

Thousands demonstrate in Berlin in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal

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A demonstration took place February 5 in Berlin in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the US death row political prisoner framed up more than 17 years ago in connection with the shooting death of a Philadelphia police officer. Protesters demanded Abu-Jamal's freedom and an end to the death penalty.

Over 8,000 mainly young participants supported the demonstration in support of Abu-Jamal, a well-known radio journalist and opponent of police brutality and racism. It was the third and largest protest in Germany so far. For four months, a nation-wide campaign for the demonstration took place under the slogan "Stop the execution of Mumia Abu Jamal!—for a new and fair trial!"

A broad alliance of left-wing groups, trade unions and human rights organizations supported the campaign, including the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). The demonstration proceeded from Rosa Luxemburg Square, past the American embassy, to the Gendarmenmarkt in downtown east Berlin. In contrast to the preceding demonstrations, there were no large-scale police attacks. Ten demonstrators were arrested and released.

Numerous speeches called for Abu-Jamal to be given a new trial and for the abolition of the death penalty in America and internationally. In a recorded contribution played on the demonstration, Abu-Jamal called for an international network of resistance, in face of "the global network of forces that exploit and suppress nature and humanity".

The media hardly reported the demonstration and the big circulation dailies gave it no mention at all. Representatives of the Social Democratic/Green Party government were not present. Apart from some PDS deputies, no other parliamentary representatives attended. Nevertheless, the numbers of those

supporting such solidarity actions have increased over past years. Many young people, school pupils, college and university students came from different parts of Europe, including Italy, Denmark, France, Switzerland and Austria.

A reporting team from the *World Socialist Web Site* also took part and distributed a flyer, outlining the political tasks posed in the fight against the death penalty and the attacks on democratic rights. Many demonstrators linked the fight for Abu-Jamal's freedom with wider social questions.

Several meetings had already taken place in advance of the demonstration. On February 4 a joint press conference of Abu-Jamal's lawyer Len Weinglass and Gregor Gysi, the chairman of the parliamentary faction of the Party of Democratic Socialism, took place in Berlin. Both criticized the behavior of the American judiciary and demanded the abolition of the death penalty.



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