is central to its efficacy in the ‘authoritarian turn.’