

German government hosts “climate dialogue” with the Butcher of Cairo, exposing its human rights propaganda

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If one event could expose the German government’s human rights propaganda and climate policy platitudes, it was the Petersberg Climate Dialogue earlier this week. The star guest of the meeting at the German Foreign Ministry was none other than Egyptian dictator Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Government leaders—most notably the Greens—regularly refer to Russian President Vladimir Putin as a “mass murderer” and Russia as a “terrorist state” to justify NATO aggression against the resource-rich country. If that characterization applies to an international head of state, then it applies to the Butcher of Cairo.

Al-Sisi, who came to power through a coup with Western backing on July 3, 2013, following mass protests against Islamist President Mohamed Mursi, heads a brutal regime of terror. His rule began with a bloodbath.

Almost exactly nine years ago, on August 14, 2013, army and police units under his command stormed two protest camps of coup opponents in the Egyptian capital, killing more than 1,000 people, including many women and children. Human Rights Watch called it a “massacre,” the “worst event of unlawful mass killings in Egypt’s modern history.”

Since then, hundreds more protesters have been killed by the security forces. Tens of thousands of political prisoners have disappeared into the country’s torture dungeons. Protests and strikes are banned by law. Independent media are suppressed, as are parties and organizations that criticize the regime.

The death penalty is also being applied with increasing brutality under al-Sisi. At least 402 people were sentenced to death in 2017, and as many as 717 in 2018. Currently, more than 2,000 people are estimated to be on Egypt’s death row. Executions—usually by hanging—are being carried out in spurts. In 2020, the number of executions tripled to an official 107.

The German government is well aware of al-Sisi’s terror. Just last month, Joe Stork, deputy Middle East and North

Africa director at Human Rights Watch, called on Germany and other EU states to change their stance on Egypt. “The human rights situation in Egypt is currently worse than it has been in decades,” he warned. “Any form of critical expression puts one at risk of imprisonment. Torture is widespread, especially of political prisoners, but also of ordinary people who end up with the police.”

But among the German government’s human rights hypocrites, al-Sisi’s terror does not even elicit a shrug. On the contrary, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) and Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Greens) rolled out the red carpet for the dictator in Berlin and showered him with praise. At a joint press conference, Scholz did not criticize the catastrophic human rights situation in Egypt with a single word. Instead, he offered the dictator a platform.

Al-Sisi boasted that he had spoken with the “chancellor about the various developments in Egypt as far as human rights are concerned,” claiming provocatively he “also believes that people have a right to lead a dignified life, and the state is committed to protecting this right.” To this end, he said, “a national human rights strategy has been developed.”

In his own remarks, Scholz made clear which imperialist interests stand behind the murderous alliance with al-Sisi. On the one hand, it concerns economic and energy policy goals. Scholz said he was pleased “Egypt has entrusted its largest railroad infrastructure project to a German company.” This showed “how close our economic relations really are,” he said.

According to Siemens, this is the largest order in the company’s 175-year history. The corporation reported at the end of May that it had signed a contract worth €8.1 billion for the construction of a 2,000-kilometer rail network for high-speed trains. The company will supply 41 high-speed trains, 94 regional trains and 41 freight locomotives to Egypt. In addition, the contract also includes the

construction of eight operating and freight stations as well as the maintenance of the infrastructure over 15 years.

With the gas crisis triggered by German sanctions and the war offensive against Russia, appetites for Egyptian energy are also on the rise. He was pleased “that we have agreed to cooperate very closely, especially in the field of hydrogen,” Scholz exulted. He said Germany would “import a very large part” of the hydrogen needed for “its economic and industrial development” from other countries. The fact that Egypt was making “ambitious” progress in this area was “a good sign for our good relations.”

Berlin is not only concerned with hydrogen. Al-Sisi said he had confirmed to Chancellor Scholz, “Egypt is ready for a partnership with Germany in the energy sector, whether by exporting natural gas to Germany or also in the field of hydrogen, wind energy and solar energy.” Egypt, he said, “attaches great importance to partnership with Germany and to transparent dialogue.”

Within the framework of this “dialogue,” al-Sisi—as previously the under the tyrant Hosni Mubarak, who was toppled by the Egyptian revolution in 2011—plays the role of a local governor for the imperialist powers in the region. There had been “traditionally close coordination ... with regard to the Middle East peace process,” Scholz explained at the press conference. Egypt played “an outstanding role in this process” and helped “to stabilize the situation in the Gaza Strip. I would like to thank them for that as well.”

In other words, Scholz praises al-Sisi for sealing off Gaza from the Egyptian side and supporting Israel’s war policy against the Palestinians.

Berlin has armed al-Sisi’s regime to the teeth to enable its function of repressing the masses not only in Egypt but throughout the region. With exports totalling €4.34 billion, Egypt was by far the largest export country for German military equipment in 2021. And the year before, Egypt also took second place in the German arms export rankings.

Above all, the close alliance with al-Sisi exposes the so-called “values-driven foreign policy” of the Greens. During last year’s federal election campaign, Baerbock had still been peddling the claim that foreign policy relations and arms exports should not be evaluated purely in economic terms, but on the basis of the human rights situation. A Green Party election poster even read, “No weapons and armaments to war zones.”

Voiced by a party that organized the first German war mission in Kosovo since World War II, as part of the federal government in 1998, such statements were never worth anything. Nevertheless, it may have surprised some younger voters to see the aggressiveness with which the Greens are now advocating the delivery of more and more heavy weaponry to Ukraine and abandon their human rights

phraseology as soon as the issue is not Russia.

The same applies to climate change policy. Despite the deadly heat wave in large parts of Europe and the worsening climate catastrophe worldwide, in her opening speech to the Petersburg Climate Dialogue, Baerbock did not announce a single new measure in the fight against climate change. Instead, she praised the intensive cooperation with her “Egyptian partners” in preparing for the meeting and justified abandoning her own limited climate goals with the war offensive against Russia.

She cynically declared that she hears “the concerns of those who ask us whether the states of Europe and also Germany are now rowing back on their climate commitments because of the Russian war,” adding, “I say frankly: We have to make hard decisions in the short term that we don’t like in order to reduce our dependence on Russian gas and oil. We have to bring in coal-fired power plants as a reserve for a short period of time.”

The aggressiveness with which the Greens are trampling on their own campaign promises, act as the biggest warmongers in government, and form pacts with the bloodiest dictators springs from the reactionary class interests of the social layers for whom they speak. The more directly the wealth of the upper middle classes is linked to pursuing aggressive war and great power policies, the more they fear the growing resistance of the working class.

At a panel discussion hosted by news agency Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland last week, Baerbock warned of the danger of “popular uprisings” in Germany. Asked why Germany had demanded Canada deliver a turbine for the Nord Stream 1 pipeline supplying Europe with Russian gas, she replied, “If we don’t get the gas turbine, we won’t get any more gas. Then we as Germany can’t provide any support to Ukraine at all, because we’ll be busy with popular uprisings.”

Against this background, al-Sisi’s reception in Berlin must also be understood as a warning. The ruling class in Germany would resort to the same brutal methods as the Egyptian military dictatorship to suppress mass resistance to its hated policies of war, social attacks, and letting the coronavirus rip.



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