

Germany's ISSE, SEP denounce attacks on meetings in defence of Günter Grass

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The International Students for Social Equality has issued a statement to the German press about the attacks on the meetings in Defence of Günter Grass organised by the ISSE and the Socialist Equality Party. Below, we reproduce the full text of the press release.

In the past week, three meetings held by the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE) in Frankfurt, Berlin and Leipzig were attacked by right-wing provocateurs. The ISSE is the student organisation of the Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit—PSG), and together they organised meetings to oppose the recent attacks on the writer Günter Grass.

Grass has been subjected to a vicious wave of abuse since stating in his poem “What must be said” the incontrovertible fact that nuclear-armed Israel is preparing a war against Iran. The 84-year-old Nobel laureate, whose literary work has continually confronted Germany’s Nazi past, has been defamed as an anti-Semite by respectable German newspapers such as *Die Zeit* and *FAZ*. No accusation is seen as too outrageous, no insult too depraved to be used against him.

The ISSE evaluated the attacks on Grass as an attempt to intimidate any opposition to another war in the Middle East. When the most famous living German writer can be dragged through the mud in such a manner, then less well-known opponents of war can expect similar treatment.

By seeking to encourage a public discussion on these issues, the ISSE itself became the target for violent assaults. Right-wing provocateurs sought to disrupt our meetings, and in so doing worked in league with government agencies and academic institutions.

- On Friday, April 20, a group of provocateurs with Israeli and US flags tried to enter a meeting of the ISSE

in Frankfurt-Main. After being prevented from doing so, they occupied the entrance and threatened and harassed those seeking to attend the meeting, until they were asked to leave by police.

In an anonymous post on the Indymedia web site, the provocateurs boasted of their action and announced new attacks on events planned by the ISSE in Berlin and Leipzig.

Those who attacked the meetings come from the milieu of the so-called “anti-Germans.” This Islamophobic group seeks to discredit any criticism of the policies of the Israeli government by branding critics as anti-Semites. The group supported the 2003 war against Iraq and even praised the February 1945 bombing of Dresden.

- On Monday, April 23, the administration of the Technical University in Berlin cancelled a meeting room for the ISSE on short notice. According to an employee of the university administration, one of the factors leading to this decision was “relations with representatives of the Israeli state”. When the PSG organised an alternative venue, the police intervened and exerted pressure on the landlord to cancel the booking at the last minute. The meeting finally went ahead only after the participants switched the venue to a nearby cafe.

- On Tuesday, April 24, several dozen right-wing troublemakers sought to invade the ISSE meeting at the University of Leipzig. They denounced Grass, harassed stewards and threatened a leading representative of the PSG with an ice pick (the weapon used to murder Leon Trotsky). When they were denied admission, they blocked the entrance to the meeting room and then conducted their own rally in the corridor complete with megaphone and Israeli flags.

Instead of demanding that the provocateurs immediately cease their unauthorised meeting, Marcel

Wodniock, on behalf of the student council, demanded that the ISSE allow the troublemakers to enter its meeting. Not only would this have made continuing the meeting impossible, it would have also put the physical safety of participants at risk, given that the group outside the meeting had already demonstrated its readiness to use violence. When the ISSE refused to comply, Wodniock claimed he had the right to close down the meeting.

The ISSE and the PSG will not tolerate these attacks on their meetings. They represent a fundamental assault on freedom of expression and assembly. Right-wing provocateurs, in collaboration with university and state authorities, cannot be allowed to determine what political issues can and cannot be publicly discussed.

The ISSE calls for public support and will continue its campaign in defence of Günter Grass and for the prevention of a war against Iran.



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