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## **Yale kills YIISA**

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CLEMENS HENI: ANTISEMITISM IN AMERICA – YALE KILLS YIISA

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The Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism (YIISA), established in 2006 as the first institute of its kind that dealt particularly with research on antisemitism was shut down by Yale University a few days ago. YIISA made a routine application for a five-year renewal of its status, which Yale University then denied.

Since 2005, even before the official establishment of YIISA, prominent scholars and publicists who are critical about new antisemitism, and Arab and Muslim anti-Semitism, appeared at Yale. A core element of YIISA's activities focused on the Iranian threat, including an event with YIISA founder Charles Small and Wall Street Journal columnist Bret Stephens at 92Y in Manhattan in 2008.

YIISA had events on many other topics related to antisemitism, like the history of the Holocaust, Holocaust obfuscation and denial, among other forms of historical and contemporary antisemitism. Invited scholars included Paul Lawrence Rose, Deborah Lipstadt, Dina Porat, Michael Oren (meanwhile Israel's ambassador to the US), Anne Bayefsky, Phyllis Chesler, Ruth Wisse, Richard Landes, Yossi Klein Halevi, Irvin Cotler, Gerald Steinberg, Jeffrey Herf, Hadassa Ben-Itto, Kenneth Marcus and Michael Walzer along with activists and public figures like ADL president Abe Foxman.

Even controversial scholars like German historian Wolfgang Benz, Yale's Sheila Benhabib, or American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, none of whom are known as critics of Muslim antisemitism, were given a podium at YIISA. The program of YIISA was diverse.

YIISA became famous due to its outstanding criticism of new antisemitism. Usually academics in the US (like in Europe) do not focus on anti-Semitism unless it derives from Neonazis. Left antisemitism, progressive, Muslim, Arab and even Jewish antisemitism is beyond discussion on campus. Therefore seminars and lectures of famous historians and other scholars like Alan Dershowitz, Benny Morris, and Robert S. Wistrich gave YIISA an international credibility.

Yale, though, was also not impressed by the fact that three well known Muslim moderates were also part of YIISA's program: lesbian Irshad Manji, German political scientist Bassam Tibi, and Bangladeshi Shoab Choudhury. Taking this into account, the Yale decision to kill YIISA is also a decision against liberal or moderate Muslims who

fight for an enlightened Islam, and a life without Sharia law, terror, and Islamic antisemitism.

Finally, in August 2010, there was a big international conference at YIISA, including over 100 presentations. Discussing Arab and Muslim antisemitism and supporting the Jewish state of Israel evoked hatred and bigotry from terrorist organizations like the PLO and bloggers, authors and no-name youngsters alike.

Yale's action proves that criticism of antisemitism in the US and on campus is possible, as long as you are just dealing with Nazis and Neonazis, or right-wing Christians, promoting old-school antisemitism. The much bigger portion of academia and the public, liberal or progressive Christians, non-believers, Muslims, and others who are spreading new style antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and Israel hatred, remain untouched. This is the core argument of [ABBY WISSE SCHACHTER](#), writing on June 6, 2011, in the New York Post:

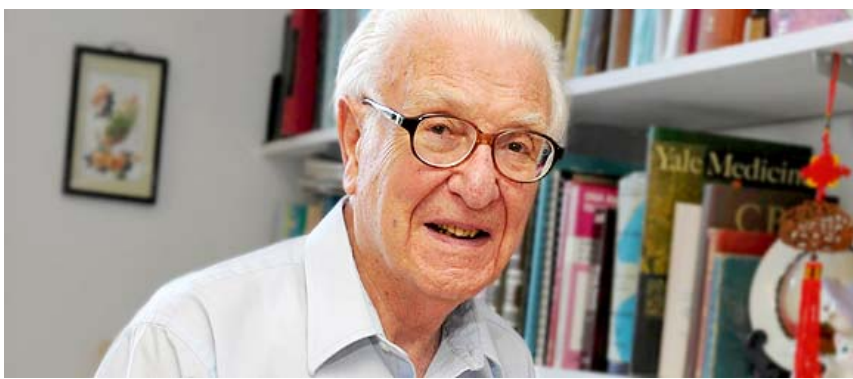
„Yale University last week killed the Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism — the only program of its kind in the country, an academically stellar one-stop anti-Semitism research shop. Worse, it almost certainly did so because YIISA refused to ignore the most virulent, genocidal and common form of Jew-hatred today: Muslim anti-Semitism.”

If one is analyzing the most dangerous form of contemporary antisemitism, you are censored, defamed, bullied, and finally thrown out from campus: highlighting Muslim and Arab antisemitism is taboo.

In that sense, American academe is like its counterpart in Europe.

