

## Happy Birthday Felicia Langer!

Yesterday, the German-Israeli human rights lawyer celebrated her 80th birthday in the German town of Tuebingen. Last year, she and her husband Mieciu had been married for 60 years. Ms Langer was born in Poland. When Nazi-Germany attacked Poland in September 1939, she and her family fled to the Soviet Union, where they stayed till the end of World War II. Her latter husband's family was not so "lucky". All, except Mieciu, were exterminated by the Nazi-killers. He survived several concentration camps. After they got married they immigrated to Israel in 1950.



Foto: Wikipedia.

After the birth of their son Michael, Ms. Langer studied law at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In 1965, she began working as a lawyer. After the occupation of Palestinian territories in the 1967 war, she was for over a decade the only Israeli lawyer who defended Palestinians before Israeli military tribunals ("kangaroo courts"). Her understanding of Israeli and international law did not sit well with the concept of law on which the "kangaroo courts" were based. She did not only suffer under the arrogance of military judges but had to endure defamations of her fellow countrymen. She achieved one great success: She succeeded, before the Israeli High Court of Justice, to prevent the deportation of Bassam Shaka, major of Nablus.

In 1990 she closed down her law firm and moved with her family to Germany. They settled in the town of Tuebingen in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg. Since then, she has been relentlessly fighting for the rights of the Palestinian people, but also for a better Germany. Her commitment was both verbal and in writing. To enlighten the German public, she wrote eleven books, showing how the Israeli occupation oppresses the Palestinian people in their homeland.

She has been criticized for being outspoken and is treated with extreme hostility by a right-wing "Israel-Lobby" in Germany, which conveys the impression that it cares more for the State of Israel than for Jews in Germany. When the former German President, Horst Koehler, awarded her The Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of German, these lobbyists got bananas. Some of these lobbyists, who had previously obtained such an award, attempted to blackmail President Koehler into revoking Ms Langer's award, by threatening to return their own awards. Ms Langer managed these defamations by keeping her dignity and completely ignoring them.

A prophet is typically not recognized in his own country. While held in high esteem among non-Zionist Israelis, she is almost "idolized" among the Palestinians. When we attended a conference together in East Jerusalem, whole Palestinian families showed up and thanked her again for what she had done for them. After she left Israel, she was honored by several prestige awards, among them the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize. Germans should be glad that she decided to settle in their country and accept German citizenship which historically could not have been taken for granted.

I feel very fortunate to have enjoyed Felicia's good advice over many years and will endeavor to follow in her footsteps in the quest for justice and truth. I wish her Happy Birthday, or in Polish *Sto lat, sto lat!*

Ludwig Watzal

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<http://between-the-lines-ludwig-watzal.blogspot.com/2010/12/happy-birthday-felicia-langer.html>