

Letters in support of IYSSE at Humboldt University

4 July 2023

The WSWS has received numerous letters calling on the university administration of Berlin's Humboldt University to stop the obstruction of the IYSSE's anti-war election campaign for the student parliament by Ukrainian nationalists and right-wing students and professors and to exercise its legal supervision over the elections that took place Tuesday.

Dear Sirs and Madams,

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality in the US calls on workers and students around the world to come to the defense of the IYSSE at Humboldt University in Germany, who's campaign for Student Parliament has come under attack by far-right Ukrainian forces. We also call upon the university administration of Humboldt to oppose these attacks and ensure free and fair elections.

Over the last few weeks Elisabeth Bauer, a Ukrainian nationalist activist and student assistant at the Chair of East Slavic Literature and Culture at Humboldt University, has regularly bragged about destroying IYSSE election material. While the "Ukrainian Society HU Berlin," a group that has never existed on campus before, has posted slanderous material falsely claiming that the IYSSE is promoting "Russian imperialist propaganda."

The allegations against the IYSSE at Humboldt, which echo similar slanders by far-right Ukrainian forces who attempted to censor IYSSE meetings in Canada and the United States, are patently false and are easily disproved by numerous statements by the IYSSE denouncing the reactionary invasion by the oligarchic Putin regime. What these forces actually oppose is the fight by the IYSSE, and our supporters in Russia and Ukraine, to arm workers and youth with a historical perspective—which would expose the central role of US and German imperialism in instigating the war—as part of our fight to rebuild the anti-war movement and avert nuclear catastrophe. The IYSSE at Humboldt has played a central role in the struggle against German imperialism and the danger of fascism returning to power in Germany.

The "Ukrainian Society" is in fact following in the footsteps of Jörg Baberowski, a right-wing extremist professor, who three years ago was filmed tearing down IYSSE election posters and physically assaulting Sven Wurm, an IYSSE member and student at Humboldt. Baberowski for years has worked to justify Germany's remilitarization and rehabilitate the legacy of Nazism, going so far as to claim that "Hitler was not vicious." In the same vein as Baberowski, far-right Ukrainian forces and their imperialist backers are working to promote Ukrainian Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera.

The IYSSE at Humboldt has shown immense courage in its consistent struggle against the far-right and the transformation of a prestigious German university into an imperialist think tank. We encourage workers and youth to study their election platform and for students at Humboldt to express their opposition to militarism and fascism by voting for the IYSSE in the upcoming election.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality in the US

To the Presidium,

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Australia condemns in the strongest terms the right-wing attacks on the IYSSE election campaign for student parliament at Humboldt University.

The "Ukrainian Society" are attempting to prevent students from coming across a genuine socialist, internationalist and anti-war perspective by destroying IYSSE posters.

The IYSSE is being targeted because it represents the only genuine anti-war tendency on campus. The IYSSE at Humboldt has consistently fought against militarism and right-wing ideology on campus. This is part of the IYSSE's international fight to establish an anti-war movement of youth and students. To end the conflict requires the unification of workers in Ukraine, Russia and around the globe against the capitalist system that is the cause of war. This can only be carried out in opposition to the US and NATO, the principal instigators of the war, and the reactionary Russian nationalism of Putin's capitalist regime.

IYSSE events in New Zealand, the US and Canada have been attacked by organisations linked with the Ukrainian far right who campaigned for the events to be cancelled and attended them to stage provocations.

Here in Australia, the IYSSE held a successful anti-war meeting at Sydney's Macquarie University. Far-right Ukrainian nationalists contacted university management in a bid to shut the IYSSE's meeting down before it took place. Less than two months later, university management rejected the affiliation of the IYSSE club at Macquarie University on the utterly false claim that we share the "same aims and purpose" as the pseudo-left, pro-war Macquarie Socialists club.

These attacks on the IYSSE internationally are occurring because the ruling elite around the world are concerned about the response that the anti-war, internationalist and revolutionary perspective being advanced by the IYSSE amid an historic breakdown of global capitalism is finding.

It is in young people's interests to be able to encounter and discuss the anti-war perspective of the IYSSE. Their future is being threatened by the danger of nuclear catastrophe.

The historical precedents of the emergence of the far right in periods of war in Germany bear recalling. We echo the IYSSE at Humboldt's demand that action be taken to hold the far-right and militarist ideologues at Humboldt to account for their attempts to silence the anti-war perspective of the IYSSE.

Sincerely

Evrin Yazgin

National Convenor, IYSSE Australia

Dear University Management,

I am writing to express my grave concern about the ongoing disruption and sabotage of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) election campaign at Humboldt University in Berlin.

It is obvious that an attempt is being made here to silence the IYSSE and suppress any criticism of the war and rearmament.

As a renowned educational institution that stands for freedom of expression and democratic values, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin should

be a place where different points of view can be openly discussed. It is therefore extremely disturbing that students who wish to engage with the IYSSE are prevented from freely expressing themselves and informing others about their socialist ideas.

