

# Axel Springer: Germany's Ties to Israel's Crimes

Axel Springer SE, a dominant force in European media, stands accused of complicity in Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories through its historical affiliations, biased editorial practices, and profit-driven business ventures. From its founder's troubling Nazi-era ties to its current role as a global media conglomerate profiting from Israel's settlement enterprise, the company embodies a legacy of moral and legal failures. This essay asserts that Axel Springer's actions, particularly through its subsidiary Yad2, implicate it in Israel's violations of international law, including apartheid, human rights abuses, and ethnic cleansing. Furthermore, it contends that Germany, by failing to hold Axel Springer accountable, is complicit in these crimes, driven by financial interests in Israel's illegal activities.

## I. A Sordid Legacy: From Nazi Ties to Zionist Advocacy

Founded in 1945 by Axel Springer, the company emerged in post-war Germany, but its founder's past raises profound ethical concerns. Springer joined the National Socialist Motor Corps (NSKK) in 1934, a paramilitary group tied to Nazi antisemitic policies. Though he claimed his membership was opportunistic and limited by health issues, this affiliation taints his legacy. Post-war, Springer built a media empire with publications like *Bild-Zeitung* and *Die Welt*, which by the 1960s dominated West German press. From 1957, he shifted the company's editorial stance to staunchly support Israel, a position formalized in its corporate principles. Critics argue this has led to biased reporting that vilifies Arabs and Muslims while whitewashing Israel's illegal actions, including human rights violations and war crimes.

## II. A Media Titan's Reach: Shaping Narratives and Profits

Axel Springer SE is now a transatlantic media and technology conglomerate, headquartered in Berlin, employing over 18,000 people across 40 countries. Its operations span News Media, including *Bild*, *Die Welt*, *Business Insider*, and *Politico*; Classifieds Media, such as The Stepstone Group and AVIV Group (including Yad2); and Marketing Media. With revenues of €3.93 billion in the first half of 2023, the company holds significant financial clout. As Europe's leading digital publisher, Axel Springer shapes public opinion, particularly in Germany, where its pro-Israel narratives often marginalize Palestinian perspectives, fostering a skewed discourse that critics argue perpetuates a German superiority complex.

## III. A Trail of Scandals: Ethical Breaches and Bias

Axel Springer's history is riddled with controversies that expose its ethical shortcomings. In 2021, *Bild* editor Julian Reichelt faced allegations of sexual misconduct and silencing subordinates with payments, revealing a toxic workplace culture. The company's editorial practices have been criticized for supporting right-wing parties and vilifying Arabs and Muslims. Its rigid pro-Israel stance has led to accusations of whitewashing Israel's illegal settlements and war crimes. In 2023, Axel Springer fired a Lebanese employee for questioning its pro-Israel position, citing German labor law's probation period. This intolerance for dissent underscores the company's prioritization of Zionist agendas over balanced journalism, with critics arguing it seeks German self-absolution rather than genuine accountability.

## **IV. Yad2: Profiting from Stolen Land**

Acquired by Axel Springer in 2014 for \$234 million, Yad2 is Israel's largest classified ads platform, valued at \$420 million in 2025. Operating in real estate, vehicles, jobs, and second-hand goods, it dominates Israel's market. Yet, Yad2's real estate listings have sparked outrage for facilitating the sale of properties in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, deemed illegal under international law. Investigations reveal thousands of such listings, including paid ads from brokerage houses, generating revenue for Axel Springer. Some involve outposts illegal even under Israeli law, built on private Palestinian land seized by the military. In 2024, Palestinians filed a complaint under Germany's Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, accusing Axel Springer of enabling illegal land grabs, highlighting its complicity in human rights violations.

## **V. Settler Violence: State-Sanctioned Dispossession**

Israeli settlers, often supported by the Israeli military, perpetrate systematic violence to displace Palestinians. Since October 7, 2023, over 1,400 incidents have been recorded, including deadly attacks involving arson, vandalism, and assaults. Settlers, sometimes in army uniforms, face near-total impunity, with the Israeli government failing to prosecute perpetrators. Far-right ministers have emboldened this violence, with policies enabling settlement expansion. The military frequently arrests Palestinian victims rather than settlers, even when settlements violate Israeli law. This state-sanctioned campaign of forcible transfer breaches international humanitarian law, exacerbating Palestinian suffering.

## **VI. Legal Condemnation: The ICJ's 2024 Ruling**

On July 19, 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an advisory opinion, adopted by the UN General Assembly as A/RES/ES-10/24, declaring Israel's actions in the occupied Palestinian territories unlawful. The ruling outlined: Israel's presence in these territories is illegal; Israel must leave the occupied territories immediately; Israel is obligated to evacuate its settlements; Israel must pay reparations to Palestinians; all states are obligated to refrain from supporting Israel's occupation; international organizations must not recognize the occupation; and the UN General Assembly is called upon to adopt measures to end the occupation immediately. This ruling implicates companies like Axel Springer,

whose Yad2 platform facilitates illegal settlement transactions, and places pressure on Germany to enforce accountability under its supply chain laws.

## **VII. Looting and Impunity: Plundering Palestinian Lives**

Israeli settlers and soldiers have been documented looting Palestinian property, including household items, during violent attacks. These acts of plunder, part of a broader pattern of dispossession, are rarely investigated or prosecuted by Israel, entrenching settler impunity. Allegations suggest looted items are sold through platforms like Yad2, further implicating Axel Springer in profiting from stolen Palestinian property, compounding the moral and legal weight of its actions.

## **VIII. Conclusion: Germany's Complicity in Israel's Atrocities**

Axel Springer's ownership of Yad2 and its pro-Israel editorial stance reveal a vested financial interest in supporting Israel's illegal activities, including apartheid, violations of international law, and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. By profiting from the sale of properties in illegal settlements, Axel Springer directly contributes to Palestinian displacement and suffering. Germany's failure to hold the company accountable suggests complicity in Israel's genocidal policies, potentially driven by the prospect of financial gains from future development projects on expropriated Palestinian land, including beachfront properties in a depopulated Gaza. The ICJ's 2024 ruling, now enshrined in UNGA resolution A/RES/ES-10/24, provides a legal imperative for accountability. Germany must act swiftly to sanction Axel Springer's violations and align with international law, or risk perpetuating a legacy of injustice against the Palestinian people.