

Berlin students defend University of Bremen student parliament against right-wing Professor Jörg Baberowski

Our correspondents
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Representatives of the student bodies of two leading universities in Berlin, Germany, have issued declarations in support of the General Student Committee (Asta) at the University of Bremen. The Asta is being sued by professor Jörg Baberowski, a leading ideologue of the far right in Germany.

In October 2016, the University of Bremen Asta published a leaflet in which they quoted and criticized statements made by Baberowski advocating a crackdown on refugees and more aggressive military intervention by Germany. Falsely claiming that he had been slandered, Baberowski has sued the Asta to prevent students from criticizing and even quoting his statements.

One week ago, one hundred students and teachers in Bremen attended a meeting to express their solidarity with the General Student Committee.

The student parliament of the Free University of Berlin, which represents more than 36,000 students at the university, has declared its solidarity with the University of Bremen Asta.

A resolution adopted last Thursday declares that the student parliament opposes “in the strongest terms, the attempt of the professor of Eastern European history at Humboldt University, Jörg Baberowski, to sue the student body of the University of Bremen because their Asta had expressed criticism of his smear campaign against refugees and theory of violence. Baberowski’s attempt to muzzle critical students represents a fundamental attack on freedom of expression and a critical university.”

At the meeting of the student parliament, the grounds for the motion were outlined. “While Baberowski bangs the drum for war in talk shows, interviews and

newspaper articles, and agitates against refugees, he wants to use the courts to silence students who criticize him,” a representative of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) told the student parliament.

Defending the Bremen student body is therefore of the utmost importance, the IYSSE representative said. It concerns the defense of the right to be able to expose and criticize reactionary, nationalist and militarist positions. “If an evident right-wing ideologue like Baberowski succeeds with his censorship attempts, it means the criminalization of resistance to the shift to the right.”

Students at Humboldt University have also declared their support for the Bremen Asta. While the next meeting of the Humboldt Student Parliament will not take place until April, the University’s Departmental Student Representative Council (Friv) has already expressed its solidarity. The Friv comprises student representatives of all the individual university departments.

At its meeting on February 1, the Humboldt University Friv opposed Baberowski’s effort to sue the Bremen students “because their student union had expressed criticism of his agitation against refugees and theory of violence.” The statement, which was sent directly to the Bremen Asta, concludes: “We therefore express our solidarity explicitly with the Bremen Asta.”

In addition, the student representatives at the history department (FSI Geschichte) also issued a statement. The FSI Geschichte represents students in the department where Baberowski teaches Eastern European history.

In a letter to the Bremen Asta, published on the

organization's website, the student representatives state: "We have learned that the Chair for the History of Eastern Europe at our institute, Jörg Baberowski, is suing you because you quoted him and expressed criticism of his positions. In a university context, criticism should lead to discussion and not be prevented through legal means. We defend the right of all students to criticize their teachers and solidarise ourselves with you!"

Solidarity also came from the Plenary Body of the Institute for Social Sciences at Humboldt University, which is calling for the reinstatement of the urban sociologist Andrej Holm. Holm was sacked by the university on the pretext that he had made false statements about his brief activity for the East German Ministry for State Security (Stasi).

"Baberowski's actions signify an attack on objective discussion with critical students. We condemn this illegitimate action in the strongest possible terms and solidarise ourselves with you," the plenary body wrote in a Tweet. It added, "Student criticism cannot be banned by court order."

The IYSSE group at Humboldt University will expand its campaign for support for the Bremen students and has called a solidarity meeting for next Monday.

The *World Socialist Web Site* calls on students, teachers and especially workers to express their support for the Bremen student body. Send letters of solidarity to the University of Bremen University Asta and send a copy to iysse@gleichheit.de!



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