

Dr. Einat Wilf: The Essence of Peace

This article was first published in German in the weekly [Die Zeit, February 20, 2014](#) under the title “Wir sind wie ihr. Warum uns die Palästinenser anerkennen müssen”. We publish the English original with the permission of the author. Dr. Wilf is a member of the [Advisory Board of the Berlin International Center for the Study of Antisemitism \(BICSA\)](#).

The Essence of Peace

By Dr. Einat Wilf



Chancellor Angela Merkel and her entire government are coming to Israel as great friends of the State of Israel and its people. The talks between the two governments will take place in anticipation of US Secretary of State John Kerry's Framework Agreement for Peace. Early leaks

indicate that the document will include a statement, requested by Israel and its Prime Minister that, as part of any final peace agreement, the Palestinians recognize Israel as the “Jewish State” or as the “Homeland of the Jewish People.”

While this request is supported by the vast majority of Israelis, as well as the Chair of the Opposition and the Labor Party Itzhak Herzog, some have not understood what it means and why it is necessary. Others have argued that it is merely a hawkish ploy to avoid reaching any agreement with the Palestinians, or that it is a sad mark of Israel’s low self-confidence that

it needs the Palestinians to tell it what it is.

The Prime Minister's request is none of the above. It is the one core demand that, once met, will mean that peace is possible.

Palestinian recognition of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people is not a condition for peace – it is the very essence of peace.

Israel does not need Palestinian recognition in order to know what it is. Those who have dreamt, founded, and built it have done so with one purpose in mind: create a sovereign state for the Jewish people in their ancient homeland.

It doesn't matter if those who established the Jewish state were secular atheists who set out to build an egalitarian socialist utopia in the spirit of the Hebrew Prophet, religious Jews who hoped to restore biblical traditions to the modern state, or national liberals who imagined Jew and Arab, Christian and Muslim, living side by side in peace in a Vienna inspired Judenstaadt. They all wanted a Jewish state, but their visions of it were very different.

Being the Jewish state was never to be a simple concept. Jewish civilization, like all ancient civilizations, is so rich as to support any system of governance and any set of values that its

bearers choose. Unlike what Palestinian leaders say when they reject the Israeli request for recognition, there is nothing in the concept of Jewish state that is necessarily religious rather than secular nor that it is only for Jews. Like all ancient value systems that have been constantly evolving, Judaism serves as a repository of liberal, as well as ultra-conservative values; it is in the eye of the beholder and the interpreter. It is partial to neither of them. Being the Jewish state simply means being the one place in the world where the Jewish people, as a people, are free and sovereign to interpret Jewish civilization and determine their own fate. Being the Jewish State means nothing more, but also

nothing less.

The Palestinians need to recognize Israel as the Jewish state, not for the sake of the Jews, but for their own sake and dignity and for the cause of peace. Time and time again, the Palestinians have rejected opportunities to live freely in their own sovereign state because in doing so, means coming to terms with the Jewish state. Already in 1947, the Arab world, including the Arabs of Palestine (later to be termed Palestinians), rejected the partition of the land into a Jewish State and an Arab State as proposed by the United Nations. They did so because they told themselves that Zionism is not the

self-determination movement of the Jewish people, but rather a colonial movement that has brought strangers to their land, strangers who – faced with determined resistance – are destined, sooner or later, to leave it.

In comparing the Jews in the Land of Israel to foreign colonials who will succumb to sustained resistance, the Palestinians might have told themselves a comforting story about a future without Jews and without Israel, but one that has repeatedly robbed them of their present. They have refused any solution that would create a Palestinian state because the price of doing so meant finally accepting that the Jews should

have their own state, too. They preferred to have nothing rather than the dignity of their own state, if it meant sharing the land with the state of the Jewish people.

To build a peaceful future, the Palestinians need to leave behind the idea that the Jewish people were strangers who have come to a strange land and, therefore, will one day go away. Once the Palestinians recognize Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, they will finally be accepting that in creating the State of Israel, the Jewish people have come home. In doing so the Palestinians will signal to the world, to Israel and, above all,

to themselves, that they are finally ready to part with a false future in order to build a real present: one in which both the Jewish People and the Palestinians people can live in peace as a free people in their own sovereign states – one Jewish, one Palestinian.

