

Germany arrests Al Jazeera journalist on warrant issued by Egyptian junta

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In an unprecedented move, the German government on Saturday detained senior Al Jazeera journalist Ahmed Mansour on the basis of an arrest warrant issued by the bloody regime of Egyptian military strongman Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Mansour was arrested at Tegel airport in Berlin. He was taken from court to prison in the Moabit district on Sunday, according to Berlin court spokesman Martin Steltner. “Today’s meeting was about formalities,” Steltner said, adding that “next week there will be an assessment regarding the validity of the warrant.”

On Monday, German courts will begin examining a request from the Sisi regime to extradite Mansour to Cairo, according to Mansour’s lawyer, Fazli Altin. Mansour, a dual British-Egyptian national, is receiving consular advice from British authorities.

“This case has clearly taken on a political dimension, and there are currently lots of background talks and various consulates are also involved,” said Patrick Teubner, a second lawyer for Mansour.

By honoring an arrest warrant issued by the Sisi junta, which has shot thousands in the streets of Egypt after launching a coup two years ago against Islamist President Mohamed Mursi, Berlin is endorsing the Egyptian junta and its frame-ups of journalists. It is a naked assault on freedom of the press and fundamental democratic rights.

This persecution of a journalist at the behest of a blood-soaked regime comes only months after German Chancellor Angela Merkel marched with other European leaders in Paris and proclaimed their devotion to freedom of the press and the rights of journalists following the attack on the anti-Islamic, racist French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*.

Dozens of protesters, including many Egyptians, gathered outside the Berlin court yesterday to protest

Mansour’s arrest.

Last year, Egyptian courts imprisoned three journalists from Al Jazeera, a news channel based in Qatar, whose government is aligned with Mursi’s Muslim Brotherhood (MB). The journalists were jailed on charges of acting to discredit the Sisi junta.

Correspondent Peter Greste, Cairo Bureau Chief Mohamed Fahmy, and news producer Baher Mohamed received prison terms of seven to ten years, though prosecutors provided no probative evidence against them. Prosecution witnesses contradicted prosecutors’ claims and suggested they had tampered with evidence. The trial attracted international condemnation and Cairo ultimately released Greste in February.

So noxious is the stench of criminality and blood that hangs over the Sisi junta, the international police agency Interpol refused to honor its request last year for a warrant against Mansour. In October, Interpol declared that the Sisi junta’s warrant request against Mansour “did not meet Interpol’s rules.”

In a statement issued Saturday, Mansour declared, “I informed [the German police] that the global police organization has rejected Egypt’s request and that I have this document from Interpol to prove that I am not wanted in any charge. I also told them that all the cases that were filed against me in Egypt were fabricated. They, however, insisted on holding me in their detention center for investigation. They told me that they will transfer me to face an investigating judge, who will determine my case.”

The accusations against Mansour are manifestly as baseless as those against Greste, Fahmy and Mohamed. Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelattie told the Associated Press that Egyptian judicial authorities, including the chief prosecutor in Cairo, were in contact with German authorities and are still trying to decide

what charges to bring against Mansour. However, they apparently include claims that Mansour “harmed the reputation of Egypt massively” by his coverage, and that he tortured an unidentified lawyer during mass protests in 2011.

“It’s unacceptable for freedom of the press and embarrassing for Germany that Mansour is being held here on these clearly political allegations,” said Mansour’s lawyer, Altin.

The German government’s decision to act on politically-tainted allegations is an infamous act. Its arrest of a journalist—based on accusations of harming the reputation of a junta that massacres unarmed protesters and tortures thousands of political prisoners—amounts to outright censorship. If Mansour is deported to Egypt, he will undoubtedly face a long prison term, or even a death sentence.

Media organizations denounced the jailing of Mansour. Reporters Without Borders issued a statement calling the detention “Egypt’s terrible revenge against journalists that cross the regime,” and warning that if Berlin decides to extradite Mansour, “it will be putting itself at the service of a dictatorial regime and will dishonor itself.”

Al Jazeera Acting Director General Mostefa Souag declared, “The crackdown on journalists by Egyptian authorities is well known. Our network, as the Arab world’s most watched, has taken the brunt of this. Other countries must not allow themselves to be tools of this media oppression, least of all those that respect freedom of the media as does Germany.”

Like Washington, the European financial aristocracy supports the Sisi junta, which they see as the only force capable of suppressing the revolutionary struggles of the Egyptian working class that broke out in 2011. Earlier this month, Sisi traveled to Berlin, where he was showered with honors and tens of billions of euros in defense contracts and business deals. (See: Al-Sisi in Berlin: Red carpet for the hangman of Cairo) He was similarly received in earlier visits to Paris and Rome.

The arrest of Mansour marks, nonetheless, an escalation in the brazenness of the European Union (EU) powers’ support for the Sisi regime.

It is a calculated signal sent by Berlin that it is ready to publicly collaborate with repressive measures by military dictatorships taken, as in Egypt, to muzzle the press and crush opposition in the working class—despite

popular opposition in Europe itself.

One of the intended recipients of this message is doubtless the Greek premier, Alexis Tsipras. He is currently seeking to renegotiate austerity measures demanded by Berlin and the EU, which are threatening to cut off credit to Greece and drive it into bankruptcy, though at the risk of provoking a new global financial meltdown and the possible disintegration of the EU itself.

Greece was ruled from 1967 to 1974 by the junta of the colonels, which came to power in a CIA-backed coup and employed mass torture and murder to suppress popular opposition.

If Berlin is capable of working so openly with the Egyptian junta, it will have no difficulty making arrangements with a new Greek military junta imposed to enforce austerity on the working class. Tsipras can see what his intended fate would be in such a scenario by looking south across the Mediterranean to Egypt, where Mursi is in jail on trumped-up charges, facing multiple death sentences.



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