

Berlin: Thousands demonstrate against genocide in Gaza

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Mass protests against the Netanyahu government's genocide of the Palestinian people are increasing worldwide. Despite bans and massive police presence, demonstrations involving thousands took place in numerous cities in Germany over the weekend.

The Israeli military has dropped thousands of bombs on the defenceless Palestinian population in three weeks, reducing half of Gaza's housing to rubble, destroying hospitals and schools, cutting off electricity, water and food supplies, and killing nearly 8,000 Palestinians, including 3,600 children. Some 1,800 children are missing. More than 1.4 million Palestinians (62 percent) are fleeing northern Gaza for the south.

The intensification of the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, which Netanyahu calls a "second phase of the war," and the ignoring of a UN resolution calling for a ceasefire brought thousands onto the streets in Berlin alone. Israel's UN ambassador Gilad Erdan had attacked the resolution, saying, "This ridiculous resolution has the audacity to call for a ceasefire."

The largest rally in Berlin took place on Saturday at Oranienplatz in Kreuzberg. More than 10,000 participants gathered on the square, expressing their solidarity with Palestinian flags, and strongly condemning Israel's attacks with placards and banners.

WSWS reporters and members of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) spoke to many participants, all of whom condemned the genocide against the Palestinians and the German government's stance.

"What is going on in Gaza now—this is unacceptable!" said one demonstrator. "This is not war, this is genocide, the destruction of a population!" She stressed, "Anti-Israel does not mean being antisemitic." Judaism is "something completely different" from what the state of Israel is doing right now. She described the bans on demonstrations in Germany against the genocide as "very anti-democratic": "There should be freedom of expression here, you don't see that anymore."

Another demonstrator said he had come to the rally despite the police presence because "the children have no one left if no one does anything." He said the Palestinians were being called "terrorists" although "everyone knows who the terrorists are—the Zionists. There are many Jews standing here with us today, but you can see that German policy is wrong. The whole world, including Islamic countries, are watching the genocide."

He added, "My family is perishing there right now, but nothing can be done. We Palestinians are here because we were chased out of our homeland."

He condemned the German government's policy as hypocritical, saying refugees from Ukraine were being taken in, but "What about Syrians? They are not even allowed to work!" Gaza, he said, "has been turned into an open prison for 75 years. And now they don't even get water. Is that humane? How can Germany still stand by and watch?"

Metin denounced Chancellor Olaf Scholz and the parties in the Bundestag. He said it was unacceptable "to condone genocide for political reasons and to take a position that is clearly inhuman and anti-human." The German government, he said, "allows innocent people to be killed before its eyes and trivialises the whole thing under the motto: Israel has the right to defend itself."

Hussein blamed the genocide in Gaza on the US and the NATO powers. What is happening in Palestine was caused by "the big imperialists, the big powers," he said. "They are all for the government in Israel—no ifs and buts—and we all know what kind of government it is!" In the Middle East, he said, it is as much about geopolitical interests and US supremacy as it is in the Ukraine war: "I am 70 years old, I know very well that this conflict, like Ukraine, is about hegemonic power. I am a Palestinian from Syria. I have experienced this myself."

The crime against the Palestinian people, which represents a new murderous height in the Israeli state's 75 years of oppression of Palestinians, is meeting with growing protest among the world's population and poses increasingly urgent questions about a political perspective.

Several participants expressed perplexity about a possible solution to the conflict. "A reasonable two-state solution is becoming more and more unrealistic," said one. The aggressive Israeli "settlement policy has already occupied so much territory. I have both Palestinian and Jewish friends, and in the end they all don't know what to do next."

Many were open to the perspective of the WSWS and SGP, which advocates a common struggle of Palestinian and Israeli workers, a mass movement against war and an internationalist socialist perspective.

WSWS reporters also intervened at another, smaller rally. This took place on Washingtonplatz in front of Berlin's main train station, after it had been moved twice by the police, most recently from the authorised square in front of the Brandenburg Gate. Here, about 300 participants gathered under the demand "For Peace in the Middle East."

Asked about the situation in Gaza and the reaction of the

German government, **Nefri**, a Palestinian who has lived in Germany for a long time, struggling for words, said, “The war in Gaza is extreme and for the people there it’s unacceptable, especially the situation of the children is very hard.”