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Member of European Parliament accuses Israel of “genocide in Gaza and elsewhere”:

Philosopher Gianni Vattimo

By Dr. Clemens Heni

Gianni Vattimo (born 1936) is a Member of European Parliament for the Liberal Democratic alliance (ALDE). He is a renowned Italian philosopher, a follower of both Martin Heidegger and Karl Marx. He is a self-declared gay-communist Catholic. He could be a minority rights activist, right? Europe has plenty of homophobic tendencies, and Iran hangs gay men on a regular basis.

Early in 2014, Vattimo co-edited a book on “Deconstructing Zionism. A Critique of Political Metaphysics,” published by Bloomsbury (New York, London, New Delhi, Sydney). The book is dedicated to leading French philosopher Jacques Derrida, known for his anti-American agenda alongside with his friend Jürgen Habermas in 2003. They were the philosophical supporters of German-French anti-Bush-agitation at the time.

In his contribution to the book, Vattimo admits that his piece is a kind of autobiography: “How to become an anti-Zionist”. He writes about his generation, born around the Second World War, and raised with the idea that Jews deserved a state due to the Holocaust. For him the “myth” of “antifascist resistance” (against the Germans/Nazis) was accompanied and promoted by “American films” about Jews and Israel, which argued in favor of a Jewish state.

Vattimo starts his article with reference to anti-Israeli Ilan Pappé and the encounter with what both call “Nakba” or Palestinian history. Around 1968 Vattimo was a socialist fan of Israeli kibbutzim, ignoring “Nakba” as he recalls. Following conspiracy theories, Vattimo writes about the “unbelievable official version” of the US Government of 9/11. Several thousand of potentially lethal missiles from Hamas

launched into southern Israel are called “totally harmless missiles.” For him, Holocaust denier and propagandist of a “world without Zionism,” Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was and is a hero, who dared to attack Israel, the Jews, and American power.

Vattimo writes:

“Better still: the entire Gaza affair contributed in a decisive way, more than any other aspect of Israeli politics, to the idea (I believe with great likelihood) that against the risk of a return of refugees, which would entail the end of the ‘Jewishness’ of the State of Israel, this situation might see no other solution than the progressive extermination of Palestinian Arabs.”

Gianni Vattimo is a loudspeaker for former Iranian President Ahmadinejad and says:

“As to the idea of making the state of Israel ‘disappear’ from the map – one of the usual themes of the Iranian ‘threat’ – its sense may not be completely unreasonable: it could, and ought, according to us, mean that the State of Israel becomes a secular, democratic, non-racist state, without walls and without discrimination among its citizens.”

Vattimo concludes:

“When Ahmadinejad invokes the end of the State of Israel, he merely expresses a demand that should be more explicitly shared by the democratic countries that instead consider him an enemy.”

For Vattimo, “memory of the Holocaust” “is imposed like a penalty”. He then takes aim at “Nazi hunters” (!) like French philosopher and critique of Heideggerian antisemitism, Emmanuel Faye. Vattimo attacks “Anglo-Saxon” “mainstream

thinking of the Atlantic, North American" region and is upset about Chilean philosopher Victor Farias, another critic of Heidegger, for his linking – for good reason – of "Heideggerianism and Iranian Islamic thought".

Gianni Vattimo's defamation of Israeli Jews culminates in the following sentence:

"The myth of 'two states for two peoples,' another aspect of the Zionist mythology, is all too clearly a way of protracting matters so that it does not appear to be an ongoing excuse by Western democracies to avoid their responsibilities, a way to give Israel the time to continue the genocide, in Gaza and elsewhere, and also to reinforce themselves militarily in every way, including the possession of atomic weapons."

To accuse Jews of committing "genocide" is the typical antisemitic projection of German and European guilt of the Shoah onto the Jews: as long as Jews today are seen as bad as Nazis, there is no reason to worry about guilt. He is a renowned philosopher but has not a clue about the word "genocide", the same holds for the word "decimation" (he uses this word as well) when it comes to Israeli policies towards today's Palestinians. The number of Palestinians is increasing, both in Gaza and the West Bank.

