German SGP election candidate speaks at student protest against deportations

Our reporters
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"The only way to prevent the madness of deportations and war is a socialist program," declared Marianne Arens, an election candidate of the Socialist Equality Party (SGP), at a demonstration of pupils in the town of Offenbach last week. On Tuesday around 500 students, Offenbach residents and workers followed the call to protest against the deportation of refugees to Afghanistan.

The demonstration had been organised by two students from the August-Bebel school after dozens of their classmates received orders for deportation to Afghanistan.

Seventy young people in Offenbach are currently threatened with deportation. All of them have gone through traumatic experiences and lost close relatives, and all made a hazardous flight before arriving in the city. Now they confront imminent deportation.

As the demonstration proceeded to the town hall in Offenbach more people joined its ranks. Prominent slogans were "No person is illegal - the right of residence for all," and "No borders, no nations - STOP deportations!"

In front of the town hall, school spokesperson Hibba Kauser said, "We will not allow people to be sent to their deaths." She explained that she had spent the first years of her life in a refugee camp because her parents came from Pakistan. The solidarity they had learned during that period was now necessary to protect classmates and friends. "These boys are our friends, they are very close to us." Everyone must take a stand when people are sent to their possible deaths.

Kauser's speech was followed by two refugees, who stressed that they had not left their homeland voluntarily. "There is still war in Afghanistan today, and people are being killed," one noted.

Julia Endres, a classmate of several affected Afghan pupils at the August-Bebel school, helped call the protest. She said, "Many seem to forget the fact that we are all human beings. They judge according to differences in skin colour, religion or origin. We cannot permit that." She demanded not only help and protection, but also integration, inclusion and a good life for all, without the disruption of war.

Further contributions made clear the extent of the planned deportations. At the Philipp-Holzmann building school in Frankfurt, 27 of the school's total of 250 students face imminent deportation. The school pastor , Hans-Christoph Stoodt, said that all schools should network in order to immediately defend those threatened with deportation.

Among the speakers who delivered greetings to the march were the parliamentary election candidates Tuna Firat (Social Democratic Party, SPD), Christine Buchholz (Left Party) and Janine Wissler (also Left Party). They congratulated the pupils for their action and made contributions calling for more "humanity," but made no mention of the fact that their own parties, the SPD and Left Party, also carried out deportations and supported the official drive for war.

The SPD is part of the ruling federal coalition, and the Left Party governs in several German states (Thuringia, Berlin, Brandenburg), which deport refugees just as vigorously as conservative-led states.

The next speaker was Marianne Arens from the Socialist Equality Party (SGP). She stressed that people were fleeing a war in Afghanistan in which Germany was playing an active role: nearly a thousand German soldiers were currently in the country, while the American government planned to massively increase its troop contingent. "The imperialists continue to carry out precisely the same war crimes which force people to flee! And then they send them back to this hell."

Arens addressed the responsibility of "all parties, including the Left Party." She emphasised that Thuringia, a state led by a Left Party premier, Bodo Ramelow, "takes second place behind Saarland in relative terms, for

deportations, even more than Bavaria. All parties, the CDU, the SPD, the Greens, the FDP and the Left Party are responsible!"

The reason, according to Arens, "was they all agree that Germany should be militarised and once again acquire the status of a great power. They organise deportations because they are all parties of German militarism and capitalism. But the population does not want war," she continued. It was therefore mistaken to turn to bourgeois politicians. "We must turn to the international working class. it is a powerful force."

Solidarity with the refugees had to be combined with a joint struggle against militarism, capitalism and war, Arens concluded. To this end a socialist program and a revolutionary party were necessary. "This is the significance of the election campaign of the Socialist Equality Party, which is affiliated to the Fourth International. It is also demonstrates the importance of our web site, the World Socialist Web Site."

The contribution was well received, and many clapped. Several participants gave interviews to the WSWS and explained why they supported the demonstration.

One of them is Ramin. In 2015 he came to Germany from Afghanistan on foot. "We walked through eight countries in 40 days, and in part we swam," he reported. "It was terrible and really difficult. It was not easy and older people would not have been able to endure it. We were a group of 20 people from Iran and Turkey, but three died. One died in my arms. It was terrible."

"I came to Germany with great hopes," Ramin continued, "and now I am supposed to go back. Why? There is no safe area in Afghanistan. Politicians know this better than we do." He said that many young Afghans in Offenbach had received deportation orders. "This strips us of any desire to work and learn. Why do they do that? Politicians are playing with our lives - that must stop!"

In Afghanistan, the situation was worsening day by day. "Politicians know this very well. They have been sending NATO soldiers for 16 years. They would not send soldiers to a safe area." When asked if he knew that all of the parties, including the Left Party, organised deportations, he replied, "Yes, I know. The parties all work together. They send people to the war zone, and that is completely illegal. At the moment people in Afghanistan are being killed indiscriminately. It is hell."

A group of schoolchildren from the Offenbach Leibniz school bore placards reading "Nothing is safe in Afghanistan" and "Everyone is welcome here."

"Flyers were distributed to us at school, that's how we learned about the demo," said a girl from a group of 13-year-olds. Her friend added: "We are here because we consider it fundamentally unfair to deport people. The supposedly safe country, to which they are going, is in fact utterly dangerous. It is simply not fair to deport them. They go to school here and have integrated very well; they are a bonus for Germany!"

Melanie, a student at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, said, "I am here because I am glad students have taken the initiative to oppose deportations." A music teacher and a language teacher both said the same and added they did not want the victims to be deported.

Young workers also joined the protest. A worker at an Offenbach day-care centre linked the demonstration against deportations to social problems and said she was very much in favour of integration, but "we urgently need smaller daycare groups and more staff!" Sonja, who was passing by with her child, said: "First of all, they have to end the wars and organise the economy more equitably. And no more export of weapons! Otherwise they should not be surprised when people become refugees."

Edina, a philologist and translator from Bosnia, learned about the protest from her son, who attends a school where a number of Afghan children are threatened with deportation. "I myself have a refugee background," Edina said. She had escaped from Bosnia-Herzegovina 25 years ago. "I am very moved by the demonstration, it reminds me of that time. I know exactly how it feels when you hear 'Get out of here!' and you do not know where to go. We all know what's happening in Afghanistan."

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