German parliament in a war frenzy

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October 12, 2023 will go down in history as the date on which all the parties represented in the Bundestag (federal parliament), from the Left Party to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), closed ranks and unanimously declared their support for a policy of unrestrained militarism and political repression.

The Bundestag gave the Israeli government carte blanche to take cruel revenge on the Palestinian population for the uprising in Gaza and promised to support it by all available means. It threatened with military retaliation all regional organisations and powers that dared to help the Palestinians and pledged to prosecute, punish, and suppress any expression of sympathy with the Palestinians in Germany.

By the time the Bundestag met on Thursday, the Israeli government had long made it clear that it was planning war crimes on a massive scale. It had already begun to turn the Gaza Strip, where more than two million people live crammed into a tiny space with no means of escape, into a hell.

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant had announced, “No electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is sealed off. We are fighting human animals, and we are acting accordingly.” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had vowed to kill all members of Hamas, which rules Gaza. “We will crush and destroy them like the world destroyed the ‘Islamic State’,” he threatened. Every Hamas member was “a dead man.” Since Hamas is deeply entrenched in Gaza, this means killing hundreds of thousands.

For days, the Gaza Strip has been bombed nonstop by the Israeli military, entire residential areas are already in ruins, and the population is cut off from electricity, water, and food. More than 1,400 people, including many children and women, had died by noon on Thursday, according to the official count. Thousands more are injured, with hospitals unable to provide further care.

The Israeli army is massing more than 300,000 troops on the Gaza border, almost twice the total strength of the present German army, and preparing for a ground invasion that is widely expected to be long and bloody. “The scope of this is going to be bigger than before and more severe. It’s not going to be clean,” the British *Economist* magazine quotes Israeli military spokesman Richard Hecht as saying. And Israeli UN envoy Gilad Erdan adds: “The era of reasoning with these savages is over. Now is the time to obliterate Hamas terror infrastructure, to completely erase it.”

Nevertheless, not a word of criticism of Israeli actions was uttered in the entire Bundestag debate, let alone a syllable of empathy with the Palestinians. Parliamentarians from all parties outdid each other in assuring the Israeli government of their support. Israeli Ambassador Ron Prosor, seated in the gallery, received a standing ovation.

The minutes of the session note dozens of times: “Applause throughout the House” and “Applause from the SPD, the CDU/CSU, the BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN and the FDP, as well as from members of the AfD and the LEFT PARTY.” In the end, the Bundestag passed a resolution that had been jointly presented by the three government parties and the CDU/CSU. It was adopted without any dissenting votes or abstentions. Members of the AfD and the Left Party also voted unanimously in favour.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) opened the debate with a government statement. He denounced the rebellious Palestinians as “terrorists” and gave the Israeli military a blank cheque. “Israel has the right under international law to defend itself and its citizens against this barbaric attack,” he said. “At this moment there is only one place for Germany: at Israel’s side.”

Scholz denied any connection between the decades-long oppression of Palestinians by the Israeli regime, which has repeatedly organised massacres, annexed large parts of the West Bank with the support of fascist settlers and turned Gaza into an open-air prison which it bombs at regular intervals. “Nothing, but nothing, justifies the terror of Hamas!” he claimed.

For Scholz, brutal violence is only permitted when it

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originates from oppressors, not from the oppressed. The Nazis had once used similar arguments to denounce as "terrorism" and brutally destroy any resistance that came from partisans, Jews, or other victims of their murderous politics. All the other speakers in the debate followed Scholz unreservedly and descended into a veritable war frenzy.

CDU leader Friedrich Merz justified in advance every war crime committed by the Israeli government, "But one thing is already clear: There must be no cracks in our solidarity, even if Israel does what is necessary to restore its security."

Omid Nouripour (Greens) said: "This is not about two parties in dispute. It is about a democratic state defending itself against sheer terror. That is why there is no equidistance, to anyone. We only stand by Israel's side."

Dietmar Bartsch (Left Party) spoke of "a new dimension of terror" that "simply wants to slaughter Jews" and reaffirmed "our solidarity with Israel."

SPD leader Lars Klingbeil said that Hamas' terrorist acts had made "sustained peace a distant prospect." Now it was necessary to "fight terror consistently."

First to speak on behalf of the AfD was Alexander Gauland, who has called the Holocaust just so much "bird shit" in a thousand years of glorious German history. "This barbaric attack with almost exclusively civilian victims must be answered radically," he said, calling for a campaign against Islam: "When we stand with Israel, we also defend our way of living and thinking against a politicised Islam."

His caucus colleague Jürgen Braun accused the "old parties" of having "allowed precisely such people as the Gaza assassins to enter our country undisturbed for years." Only the AfD had "clearly opposed the immigration of Jew-haters and mass murderers."

CDU Secretary General Carsten Linnemann most clearly summed up the parliamentarians' enthusiasm for war when he spoke to broadcaster ZDF about a visit by Israeli Ambassador Prosor to the CDU parliamentary group. He said, "That was historic for me, I will never forget that meeting." He reported that the ambassador had said: "Of course we try not to hit innocent people, but of course it will happen. And we have to hit back so hard that nobody even thinks of attacking Israel again. And that will be tough." The caucus had applauded, he said. "We paid respect and I really got goosebumps."

Goosebumps in the face of a "tough" action that hits many innocent people—such feelings were previously reserved for radical neo-Nazis!

In his government statement, Scholz did not stop at attacking the Palestinians. He also accused Iran of complicity, without any proof, and blatantly threatened Tehran with war.

"It is true that we do not yet have any tangible evidence that Iran has given concrete and operational support to this cowardly attack by Hamas," the chancellor said. "But it is clear to all of us: Without Iranian support over the past years, Hamas would not have been capable of these unprecedented attacks on Israeli territory."

Turning to Tehran and Lebanese Hezbollah, he threatened, "Our message is clear: it would be an unforgivable mistake to attack Israel."

On this issue, too, all the other speakers followed him. Above all, CDU leader Merz made it clear that military action in the Middle East was already being discussed in ruling circles. "Since last Saturday, we know that besides the war in Ukraine, freedom and peace have to be defended in a next place in our wider neighbourhood," he said.

All parties also agreed to suppress any sign of solidarity with the Palestinians in Germany. In his statement, Scholz announced the banning of Samidoun, a network for the defence of Palestinian prisoners, and a ban on the activities of Hamas, which is already classified as a terrorist organisation by the EU.

The closing ranks of all the parties in the Bundestag, their enthusiasm for war and their efforts to suppress any dissenting opinion are not only a reaction to the Palestinian uprising in Gaza. They are reacting to the growing opposition to a social system that has nothing to offer except exploitation, social inequality, and war. They have their backs to the wall and are reacting as they did 90 years ago, with dictatorship and war.

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