No surprise, then, that Vattimo and his co-editor Michael Marder, co-editor of the US journal *Telos*, included proponents of the "one state solution" like Duke University's Walter Mignolo, who was a fellow in sociology at the University of Warwick a few years ago. He was invited by scholar in antisemitism Robert Fine and his colleague Gurminder Bhambra, a follower of "post-Orientalist" enemy of Israel Edward Said (1935–2003). Other authors in the Vattimo/Marder volume are Marc H. Ellis, a "liberation theologian", "currently a visiting professor at the United Nations University for Peace

in Costa Rica,” feminist Luce Irigaray, post-colonial and feminist scholar Ranjana Khanna (Duke University), political scientist Artemy Magun (European University at Saint-Petersburg), Christopher Wise, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Western Washington University in Bellingham, and Santiago Zabala, a Professor at the University of Barcelona (author of “Hermeneutic Communism,” 2011, co-authored with Gianni Vattimo).

Vattimo and Marder also included Judith Butler in this volume. Her well known anti-Israel article “Is Judaism Zionism?”, was published in a book on “The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere”, including articles by famous philosophers Charles Taylor and Jürgen Habermas in 2011, based on a huge event with some 1000 people attending at New York University in September 2009. Vattimo himself was honored in 2007 with a Festschrift, among the contributors were Charles Taylor, Umberto Eco, German philosophers Manfred Frank, Wolfgang Iser, Rüdiger Bubner and American philosophical superstar Richard Rorty (1931–2007).

This is just indicating that Gianni Vattimo is not an outsider at all.

Will any one of his fans criticize this volume about “Deconstructing Zionism?” For Vattimo, “anti-Zionism is synonymous with leftist world politics” – and he embraces it and promotes it via the European Parliament. I do not view Vattimo as a freak, despite his fantastical theories. Rather, he is dangerous, because he represents a highly antisemitic climate among the elites in the humanities, the social sciences and the cultural and political elites in Europe and the Western world. At the EU Parliament, he is a member of [ALDE](#) – Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group – and a member of the Culture and Education Committee of the EU-Parliament. He was an ally of Venezuelan Hugo Chavez and in his contribution to the book he promotes Brazilian pro-Iranian policies:

“That Brazil’s president Lula was among the first ‘Western’ leaders to welcome Iran and Ahmadinejad has an emblematic value that goes far beyond the particular significance of his visit.”

The book “Deconstructing Zionism”, published in 2014 by Gianni Vattimo and Michael Marder, indicates that anti-Zionist antisemitism is on the rise. The ordinary tone of Vattimo also indicates that he has nothing to lose: he knows that the elites in Europe have no problem with his kind of left-wing antisemitism, framed as “left-wing world politics”. No one is shocked that he literally embraces Holocaust denier and antisemite Ahmadinejad and openly welcomes the destruction of the Jewish state of Israel. If you want to know anything about the European Parliament, about European philosophy, and European political culture, read this article by Gianni Vattimo. Heidegger would be proud of such an outspoken anti-American and antisemitic approach. Vattimo is very clear: the problem is not the “occupation,” the result of Israel’s victory in June 1967. The problem is 1948, Israel as a Jewish state! That is the anti-Zionist agenda of Judith Butler and her allies in a nutshell.

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How successive governments and the media in Bulgaria are feeding conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism

By Dr. Elena Zaharieva, Bulgaria

On the 5th of February 2013, after six months of conflicting reports in the media and hesitant statements by authorities, the government of PM Boiko Borisov officially attributed to Hezbollah the attack against Israeli tourists in Burgas, which claimed the lives of five Israelis and one Bulgarian citizen. It was the beginning of a turbulent month which ended with the collapse of the GERB government under the pressure of public protests against high electricity bills. Preliminary elections were held in May and a coalition government was formed by the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and the ethnic Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). Holding exactly 50% of the seats in the Parliament, the coalition fell hostage to the ultra-nationalist Ataka, on which it relies for Parliamentary majority. This is how the outspoken antisemite and infamous vandal Volen Siderov and the 22 far right extremists who constitute his parliamentary group became the key ally of the fragile socialist-led coalition government.

