

# University authorities and police seek to prevent Berlin meeting in defense of Günter Grass

**Our correspondent**  
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On Monday, on short notice, the administration at Berlin's Technical University cancelled a meeting called by the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE) under the heading "Defend Günter Grass."

Although the ISSE has held numerous events at the university, on this occasion the administration delayed confirmation of the room booking. Shortly before the planned event, the room booking was cancelled.

The university has still to provide an official explanation. A staff member of the university president, Jörg Steinbach, told an ISSE representative that a decision to approve the event would have to take into account whether it would affect "the relationship with the representatives of the state of Israel"—a clear indication that the university administration was under political pressure to block the event.

When the ISSE moved the event to a café on the campus, the police intervened. Several police officers entered the café and warned the manager about possible "disturbances." The manager then called the café owner, who instructed her to stop the meeting because the university provided many of his customers.

The previous Friday in Frankfurt, pro-Israeli provocateurs had tried unsuccessfully to disrupt a meeting organized by the ISSE on the same topic.

In Berlin, at the time of the meeting there was no sign of anyone who might seek to disrupt the event. Only later, when the participants had already left the café, did a small number of pro-Israeli activists appear. The police were clearly motivated by a determination to prevent the meeting.

Despite this flagrant political censorship, the ISSE

was not deterred from holding the meeting. The proprietor of a nearby café offered the use of his facility.

The 60 participants similarly refused to be intimidated or discouraged by the long delay. They all went to the new venue. This underscores that while the media and the authorities are seeking to suppress any debate on the preparations for war against Iran, there is a great demand in the general population for information and broad opposition to another war in the Middle East.

In his presentation, Wolfgang Weber, a member of the executive committee of the Socialist Equality Party of Germany, documented the advanced state of preparations for war against Iran, about which Günter Grass had warned in his poem "What Needs to be Said." The publication of the poem earlier this month provoked a vicious witch-hunt against the Nobel Prize-winning writer in which most of the establishment press and all of the major political parties attacked Grass as an anti-Semite and even a closet Nazi.

Weber first showed how Iran is surrounded on all sides by land, air and naval forces of hostile powers which are vastly superior to those of Iran. Several US naval units are stationed in the Persian Gulf and off of the Arabian Peninsula. As a proportion of gross domestic product, military spending by Saudi Arabia and Israel places them in third and sixth place worldwide, while Iran is ranked sixtieth.

Unlike Israel, Iran today possesses no nuclear weapons, has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and allows foreign inspectors into the country. In 2007, US intelligence agencies concluded that Iran had halted its nuclear weapons program. Nevertheless,

the US imposed sanctions that have been repeatedly tightened, with ever more severe consequences for the civilian population.

To illuminate the background to the conflict, Weber outlined Iran's recent history. In 1953, the elected government of Mohammad Mossadegh was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup and replaced by the regime of the Shah Pahlavi. The Shah functioned as a US puppet for a quarter of a century, protecting American interests in the country with the third largest oil reserves in the world.

After Pahlavi's overthrow by the revolution of 1979, the regime of the mullahs came to power, which Washington has ever since regarded as a thorn in its side. From 1980 to 1988, the US backed Iraq in its war against Iran, which claimed one million lives.

In order to expose the war propaganda against Iran, Weber listed the arguments used in 2003 to justify the war against Iraq, all of which were lies. They closely track the present agitation against Iran.

The accusation that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction was as groundless as the current charge that Iran will soon possess an atomic bomb, Weber explained. Yet the transparent lie about Iraqi WMD was used to justify an invasion and occupation that claimed 655,000 lives and forced four million to flee.

Weber illustrated the global implications of the Iran conflict with the help of statistics showing that 20 percent of Iran's oil exports go to China, 17 percent to Japan and 16 percent to India. He noted that China, due to its international economic power, has become America's number one enemy. "All regional conflicts, including the Middle East conflict," he said, "must be seen in the context of this global conflict between Beijing and Washington."

Weber then discussed Israel's role in the Middle East conflict. Referring to the history of the persecution of the Jews, Weber said: "The state of Israel has been praised by the Zionists as the response to this. In reality, it has proven to be a trap for all those concerned. Israel is a powder keg marked by extreme social inequality.

"It is a deeply divided country, in which the standard of living has fallen for 25 years and social inequality has increased. Some 25 percent of pensioners and 40 percent of all children live in poverty, and another 30 percent of children are at risk of poverty. Every year,

there are 50,000 abortions due to financial hardship."

Last summer saw the largest social protests in Israel's history, said Weber. Like all wars, the war agitation against Iran is being used to distract the Israeli public from internal social tensions.

Finally, Weber discussed Germany's role in the Middle East conflict. He noted that since German soldiers participated in military action for the first time since World War Two under Green Party Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in 1998, German troops have been regularly deployed in international military operations. It was unlikely that Germany would stay out of a war in the Middle East for tactical reasons, as it did in Libya.

This, Weber continued, is underscored by the hysterical media response to Grass's poem. The poet merely said that Israel was preparing a war which threatens world peace and that Germany was supplying it with weapons for this purpose. That these conclusions provoked such a barrage of slander against Grass shows that the preparations for German military participation are far advanced.

In conclusion, Weber stressed that the working class had to be mobilized against the warmongers in Washington, Berlin and Tel Aviv. The Arab and Jewish working masses had to be united in the fight for the United Socialist States of the Middle East, and the working class of Europe in the fight for the United Socialist States of Europe.



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