

ISSE meetings in Germany defend WikiLeaks

Our correspondents
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One week ago the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE) and the *World Socialist Web Site* held meetings in the cities of Darmstadt and Leipzig to discuss the issues arising from the revelations made by WikiLeaks. Both events were attended by around 60 participants, predominantly students.

Following short introductory contributions examining the political importance of the most recent WikiLeaks publications, both meetings opened up for extensive discussion.

In Darmstadt a member of the ISSE, Michael Regens, began his report by discussing

WikiLeaks dispatches that reveal extensive and hitherto unknown war crimes committed by the US-led forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He also addressed the current situation in Tunisia. The reports published by WikiLeaks had shown that the US and all European governments were fully aware of the corrupt nature of the Ben Ali government, which they nevertheless treated as a full partner in the “war on terror.” Regens noted their stance is even more hypocritical now, with leading politicians expressing their support for the Tunisian population in the struggle for democracy.

Regens stressed that the causes for both the global social crisis and the suppression of basic democratic rights have their roots in the capitalist system. The only way to defend these rights is to build a revolutionary party on the basis of a socialist perspective, he said.

In Leipzig, the meeting was opened by ISSE member Christoph Dreier. Dreier stressed the need for an energetic defense of Julian Assange, the head of WikiLeaks, against attempts to persecute him by the US and European governments. Dreier pointed to the warnings made by Assange’s lawyers that he could face the death penalty if he were to be extradited from Britain to Sweden and then to the US.

“Without WikiLeaks no one would know how concretely the US government discussed the prospect of a war against China or Russia with other governments,” Dreier said. “Millions of people have gained important information about the criminal nature of their governments.”

Dreier noted that the uprisings in North Africa make clear

why governments in Europe and the US are so intent on destroying WikiLeaks and silencing Julian Assange. US foreign policy experts have declared that Tunisia was “the first WikiLeaks revolution,” he said.

The Tunisian population had been able to obtain vital information from WikiLeaks and countless videos, coordinated through Facebook, Twitter and other Internet media. Now the US and the European powers would do all in their power to prevent any such reoccurrence.

“The concerted action by governments, corporations, banks and the media against WikiLeaks must be related to the extensive attacks taking place in every country on democratic rights, and must be opposed,” Dreier concluded. He urged all those present to assist in the creation of an action committee and contribute to building a global campaign to defend Assange and WikiLeaks.

Socialist Equality Party member Wolfgang Weber was the main speaker in Leipzig. “The crimes exposed by WikiLeaks are not merely blemishes, ‘errors’ or ‘deviations from the norm’ in the global system, which could then be easily overcome,” he said. “Instead, they are inextricably linked to the ways in which a tiny, incredibly rich, financial global elite maintain their dominance over society. These divisions and the polarization of society are very evident in the United States, but also in Europe, where the euro crisis is being used to dictate brutal austerity programs in one country after another and reverse all of the social reforms of the postwar period. Such policies cannot be carried through under democracy, but instead require police-state measures, and the establishment of authoritarian, dictatorial regimes.”

“The fight to defend democratic rights is therefore only possible on the basis of a political struggle for a fundamental transformation of society according to socialist principles,” Weber continued. “The abolition of the dictatorship of this criminal financial aristocracy and the reorganization of production, trade and other sectors of society according to the interests of the majority and on democratic principles is the only way to remove the causes of war, dictatorship and government repression. Because the ISSE and the PSG [Partei für Soziale Gleichheit—Socialist Equality Party] campaign for this socialist perspective, they are also on the front line in the defense of Assange and WikiLeaks.”

The subsequent discussion was opened by a student who referred to the recent events in Tunisia. “If the rebellion in Tunisia is characterized by confusion, uncertainty, and aimlessness is there not the danger of a political backlash?” the student asked.