In total Ataka and other far right formations received 12.9% of the votes (equal to 456 453 votes) in the May 2013 elections. Ataka itself got 7.3%, i.e. 258 581 votes.[\[i\]](#) Ataka is a fiercely anti-Western party, whose name was taken from Goebbels' Nazi newspaper "Der Angriff" (the Attack).[\[ii\]](#) Ataka, which appeared to be well funded ever since its creation in 2005, started in the Fall of 2013 a massive

campaign. Hundreds of billboards in the capital and elsewhere around the country advertise Ataka's TV channel Alfa as "the channel of truth", Ataka's newspaper is being distributed free of charge in metro stations.[\[iii\]](#) Even though every Bulgarian sees Siderov's huge face on billboards a dozen times every day, not many have seen his photo in the company of Holocaust denier and Ben Laden admirer Ahmed Rami and David Duke from the Ku Klux Klan, taken at the "revisionist" conference in Russia in 2002, where Siderov gave a lecture entitled: "Globalization as the last stage of colonization of the Christian Orthodox East"[\[iv\]](#). Being circulated in social media, the picture never appeared in mainstream outlets[\[v\]](#). Not that Siderov's antisemitism is a secret, or that the mainstream media does not pay attention to him – the opposite is true. A day doesn't go without Ataka members being invited in the studio of some mainstream TV channel, where they invariably insist on parading their anti-Americanism and antisemitism. Recently, in response to a comment by a TV host on poverty in Cuba, an Ataka MP and admirer of the Castro regime, erupted on the air of the popular bTV, repeating several times that bTV is a "Jewish television". Intending to offend the TV host he suggested that she changes her name to Zuckerberg (since her name is rooted in the Turkish word for "sugar"), then kept calling her Mrs Zuckerberg until the end of the interview.[\[vi\]](#)

It's alarming that the reactions by authorities and the media to xenophobic outbursts on TV and radio stations are spineless at best, and that this kind of behaviour is not limited to Ataka and its supporters[\[vii\]](#). When Misho Shamara (Misho-the-Smack), a rap singer who became the face of pro-government demonstrations, made a blatantly anti-Semitic comment on the nationwide TV7 calling former finance minister Simeon Dyankov "a worthless Jewish vermin", the ruling Socialists not only did not react, but few days later they readily accepted a petition in support of their government brought to them by the same person.[\[viii\]](#)

The leader of the BSP Sergei Stanishev is also the leader of the Party of European Socialists (PES), and not surprisingly the absurd coalition of a socialist, an ethnic Turkish and a neo-Nazi party has brought the BSP under fire from Europe. Surely the BSP are keen on replacing Ataka with another stabilizing factor for their government, but a serious harm has already been inflicted. After the Borisov government had been tolerant to Siderov, the current government gave him a leading role, and the mainstream media gave him a tribune, public conscious has been anaesthetized, xenophobia has been legitimized and even for the conscientious ones anti-Semitism and conspiracy theories have become an unimportant side effect of the political manipulations in our troubled country. Journalist Ivan Bedrov commented that “the refusal of the other political parties to isolate Ataka, and the refusal of the institutions to apply the law against Siderov” has lead to the spread of “aggression against everything non-Bulgarian and non-Christian, reaching a peak with the formation of “civic patrols” against the [Syrian] refugees; conspiracy theories and accusations in anti-Bulgarian activity against human rights NGOs”.[\[ix\]](#)

The day Hezbollah was officially incriminated for the Burgas bus bombing, in an article entitled “The dirty order of the Israeli Prime-Minister” Siderov wrote the following: “For many years no country wanted to play the dirty games of Tel Aviv, to call Hezbollah a terrorist organization and justify an attack on Lebanon, Syria or Iran. This is the plan of those who determine matters in the World, who instigate wars ..., this is the plan which the Bulgarian government has walked in blindly, like a calf following its mother, without a thought of the future of our nation.”[\[x\]](#) There is no surprise in Siderov blaming Israel for involving Bulgaria in its “dirty games”, the big problem is that a pantheon of Arabists, analysts, left-wing politicians and mainstream journalists

echoed his message.

