

German vice chancellor praises the hangman of Cairo

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“In my opinion you have an impressive president,” said the German economics minister, vice chancellor and Social Democratic Party (SPD) chairman, Sigmar Gabriel, in reference to the Egyptian despot Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Gabriel made the remark during a press conference last Sunday in the Egyptian capital of Cairo.

This single sentence says a great deal about the character of the SPD. With this quote, Gabriel places himself directly in the tradition of Gustav Noske, who, as the first social democratic defence minister, declared during the 1918 November Revolution in Germany, “As far as I’m concerned, someone has to be the bloodhound! I will not shirk the responsibility!”

Noske drowned the workers’ uprising at the end of the First World War in blood, in the process overseeing the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has written, al-Sisi is on an equal footing with General Augusto Pinochet, the leader of the Chilean military junta, under whose rule between 1973 and 1990 tens of thousands were imprisoned, tortured and murdered.

The former head of military intelligence under Mubarak, trained in the United States, al-Sisi is the absolute ruler of one of the most brutal dictatorships in the world and the gravedigger of the Egyptian revolution. Since July 3, 2013, when al-Sisi seized power following mass protests against the Islamist President Mohamed Mursi, all opponents of the regime have faced the possibility of being murdered at the hands of al-Sisi’s security forces or being arrested and tortured.

According to Amnesty International, just in the first two years under al-Sisi, 41,000 people have disappeared into the country’s torture chambers. Thousands were shot during the suppression of protests and strikes or sentenced to death. Freedom of the press

doesn’t exist even on paper in al-Sisi’s Egypt. Parties and organizations that merely criticize the regime are proscribed by the dozens.

In June 2015, when the German government rolled out the red carpet for the hangman of Cairo in Berlin, the *World Socialist Web Site* put together a partial timeline of the bloodiest crimes of al-Sisi’s military junta:

- * July 8, 2013: Egyptian security forces shoot 53 Mursi supporters in front of the building of the Republican Guard in Cairo.

- * August 14, 2013: The army and police storm two camps of anti-putsch protestors and kill more than 1,000 people, among them many women and children. Humans Rights Watch identifies the “massacre” as the “worst incident of illegal mass killing in the modern history of Egypt.”

- * January 25, 2014: On the third anniversary of the Egyptian Revolution, military and security forces kill more than 100 opponents of the regime during demonstrations.

- * March 24, 2014: On a single day of hearings in the largest mass trial in Egyptian history, 529 people are sentenced to death.

- * April 28, 2014: In another mass trial, 683 more people are sentenced to death in less than 15 minutes.

- * May 15, 2015: Mursi himself and more than 100 other co-defendants are sentenced to death.

- * May 16, 2015: Six of those convicted are hanged. Amnesty International strongly condemns the trial and points out that the confessions of the accused were extracted under torture.

Since then, the state terror has only increased. Just weeks before Gabriel’s visit, the terrible news of the brutal torture and murder of Italian student Giulio Regeni on the fifth anniversary of the Egyptian

revolution provoked outraged protests worldwide.

There are strong indications that al-Sisi himself was involved in the murder. Relying on an anonymous source in the Egyptian security apparatus, the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* reported that Regeni's transfer to military intelligence was decided by Interior Minister Gen. Abdel Ghaffar together with al-Sisi's adviser general, Ahmad Jamal ad-Din. In a subsequent conversation, which concerned Regeni's corpse, al-Sisi was revealed to have been present.

On the weekend of Gabriel's visit, Egyptian security forces put down protests against al-Sisi's reign of terror in Cairo, Gizeh and Ismailia, among other locations. According to media reports, large quantities of tear gas were used against demonstrators and at least 119 were arrested.

The protests were ignited by the handing over of two strategically important islands in the Red Sea, Tiran and Sanafir, to Saudi Arabia. Tens of thousands took to the streets throughout the country and chanted the slogan used during mass protests in 2011 against al-Sisi's predecessor, the long-standing dictator and vice-regent of the West, Hosni Mubarak: "The people want the downfall of the regime."

Gabriel's embrace of the counterrevolutionary al-Sisi regime was so blatant and obvious that even some German politicians chose to criticize it. Green Party Chairman Cem Özdemir asked on broadcaster ARD's morning news program, "I don't know what it is about President Sisi that impressed Mr. Gabriel—is it the torture, is it the oppression, is it the censorship, is it the dealings with German foundations?" Bernd Riexinger, chairman of the Left Party, reproached the German government, saying "it should not be a fan club for despots."

The criticism by these opposition parties is transparent and phony. When the "despot" al-Sisi was a guest in Berlin last year, Katrin Göring-Eckardt, leader of the Green Party's parliamentary fraction, explained: "Certainly, one must, when necessary, also speak with a military dictator when it comes to the extremely difficult situation in the Middle East." The then-chairman of the Left Party, Gregor Gysi, wrote at the time: "Because dialogue is the only possibility for influencing the solution to the conflict, it would be wrong not to speak with Sisi."

Why do leading German politicians from all parties,

who otherwise regularly spout phrases about human rights, feel so attracted to the Egyptian dictator?

The answer is obvious. German imperialism, hungry for exports and raw materials (the finance minister was accompanied by some 120 business representatives) has enormous interests in the Middle East and North Africa and fears nothing more than renewed mass uprisings in the most politically and culturally influential country in the region. Gabriel explained, "We have a real interest in maintaining the country's stability." Should Egypt, with its 90 million people, be destabilized, it would have immediate consequences for Europe.

Gabriel left no doubt that the German government intends to support al-Sisi with more than just words. Among other things, he promised "German aid" in the anti-terror fight—a code word for the suppression of all opposition—and the building-up of the Egyptian regime. Cairo has already received four German U-boats and expressed interest in border protection assets.

That Gabriel regards a man like al-Sisi to be "impressive" is a warning to workers and youth in Germany and throughout Europe. The same ruling class that brought Hitler to power in 1933 is once more prepared to adopt the methods of a brutal military dictatorship to defend its geostrategic and economic interests worldwide and suppress any opposition from the population.



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