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American Jewish Committee
A Century of Leadership

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Executive Director

July 20, 2009

Professor Dr. Horst Köhler
President
Federal Republic of Germany
Spreeweg 1
10557 Berlin

Dear President Köhler:

We write to express our grave concern at the presentation, on July 16th, of a Federal Order of Merit (First Class) to Felicia Langer, a lawyer and activist living in Tübingen, citing her "tireless efforts to reach her goal of building a bridge between Israelis and Palestinians."

Ms. Langer is known not as a peace builder, but for her vociferous attacks upon the State of Israel. These attacks are not based upon criticism of actual Israeli policies, but upon her demonization of Israel as the "apartheid of the present" and her rejection of Israel's right to define itself as the State of the Jewish people.

Given Ms. Langer's background as a senior member of the Israeli Communist Party, which for many years slavishly followed the positions of the Soviet Union and its satellite states, including the so-called German Democratic Republic, we are not surprised by her continued insistence that Israel is an apartheid state. After all, this slanderous comparison was invented by Soviet propagandists at the height of the Cold War and used to justify the USSR's repression of the Jewish community in the Soviet Union.

This aspect of her record heightens our own astonishment at the decision to honor an individual who for many years was an apologist for a regime which brought untold fear and misery upon the citizens of eastern Germany. Indeed, there is perhaps no better evidence of Ms. Langer's affiliations than the award she received, in 2006, from the *Gesellschaft zum Schutz von Bürgerrecht und Menschenwürde e.V.*, an organization run by a former member of the Stasi secret police.

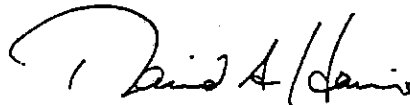
President Horst Köhler
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As you know, Mr. President, the American Jewish Committee has long enjoyed excellent relations with the German government, parliament, and other partner institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany. Together, we have advanced important principles of the transatlantic relationship, such as safeguarding democracy and human rights and strengthening cooperation among the United States, Germany, and Israel.

We wish to stress that these important achievements cannot be undone by the decision to honor Ms. Langer, however regrettable. Against the background of Germany's principled solidarity with Israel, and as proud recipients of the Federal Order of Merit of the Federal Republic for our work in advancing American-German-Jewish understanding, we urge you to reconsider the decision to grant this honor to Ms. Langer.

With the expression of our abiding friendship and our highest esteem, we remain,

Respectfully,



David A. Harris
Executive Director

Rabbi Andrew Baker
Director, International
Jewish Affairs

Deidre Berger
Director, Ramer Institute
for German-Jewish
Relations, Berlin

Eugene DuBow
Director Emeritus,
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