Germany: Official backing for Zionist crimes at pro-Israel rally in Frankfurt

Marianne Arens
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On August 31 a pro-Israel rally was held at the Römerberg (the city's central square) in Frankfurt, Germany. Under the slogan "Anti-Semitism, Never Again" high-ranking German politicians proclaimed their unconditional support for the Israeli state and denounced anyone criticizing the war crimes committed by the Israeli army against the Palestinians in Gaza as "anti-Semites."

The event had been announced as a "nationwide mass rally" and is due to be repeated in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) and the president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Dieter Graumann, are scheduled to speak at the Berlin rally.

The appeal "Raise your voice: Anti-Semitism, Never Again," published by the German newspaper *Bild*, underlines the bourgeois and official nature of the campaign. Among the first signatories are President Joachim Gauck, Chancellor Merkel, government ministers Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Ursula von der Leyen, Sigmar Gabriel, Heiko Maas, Thomas de Maizière and Andrea Nahles, DGB (German trade union federation) chairman Reiner Hoffmann, Greens chairman Cem Özdemir, FDP (Free Democratic Party) chairman Christian Lindner, industry bosses Jürgen Fitschen (Deutsche Bank), Frank Appel (German Postal Service), Martin Winterkorn (Volkswagen), Thomas Enders (Airbus Group), Rüdiger Grube (German Rail), Ines Pohl (*taz* newspaper) and many others.

Gregor Gysi, chairman of the Left Party, also signed the *Bild*'s appeal. Although the Hessian Left Party did not officially appear at the rally, the party backs the state of Israel's right of existence, and leading representatives, such as Berlin chairman Klaus Lederer, publicly support Israel's war in Gaza.

The event's organizer was Sacha Stawski of Honestly Concerned and I Like Israel. Stawski is also the initiator of the German Israel Congress and describes Israel as "the only democracy in the Middle East." Although sponsored buses brought participants from many German cities, total attendance at the rally was only 1,500.

Kurdish and Yazidi organizations also participated. Just prior to the rally the German government had promised the delivery of arms to Kurdish fighters in northern Iraq. These groups then mobilized their members on short notice. Besides FDP and American flags, many banners and flags of the northern Iraqi Kurds and the Star of David were seen at the rally.

In order to justify the war in Gaza, Hamas and ISIS were constantly equated in speeches and on banners. One said: "IS=terror; HAMAS=terror; Israel wants peace." In Frankfurt politicians of the CDU, SPD and Greens even went so far to pray with representatives of Israel for its army, the IDF (Israel Defense Force): one item on the rally's agenda was a "Prayer for Israel and the IDF."

Along with Frankfurt's Mayor Peter Feldmann (SPD), CDU City Treasurer Uwe Becker and Israeli ambassador Yakov Hadas-Handelsman, many other representatives of the SPD and Greens spoke at the rally. They spoke of tolerance and the protection of minorities without addressing a word to the fate of Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories. They denounced anti-Semitism but were silent on the role of the fascists and anti-Semites in Kiev's government, which has the full support of Germany's political parties.

The speakers exaggerated anti-Semitic incidents that had occurred in Germany in recent weeks, in order to use them as a pretext for a full defense of the policies of the Netanyahu government. They equated anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism in a stereotyped way to label all critics of Israel as "anti-Semites."

Several speakers emphasized this quite openly: Reinhold Robbe (SPD), who is the President of the German-Israeli Society and a former military commissioner to the German Parliament, claimed: "The hate preachers today are not stupid. They rail against Zionism, but they are talking about 'Jews.'" The Green Party's Bundestag representative Volker Beck said, anti-Zionism was "the form in which today's anti-Semitism emerges."

This is a deliberate falsification. In reality the vast majority of people protesting in recent weeks were protesting against the war in Gaza and held rallies against Israeli war crimes and the massacre in Gaza, not against "the Jews."

Jewish opponents of anti-Semitism also attended the anti-Israel protests. Three-hundred-fifty Holocaust survivors signed an open letter in the *New York Times* that denounced "the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza and the ongoing occupation and colonization of historic Palestine."

In Frankfurt the group "Jewish Voice" opposed the equation drawn between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. In a leaflet the group wrote: "Those who protest against Israel's brutal actions in Gaza, are not necessarily anti-Semites (Under these conditions…) The protest against anti-Semitism is self-evident, and also superfluous…But we are not willing to show solidarity with an Israel which violates human rights and international law."

The speakers' denunciation of any criticism of Israel as "anti-Semitic" was most brazenly expressed by journalist Matthias Küntzel. He constructed a direct connection from Adolf Hitler to Hamas. "If we look to the Middle East," he declared, "we see that a central element of the Nazi ideology has been preserved: The irrepressible desire to destroy the Jews and their state."

Without mentioning the occupation of Palestinian land and the forcible expulsion of the Palestinians at Israel's founding, Küntzel said that after 1945 "the waves of anti-Semitic hatred spread

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spontaneously in the Arab world."

