

Following a wave of protests IYSSE anti-war meeting at Goethe University in Frankfurt will take place

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An anti-war meeting organised by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Frankfurt's Johann Wolfgang Goethe University will take place as planned on May 12 in the ESG hall on the Westend campus, Siolistr. 7 (House 3). Confirmation of the meeting came on Wednesday from Anke Spory on behalf of the Evangelical Student Community Frankfurt (Evangelische Studierendengemeinde, ESG), which, at the end of last week, had initially threatened to cancel the IYSSE meeting and unlawfully terminate the booked room.

Withdrawal of the ban by the ESG followed a wave of protests against what was clearly a flagrant act of political censorship. In its original email, the church-based student organisation justified its antidemocratic action by stating that the IYSSE's opposition to the militarisation of German universities was incompatible with its principles. The IYSSE then responded by publishing a leaflet detailing the political significance of this attack and calling on readers to protest against the ESG's action.

This leaflet was distributed in the thousands on the Frankfurt University campus and discussed with students. Members of the IYSSE also gave short presentations to various basic lecture courses with hundreds of participants to promote the meeting and explain the internationalist perspective of the socialist youth movement against the Ukraine war. The presentations were warmly greeted with applause.

While acknowledging the reactionary role of the Russian intervention in Ukraine, many students in conversation with IYSSE members also criticised the war policies of NATO and the United States in recent decades. The unprecedented rearmament of the

Bundeswehr was rejected by the overwhelming majority of respondents and the IYSSE's analysis of the imperialist war aims pursued by the German elite in the Ukraine war met with particular interest. 'You should definitely hold your meeting,' was the tenor.

Many students and local residents reacted indignantly to the ESG's attempt to censor the IYSSE meeting. A senior university staff member referred to the student uprisings and mass protests that erupted in Germany and across Europe in the late 1960s against the antidemocratic and militaristic tradition of the universities. With its attempt to ban opponents of militarism and fascism from the campus, the ESG was siding with the ruling class.

Religious studies teacher Thomas B. recalled in his email the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was murdered by the Nazis, and demands that "peace-oriented political activities" have a "firm place" in churches as well as society: "What worries me a great deal is the fact that for at least a year all activities opposed to rearmament, arms deliveries and participation in war have been suppressed and persecuted. ... I cannot understand the ESG's reasoning for cancelling the premises."

Nadine H. wrote: "You don't believe in the 'capacity for discourse' on the part of young people who invite participation in a public political debate? You yourself threaten this pronounced principle by being discriminatory. You are thereby carrying out antidemocratic censorship! If academic-political discourse must stop where individual moral considerations ends, then it is you who can no longer refer to freedom."

Many protest notes were also sent from other

countries. Harvey Lichtman wrote from the US: “Having taught history in New York schools for 24 years, and having had my mother’s family and their eight brothers and sisters, each with spouses and children, murdered by the German military at Auschwitz, I can only view this political attack on democratic discourse as a historically repugnant act, especially as German Leopard tanks are now again rolling into Ukraine towards Russia.”

“I think your meeting against the war in Ukraine is really very important,” said Justine, who is from France and recently started studying at Goethe University, speaking to the IYSSE on campus. “In French political circles there is no criticism of the war, nobody talks about it. It’s especially wrong that all the ‘left’ parties remain silent about it. I find that frightening.”

Justine continued: “Yesterday I saw pictures of the Bundeswehr’s new recruitment campaign declaring that Germany should ‘again show its strength.’ What do they mean when they say ‘again’? I immediately sent the photo to all my friends because I think there should never be another war.”

The series of meeting in Germany on “How to stop the Ukraine war” continues. The meeting in Frankfurt takes place May 12, at 18:30, the Campus Westend, Siolistr. 7 (Haus 3), 60323 Frankfurt.



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