

Germany: Demonstration in Bielefeld to support the Arab revolutions

Our reporters
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On Saturday, March 5, over a hundred people assembled in the German city of Bielefeld to express their support for the revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa and protest against the repressive measures undertaken by the Libyan dictator Gaddafi.

A crowd, consisting mainly of young protesters, gathered at the city's central Jahnplatz and unfurled banners that declared, "Solidarity with the Arab democracy movement," "Mass murderer Gaddafi" and "Hands off Gaza."

The protest was organized by individuals who want to express the solidarity of German working people and youth with the mass protests and uprisings in Arab countries. The gathering was publicized only through Facebook and by word-of-mouth. No party or formal group acted as organizer of the rally.

Supporters of the *World Socialist Web Site* distributed leaflets with current articles and conducted discussions with those participating in the protest. It emerged that all of those in attendance were totally opposed to any sort of military intervention by Western powers in Libya.

At the same time, however, there was confusion and disagreement about how to assess the actions of the German government and other imperialist powers. The organizers of the protest had drawn up an open letter to the German foreign minister Guido Westerwelle in which they call upon him to, "Prevent a no-fly zone and any military intervention in Libya" and "Press for the lifting of the state of emergency [in Egypt and Tunisia], the release of all political prisoners and respect for human rights."

In fact in the last few decades German foreign policy

has consistently supported the dictatorships in Arab countries, and it is completely unrealistic to expect any basic change of policy from the current foreign minister.

When WSWs members made this point to one of those who had drawn up the letter, another supporter of this viewpoint declared, "Certainly, Western countries pursue their own interests in Libya, but maybe they now recognize that these dictators are not protecting their interests, and that it is better to work with democracies."

A native of Morocco stressed the need to support the insurgents in Libya in order to stop Gaddafi: "One must prevent him from bombing his own people, but we do not want a military operation from the West. What happened in Libya in recent days is intolerable. We cannot simply look on. We are here to support the insurgents in order to get rid of mass murderer Gaddafi."

Two students told the WSWs, "We are here because we want to draw attention to what's going on in Libya now, and to give moral support to the people there who are fighting against Gaddafi. What can one do here? We are opposed to a military intervention by NATO, or the European or American sides! But we have to get up and show people that we support the movement for freedom and democracy in Arab countries.

"Via the movement in the Arab countries, we hope for greater democracy and an end to persecution. We know of many people who for years were unable to travel to their home countries because prison sentences were awaiting them. In Egypt and elsewhere one was continually threatened with police repression and brutality. We want an end to oppression there and at the

international level and that, as we say in Arabic, nobody continues ‘to sit on the head’ of the Arab people. We require genuine self-determination.

“Social issues are also at stake. We are opposed to all the corruption which begins with the birth certificate and to the fact that the rich are getting richer, and are never prepared to share, or even invest their wealth.”



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