

Demonstrations in Germany against Syria war drive

Our correspondents
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Demonstrations against plans by the US and its allies for war against Syria were held in a number of German cities last Friday. Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to participants at two of the protests.

The “Duisburg Network Against Right-wing Extremism” had called for a demonstration in Duisburg. About 200 people, mostly of Kurdish origin, gathered at the city’s central railway station and marched through the city centre.

Gamze, a student at the university in Essen, spoke out against the impending war on Syria and expressed her disgust over widespread pro-war propaganda being pumped out by the media.

“I don’t want to absolutely equate it with fascism, but what we’re getting from the newspapers and television news broadcasts reminds me of Germany’s worst days, of the Nazis,” she said. After all the wars of the last few years, it was clear to Gamze that it was all about “geostrategic interests. Now it’s Syria’s turn. Next comes Iran and eventually Russia and China.”

Unlike in Tunisia and Egypt, where the revolutions were supported by the population, Gamze declared that the rebellion in Syria was sustained by the stooges of imperialism from the very beginning. “You can think what you like about Assad,” she said, “but the so-called rebels are mainly Islamist terrorists from the al-Nusra Front. And those forces are being supported by Turkey and the United States.”

Many Kurdish demonstrators recalled the massacre committed by the al-Nusra Front in Rojava, part of Syrian Kurdistan. “More than 50 people, including many women and children, were brutally murdered,” said Gamze. She is disappointed with the political organisations in Germany. “At the time of the Vietnam War, everyone took to the streets and called the war what it was: an imperialist crime”, she said.

Gamze’s friend Omed, a college student from Afghanistan, added, “The entire so-called left has completely failed in the struggle against the war. [Left Party chairperson Katja] Kipping and [her deputy Jan] Van Aken signed in support of the ‘Adopt a Revolution’ initiative last year.” Omed was referring to the appeal entitled “Syria: Freedom needs assistance”, which calls for intervention in Syria and was endorsed by the signatures of leading Social Democratic Party (SPD), Green Party and Christian Democratic Union (CDU) politicians.

Omed believed the US was intervening now only because the opposition forces have become weaker. “They completely disregard the national sovereignty and human rights that they claim to support,” he said.

Halil, an elderly Kurd, reported that he had been in Turkey three weeks ago, right on the Syrian border. “The Turkish government is arming the Islamists,” he said.

Rojin, who took part in the demonstration with her friends, feared the war might expand into a third world war. The US was putting a match to a powder keg. “The war against Syria is actually directed against Russia and China,” she said. If the Kurdish peace process is also stymied, it could lead to a conflagration.” It would be like the well-known domino effect,” she said.

Katharina, an older worker, asked, “Where are all the others? Where are the trade unions, the political parties and the churches?” She too was appalled by the news coverage. “That they can’t come up with anything else! So now it’s poison gas. And now there has to be war?” she said, adding, “As though a war will save lives.”

But she was mainly angry about the hypocrisy of the federal government. “Germany is the third largest arms exporter and sends weapons to war zones,” she said.

“That brings in a lot of money. And when everything is destroyed and has to be built up again, a lot of money is made in the reconstruction. And there’s nothing for the victims of war; that’s when we’re invited to make donations. But that’s just brainwashing the population.”

Baathist groups and Assad followers organised a demonstration outside the US embassy in Berlin. But there were also those present who had no sympathy for the Assad regime but wanted to express their hostility to any military intervention.

A young protester said he and his girlfriend had come to speak out against the imperialist policies of the Western countries. “You can’t fight war with war,” he said. “The whole thing was planned. There were definite political motives behind the current war.”

He criticised the German government for backing the war plans. “It’s well known that the German and the American governments have a special relationship,” he said. “The Germans generally do whatever the US government says. One wouldn’t expect them, especially now, to turn against the American government.”

He is sceptical about the possibility of another government changing the current political course. “We’ve seen how hardly anything changed, when other parties came to power,” he pointed out. “Maybe there’ll be a change, when it’s the turn of parties that haven’t yet had a chance to rule. But that probably won’t happen. There is a state within the state.”

Nena, a high school student of Indian origin, and her friend from Turkey asked about the background to the war. “The media reports are totally different from what my friends from the Middle East tell me,” she said. “They say the rebels get no support at all from the population. The whole media campaign promoting the rebels is really disconcerting.” Nena’s girlfriend said not only Syria was affected, but that other countries would also be drawn into the conflict.

“We’re definitely against military intervention in Syria”, said another female student who was at the rally with a friend. “Intervention will have the same consequences as in Libya—thousands of deaths. It’ll be claimed that we’ll be defending democratic values there, but there’ll be nothing of the kind when it’s all over. Conditions in the country will more likely be worse”.

One of the students said that to stop the war no more weapons should be produced and exported there. “We need a humane world view,” she said. “Countries should be helped with food, medicine and education initiatives, so that justice and equality have a chance to grow in their societies. But of course it’s difficult to stand up for values in other countries, when those values are being disregarded at the international level.”



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