The systematic disruption of the IYSSE election campaign, such as the removal of posters and other information materials, is a clear violation of the fundamental right to freedom of expression. These activities clearly serve the purpose of weakening the IYSSE and preventing open discussion on important issues such as war and the link between capitalism, war and rearmament.

I therefore urge you to take immediate action to ensure that the IYSSE election campaign can take place free from disruption and that students' right to freedom of expression is respected. It is crucial that the university issues clear instructions to all students and staff to ensure that such disruptions do not continue to be tolerated.

This is not the first time that the IYSSE has had its political work restricted. A member of the IYSSE was physically assaulted by Professor Jörg Baberowski when he was caught by the student taking down IYSSE posters. No action was taken against this either. Therefore, I request you to take appropriate steps to bring those responsible for disrupting the IYSSE election campaign to justice. It is important that such attacks on freedom of expression and democratic values do not go unpunished. I appeal to your commitment to an open, tolerant and pluralistic environment at Humboldt University in Berlin. It is of great importance that the university is a place where students can discuss different ideas and viewpoints without fear of reprisals.

I expect a timely response to this concern and thank you in advance for your attention and commitment.

Yours sincerely

JT

As a teacher of history from the United States and part of the global education community, and even more so as a person recognizing the lessons of the past are indeed the signposts for today, I call on you to take positive action on the request of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) for you and the Humboldt University management to exercise your legal oversight over the Student Parliament elections and to condemn the actions of Professor Jörg Baberowski and Elisabeth Bauer, a student assistant in the Chair of East Slavic Literatures and Cultures, and hold them accountable. The IYSSE has exposed and criticized the major falsification of history and the militaristic positions of Baberowski and other professors at Humboldt University and has been elected to the Student Parliament for eight consecutive years with up to seven percent of the vote.

This is an international and vital issue in the United States, Germany, and internationally because governments and oligarchies globally are undemocratically placing the universities more and more directly at the service of militarism in a madness leading into World War Three. Lessons of history are being ignored and a climate of intimidation created against the IYSSE for pointing this out. A self-proclaimed "Ukrainian Society HU Berlin," falsely accuses the IYSSE of "Russian imperialist propaganda," an absurd accusation because the IYSSE has strongly condemned Putin's reactionary invasion of Ukraine in its flyers and at its events. However, the IYSSE has won support from students in pointing to the willingness of NATO to use the Ukrainian people as cannon fodder in a war NATO, not least the US and Germany, provoked in order to have Ukraine join NATO with the purpose of extending hegemony over Russia and its resources.

Defense of democracy and the future of humanity against fascism and war are again at a turning point in history. Along with the actions of the young people and the working class internationally, they require your action.

Sincerely, HL

Dear HU President,

I protest against the unequal treatment, obstruction and harassment of the IYSSE and its election campaign at HU. I would never have thought that after the experiences with Hitler's fascism at a German university such a suppression of socialist positions as described in the article by the IYSSE could be possible again.

The suspicion suggests itself that the HU is instead to be developed again into a cadre school of the tone-setting and warring class, which is again sending tanks to Russia.

MK

Dear Presidium, Dear Ms. Blumenthal,

I have learned that you are condoning the sabotage of the student parliament election campaign at Humboldt University in Berlin; and not for the first time either. The posters and flyers of the IYSSE for the election campaign for the Student Parliament are being systematically torn down and removed. Elisabeth Bauer, a student employee in a department at HU, confessed to tearing down the election posters and to continue doing so. Recently, a completely unknown "Ukrainian Society HU Berlin" has appeared and is destroying the posters and making completely wild and untenable insinuations against the IYSSE. These attacks are nothing new.

Three years ago, Professor Baberowski, who is supported by the university and continues to be employed by it, dared to destroy the election posters of the IYSSE and to attack and insult an IYSSE student parliament deputy and student at his institute who caught him doing so. To this day the university has done nothing to condemn this behaviour.

It seems that it is not enough for HU management to employ an openly right-wing incompetent who trivialises Hitler and the extermination campaign, including the Holocaust. By the university's inaction, it is also protecting him. This year, too, HU management is doing absolutely nothing to protect the democratic rights of students. I hereby call on the university leadership to do their duty, to condemn these attacks and to allow a democratic election. Otherwise, they will bring back memories of the darkest chapters of the Humboldt University of Berlin.

Respectfully,

cb

Humboldt Univ. must stop supporting right-wing extremists who are attacking the IYSSE, which is campaigning for Student Parliament. Far-right Ukrainian nationalists in NATO countries, like the US and Canada, are similarly trying to suppress with slander the socialist anti-war message of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE).

Real democracy demands an honest debate and the IYSSE must be supported in their efforts to counter the calls for unending global wars by right-wing NATO supporters, who are actually promoting the suffering of the people of Ukraine in aid of giving NATO a base from which to attack its competitor nation, Russia.

The IYSSE has an important role to play in preventing the slide towards World War III the right-wing is baying for.

LJ, USA



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