We should “take heart” and work “to help the children, to help the Palestinian people above all.” She said it was “an indictment” that Foreign Minister Baerbock and the German government were speaking out against a ceasefire. “The bombing must first stop” and then “we must talk to each other.”

When SGP Chairman Christoph Vandreier explained that the SGP was fighting for a joint struggle of the Israeli and Palestinian working classes, for a general strike and a worldwide movement of the working class against genocide and for Palestinian rights, she strongly agreed.

Speaking further, Nefri expressed concern about the increasingly openly right-wing and anti-refugee policies of the German government. “My parents were refugees themselves and the refugee policy—well I don’t know what to say about it. It’s getting worse and worse here!” She wondered “what it will look like here in 20 or 10 years. Who are we going to vote for anymore!”

“We are here today because we are against war,” **Bilal** said. “We want to live in peace. We want to have our rights as Palestinians, in Palestine and in Germany, that’s why we’re here today. Among us there are also Jews who, like us, are for peace.”

He has a clear answer to Baerbock’s rejection of a humanitarian ceasefire: “Whoever is against a ceasefire should go to Gaza for a week and see what it’s like, and preferably take his family with him, and then he can decide whether he is against or for a ceasefire. I am Palestinian and was born in a refugee camp in southern Lebanon. And I have experienced war myself. I know what it is like when the planes come and shoot and the whole earth shakes.”

Bilal continued, “When the Israeli planes bombed 16 to 17 kilometres from our home in Lebanon, the walls were dancing. It is terrible. I’ll put it this way: this is not just about the killing of civilians, it’s also about the fear that is implanted in people, in the next generation. How is that going to be forgotten? I am lucky to have come to Germany to live in peace. But they will never live in peace as long as this regime is stubborn.”

“I think it is a pity,” Bilal said, “that the great powers only know one language, and unfortunately that is only the language of war. I hope they respond to the fact that most people don’t want war.” He has no illusions, however, because behind the war “stand other interests.”

Asked about the need for a joint struggle of the Israeli and Palestinian people against the Netanyahu government, he said. “It would be very nice if the Israeli people also took to the streets and demonstrated against the war. That would help and also put pressure on their government.”

Bilal places his hopes in a two-state solution: “Palestinians and Israelis” should live peacefully side by side “in neighbouring countries.” He said he knows that many Israelis want to live in peace with the Palestinians, “but they are also oppressed by the government.”

Bilal said there was a need for an international movement. “But such an international movement is constantly stopped by the US.

For example, the UN Council is controlled by two, three countries. This is unfair. German workers should also strike against the war. I know most of them here are also against the politicians, but then they should show that and take to the streets.”

Bilal fears that these wars in Europe and the Middle East will spread, and “at some point we will have war here too if this goes on. We have to stop this at all costs. Don’t supply weapons, preferably don’t produce weapons, just be against war.”

H., an elderly participant at the rally, and his companion **Petra** also reacted with deep disgust and great anger to the German government’s unqualified support for Netanyahu’s war crimes and suppression of freedom of expression at home.

“The Israeli government is not to be equated with the Jews!” H. explained. He is Jewish himself and lost his parents in the Holocaust. For him, it was outrageous that the German government denigrates any criticism of the Israeli government as “antisemitic.” Foreign Minister “Baerbock had made common cause with the Bandera criminals,” he said, referring to the German government’s cooperation with the fascist-infested Zelensky government and the war in Ukraine, which was also financed and supported with weapons from Germany.

“There are so many hot spots. You can’t even count the number of conflicts,” he said, and his companion added, “I was never a supporter of the Greens, but it’s unbelievable how the Greens have changed from an anti-war party to a pro-war party.” “Baerbock is a war minister!” Petra stated categorically.

Other participants also drew parallels with various war zones. For example, one Palestinian demonstrator carried a poster he had made himself, comparing the bombs of different wars.

H. and Petra, like many other participants at the rally, were critical of the appeal to the federal government that came from the organisers. They vehemently rejected the organisers’ call for a two-state solution. “Nationalism is one of the greatest scourges of humanity, which always leads to war,” Petra stressed.



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