

Spontaneous protests in solidarity with Palestinians in German cities

Our reporters

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A number of spontaneous pro-Palestinian demonstrations have taken place in Germany this week, despite efforts by the government, police and courts to ban all protests against the Israeli army's brutal crackdown on Gaza.

On Saturday evening, about 50 people demonstrated in solidarity with Palestinians in the Neukölln district of Berlin. Police broke up the protest by force stating that, according to a police spokesperson, public safety was threatened by "anti-Israel and violence-glorifying chants" and the wearing of masks.

On Monday evening, more than 100 demonstrators expressed their support for Palestinians in Duisburg. The mostly young participants waved Palestine flags and held up homemade placards. The demonstration, which began at Brückenplatz, Hockfeld, near the city centre, was accompanied by a huge contingent of press and television media as well as police. A hundred police officers, dog handlers, motorbike police and numerous plainclothes officers were deployed.

Formerly an industrial area, Hochfeld is now one of the poorest and most heavily migrant districts in the city. More than one in four adults receives basic social security and among under-15s this figure rises to over 50 percent.

The association "Palästina Solidarität Duisburg" had registered the demonstration at short notice. The police in Duisburg also moved against the participants, although according to their own statement the protest was trouble-free. They took two people into custody and the public prosecutor's office is investigating some participants, alleging they disturbed the public peace with their statements, which were made in a foreign language.

In fact, the demonstration was characterised above all by expressions of solidarity with Palestinians suffering

under occupation. "I condemn violence in any form. But the Palestinians are in the process of liberating themselves. Palestine is occupied and Israel is the occupying power," said Jamal, who came to Germany from Palestine with his parents 44 years ago. "I have more in common with Germany than with Palestine. But I feel for the people from whom my parents came and the land from which they were expelled several times."

Jamal addressed the vile hypocrisy of the German and American governments. "It has always been brushed aside, nobody cared when the Israelis expelled the Palestinians. UN resolutions have been passed against Israel. But nothing has happened. Now the Palestinians are reacting, they want to liberate themselves. And all hell is breaking loose all over the world. Everyone is turning against the oppressed. And that's not fair. It's one-sided, it's not okay, it's inhuman. For my part everyone is a human being, no matter where they come from or where they live. When the Israelis are terrorised, everyone shouts out loud, and justifiably. But when Palestinians or Afghans are terrorised, it doesn't matter. That's not OK. That's why I'm here."

Asked about the Israeli government and its terrorisation of Palestinians, Jamal replied, "You've seen the demonstrations by Israelis against their right-wing government. How strong is the rule of law or democracy in Israel? The nation-state law, according to which the state of Israel is reserved for the Jewish population, excludes all non-Jews. That's democracy for Europe and the US, but for me it's not democratic."

Jamal referred to interviews he has seen with far-right Israelis: "They say Palestine is their land and that Arabs should clear off. But excuse me, I can't do anything with that. That's what Muslim fanatics also say."

Asked about the prospect of Israeli and Palestinian, Jewish and Muslim workers uniting, Jamal replied, “That would be brilliant. Honestly, this is an issue that makes my life hard because I think as long as there are religious fanatics on both sides, there will be no peace. I wish that, after the Israelis have suffered as much as the Palestinians, people on both sides would get fed up with violence. We have to work together—all religions living in peace.”

Events in Israel and the Occupied Territories were also the subject of discussion at the joint meeting of action committees of German rail, postal and public service workers, which is mobilising workers to unite independently of the trade unions to assert their rights and prepare strikes.

There was unanimous solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people at the meeting, with many workers sharing links to families in the Middle East, the Arab and Muslim world.

M.M. who comes from Iraq and is a shunting attendant and member of the Rail Action Committee, said he found it remarkable that the reporting on the conflict was as one-sided as it was. One only heard what one was supposed to hear. In the runup to the meeting, he had already told the WSWS: “Anyone who doesn’t just read the *BILD* tabloid newspaper naturally knows what’s going on: the Palestine-Israel conflict goes back 75 years.”

“War is never a pretty thing,” M.M. stressed, “but a snake that drives you into a corner will eventually bite. The world is slowly beginning to understand what the conflict is about: so many Palestinians have already lost their own children and had to bury them.” He referred to the children and young people who have been snatched from Gaza and disappeared in Israeli prisons over the years, or who have been killed in Israeli bombing raids.

He said: “These people had to bury their own children. I’m sure that’s true of many of those who have taken hostages in Israel now.” M.M. raised the social situation of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip, with its just over 2 million inhabitants, “That’s several million Palestinians, and you have to realise that only a fraction of them have certificates to work inside Israel, because everything in Gaza has been destroyed. And when there is such high unemployment, you can imagine that at some point a father or mother of a

family, no longer able to feed their family, will side with those who are trying to change things.”

He adds: “One thing that I personally find really bad here in Germany is that, as a worker, you don’t even have the right to do anything anymore, to work and contribute anything, to feed your family.” M.M. reported that his family originally came from Iraq, where more than a million civilians were killed in the US invasion and occupation. Other workers came from Syria and have their own experiences in Germany, i.e., of subsisting for five years without a work permit and not being allowed to leave the city.

M.M. emphasised that the new Middle East conflict did not come out of the blue. “The same applies to the conflict with Russia, by the way,” he concluded. “Since 2015, tens of thousands of Russians have been under siege in eastern Ukraine, but nobody talks about that here. Now, regarding Israel and Palestine, journalists only say what benefits the government. It’s the same in the world of work: we are only shown in public what helps the political elite, while we are left in the lurch.”



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