

Workers and youth in Germany respond to the ICFI's May Day rally: "It's the same problems all over the world"

Our reporters
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Several thousand participants across every continent participated in the online May Day 2021 rally held by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which launched the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to some of the many workers and youth who took part from Germany about their impressions.

"The May Day rally made clear that workers and youth all over the world are confronted with the same problems," said **Tamino**, 17, who is setting up a Students Action Committee in Baden-Württemberg. This could also be seen in the pandemic, he noted "in the issue of school openings and the reactionary role of the trade unions in this. Here in Germany, schools are being kept open with the support of the education unions."

The trade unions played the same reactionary role everywhere, Tamino added. "As Ula? Ate?çi mentioned in his contribution, in Turkey, too, the trade unions support the government in reopening schools and its 'Back to Work' policy. However, an independent action committee for safe education was also initiated in Turkey against this policy." The same was "the case in numerous other countries, such as the UK, France and the US."

Now, he said, the action committees needed "to network internationally to be successful against the equally international pandemic." For this reason, the May Day rally was very significant, "as it called for just such an international workers' alliance of action committees."

Tamino was also particularly impressed by the unified global perspective presented at the rally. "The

speeches clearly showed that governments in all countries put profits before lives and are unable to end the pandemic. As David North said in his introductory speech, just as with the First World War, the working class must be mobilised to stop the dying."

Florian from Frankfurt am Main is currently working as a mechatronics engineer in Trondheim, Norway. He said, "The ICFI is obviously about to take a huge organisational step because now it's getting concrete with the action committees as a worldwide initiative." He said he was particularly impressed by the speeches that reported on workers' struggles from all over the world: "The trade union question is now becoming very topical everywhere. These are the pseudo-workers' organisations that you have to distance yourself from the most because they betray the working class everywhere."

Florian pointed to the reports from Sri Lanka: "The speakers from Sri Lanka, who spoke in both Sinhala and Tamil, showed that action committees are already being set up there, for example among the plantation workers. I found that very powerful. It gave me the idea that I could also approach Tamils here in Norway. In Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim—Tamils have emigrated everywhere, and the second generation can be found at university. I'm sure there's interest in this international perspective there too."

Florian said he found David North's contribution very strong because, "he presented the situation so clearly as it really is." He said he wanted to study North's speech again more closely, because "there was a lot in it. Anyway, it stood out pleasantly from the other official pronouncements. No candle-lighting or shedding of crocodile tears."

Habip Bektas is one of the WISAG workers who was sacked at Frankfurt Airport in mid-December and has since continued the fight against arbitrary dismissals and wage theft with a group of his colleagues. He found the May Day event “very good. Everywhere the working class is being oppressed and divided. I also thought it was very good that Christoph Vandreier spoke about our struggle.”

He explained about his experiences looking for work: “Parallel to the struggle for our jobs at WISAG, I am currently constantly looking for other jobs. I have now applied to the company AHS, also at the airport. They handle the communication between the ramp and the aircraft. Since I’m a loadmaster and ramp agent, I know what to do. But do you know what they pay? 9.73 euros basic salary! I get more from unemployment benefit. To get the same as my unemployment benefit, I would have to work 250 hours a month at AHS. That’s how it looks at the moment.”

Bektas said it was important to hear about the situation of workers in other countries. “The report from Brazil was interesting. Bolsonaro is much more open and straightforward than politicians here in Europe. But they all do not care if workers die, the main thing is that the money flows.

“I also liked the contribution from Turkey by Ula? Ate?çi, because he warned about the wars that are being prepared in the region. The oligarchs are fomenting war in many countries, just like in Turkey. The former rulers from Europe or America have left conflict hotbeds everywhere so that they can divide the population and continue to rule; this is true in Kashmir in India and Pakistan, this is true in the Golan Heights in Israel and Palestine, and this is especially true in Africa.”

On the coronavirus pandemic, Bektas commented, “You have to ask yourself: who benefits from the pandemic? Who gets an advantage? The rich! The workers must die for the rich to make more money. In my opinion, we could contain the pandemic if we shut everything down. But the rich are against it, production must continue so that the profits do not dry up. The victims are mainly the elderly between 60 and 80. That is accepted—it relieves the rich even more.”

Bektas explained that he had “done the math” on the pandemic bailouts. “In Germany, at least 1.2 trillion euros were distributed in the course of the coronavirus

pandemic, mostly to the big corporations. If that had been distributed to all 82 million inhabitants, each would have almost €15,000. The money would then actually support the economy. Because we would spend the money, on furniture, clothing or watches, jewellery, etc. Because of this general situation—and also my own—I support the setting up of action committees.”

The WISAG workers, Bektas says, formed a committee “because no one else supports us. Unions used to work for the workers, now they work against the workers. Now a union is run like a company, it has nothing to do with the original idea. But workers need an organisation—so we have to build it.”

“The whole structure would have to be changed. That a union leader earns €350,000 a year is an outrage. The whole issue of workers’ representation needs to be reorganised. A different form of organisation is absolutely necessary. That’s why I think the initiative of the action committees in all countries is good and I think very highly of it.”

Clemens, 18, an IYSSE member from Bavaria, also thought the May Day rally was strong. He said it “particularly succeeded in presenting the ICFI as a world party acting in a unified way. The call for the formation of the International Workers Alliance made our perspective—that the pandemic can only be defeated internationally by the working class—very clear. Only the united intervention of the working class everywhere in the world can lead the developing international struggles against austerity, war, and fascism to victory. But this requires a socialist programme, as only the ICFI represents. This has become particularly clear once again through the rally.”



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