

40,000 demonstrate in Germany against Israeli invasion of Gaza

Our reporter
12 January 2009

Some 40,000 people took part in demonstrations in major German cities on Saturday to protest against the Israeli invasion of Gaza. In sub-zero temperatures, 8,000-9,000 protested in Berlin, 3,500 in Nuremberg, and 2,500 in Munich. In the Ruhr city of Duisburg, 10,000 took the streets in the biggest of the German demonstrations.

Placards on the demonstrations raised the demands, “Stop the massacre in Gaza!” and “Stop the war now!” and posed the questions “Can Israel do anything it likes?” and “Who are the terrorists?” Many participants carried photos depicting the horrific injuries inflicted on the victims in Gaza, particularly the children.

In Berlin, demonstrators took the streets of the German capital in freezing weather to protest the Israeli assault. The march through the city was composed of many Arab families, young people, German citizens and members of the city’s Turkish community. The protesters gathered in the centre of Berlin and then marched to the German chancellery and government buildings.

The march was flanked by thousands of police and a thick cordon of police prevented the demonstrators from approaching the vicinity of the German parliament and chancellery. The police had laid down a number of conditions for the demonstration, including the stipulation that no Hamas flags be shown. In the course of the protest, police and so-called “anti-conflict teams” intervened to arrest a number of those taking part.

Notable at the demonstration was the complete absence of German political parties and the trade unions. It was quite clear that organisations such as the Green Party and the Left Party, which had supported similar protests in the past, had made a decision to boycott Saturday’s demonstration.

The reason for the absence of these organisations on Saturday became clear when one participant on the demonstration informed WSWs reporters that leading members of all the city’s political parties—the Social Democratic Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Free Democratic Party, the Greens and the Left Party—were scheduled to address a demonstration called by a series of pro-Israeli organisations for the next day. The pro-Israel rally was organised under the slogan “Support Israel: Operation Cast Lead”—the name of the Israeli military operation in Gaza.

At the Berlin demonstration, a team from the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party, Germany) distributed thousands of copies of the leaflet, *A socialist answer to the Gaza crisis* and spoke with protesters.

Marcel Bartels stated “I am taking part in the demonstration to express my opposition to the mass murder taking place against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. It is entirely correct to draw a parallel with what the Israelis are currently doing in Gaza and the brutal suppression of the Jews carried out by the Nazis in the Warsaw Ghetto. The position of the German government and the chancellor, Frau Merkel, is completely hypocritical when she declares that the Hamas movement bears responsibility for the appalling

violence in Gaza. This is clearly the responsibility of the Israeli government and its international backers, in particular the US.

“The Arab regimes are all doing too little. It is evident that the Egyptian regime of Hosni Mubarak is working closely with Israel, the US and the European governments. Mubarak is fearful of the Muslim Brotherhood in his own country and is quite prepared to accept or even collaborate in the suppression of the Hamas movement.”

Bartels condemned the Left Party for boycotting Saturday’s demonstration, but pointed out that the position of the party came as no surprise to him. He noted that a leading member of the Left Party in Berlin, Klaus Lederer, was scheduled to speak at Sunday’s pro-Israel rally in Berlin.

Petra and her friends also took part in the rally to express their horror at what was happening in Gaza.

“The situation in Gaza is completely intolerable. The Israeli army are herding large numbers of people into so-called “safe houses” and later these houses are bombed. Everybody is wiped out and there are no witnesses to the Israeli atrocities.

“Any attempt to draw Mubarak and the Egyptian government into organising a cease-fire will bring no solution to the killing. I am afraid the situation will last some time ... there is no quick remedy. The only solution is for the complete Israeli withdrawal from their occupation of the region. Israeli politicians always seek to use the tragic history of the Jewish people as an excuse for everything they do. But at some point this has to stop. There were many victims of the Nazis in the Second World War, but that does not give anybody the right to invade and persecute another people.”



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