Wolfgang Weber replied, “We are entering an era of global rebellions against the ruling elites—uprisings in which the masses will be mobilized by the sort of revelations made by WikiLeaks and strengthened by the technical possibilities of the Internet. What is missing— for reasons bound up with the complex history of the 20th Century—is a clear political leadership and perspective for the masses. This cannot emerge spontaneously from the grass roots nor merely on the basis of technical possibilities. Such leadership can only be provided by the parties of the Fourth International and the ISSE, based on the political analysis, reports, and perspectives published by the *World Socialist Web Site*.”

Another student declared that perhaps it is not necessary to conduct such a broad struggle to transform society. He expressed his hope that the WikiLeaks revelations would lead to more open and honest relations between states.

Christoph Dreier warned that such a standpoint completely underestimates the fierce and murderous determination of American and European governments to defend the present system. They will not rest until WikiLeaks and Assange are silenced. Democratic rights and the unveiling of the criminal activities of governments and the financial elites are absolutely incompatible with their own interests. “Under the current conditions the ruling elite cannot afford transparency and democratic rights, which—as is the case in Tunisia— would directly threaten their power,” Dreier said.

Wolfgang Weber pointed out that the criminal activities of American and European diplomats and governments revealed by WikiLeaks, their war crimes and war discussions, recall the state of affairs in Europe in the first half of last century. In the 1930s Europe was dominated by autocratic or dictatorial regimes embroiled in trade wars and making feverish preparations for a shooting war. “What is driving governments in the EU back to these conditions is the global financial crisis and the bankruptcy of their project aimed at peacefully uniting Europe under capitalist conditions,” he said. “The only realistic policy is to mobilize the working class in Europe and internationally on the basis of an international socialist program to introduce democratic and humane social relations.”

The question was then raised as to how to defend WikiLeaks against manipulation that could be used as a counter-attack on the web site. In reply Christoph Dreier said that a vigorous public campaign was necessary to defend Assange and WikiLeaks in order to prevent such persecution as well as attempts aimed at deflecting attention away from the revelations.

Finally, a member of the audience quoted a well-known journalist who on Internet blogs had declared that, even if Assange were to go to prison and WikiLeaks closed down, the struggle for the freedom of the Internet would be continued by others.

Christoph Dreier warned against any sort of fatalism or apathy regarding the fate of Assange and WikiLeaks, and Weber explained that the journalist’s comments amount to a condemnation of the media as a whole.

“In theory it is the job of German newspapers such as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* or the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and television and radio stations to do the work being done by WikiLeaks—they have the means and possibilities,” Weber said. “But, in fact, they have made no such contribution! *Die Zeit* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* have even sought to justify their negligence by claiming that journalists have the job of filtering information for their readers. In other words, these journalists do not regard their job as informing the public, appealing to the intelligence of their readers and encouraging democracy, but rather, in the manner of a Prussian police commissioner, the suppression of information that could be inconvenient for the government. Almost all the institutions, media and parties who defend the prevailing capitalist system have either expressed their opposition to WikiLeaks or declared their ‘neutrality’.”

This is also the case for the Left Party, Weber pointed out. “Many of you will ask yourself: why is the Left Party so silent on the issue of WikiLeaks? Why in its statement has it distanced itself from WikiLeaks? The answer is simple. WikiLeaks has published documents, which reveal that the party stands fully in line with the political establishment. It has documented the jovial conversation between Left Party Gregor Gysi and the US Ambassador Philip Murphy, who expressed his concerns regarding the Left Party’s call for the dissolution of NATO. Gysi reassured him that the claim had no practical political significance and that the only reason for the inclusion of the demand in the party program was as a sop to NATO opponents inside the party.”

The role of the media and the Left Party, Weber concluded, clearly demonstrate the necessity of conducting a comprehensive political offensive in defense of WikiLeaks together with a thorough analysis of the content and significance of the material published.

Further meetings in defense of WikiLeaks are being held in Berlin, Stuttgart and Munich.



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