

Brutal repression of Palestinians and peace activists in Germany

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Following the unanimous agreement by all members of the German parliament (Bundestag) to back the German government's war policy in the Middle East and its support for Netanyahu's genocidal policies, state authorities are now suppressing all critical opinions using vicious police state measures. Across Germany, the police are brutally cracking down on peace activists and migrant workers.

Sonnenallee in the Berlin district of Neukölln is under siege. Anyone who leaves their house wearing the wrong clothes is immediately taken away by the omnipresent police and placed in custody. All it takes is for someone to wear a Palestinian scarf or display the Palestinian flag. The social media is full of videos showing the brutality of the German police.

Demonstrations in solidarity with civilians in Gaza are banned in the capital city, as are all gatherings criticizing the massacre in Gaza. The reason given by the police and government is that antisemitic statements could be made at the protests—this, although the fascist members of the German National Party (NPD) and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) regularly carry out their own racist parades.

The hypocrisy of such reasoning was revealed by the ban on a demonstration with the title “Jewish Berliners Against Violence in the Middle East—Against the Murder of Our Fellow Human Beings in Gaza, Jewish and Palestinian People Have the Same Right to Live.” In seeking to justify the ban, police declared there was the danger of popular incitement.

Following the ban, Iris Hefets from the board of the “Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East” walked alone with a sign across Hermannplatz in Neukölln, insisting that as a single person, she did not meet the criteria of a gathering. Nevertheless, the police forbade her to carry the sign with the inscription “As a

Jew & Israeli Stop the Genocide in Gaza” and took her into custody.

This means that Jews in Germany are not permitted to criticize the genocidal policies of the far-right government in Israel, and this policy is then justified with the mendacious claim that it is about opposing antisemitism.

The actions of the state go far beyond the banning of meetings. In a letter to the city's schools, the Berlin Department for Education, Youth and Family declared that wearing Palestinian scarves or displaying flags, as well as shouting “Free Palestine” can from now on be banned in schools, even if such activities “did not overstep the boundaries of criminal liability.”

In the event of a violation, schools could react with “educational and disciplinary measures,” the letter continues. In addition, schools are urged to report suspected offenses directly to the police.

In numerous other German cities such as Munich, Cologne, and Düsseldorf, bans on assemblies and bans on already authorized rallies were also issued, most of which were upheld by the courts. In each case, the police used great brutality against anyone who opposed the bans.

In Frankfurt, the administrative court first lifted a previous ban on a demonstration. When hundreds then poured onto Opernplatz early Saturday afternoon, the police declared, only twelve minutes before the official start of the protest, that the Hessian administrative court in Kassel had upheld the original ban and demanded demonstrators vacate the square immediately. Dozens of squad cars and heavily armed police with two water cannons lined the square while police helicopters flew noisily over the city.

Members of the Socialist Equality Party (SGP), who left the site of the rally and distributed passers-by

leaflets reading “Down with the Netanyahu Government! Stop the Imperialist-Backed Zionist Offensive Against Gaza!” were stopped by the police. All of the leaflets were confiscated on the grounds that they needed to be checked first—a clear form of censorship of a political party.

The extent of the suppression of the most basic democratic rights is unprecedented in the history of post-war Germany and is openly assuming dictatorial forms. The government is responding to the enormous opposition that is building up against its relentless militarism.

In Frankfurt, 6,000 people defied the ban on demonstrations and spontaneously gathered at Rathenauplatz and Hauptwache, where they were attacked by the police. In Stuttgart, around 2,000 opponents of the massacre in Gaza gathered, with 600 in Braunschweig, 700 in Düsseldorf, and over 200 in Cologne. In Berlin, a pro-Palestine rally planned for Saturday was banned by the authorities. Nevertheless, a gathering of around 150 protesters increased to 1,000 participants in the evening. On Sunday, according to official estimates, more than 1,000 participants gathered on Potsdamer Platz in Berlin to protest against the ban on assembly, the restrictions on freedom of expression as well as the war against the Palestinians. Police forces only managed to break up the rally using arrests and the use of pepper grips and so-called “pain grips.”

The SGP used a European election rally at Hermannplatz in Berlin-Neukölln on Saturday to protest against the massacre in Gaza and explain the party's socialist perspective to liberate the Palestinian people and unite Arab and Israeli workers. Police officers present were visibly nervous, but did not dare to stop the rally.

The editor of the German edition of the *World Socialist Web Site*, Johannes Stern, strongly condemned the war of the Netanyahu government against the Palestinians and the complicity of the German government and other imperialist powers.

Regarding the accusation of antisemitism, Stern said: “It is not the oppressed Palestinians and the hundreds of millions of people worldwide, who express solidarity with them, who promote antisemitism but the imperialist powers.” In Germany, he said, antisemitism and the trivialization of Nazi crimes were being

advanced by the same parties that now support the massacre of Palestinians.

Many passers-by who heard the speech stopped to talk with SGP members. Workers, students, pupils, and pensioners welcomed the SGP's internationalist and socialist perspective and signed to permit the party to participate in the European elections, while demanding an end to the massacre.

To take up the struggle against war and oppression both in Gaza and worldwide, Stern concluded his speech by stressing, “The urgent need of the hour is the development of a united mass movement of the international working class against the capitalist warmongers and for socialism. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei and its sister parties of the Fourth International are fighting for, and this is the significance of our participation in the European elections.”



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