

Statement by the Management of the Otto Suhr Institute regarding the
Accusations against the Lecturer Roldán Mendivil

1. In a letter to the president of Freie Universität Berlin, a group of students called “Gegen jeden Antisemitismus an der Freien Universität Berlin” [“Against Every Form of Anti-Semitism at Freie Universität Berlin”] raised serious accusations against a lecturer at our institute. Similar accusations were already published in the *Jüdische Rundschau*, a Jewish newspaper appearing monthly in Germany. According to these accusations, the part-time lecturer Roldán Mendivil denigrates the State of Israel in her public blog “cosas que non se rompen” and de facto denies its right to exist. The article in the *Jüdische Rundschau* even writes about her “radically anti-Semitic commitment.”

These allegations are not directly related to the curriculum and organization of the course “Rassismus im Kapitalismus” [“Racism in Capitalism”], which Ms. Roldán Mendivil teaches at our institute. However, they concern the suitability of the lecturer for scholarly treatment of the content matter. For that reason the Otto Suhr Institute is taking the accusations very seriously and will take immediate action to look into the matter.

2. The major criterion for us is academic relevance. We distinguish between public freedom of speech and academic freedom to address issues from a scholarly point of view. In principle, restrictions on academic freedom of discussion arise only in connection with the objective of the respective subject. This requirement is not directly moral, but rather results from the scientific purpose of scholarly communication itself.

This means that within courses taught at the university, it can be permissible to examine positions that are not compatible with the liberal democratic order or the state of international law. It would not be possible to teach a single class on Plato, Hobbes, or Nietzsche if the distinction between public and academic freedom were ignored.

The same thing holds true for a critical discussion, for example, of Zionism or the policies of Israel. In any regard, adequately addressing such issues in a scholarly manner requires empirical knowledge about the past and present of conflicts and the interpretations of conflicts. We must also expect that all teaching faculty members exhibit conceptual accuracy and fairness in dealing with conflicting reasons and points of view, as well as argumentative diligence.

If any individuals teaching at the university express their personal opinions in public, for example, in publicly accessible blogs, in such a way that the above-named virtues are violated, they raise reasonable doubts about their suitability for teaching classes in an academic environment.

3. The Otto Suhr Institute is taking the following steps.

a) We will immediately begin a scholarly investigation into the allegations of anti-Israeli or anti-Semitic observations in publications by the lecturer Roldán Mendivil. Ms. Mendivil will not be given any further teaching contracts at the Otto Suhr Institute until the matter has been thoroughly investigated.

b) The institute management will hold a public discussion, if possible during this semester, where professors at the institute will comment on the borderline between scholarly relevant criticism and a denigration of Israel and its policies. They will also address what they view as the difference between dealing with anti-Semitism academically as opposed to using the accusation of anti-Semitism as a denunciation.

c) We will review our standards for issuing teaching contracts, even for one semester. In this context, we would like to encourage all students to give us feedback about their experiences with instructors, both positive and negative. This applies especially if there are indications that serious violations of good scholarly work are involved.

On behalf of the management of the Otto Suhr Institute
Prof. Dr. Bernd Ladwig