In February 2013 it became an everyday scenario to hear PM Boiko Borisov or FM Nikolay Mladenov confirming the results from the investigation and rejecting the accusations that they have acted under pressure from the US and Israel, and then members from the BSP, Arabists and journalists to come out and try to feed uncertainty and even conspiracy theories again. It didn't help matters that authorities made bolder statements for the foreign media and more hesitant ones in Bulgarian for internal use. In statements in English the evidence was "solid", in Bulgarian it was "reasonable". The general atmosphere in the media in the last month of the Borisov government can be summarized in a statement made by journalist Georgi Milkov from the popular newspaper "24 chasa": "Bulgaria has been pushed into a [Israeli] scheme that starts with Hezbollah and ends with Iran".[\[xi\]](#) On the 15th of February the same Georgi Milkov conducted a rather friendly interview with three Hamas officials who had entered Bulgaria under unclear circumstances.[\[xii\]](#) Ismail al-Ashqar, Salah al-Bardawil and Mushir al-Masri had been invited by the Center for Global and Middle East Studies (MESBG). The director of the organization, Mohammed Abu Assi – a Palestinian holding Bulgarian citizenship, stated that he invited the Hamas MPs in an attempt to "improve Bulgaria's image in the Arab world" and "to prove that Bulgaria is not an absolutely pro-Israel country" after the country's government "made a blunder" by blaming Hezbollah for the 2012 bus bombing.[\[xiii\]](#) Hamas official Ismail al-Ashqar told Georgi Milkov that Bulgaria is the gate to Europe and so it can "spread our message" among Europeans. Milkov did not feel the need to ask al-Ashqar inconvenient questions about the terrorist nature of the organization whose message he wanted him to spread. To their credit no Bulgarian authorities or members of the Socialist Party met with the Hamas representatives, and both the ruling party GERB and the BSP distanced themselves from the visit. However, according to information in the Jerusalem Post, the

visitors had been scheduled to meet members of the BSP.[\[xiv\]](#) Bulgarian security forces ordered the Palestinians out of the country 48 h after their arrival.

MESBG[\[xv\]](#) was created in 1999 by Mohd Abu Assi and Vladimir Chukov.[\[xvi\]](#) It endorses the comparison between Israel and Nazi Germany, publishes Bulgarian translations of the series "The ethnic cleansing of Palestine" by Ilan Pappé[\[xvii\]](#), as well as "reports" that the IDF is killing Palestinians to sell their organs[\[xviii\]](#) and in general blames Israel for every evil in the World. The MESBG also had a role in sending Bulgarian journalists from TV7 in Lebanon to conduct anti-Israel interviews via the Hezbollah controlled Al Manar TV.[\[xix\]](#) In his latest appearance on bTV Abu Assi was asked to comment on the trip of socialist MP Strahil Angelov to Syria and his meeting with Syrian officials, which Angelov had explained as a private visit. Abu Assi erupted: "Why do you call this a scandal? A scandal is former foreign minister Nikolay Mladenov going to Israel a year ago and saying that every attack on Israel is an attack on Bulgaria. ... Is this a balanced foreign policy ... Why is Hanukkah celebrated in the foreign ministry (not that I mind...)." [\[xx\]](#)

If one follows carefully the commentary in Bulgarian media one would notice that the same faces and names appear whenever the topic is security, terrorism and the Middle East, and most of them are well connected with the MESBG. For example, the most prominent Arabists and terrorism experts such as Vladimir Chukov or Slavcho Velkov[\[xxi\]](#) have served on the editorial board of Abu Assi's anti-Zionist propaganda magazine East-West.[\[xxii\]](#) This explains the strange consensus in the media that not Hezbollah but Al Qaeda is the perpetrator of the Burgas bus bombing, and every attempt to blame Hezbollah is part of an Israeli scheme to justify an attack on Iran. To put it simply, Bulgarians may see several different faces in talk shows, but they are not offered several different points of view, they are offered Abu Assi's point of view.

