

Berlin Humboldt University Student Parliament: IYSSE rejects anti-democratic campaign of Social- and Christian-Democratic youth organizations

Gregor Kahl
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Last Tuesday, the Berlin Humboldt University student parliament (StuPa) faction of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) youth organization—the Young Socialists (Jusos)—introduced a motion denouncing any “joint struggle” of Palestinian and Jewish workers against the Israeli state apparatus as “anti-Semitic.” In doing so, the SPD junior politicians referred to an article in the online publication Klasse gegen Klasse (Class against Class).

The motion was originally an anti-democratic attempt to prevent parliamentary confirmation of a vote by the Foreign Students’ General Assembly. The assembly had elected a student who published texts for the platform for the office of the “AntiRa” speaker—an anti-racist unit of the student self-administration. After the confirmation of his mandate was delayed over a period of several months, the student finally withdrew his candidacy.

In a new version of its motion, the Juso faction declared “activity with Klasse gegen Klass” to be “incompatible” with work in student bodies. The motion was passed with the votes of the Jusos and the Association of Christian Democratic Students (RCDS), a student organization associated with the conservative Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), as well as votes from other factions.

Previously, in 2018, on the initiative of the two party lists, the StuPa passed a reactionary resolution to exclude all persons who supposedly sympathize with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign from university political activity.

In this article we document the speech of International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) MP Gregor Kahl, who defended the democratic right of students to freedom of expression and explained why the IYSSE parliamentary group rejects the motion in the strongest possible terms.

The IYSSE faction rejects the motion of the Juso faction. We call on all members of the student parliament to likewise vote “no.”

The motion does not contribute to the fight against anti-Semitism, rather it misuses the banner of the fight against anti-Semitism for a right-wing campaign. It is directed against all who seek a way to overcome the ethnic and nationalist divisions among working people in Israel, Palestine and the entire region.

Everyone knows that fundamental differences divide us from *Klasse gegen Klasse*. But the charge of anti-Semitism is absurd and must be rejected.

The motion of the Juso faction explicitly claims that it is anti-Semitic to demand a “common struggle” of “Palestinians and Jews” against the “pro-imperialist state of Israel” in order to guarantee a “peaceful and fraternal coexistence of Palestinians and Jews.”

This motion is an intolerable trivialization of anti-Semitism and turns reality upside down. A common struggle of Arab and Jewish workers against imperialist military power is not anti-Semitic, rather the exact opposite of anti-Semitism.

If a joint struggle of Jews and Palestinians against the Israeli state apparatus and its brutal war policies is called anti-Semitic, this then denigrates large sections of the Israeli left and Holocaust survivors like the late

Esther Bejarano as anti-Semites.

On the day of our last meeting, parliamentary elections were held for the fifth time in under four years. The 5.5 million Palestinians living under military occupation in the West Bank were not allowed to vote, but the roughly 700,000 Israeli settlers who live there were. Meanwhile, Benjamin Netanyahu is working to form an openly hard-right and racist government.

The weeks leading up to the election were marked by a nationalist war climate. Hardly a day went by without new reports of Palestinians killed by right-wing religious nationalists or the IDF (Israel Defense Forces). At least 175 Palestinians have been killed this year alone, and detention centers are overflowing. In early August, Israeli government airstrikes against Gaza killed 16 children. In all, 400 people were wounded and 45 people died.

Left-wing criticism of this policy is not anti-Semitic. In fact, the idea that the Israel Defense Forces and the right-wing government of Israel are expressions of Judaism is itself borrowed from the arsenal of anti-Semitism.

The socialist labor movement, on the other hand, has always fought anti-Semitism by all means. Many workers, youth and intellectuals of Jewish origin played a prominent role in this movement. Hundreds of thousands of socialists paid for their resistance to Hitler and the Nazis with their lives.

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The Marxist revolutionary Leon Trotsky warned of the imminent annihilation of the Jews as early as the Kristallnacht ["Night of Broken Glass"] pogrom of November 9, 1938. In a letter to American friends he wrote: "It is possible without difficulty to imagine what awaits the Jews at the mere outbreak of the future world war. But even without war, the next development of the world reaction will certainly mean the physical extermination of the Jews."

Trotsky advocated the international unity of the working class in the struggle for socialism. Trotsky rejected the nationalist Zionist project from this standpoint, calling it a "bloody trap for hundreds of thousands of Jews." In 1937 he declared, "I in no way believe that the Jewish question can be solved within the framework of putrid capitalism and under the control of British imperialism." How correct this

assessment was is now apparent to everyone.

The Juso motion is part of the well-known right-wing campaign based, among others, on the fascists and anti-Semites of the AfD (the far-right Alternative for Germany party). In 2019, all the parliamentary groups in the Bundestag voted unanimously in favor of a resolution calling criticism of the Israeli government's right-wing policies anti-Semitic. Among them was Alexander Gauland, who trivialized the Holocaust as a "flyspeck" in German history.

With the votes of the Nazis, among other things, criticism of the Israeli government by Jews was banned by the German Bundestag (federal Parliament)!

Now the Juso faction is introducing a motion that also aims to ban left-wing criticism of the Israeli government at our university. And this at a university where the Holocaust is relativized and Hitler is trivialized!

"Hitler was not vicious," claimed Professor Jörg Baberowski—who still holds the Chair of Eastern European History!—in 2014 in (Germany's) biggest news magazine *Der Spiegel*. In the same infamous article, Baberowski put the Holocaust on par with "shootings during the Russian Civil War" and declared, "Basically, it was the same thing: industrial killing."

This relativizing of the Holocaust is anti-Semitic! But although Baberowski is notorious as a leading ideologue of the extreme right and has since moved on to violently attacking student critics, he continues to enjoy the backing of the university administration. This applies to the SPD-led Berlin Senate, as well as former Humboldt University President and SPD politician Sabine Kunst.

The motion of the Juso faction trivializes anti-Semitism and criminalizes left-wing criticism of Israel's war policy. It denigrates Israeli government opponents and ridicules survivors of the Holocaust. Its equation of left-wing criticism of Zionism with anti-Semitism is grist for the mill of the extreme right. The motion must be unconditionally rejected.



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