

Student representatives at Humboldt University in Germany support disciplinary complaint against president, demand action against Professor Baberowski

IYSSE at Humboldt University of Berlin
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The disciplinary complaint of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) against Humboldt University (HU) President Sabine Kunst is finding broad support.

In recent weeks, student councils at HU and the Technical University of Berlin, which together represent more than 75,000 students, have shown solidarity with the complaint. Student representatives outside of Berlin, including the AStA (General Student Council) of the University of Bremen, have also supported the complaint.

The development shows the enormous opposition among workers and young people to right-wing extremism and fascism. Students do not accept that right-wing extremist professors, with the active support of the university administration, can once again falsify history and promote fascistic politics at German universities.

Sabine Kunst (Social Democratic Party, SPD) has repeatedly backed the right-wing extremist Humboldt Professor Jörg Baberowski, even though he insults, threatens and physically assaults students and colleagues critical of his views. At the end of May, Sven Wurm, a member of the student parliament at Humboldt University Berlin and spokesperson for the IYSSE, therefore filed a disciplinary complaint against Kunst with Governing Mayor of Berlin Michael Müller and State Secretary for Science and Research Steffen Krach (both SPD members).

Since then, nothing has been done on the part of the Berlin government or Humboldt University to investigate the complaint. Krach has so far only

confirmed that the disciplinary complaint has been received and handed over to the responsible chairperson of the HU Board of Governors, Edelgard Bulmahn (also SPD). In response to a further inquiry by Wurm, the university stated that the complaint was “currently being processed.” The Berlin Senate and the university management are clearly using stalling tactics to suppress the accusations against them.

The vast majority of students are not willing to accept this. On July 8, the student representatives of the Referent innenrat (RefRat, legally AStA, student government) of Humboldt University published the following statement :

The RefRat supports the disciplinary complaint against University President Sabine Kunst due to her inaction in addressing the right-wing radical Professor Jörg Baberowski and stands in solidarity with the victims of the attacks by this professor.

The Governing Mayor and Senator for Science and Research, Michael Müller (SPD), and the State Secretary for Science and Research, Steffen Krach (SPD), have so far taken no action to make the university president (also SPD) take action against the unacceptable behavior of the right-wing radical professor. Instead, like Ms. Kunst herself, they seem to be trying to let the disciplinary complaint come to nothing. This creates the unacceptable impression that party friendships determine

whether supervisory measures are taken.

The RefRat calls on the Governing Mayor and the State Secretary to act quickly to put an immediate stop to these attacks on students and the promotion of radical right-wing positions at Humboldt University.

HU student councils and student representatives from other universities also showed their solidarity. The AStA of the Technical University of Berlin, the third largest university in Berlin with about 35,000 students, on Twitter welcomed the submission of the disciplinary complaint against the HU president and stated its hope “that officials send a clear signal against right-wing radicalism at the university.”

The AStA of the University of Bremen also expressed its support. The Bremen student representatives had themselves been targeted by Baberowski in 2017 because they had protested a lecture by him. Baberowski then tried to suppress student criticism with a lawsuit, which ultimately failed in court.

As Wurm points out in his disciplinary complaint against the university president, Baberowski is one of the best-known academics of the extreme right in Germany. He runs a “new right” salon, agitates against refugees and drums for war and militarism. The trivialization of Nazi crimes (“Hitler was not vicious”) is a continuous thread throughout his work.

Wurm emphasizes:

The fact that this right-wing extremist ideologist has now started marching around campus like a far-right activist, destroying student election advertising and physically attacking students is also the responsibility of university president Sabine Kunst. She has supported for years and defended the right-wing extremist structures that have emerged in Baberowski’s department of Eastern European history.

On January 30, 2020, Wurm himself was physically assaulted by Baberowski after he caught the professor

tearing down and destroying election posters of the IYSSE from a campus bulletin board. Kunst defended the right-wing extremist’s violent behavior, which is documented on a video, as “humanly understandable.” In his complaint, Wurm states:

There is no harmless explanation for this chronology of events. Ms. Kunst has time and time again systematically covered up Baberowski’s verbal and physical attacks on students and suppressed necessary criticism of the right-wing extremist professor. She therefore bears responsibility for the climate of intimidation aimed at preventing students from criticizing the right-wing opinions of professors. This is incompatible with a democratic university.

The IYSSE strongly urges the Berlin Senate and the Chair of the Board of Governors to immediately investigate the disciplinary complaint against Kunst and take action against her. All those responsible must be held accountable and the right-wing activities at Humboldt University must be put to an end.

We call on students, faculty and staff to support and publicize the disciplinary complaint. Especially against the background of increasing violence by right-wing extremist forces in Germany and internationally, it must not be allowed that right-wing extremist ideologues and thugs are courted and encouraged at, of all places, our university.



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