In 2002 Abu Assi's colleague Chukov created the Center for Regional and Confessional Studies.[\[xxiii\]](#) One of his latest articles posted on the website of the CRCS focuses on Jewish fundamentalism. Apparently Chukov does not exclude the possibility of the "establishment of a cruel fundamentalist Jewish regime in Israel." In order to equate Jewish and Islamic fundamentalism he developed the theory of the "Semitic origins of Jewish fundamentalism". Unfortunately, the circle of ME experts with anti-Israel views has found a more direct way to influence the Bulgarian government, than via the media. Vladimir Chukov's brother Boyan Chukov, also an Arabist has served as a security council in the Socialist government of PM Sergei Stanishev (2008 – 2009) and is currently a foreign policy advisor to Socialist PM Oresharski. Around the time of publicizing the investigation results Boyan Chukov maintained the idea that if in the absence of evidence Bulgaria points Hezbollah as the perpetrator, that means that Bulgaria is serving certain geo-political circles (i.e. Israel and US). He remained completely unimpressed by the actual existence of the evidence.[\[xxiv\]](#)

As elsewhere in Europe, Bulgaria has not been spared Palestinian propaganda. Recently, the State TV channel BNT showed the documentary "'Alphabet of sadness'", portraying the IDF as child-beating monsters,[\[xxv\]](#) and currently a film festival of ME cinema is being organized with the assistance of the Embassy of Iran and the Embassy of "the State of Palestine" as the program of the festival says.[\[xxvi\]](#) It should be worrying us greatly how much has been done by successive governments and the media in Bulgaria to make sure this propaganda falls on fertile soil. Ruling parties have been irresponsible and cynical and have used Ataka for political gains without thinking of the consequences – a tradition that has culminated in the current Red-Brown

alliance. In addition, the media that for 25 years of democracy has so far failed to establish high journalistic standards and continues to serve governments and power circles, has allowed a clique of intellectuals with radical anti-Israel views to ascertain themselves as the most prominent Bulgarian experts on security and the Middle East.

Nevertheless, I would like to end on an optimistic note. The latest developments have brought up a debate about racism and antisemitism that was non-existent in Bulgaria before. Journalists and bloggers have started to write regularly about racism and antisemitism, civic leaders and NGOs have been active in condemning antisemitic statements, Facebook groups such as “Bulgarians against antisemitism” and “Friends of Israel in Bulgaria” have emerged. Even though the reaction and debate are still on a small scale, it is an important start for people who desperately need a more constructive and introspective approach towards their national identity, instead of our typical wavering from self-loathing to self-righteousness with little in between. Anti-government protests have not ceased for 226 days since the red-brown coalition came to power. What is very encouraging is that the protesters are for the most part not stressing on poverty or high bills but are disgusted by the political situation and would like to see their country as a respectable European member. As small-scaled and indecisive as the protests might sometimes seem, they are not simply protests for a higher standard of life, they are a fight for true democratic values in Bulgaria.

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[iii] Maria Manolova, 'Ataka's Massive Campaign', 13 November 2013
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[iv] Dejan Lucic, 'Revisionists of the World Unite!' <http://www.dejanlucic.net/Revisionists%20of%20the%20world.html>>. accessed 01/28/2014

[v] Milen Radev, 'The Red-Brown-green Axis', 2011
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[\[ix\]](#) Ivan Bedrov, 'Immunity Doesn't Matter. Siderov Already Won', 2014 <<http://ivanbedrov.com/?p=3761>>. *accessed 01/28/2014*

[\[x\]](#) Volen Siderov, 'The Dirty Order of the Israeli PM', 2013 <<http://volensiderov.com/?p=296>>. *accessed 01/28/2014*

[\[xi\]](#) *Referendum* (Bulgarian National Television, 2013).

[\[xii\]](#) Ismail al-Ashqar, 'Bulgaria giving a sign to Europe to remove Hamas from terrorist list', 2013
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[\[xiii\]](#) 'Hamas Says Delegation Ordered to Leave Bulgaria', 15 February 2013
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[\[xv\]](#) 'Center for Middle East Studies' <<http://www.mesbg.org/>>. *accessed 01/28/2014*

[\[xvi\]](#) 'Vladimir Chukov – Wikipedia'
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The author, Dr. Elena Zaharieva, in October 2012 published BICSA's Working Paper No. 1: [The Burgas Attack and Antisemitism in Bulgaria](#).