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Outrage over Swiss Green party candidate's links to BDS

• By BENJAMIN WEINTHAL

The Swiss city of Basel, where Theodore Herzl ushered political Zionism into the world in 1897, is engulfed in an anti-Israel row over a Green Party candidate's longstanding support for the BDS campaign targeting the Jewish state.

The Green Party candidate for Basel's city government, Heidi Mück, launched a parliamentary initiative in 2008 against Israel. She sought to stop the work of the Basel city building department with the French company Veolia because it had helped construct Jerusalem's light rail system.

For the last 14 years, a picture of Mück has been on a Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions website that calls for the boycott of Israeli goods. In 2010, Mück signed a document in support of BDS.

The prominent Swiss-German daily *Basler Zeitung* reported critically over the past week about Mück's pro-BDS activities, ostensibly leading her to walk back her support for BDS.

When asked about her BDS activities, Mück told *The Jerusalem Post* on Tuesday that: "I signed at the time the BDS call for a boycott of Israeli products

on humanitarian grounds. As early as 2016, I made it clear in a reply in the *Basler Zeitung* that I am neither a member nor a supporter of BDS, but only supported this one appeal."

Mück would continue to meet with BDS activists in 2017 in connection with the 120th anniversary of the first Zionist congress in Basel – appearing to suggest a way to strip Israel of its legitimacy, according to critics.

Mück said that "I have repeatedly and publicly distanced myself from any antisemitism. In the meantime, I have asked for my statement to be deleted from the BDS site and distanced myself from BDS. I am aware, however, that I will continue to be charged with signing the call for a boycott – I deeply regret this.

"The exchange with Jews on the subject of BDS also showed me that many felt hurt by the appeal," she said. "I am very sorry for this and I have apologized publicly for it."

The Green Party politician claimed that her parliamentary measure to stop work between Basel's building agency and the French company active in Israel was not due to BDS. She said the anti-Israel initiative was, for example,

about "human rights" and "the peace process in the Middle East."

Critics, however, cast doubt whether Mück could be believed.

Basel City politician Joël Thüring from the conservative Swiss People's Party tweeted "Stand up/advertise for the antisemitic BDS for 14 years and then distance yourself from it on the day of nomination for the government council. Credibility looks different."

Basler Zeitung headlined its article last week: "The half-truths of Heidi Mück."

Swiss-Jewish journalist David Klein – who lives in Basel and has reported on Green Party's anti-Israel activities over the years, including Mück's BDS support – told the *Post* that Mück's new "statement is totally false. She says this because she wants to be elected to the government council (also by Basel Jews).

"She says that she apologized to 'the Jews' (whoever that might be), and the next moment she compares BDS with the boycott of South Africa (which was justified and effective) – so she compares the democracy of Israel with the apartheid state of South Africa," Klein said.