Analyzing liberal and left hypocrisy, YIISA Associate Professor Neil Kressel, already showed in 1992 that progressives aim at antisemites as long as they are right-wing or Nazis. Antisemitism from the Third World or from minority groups, including the left, have never been a topic for mainstream scholars and journalists in the US. Contrary to fantasies about a powerful 'Israel-Lobby' in the US, antisemitism is very strong among the elites in America. The recent Yale decision is proof for this.

William Prusoff witnessed Nazi activities in New York City in the mid 1930s, including attacks on the shop of his father, and the marching of Pro-German activists on the streets with swastika and Nazi style antisemitic slogans. Bill fled with his family to Florida, he came back years later and was one of the most renowned pharmacologists in the US. Bill Prusoff was one of the leading figures behind YIISA, a sponsor from the very beginning. With a huge portion of humor and his always optimistic view on society, Bill told me and two friends about his life and experiences with antisemitism.



In April 2011 [William Prusoff](#) died, age 90.

The Yale commission's decision to shut down YIISA is a typical behavior for American academics, promoting anti-Zionism and rather Pro-Islamism, while attacking criticism of antisemitism and Islamism. If we look at public counter-intellectuals like Tony Judt, Norman Finkelstein, Noam Chomsky, Judith Butler, Daniel Boyarin, all those Institutes for Middle Eastern Studies, Islamic Studies, Area Studies (or Gender Studies, Philosophy etc. etc.), not to forget Obama's and Edward Said's ally Rashid Khalidi: hatred of Israel, anti-Zionism, along with affirmation, trivialization or downplaying of Muslim antisemitism, are conventional wisdom for many elites in the US, especially scholars in the related fields.

In January 2009 there were rallies across the nation attacking Israel, but not Hamas and its Qassam rockets fired on Israel. In one of these rallies in New Haven some demonstrators had posters with "Israel Stop the Holocaust in Gaza". This did not shock Yale University.

I was undercover in a church in downtown New Haven during the preparation of one of these anti-Israel rallies. Trotskists, Maoists, Marxists, alongside with religious extremists, Islamists, Christians, and others focused on their common enemy: the Zionists!

We know this from Germany, most recently famous Protestant cleric Margot Kaessmann publicly said she prefers to pray for the Taliban instead of fighting or bombing them.

This is the German way of love and peace with those who love death and destruction.

[Charles Small](#) is the founder of the Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism (YIISA). His tireless engagement with YIISA was the force that made YIISA a famous institution among those who love democracy, Israel, America, and who are against bigotry, Sharia law, antisemitism and the cult of death, embraced by Islamism.

Charles was always soft in his tone, respecting the fact that YALE is a typical liberal institution of higher learning.

American antisemitism remains an important topic for research. The decision by Yale to kill YIISA adds another chapter to this story. As late as in 2006 a liberal Canadian sociologist, Charles Asher Small, founded YIISA. Not even five years later the story ends (with a tiny exception of an institute on research on antisemitism in Bloomington, Indiana).

Analysis and criticism of Islamic antisemitism is as important as never before. Yale University intentionally destroyed its own institution which really gave Yale the spirit of being an important place for this world. Embracing universal law and fighting cultural

relativism, YIISA was a beacon of democracy and the free world. This is no longer welcome.

As soon as Yale closes the doors of YIISA it will be – on another level, sure – as unimportant for criticism of the real threats to world peace (Islamic Jihad and Muslim antisemitism) as German universities like Humboldt-University Berlin, Free University Berlin, Technical University Berlin, like Columbia, or the University of California in LA, Berkeley, and elsewhere: just another place for postcolonialism, Area Studies, postorientalism, cultural relativism, Islamism (framed as „multiculturalism“ or “tolerance”), anti-Americanism, anti-Zionism (“criticism of Israel”) and the minimization of antisemitism.

Yale will be just another place for ignoring or even promoting Jew-hatred. YIISA made Yale a great place – but Yale obviously did not wish to rise to the challenge.. New Haven and Yale do not want to be a great place. Probably they do not even deserve it.

YIISA did inspire an entire generation of young scholars to deal with antisemitism in a new, much more critical way we used to do in North America and Europe. Israel has of course the longest record of high-profile research on antisemitism.

The idea to challenge academia from within, when it comes to antisemitism, will be among the life achievements of Charles Small.

Bill Prusoff did not witness the end of his dream of YIISA, as he died shortly before Yale’s decision. His dream is still alive and his and Charles’ idea of universalism has already spread around the world. Groups like British Muslims for Israel are indicating a new tendency in world history: moderate Muslims are waking up AND they get support in the West. No longer from Yale, though. However, at some point even Yale University will learn its lesson.

*The author, Dr. Clemens Heni, was among the first five Post-Doctoral Researchers at the Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism (YIISA) in 2008 and 2009. In 2011 he established the Berlin International Center for the Study of Antisemitism (BICSA). In summer 2011 he will publish his groundbreaking 430 pages study on Schadenfreude. Islamic Studies and antisemitism in Germany after 9/11.*