

Oppose the outlawing of solidarity protests in defense of Gaza!

Alex Lantier, Johannes Stern**12 October 2023**

The onslaught by the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu against the Palestinian uprising in Gaza has provoked anger among workers and youth across Europe and internationally. In response, imperialist governments are moving to criminalize opposition and abolish basic democratic rights.

As Israel cuts off food and water and prepares a ground invasion that will kill tens of thousands of people, governments in Europe as well as the United States are banning protests against the massive onslaught.

German police have banned protests in Berlin and Frankfurt, an action that Berlin police defended on X/Twitter, claiming protests might lead to “anti-Semitic outbursts, glorification of violence, as well as violence.” German authorities also banned a Berlin protest against school violence that was planned after a teacher physically assaulted a student who came to school with a Palestinian flag. They claimed that protests against the assault on this student could lead to “incitement” and “anti-Semitic” statements.

Germany’s ruling Social Democratic Party (SPD) is demanding the right to ban protests and outlaw organizations. Bans on protests, said SPD General Secretary Kevin Kühnert, “are exactly the signs that are needed now, and with precisely this justification, namely that public order in the city is endangered.” Kühnert also called for a ban on the Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network Samidoun, saying that “if there is any legal possibility to ban this group now as well, it should be used as soon as possible.”

In France, the Interior Ministry has banned protests in solidarity with Gaza called in Paris, Lyon and Marseille, citing “the risks of disturbing public order” they supposedly pose. Moreover, the French government has decreed that making statements in favor of the uprising in Gaza is a crime, allowing for the prosecution of political parties making such statements.

Justice Minister Eric Dupont-Moretti issued a three-page brief warning that the Israeli-Gaza war could lead not only to terrorist attacks on individual Jews in France, but also to

“statements hailing the attacks, presenting them as legitimate resistance to Israel.” Such statements, he asserted, constitute “anti-Semitic crimes” such as “apologetics for terrorism or direct provocation to acts of terrorism.” Such actions must face, he added, “systematic and firm criminal prosecution, primarily via summary judgment.”

Among the parties and associations that could be prosecuted, Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin confirmed yesterday, is the New Anti-Capitalist Party—a party whose presidential candidates have in previous years received millions of votes.

Similar threats are being made in every imperialist country. In Britain, a protest in London was met by a heavily armed police deployment. Home Secretary Suella Braverman called on police to use the full force of the law against “displays of support for Hamas.” In Australia, the New South Wales state Labor government banned a march opposing Israeli aggression this weekend in Sydney.

In the United States, student groups at Harvard that issued a statement denouncing Israeli crimes and calling attention to the historical background to the uprising in Gaza have faced demands that they be disaffiliated. Both Democratic and Republican politicians have called for protests to be banned. The president of New York University’s Student Bar Association has been the subject of relentless denunciations in the media and has had a job offer revoked for denouncing Israeli atrocities.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International unequivocally condemn these bans on demonstrations. One of the most basic democratic rights, the right to free speech, is under assault.

According to the imperialist governments, the population must simply accept the official media line. Those involved in the protests may not support the actions of Hamas, but they oppose the completely dishonest distortions and fabrications in the media and are appalled at the relentless atrocity propaganda aimed at justifying Israel’s assault on Gaza, a crime of monumental proportions. Many of those

protesting point out that the atrocities of the Israeli government are never condemned.

More is involved than just banning protests against Israeli crimes. The ruling elites of all the major capitalist countries are aware that they confront growing domestic opposition to their war policies and a developing movement in the working class against inequality and exploitation. The conditions are being created to suppress all social and political opposition by placing dictatorial powers in the hands of the state.

The arguments used to justify these dictatorial measures are a tissue of political and historical lies.

While the ruling elite falsely claims that those protesting Israel's actions support "terrorism," the Israeli government is preparing an act of state-sponsored terror on a massive scale.

On Monday, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant ordered the complete closure of Gaza, declaring: "There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel. We are fighting human animals and we will act accordingly."

Since then, this policy has been put into practice. The Israeli air force continually bombs the densely populated Gaza Strip, which has already cost the lives of more than 1,000 civilians, including many women and children. An imminent ground offensive by the Israeli army threatens tens of thousands of lives.

This recalls the rhetoric and methods of the Nazis in World War II, who responded to resistance with brutal collective punishment. In occupied Poland, Nazi occupation forces crushed the Jewish uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943 and the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, razing entire neighbourhoods to the ground and killing tens of thousands. In the Czech Republic, after the assassination of the head of the Reich Security Main Office Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazis massacred the population of the village of Lidice.

As for anti-Semitism, it is not the oppressed Palestinians and the tens of millions worldwide who show solidarity with them who promote anti-Semitism, but the imperialist governments, by seeking to collectively associate Jewish people with the criminal policies of the Netanyahu regime.

Europe's imperialist governments slander solidarity with Gaza as anti-Semitic while openly basing themselves on far-right forces. French Interior Minister Darmanin is a close supporter of the *Action Française* and is notorious for his public attacks on kosher and halal food. Italy is ruled by the fascistic politician and Mussolini admirer Giorgia Meloni. And the ruling class in Germany is once again building a fascist party, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), and defending academics, such as Professor Jörg Baberowski, who publicly trivialise the crimes of Hitler and the Nazis.

As they wage war on Russia in Ukraine, the leading

NATO powers are supporting and arming a Ukrainian regime that celebrates Nazi collaborators like Stepan Bandera and mobilises neo-Nazi militias like the Azov Battalion.

On September 22, less than three weeks ago, the entire Canadian parliament, in the presence of the ambassadors of all of the G7 countries, rose in a standing ovation for Waffen SS veteran and Nazi war criminal Yaroslav Hunka.

All these governments know that they are widely hated as they impose deep cuts in living standards, slashing real wages and social rights in order to divert hundreds of billions of euros to the war in Ukraine, military rearmament and tax cuts for the rich. They are terrified that the development of the class struggle will upend all of their reactionary policies.

Earlier this year, there were mass strikes against inflation in Germany, Britain and across Europe, while in France, millions of workers and youth protested against massively unpopular pension cuts that President Emmanuel Macron imposed in open defiance of the will of the French people. The American ruling class is confronting a strike wave not seen in decades, which the trade union apparatus is seeking desperately to control.

The imperialists' attempt to ban protests must be taken as a warning by workers and youth. As imperialist governments plunge ahead with ever more reckless and reactionary policies, they move to scrap democratic rights and impose dictatorial regimes. Just as the Palestinians need the support of workers in Israel, Europe and internationally to halt the Israeli invasion and end the occupation, the working class must mobilize internationally in a socialist defense of the Palestinians to halt imperialism's downward spiral into dictatorship and war.



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