German protests against Gaza bombing and the bogus accusation of “Anti-Semitism”

Peter Schwarz
18 May 2021

Anti-Semitism is a serious accusation—especially in Germany. There is no other crime in history comparable to the genocide of the Jews under the Nazi regime. Solely based on their ancestry and religion, six million people were disenfranchised, abused and ultimately murdered by the German state and its countless accomplices in a precisely planned and organised operation.

This makes it all the more repulsive when the German government, the media and all of the parties represented in the Bundestag—led by the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD)—denounce as anti-Semites anyone who demonstrates against the war crimes being carried out in the Middle East.

No one can seriously argue that the Israeli government’s bombardment of the densely-populated Gaza Strip is a not a crime. More than 200 people, including 58 children, have already fallen victim to Israeli bombs, according to official figures. The destruction of a high-rise building housing a number of international media outlets is also a war crime. The organisation Reporters Without Borders has openly stated this, and the Associated Press news agency has strongly protested against the act of destruction. Evidently the Israeli army does not want independent witnesses to its actions.

In addition, the current conflict cannot be seen in isolation from its history: the forcible expulsion of Palestinians at the time of the foundation of the Israeli state; the occupation of East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 war—occupations declared illegal under international law; the systematic seizure of land by right-wing extremist settlers; and the decades of discrimination against Palestinians by the Israeli state.

An anti-Semite is not someone protesting against the crimes of the government of Benjamin Netanyahu, who has struck an alliance with extreme right-wing parties, has one foot in jail and can only stay in power through endless provocations. An anti-Semite is someone who equates “the Jews” with the policies of the Israeli government. In fact, Netanyahu does not even have a majority inside Israel. Countless Jewish people in Israel and around the world vehemently reject his course.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called Netanyahu last weekend and, according to a government spokesperson, “unreservedly” lined up behind Israel. Only those who are historically blind can regard this as an indication of sympathy for Jews. In reality, the German government does not care about their fate. German imperialism regards Israel, with which it has long maintained close political and military relations, as a useful ally, at least for the moment, in gaining a stronger foothold in the fiercely contested region of the Middle East.

As leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) for almost twenty years, Merkel headed a party that included numerous former Nazis in its ranks. The co-author and commentator of the Nuremberg Race Laws, Hans Globke, was chief of staff for Merkel’s political role model—postwar Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. As late as 1966, the CDU appointed as chancellor a former member of the Nazi party, Kurt Georg Kiesinger. Far-right networks, which committed 2,275 anti-Semitic crimes last year alone, have been systematically covered up by Germany’s intelligence agencies. Hans-Georg Maaßen, the longtime head of Germany’s domestic secret service under Merkel, is espousing anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and has just been appointed a CDU candidate for the federal election.

When the Socialist Equality Party criticised historian Jörg Baberowski in 2014 for defending Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte and claiming that Hitler was “not vicious,” representatives from all political parties and the media denounced the SGP and rushed to the defence of the far-right professor. “The attempts to establish a historically

© World Socialist Web Site

false narrative come at a critical point in German history," we wrote at the time. "The revival of German militarism requires a new interpretation of history that downplays the crimes of the Nazi era."

It then comes as no surprise that the far-right AfD has railed loudest against the current anti-war demonstrations. The AfD, whose leaders have described the mass murder of Jews as "a speck of birdshit" in a thousand years of glorious German history, and called the Holocaust memorial in Berlin a mark of shame, now poses as Israel's best friend. AfD leader Jörg Meuthen has gone so far as to accuse the German government of not doing enough "to stand behind Israel and its efforts to protect its population from terrorist attacks."

The AfD parliamentary group has demanded that anti-war demonstrations be banned in advance, while AfD parliamentary faction leader Alexander Gauland blurted out the real motive of the party: "Whoever is really serious about fighting anti-Semitism must stop uncontrolled Islamic mass immigration and consistently deport criminals with no questions asked."

As is the case with refugee policy and Germany's internal and external rearmament, the AfD is being used as a pioneer by all other parties. Based on isolated anti-Semitic incidents, they denounce as anti-Semites the thousands who have peacefully protested all over Germany against the Israeli terror. The aim is to justify anti-immigrant xenophobia and the suppression of demonstrations.

While CDU leader Armin Laschet declares he is incensed about "horrific images at demonstrations," the CDU/CSU parliamentary group is already discussing even more limits on immigration, which must be "kept at a level sustainable for integration," according to Mathias Middelberg, the CDU's spokesperson on domestic policy.

CDU General Secretary Paul Ziemiak stated that anti-Semitism in Germany came from three directions: right-wing extremism, left-wing extremism and immigration, declaring, "All three areas must be identified and resolutely opposed." He then called for the banning of several Palestinian organisations and parties.

The Social Democratic Party (SPD) has expressed similar views. SPD leader Saskia Esken called for the rigorous punishment of those taking part in "anti-Semitic demonstrations." SPD chancellor candidate Olaf Scholz added: "There can be no excuse for such things. Perpetrators must feel the full force of the law." Green Party MP Cem Özdemir railed against "anti-Semitism on the part of immigrants."

Gregor Gysi of the Left Party also condemned "anti-Semitic protests" in a long interview with *Der Spiegel*: "Anyone who sets fire to Israel flags is not left-wing." He then called on the German government to mediate in Israel, relying on the discredited Palestinian Fatah party. Dietmar Bartsch, the Left Party parliamentary head and lead candidate in the Bundestag election campaign, even supports the delivery of German submarines to Israel.

For its part the *taz* newspaper (which is close to the Greens) is trying to outdo the conservative paper *Die Welt* in its condemnation of the protests against the Israeli bombardments. For *Die Welt*, the slogan of some protesters: "Stop doing what Hitler did to you," directed at the Israeli government, is unmistakable evidence of anti-Semitism.

The *taz* condemned the anti-war demonstrations as "pure anti-Semitism, barely disguised under the mask of anti-Zionism." According to the newspaper: "Hatred of Jews is a problem in immigrant communities—but it is also rampant among those who have lived here for a long time. The phenomenon of Jew-hatred is not just about neo-Nazis or right-wing populists either. It also applies to supposed leftists who, armed with the anti-imperialist fantasies of today and the hatred of Jews of their grandfathers, diligently join in demonstrations against the great demon Israel."

The accusations of anti-Semitism must be firmly rejected. They are being made by parties and media which are profoundly compromised in right-wing, anti-democratic and militarist conspiracies—the real source for fascism and anti-Semitism. The struggle against these forces requires the independent mobilisation of the working class of all nationalities on the basis of a socialist programme.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site