

Right-wing violence against students at Berlin's Humboldt University

IYSSE spokesperson files disciplinary complaint against Humboldt University President Julia von Blumenthal

Sven Wurm
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Sven Wurm, a member of the student parliament (StuPa) at Berlin's Humboldt University (HU) and IYSSE candidate in its elections, filed the following disciplinary complaint against University President Julia von Blumenthal with the Chair of the HU Board of Trustees, Edelgard Bulmahn. Von Blumenthal, like her predecessors, has supported right-wing radical Professor Jörg Baberowski, even though he insults, threatens and physically assaults critical students and colleagues.

The IYSSE is currently running in fourth place in this year's StuPa elections. Absentee ballots can be requested by mail until June 20 at 3pm. For more information on the polling stations for the student parliament elections July 4 and on the IYSSE election campaign events, please visit iysse.de.

On June 19, the IYSSE will be holding a meeting entitled "No to a Third World War! Stop the Rearmament!" in the seminar building at Hegelplatz.

Dear Ms Bulmahn,

As a member of the student parliament and a student at Humboldt University, I hereby file a disciplinary complaint against University President Julia von Blumenthal. Although she has been in office for over a year, she has left my disciplinary complaint of February 5, 2020, against the right-wing radical Professor Jörg Baberowski completely unanswered and has thus clearly violated Article 17 of the Constitution, among other things. Moreover, she has supported Baberowski in the face of the student parliament and made it clear that she would do nothing to protect students from right-wing extremist attacks by professors.

As you know, I filed the complaint because Professor Baberowski physically assaulted me, viciously insulted me

and made vulgar threats. Previously, he had torn down and destroyed officially approved IYSSE posters for the StuPa elections. This incident is recorded on video and is absolutely clear: by damaging property, using violence and making threats, a right-wing radical professor is trying to prevent a critical student from his own institute from making his political convictions known.

Despite this unambiguity, you dismissed my disciplinary complaint of May 31, 2021 against the then HU President Sabine Kunst on the grounds that the criminal proceedings against Baberowski for his attack on me were still ongoing and that the complaint could therefore not yet be decided. But the proceedings ended over a year ago in exchange for the payment of 4,000 euros. The fact that Baberowski paid this substantial sum to avoid a trial is tantamount to an admission of guilt. But the president has still not decided on my complaint.

When Ms von Blumenthal (who became president of the university in October 2022) visited the student parliament February 2 of this year, I informed her that with this illegal action, her presidium was flouting several clear and overwhelmingly supported resolutions passed by the student parliament. In the resolution of October 17, 2019, the student parliament unanimously called on the presidium to "initiate measures against Prof. Baberowski's misconduct" and to "revise its declaration of solidarity with Baberowski" published in 2017.

After Baberowski's attack on me, the StuPa called on the HU presidium on June 18, 2020 to "provide students with a safe environment free of intimidation and violence," to "end their support for the radical right-wing professor and to hold Baberowski accountable." In an official letter dated February 16, 2020, the student election committee called on

the university administration to exercise its legal oversight and take action against Baberowski's significant interference in the election.

Ms von Blumenthal refused to proceed, stating that the professor's "political statements" were to be "separated" from his "official activities at the university" and therefore basically "justified," as though attacking a student were the equivalent of making a "political statement!" Ms von Blumenthal did not answer the question of how she intended to protect critical students from future cases of right-wing violence, nor did she answer the question of when she would fulfil her duty to resolve the disciplinary complaints against Professor Baberowski.

Baberowski is the best-known academic of the extreme right. In 2015, he founded the "Salon Baberowski" (as reported by *Die Zeit*), where at least every six months, everything that has a standing and a name in the New Right scene meets. He himself regularly agitates against refugees, beats the drum for brutal wars and, above all, plays down the crimes of the Nazis.

In January 2020, Baberowski repeated to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* the central lie of many Holocaust deniers, that Hitler "did not want to know about Auschwitz." In doing so, he attempted to justify his earlier statement that Hitler "wasn't vicious." The trivialisation of Nazi crimes runs like a thread through his academic work.

The fact that this right-wing extremist *ideologue* has now taken to roaming the campus as a right-wing extremist *activist*, destroying student election advertisements and physically attacking students, is also the responsibility of the university presidium. It has supported and defended the radical right-wing structures that have developed under Baberowski's Chair of Eastern European History for years. Ms von Blumenthal is now continuing this course.

I already explained to you in my complaint against Ms Kunst how Baberowski's aggressive behaviour has been covered up and promoted by the university administration for years.

Even when I informed the presidium on February 12, 2017 that Baberowski had vulgarly insulted me in an official lecture and called on students to disrupt IYSSE events, she defended the radical right-wing professor and described "media attacks" on him as "unacceptable." Even when Baberowski moved on to insulting and threatening other Humboldt University professors for criticising a right-wing petition, the presidium backed him.

Then, in December 2018, about two dozen right-wing extremists responded to a call by Baberowski to disrupt an IYSSE event at Humboldt University. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) functionaries interrupted the speakers, threatened those present and attempted to sing the

Deutschlandlied (national anthem). While the student parliament unanimously condemned this right-wing extremist attack on a student event at HU, the presidium again refused to take a stand against these machinations.

When Baberowski insulted Bafta Sarbo and Juliane Ziegler, members of the university senate, on his Facebook page as "unbelievably stupid" and as "left-wing extremist fanatics" because they had criticised a "dictatorship studies" centre planned by him, the presidium unlawfully refused to settle a disciplinary complaint by the two students, let alone take action against the abusive professor.

At the end of 2020, I finally informed the presidium that a close colleague of Baberowski's had been a well-known neo-Nazi in Hanover in his youth, who, together with right-wing terrorists, had taken part in a demonstration against an exhibition detailing the crimes of the Wehrmacht (Hitler's armed forces). The university's press office answered me monosyllabically that it could not comment publicly on personnel matters. The presidium did not do the slightest thing to protect us students from such instructors.

They did not respond to this clear chronology in their answer to my disciplinary complaint against Sabine Kunst with a single comment, but simply "rejected" the "accusation that the president supports radical right-wing positions and structures."

In fact, there is no innocent explanation for this series of events. The university presidency has systematically covered up Baberowski's repeated verbal and physical violence against students and suppressed necessary criticism of this right-wing radical professor. It is thus responsible for a climate of intimidation in which students are prevented from criticising the far-right views of professors. This is not compatible with a democratic university.

On July 4, the next elections for the student parliament will take place, in which students must have the right to campaign for their candidates and present their positions without intimidation and threats. I therefore call on you to deal with my complaint immediately, to ensure that the elections take place without disruption, and to take disciplinary action against both Ms von Blumenthal and Mr Baberowski.

Yours sincerely
Sven Wurm



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Socialist Equality Party visit:
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