

Right-wing radical Professor Jörg Baberowski faces trial for causing bodily harm and damage to property

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22 April 2022

Next Wednesday, the main hearing against the right-wing radical professor Jörg Baberowski for causing bodily harm and damage to property will take place at the Tiergarten District Court in Berlin. On January 30, 2020, the professor had destroyed large amounts of student election campaign material at Humboldt University, physically assaulted Sven Wurm, an IYSSE member of the student parliament, knocking a mobile phone out of his hand and threatening him, saying, 'Do you want me to punch you in the face?'

After Wurm filed a criminal complaint against the professor, the public prosecutor's office issued criminal charges in June last year for causing bodily harm and damage to property, because the facts were absolutely clear thanks to a video of the violent act. The accused then hired two lawyers—including Joachim Steinhöfel, who has defended those in the right-wing scene—and filed an appeal against the charges. The main public hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, April 27, at 9:15 a.m. at the Tiergarten District Court in Room 862.

"The trial has great political significance," Wurm told the WSW. "It is about whether students are allowed to objectively criticise their professors without facing massive threats and being physically attacked. As the university group of the IYSSE at Humboldt University in Berlin, we have criticised the trivialisation of Nazi crimes and Baberowski's radical right-wing positions. This is not only our right, but our duty as students of our university," said Wurm. "Moreover, there was a clear encroachment on the autonomy of the constituent student body, because it involved obstructing our work for the Student Parliament (StuPa) elections."

Baberowski has long been known to threaten and

intimidate dissenters. In 2019, the two student representatives to the university senate, Bafta Sarbo and Juliane Ziegler, had filed criminal charges against Baberowski because he had publicly defamed them as "incredibly stupid" and as "radical left-wing fanatics" for objectively criticising his planned "Centre for Comparative Dictatorship Research."

Baberowski has also taken similarly aggressive action against his colleagues. When professors at Humboldt University sent a letter to the head of Lit-Verlag against Baberowski's signing of the xenophobic "Declaration 2018," he insulted them as "denunciators" who were running a smear campaign. He tried to liken their behaviour to the Nazis' boycott of Jews, saying he felt reminded of "dark times" and writing: "Don't buy from the outcast!" Finally, he threatened them by saying, 'The humiliated and excluded will remember who pilloried them.'

Several times previously, Baberowski had publicly slandered Wurm and the IYSSE university group to which he belongs as "psychopaths," "denunciators," "fascists," "criminals," "lunatics" and "perpetrators of violence."

With the physical attack on Wurm, Baberowski followed up these slurs and threats with action. The video evidence shows the professor tearing down numerous election posters of the IYSSE university group from a board for student notices and destroying them. When he notices that Sven Wurm is filming this act of vandalism, he becomes physical and hits him. He hits his hand, thus knocking the mobile phone to the ground. He then exclaims, "Do you want me to hit you in the face?"

In this way, Baberowski tried to intimidate Wurm and

the other members of the IYSSE, who have been represented in the student parliament for many years, and to prevent them from carrying out their political work. It is therefore also a serious encroachment on the autonomy of the constituent student body, which has been condemned in the strongest possible terms not only by the Humboldt University student parliament but also by numerous other student councils in Germany and Austria.

What is particularly concerning is that Baberowski teaches at the history department where Wurm is currently completing his Master's degree. So, the victim of the attack could therefore meet the violent professor again in an exam upon which his future path in life depends.

With his violent act, Baberowski is trying to suppress any criticism of his radical right-wing positions. He had already failed twice before in court in this regard. On June 1, 2017, the Higher Administrative Court of Cologne declared that Baberowski could legitimately be described as "racist," "radical right-wing" and "glorifying violence" in view of his past statements, whereupon the professor withdrew his lawsuit against the Student Council of the University of Bremen.

The court based its decision on statements by Baberowski that had previously been quoted by the Bremen Student Council. For example, regarding arson attacks on asylum shelters, Baberowski had stated: "I think, in view of the problems we have in Germany with immigration, which is taking place right now, what we have is still rather harmless."

Referring to the war on terror, Baberowski had stated that it could only be won by means of terror. "If you are not prepared to take hostages, burn villages and hang people and spread fear and terror, as the terrorists do, if you are not prepared to do that, you will not win such a confrontation. Then you should leave it alone."

In November 2017, Baberowski then tried to sue the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, Germany; SGP), of which the IYSSE is its youth organisation, for quoting a student who had accused Baberowski of "falsifying history." The Hamburg Regional Court dismissed this case as well because it saw sufficient contributing factors for this designation in Baberowski's statements on Hitler alone.

In particular, the court cited a quote by Baberowski comparing Hitler to Stalin. "Hitler was not a

psychopath, he was not cruel. He didn't want people talking about the extermination of the Jews at his table. Stalin, on the other hand, added to and signed off on the death lists with gusto, he was vicious, he was a psychopath," Baberowski had declared in newsweekly *Der Spiegel* in 2014.

Similar trivialisations of the Nazis and their crimes run through Baberowski's entire work. In a 2007 text, for example, he declared that the Red Army was responsible for the atrocities of the Nazis' war of extermination. "Stalin and his generals imposed a new type of war on the Wehrmacht [Hitler's army] that no longer spared the civilian population," Baberowski wrote at the time.

This combination of downplaying Nazi crimes, agitating against refugees and drumming up support for brutal wars made Baberowski a central figure of the New Right. In 2015, the professor founded the "Salon Baberowski" (*Die Zeit*), where at least every six months, everyone that has standing and a name in the scene meets.

Now, Baberowski no longer acts only as a right-wing ideologue and Nazi apologist but directly as a right-wing extremist activist and perpetrator of violence. He wants to suppress and throw off campus anyone who criticises his radical right-wing agenda. That is why the trial against him is of great importance.



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