Berlin police open criminal investigation aimed at silencing Roger Waters

Kevin Reed
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German authorities have made systematic efforts to silence musician-performer Roger Waters. Now reactionary political forces in Berlin have launched a new campaign against the internationally acclaimed music artist and co-founder of Pink Floyd.

According to multiple news reports, the Berlin police department has opened a criminal investigation into Waters on charges of "incitement of hatred" for his two appearances on stage in the city wearing a costume that resembles a Nazi uniform.

CNN reported on Friday that it had received a statement from the State Security Department at the Berlin State Criminal Police Office, which said it had "initiated a criminal investigation procedure regarding the suspicion of incitement of the people (140 Paragraph 4 of the German criminal Code)."

The statement to CNN goes on to say, "The context of the clothing worn is deemed capable of approving, glorifying or justifying the violent and arbitrary rule of the Nazi regime in a manner that violates the dignity of the victims and thereby disrupts public peace." The Berlin police said after its investigation, "the case will be forwarded to the Berlin Public Prosecutor's Office for legal assessment."

The Berlin police investigation is in response to a social media campaign launched by political figures who are adding to the slanders that Waters is an antisemite the lying charge that he is trivializing the Holocaust and sympathizing with Nazism during his performance of the song "In the Flesh" from the 1979 Pink Floyd album "The Wall."

On May 23, for example, Aviva Klompas, the former head speechwriter for the Israeli mission to the United Nations, tweeted a photo of Waters on stage in Berlin with the following comment, "At a performance in Germany, Roger Waters dressed up as an SS soldier and pretended to fire a rifle. How any person with a conscience can pay money to see this vile human is beyond me."

Meanwhile, Katharina von Schnurbein, European Commission coordinator on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, wrote on Twitter, "I am sick & disgusted by Roger Waters' obsession to belittle and trivialize the Shoah & the sarcastic way in which he delights in trampling on the victims, systematically murdered by the Nazis. In Germany. Enough is enough. Holocaust trivilisation is criminalized across the EU."

The latter comment was then retweeted by Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, the US Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, along her own remark, "I wholeheartedly concur with @EUAntisemitism's condemnation of Roger Waters and his despicable Holocaust distortion."

On Wednesday, the European Jewish Congress reposted the photo shared by Klompas and added an image of a segment of the concert where Waters displays the name of Ann Frank along with many other individuals killed by the fascists, right-wing governments and police violence. The tweet said, "Waters in Berlin. Is there anything more antisemitic than using Anne Frank as a prop on a German stage while prancing around in a Nazi uniform attacking Jews?"

The lineup of representatives of Zionism and US and European imperialism to intensify the slander of Waters as an antisemite must be condemned by all those who defend basic democratic and free speech rights. These latest despicable and thoroughly cynical claims against the artist are the surest sign that the political messages in his worldwide "This Is Not a Drill" concert tour are resonating with widespread public sentiments against imperialist war, the criminal attacks on Palestinians by the Israeli government, police violence as well as criticisms of the entire capitalist world order.

If Waters is prosecuted for attacking Nazism by

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dressing up as one, what is to be done with copies of *The Great Dictator* (1940), in which Charlie Chaplin satirized Hitler by appearing as Hynkel the dictator and mocking the Nazi salute and the swastika? Or the more recent *Look Who's Back* (2015), in which Hitler comes back to life in modern Berlin?

Responding to the right-wing attack on his Berlin performances, Waters posted the following statement on his social media accounts:

"My recent performance in Berlin has attracted bad faith attacks from those who want to smear and silence me because they disagree with my political views and moral principles.

"The elements of my performance that have been questioned are quite clearly a statement in opposition to fascism, injustice, and bigotry in all its forms. Attempts to portray those elements as something else are disingenuous and politically motivated. The depiction of an unhinged fascist demagogue has been a feature of my shows since Pink Floyd's 'The Wall' in 1980.

"I have spent my entire life speaking out against authoritarianism and oppression wherever I see it. When I was a child after the war, the name of Anne Frank was often spoken in our house, she became a permanent reminder of what happens when fascism is left unchecked. My parents fought the Nazis in World War II, with my father paying the ultimate price.

"Regardless of the consequences of the attacks against me, I will continue to condemn injustice and all those who perpetrate it."

The ongoing campaign against Waters' principled stand against the crimes of imperialism has been aided by the corporate media, which has not only refused to defend the artist but is participating in the slanderous accusations against him.

A particularly disgusting example of this is an article published May 19 by Nicholas Potter, a self-proclaimed "journalist and researcher covering the far right, antisemitism, racism and culture in English and German," in Belltower News, headlined "I'm not an antisemite but…"

In his review of the first of the two shows in Berlin, Potter attacks both Waters and his growing audience of supporters and listeners. He writes that the 10,000 fans in Berlin, "have come despite his antisemitic outbursts, his vocal support of the BDS movement, his dissemination of Russian war propaganda, his sympathies for Putin. You could say: despite Roger Waters. Or did they rather come precisely because of him?"

This diatribe shows that the forces of political reaction are equally afraid of Waters' position in defense of the rights of Palestinians as they are of his opposition to the US-NATO-instigated war against Russia in Ukraine. Waters has never expressed "sympathies for Putin" or promoted "Russian war propaganda."

The singer-musician has, in fact, consistently denounced the Moscow regime for its military operation in Ukraine while also steadfastly pointing to the hegemonic aims of US imperialism that are driving the conflict that threatens mankind with nuclear annihilation. The danger of a third world war and demands for an end to the production and proliferation of nuclear weapons are recurring themes in Waters' music and live performances over the past four decades.

The renewed smear campaign against Waters follows the failure of previous efforts to shut down his shows in Munich and Frankfurt by an alliance of the capitalist political establishment in these cities on bogus grounds of antisemitism. The very same political forces that are making accusations of pro-Nazi propaganda against the musician are in reality responsible for enabling the development of far-right politics and fascists within the German state apparatus.

It is no accident that the charges being sought by the Berlin police were initiated over the past two days. On Thursday evening, the second of his "This Is Not a Drill" concerts in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, was broadcast live to audiences in 1,500 movie theaters in 50 countries around the world.

This significant global cinematic event, which has barely been mentioned by the corporate media, opened up his music and stinging political indictment of the ruling class to an even larger global viewership.

As pointed out in the WSWS review of the recent performance in Berlin, "The method used by politicians and the media to crack down on Waters is as dirty as it gets. Using the charge of anti-Semitism, any opposition to the oppressive, anti-democratic and extremely belligerent policies of the Israeli government, in which far-right forces set the tone, is to be silenced."

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