Küntzel is a political scientist and member of the German Council on Foreign Relations, a think-tank founded by banker Hermann Josef Abs in order to influence Germany's foreign and security policy. He started his political career as a research associate for the Greens in the parliament. Previously he was a member of the (Stalinist) Communist League (KB), and when it split he became an editor for the magazine *Bahamas*, which is regarded as the theoretical organ of the so-called "anti-Germans."

Küntzel is a typical representative of a trend influenced by the ideas of the Frankfurt School, which he developed in an extreme form. The Frankfurt School portrayed fascism as ultimately a consequence of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. They claimed that industrial progress and the capitalist division of labor had transformed the working population into a stultified and subservient mass, unable to engage in revolution. Some "anti-Germans" concluded that the German working class was latently fascistic and responsible for the Holocaust.

After the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s most representatives of this pseudo-left tendency assembled around the Greens and later shifted to the far right. It was Küntzel who hosted a conference on behalf of the Green Party-affiliated Heinrich Böll Foundation in 1999 to defend Daniel Goldhagen, the American academic who denounced all "ordinary Germans" as "Hitler's willing executioners." After 9/11 Küntzel supported the war against "Islamist terrorism" and in 2012 he was one of the leading agitators against the German author Günter Grass, who had dared to publish a poem warning against the nuclear threat to Iran from Israel.

Until recently the "Anti-Germans" have claimed to be "left," but in reality they defend US imperialism and its "civilizing mission." In Frankfurt they were represented in the form of an "Antifa (anti-fascist) group," which functions as a militant defender of Israel. "Antifa Ostend" demands online included, "to defend Israel as a shelter for Jews against all those seeking to destroy them, regardless of the political-military situation in the Middle East."

At the rally they carried a banner with the insignia of the Israeli army and the slogan: "There is no anti-Zionism without anti-Semitism." This statement contains the essence of reactionary ideology directed against the interests of the working class and the oppressed masses in the Middle East.

Since its founding at the end of the 19th century Zionism has represented a nationalist ideology consciously directed against a socialist perspective for the working class. Zionism flourished after the betrayals of Stalinism assisted the Nazis to take power in Germany. When the state of Israel was founded as an outpost of Western imperialism after the Second World War, Zionism provided the ideological basis for the expulsion of the Palestinians from their land. The Stalinist Soviet Union was the first state to officially recognize Israel.

The military history and Israel's current deep crisis confirm that Zionism is as hostile to Jewish working people and their living conditions as to the Arab masses. Israel is divided by an unusually high degree of social inequality, and in the summer of 2011, following the Arab Spring, Israel witnessed social protests that persisted for months. The recent war in Gaza, the cost of which will be paid by the working population, reinforces the country's social problems and will force the Israeli population into struggle.

Zionism is incapable of opposing anti-Semitism, and in fact feeds upon it. It is based on the capitalist system that ultimately led to the Holocaust. Zionism has produced ultra-right-wing tendencies, such as the settler movement and the neo-fascist Kahane group, which have much in common with the ideology of National Socialism. This also applies to a number of current government politicians.

The Deputy Knesset Speaker Moshe Feiglin (Likud party), for example, expressly calls for the military destruction and annexation of Gaza, for the complete expulsion of the Arab population and the establishment of concentration camps.

The Israeli Major General Giora Eiland wrote on Israel-News: "Something like innocent civilians do not exist in Gaza…You have to close the gates, goods should not be let in, also no food, and gas and electricity has to be cut off." State Secretary Avigdor Lieberman (Beitenu) has even demanded ethnic cleansing in Israel and the expulsion of the Israeli Arabs.

Israel's war in Gaza was not only conducted against Hamas' military bases, but primarily against the livelihoods of the Palestinian population. In recent weeks more than 2,000 Palestinians, including 500 children, were killed in Gaza. Housing blocks, hospitals, nursing homes and UN shelters were laid in ruins, and the entire infrastructure, including water, electricity, gas, roads and transport routes, was destroyed.

By presenting these crimes against the Palestinians as a necessary byproduct of defending Israel, the politicians at the rally in Frankfurt also made clear that they are prepared to accept similar crimes and attacks on the working class in Germany in defense of the state.

A lasting solution in the Middle East can only be achieved if the pressing social issues are resolved, which affect both the Arab and the Israeli population in the region. Neither the terror of the Israeli government nor the bourgeois nationalism of Hamas offer any perspective. The two-state solution is no answer in the age of globalization, since the global crisis will not allow a healthy development of a mini-state that remains under the thumb of Israel.

In 1934, long before the establishment of the state of Israel, revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky explained in an interview: "Both the Fascist State in Germany, as well as the Arabian Jewish struggle bring forth new and very clear verifications of the principles that the Jewish question cannot be served within the framework of capitalism. I do not know whether Jewry will be built up again as a nation. However, there can be no doubt that the material conditions for the existence of Jewry as an independent nation could be brought about only by the proletarian revolution. There is no such a thing on our planet as the idea that one has more claim to land than another."

Only the International Committee of the Fourth International presents a practical solution for the Middle East: Israeli workers must unite with the Arab masses and take up the fight for the United Socialist States of the Middle East.

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