

IYSSE motion to Humboldt University student parliament in defense of “Münkler-Watch”

Our reporters
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Humboldt University in Berlin has placed a motion defending the right to free expression on the agenda of the student parliament, which is due to discuss the motion at its meeting on Thursday.

The background to the motion is a ferocious campaign being carried out by university officials and the press against students associated with the blog “Münkler-Watch,” which has regularly reported on lectures given by Humboldt political scientist Herfried Münkler. In the blog, students have criticized Münkler’s advocacy of militarism. Along with “Münkler-Watch,” the IYSSE has come under attack for opposing the propagation of militarism at the university.

“We are talking about a very basic question,” said Sven Wurm, an IYSSE member recently elected to the student parliament. “The university should be a center for critical debate and should not be subordinated to the foreign policy objectives of the federal government. There is an attempt to silence ‘Münkler-Watch’ and intimidate anyone at the university critical of war and militarism.”

“Münkler-Watch” and the IYSSE have been the target of a vicious smear campaign in recent weeks. All of Germany’s major newspapers have pounced upon the students and attacked the right to freedom of expression. Professor Münkler went so far as to compare critical students with Nazis. The university president, Jan-Hendrik Olbertz, has backed the campaign and attacked the students.

“With this resolution,” Sven said, “we are addressing not only the Humboldt University student parliament, but all students, student councils and groups of students

throughout Germany who are seeking to oppose the assault on democratic rights. We are determined to prevent a precedent at Humboldt for the suppression of students with critical opinions.”

The IYSSE motion reads as follows:

This student parliament rejects the violent attacks launched by the media and some teachers at our university against “Münkler-Watch.” The students concerned have merely documented and criticised the political and academic positions of a professor. This is entirely in keeping with the principles of a university dedicated to critical scholarship. Freedom of expression is a basic legal right.

This applies equally to anonymous criticism. On 23 June 2009, the Federal Court ruled that “the obligation to identify oneself with regard to a particular opinion” is not consistent with the Basic Law. Such an obligation would carry “the danger of individuals refraining from expressing their opinions due to fear of reprisals or other negative consequences.”

There are good reasons for the choice of anonymity by the students behind “Münkler-Watch.” The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Humboldt University, which has publicly advanced criticisms of Humboldt professors Herfried Münkler and Jörg Baberowski, has been subjected to direct attacks in the form of comments posted on the public web site of the university.

The student parliament calls upon the university administration to immediately cease all forms of censorship and intimidation of critical students and political groups at Humboldt University. The censorial comments directed against “Münkler-Watch” and the IYSSE must be removed from the university web site. Freedom of expression is essential for the free conduct of scholarship and teaching.

The meeting of the student parliament is public and takes place at the university on June 11, 2015 at 18:30. The IYSSE is currently disseminating the resolution among students and requesting that as many as possible attend the meeting.



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