

Campaign for 2015 International May Day Online Rally

German workers, students express opposition to war

Our correspondents
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Hundreds of workers in over 60 countries have registered to take part in the International May Day Online Rally 2015, sponsored by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), being held on May 3 at 2:00pm US Eastern Standard Time at internationalmayday.org.

The rally, also sponsored by the WSWs and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), will “give voice to the workers of the world, the hundreds of millions of people looking for a way to stop the recklessness and criminality of the corporate and financial elite.”

The May Day online rally will bring together workers in all countries on the basis of a socialist perspective to unite the struggle against war together with the struggle against the attacks on social and democratic rights.

Supporters of the Socialist Equality Party (Germany) have promoted International May Day at numerous workplaces and universities throughout Germany. Workers and students have responded positively and spoken about their experiences and the necessity of a struggle against war.

Campaigners encountered great interest in the May Day rally at Goethe University Frankfurt.

Marina, a 23-year-old student, stood in front of the poster “No more war!” and said “What a crazy thing, isn't it? They have money for the military and armed drones, but they are indifferent to what happens to the refugees in the Mediterranean whom they allow to drown.”

She agreed that the majority of the population does not want war and said, “If democracy really ruled in Germany, it would go differently. But what kind of democracy is there here? It seems more like a

conspiracy to me.”

Students from Ukraine stopped to talk with SEP supporters to voice their opposition to war. One of them said, “If there is a war again, then the Ukrainian people will be the first affected. I wish you a lot of luck for your campaign against war.”

Florian, a physics student, expressed interest in the fight by the IYSSE at Humboldt University in Berlin against the downplaying and revision of the role of the Wehrmacht in the Second World War. “That is really interesting,” said Florian. “Right-wing tendencies are also asserting themselves at Frankfurt University.” He said that he studies economics, and the study of Marx was recently removed from the study course. “A year ago it was still part of what we studied, but this year Marx is not discussed.” Some students had protested against that and asked for the reasons, but they had only received the answer that Marx is “not relevant anymore.”

Florian also finds the struggle against war to be very important and said, “The preparations for war are coming to a head, but this is not discussed with the public. I will definitely watch the campaign.”

Campaigners also intervened at the Berlin teaching hospital, Charité, where employees are currently on strike demanding more personnel and better working conditions, as the pressure on workers has increased substantially in the past few years. “We have already been fighting for over two years for an improvement in the personnel situation. Up till now, nothing has happened. Instead, the situation has gotten even worse,” said a nurse at Virchow Klinikum, who was at a demonstration with hundreds of his coworkers on Tuesday.

The 22-year-old nurse intern Kevin came to the demonstration because of intolerable working conditions. “All employees constantly do overtime and receive no relief hours in exchange,” he said. “Temporary relief workers are forbidden because of the situation with the budget. Many coworkers have to do double shifts if others call in sick.”

Peter, a 61-year-old nurse in oncology, reacted enthusiastically to the prospect of an online May Day rally to bring together workers in all countries around the world to fight against the attacks on social conditions. He sees a direct connection between the attacks on social conditions in southern Europe and the working conditions at the Charité.

“The Charité has tried to recruit Greek and Spanish nurses made unemployed because of austerity measures. The lack of jobs in these countries is being used to put pressure on wages here. But even Spanish workers have returned home because they find the working conditions here intolerable,” he said.

Florian, a medical student who came to the demonstration, spoke in favor of solidarity with the Greek workers. “I think it is terrible that in Greece the chronically ill, cancer patients and children no longer receive proper medical care. That is what is really sick.”

Workers talked about the issue of war, placing it in the context of their social demands. “I also see that the state wants to put more money into the military. But supposedly no money is there to improve the care for the sick,” said an assistant doctor from Freiburg who was visiting Berlin and spontaneously attended the demonstration.

“Every war is one too many,” said the 55-year-old nurse Veronika. “In the end it is always only about money, natural resources and power. That is the only thing. The well-being of the people that we work for every day plays no role.”

Afta, who was observing the hospital employees’ demonstrations, came to Germany from Pakistan in 2005 and is vehemently opposed to war. “The US has led a war in Afghanistan in the past 14 years and today the situation is much worse than before the war,” he said.

“The US is also carrying out a war in Pakistan. It is killing masses of people with drones. If someone is suspected as a terrorist, he has to be taken into custody

and go before a court. But they are simply shooting people without any proof. And no one in Europe is saying anything.”

After he had read through the announcement of the May Day rally, Afta decided to attend and took fliers to distribute.

Anyone in Germany who is interested can take part in the rally, free of cost, in public listening sessions in Berlin, Leipzig, Frankfurt on Main and Bochum.



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