

Defend the right to protest in Germany!

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei
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The long list of victims of the genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza include freedom of expression and the right to demonstrate in Germany. While millions watch in horror as the Israeli army deprives 2.3 million people of water, food and fuel, bombs their homes and hospitals and massacres thousands of men, women and children, the German authorities are suppressing all demonstrations of solidarity with the Palestinians.

Demonstrations have been banned in Berlin, Frankfurt, Mannheim, Munich and many other cities. This was often done at the last minute, resulting in protesters being surrounded, abused and arrested by police. The mere showing of a Palestinian flag or wearing of a Palestinian scarf is sufficient to be stopped and arrested. Even Jews who condemn Israeli war crimes are not spared. The Palestinian scarf has been banned in Berlin schools and the city's district of Sonnenallee, where many Palestinian and Arab migrants live, is under siege.

The media denounce anyone who condemns Israeli war crimes as “antisemitic.” In fact, the antisemites are not those who denounce the crimes of the Israeli government but rather all those who maintain that Jews are collectively responsible for the criminal policies of Netanyahu, his fascist cabinet and their imperialist backers in Berlin and Washington.

That is why the Alternative for Germany, (AfD), whose ranks are teeming with antisemites and Holocaust deniers, enthusiastically welcomes the genocide of Palestinians. AfD leader Alexander Gauland and his cronies are very well aware that it is not the Palestinians, who have been persecuted and humiliated for 75 years, but rather Biden, Scholz and their attack dog Netanyahu who are following the imperialist traditions of robbery, oppression and extermination that were underlying the Nazis' genocidal war of extermination.

The Left Party, the Social Democrats (SPD) and the

Greens, which have readily joined this chorus, have forfeited any claim to stand for progress, humanity and the interests of workers. With the danger of a Third World War, which would mean the end of human civilisation, coming ever closer, these parties have all sided with the most aggressive warmongers.

The ban on demonstrations against the genocide in Gaza shows once again the threadbare nature of Germany's democratic façade. In a state where the profiteers of Aryanisation, concentration camp labour and the war economy were allowed to keep their fortunes, where Nazi judges and professors remained in their posts rising to the highest government posts and where Wehrmacht generals rebuilt the German army, this democratic façade always served to provide an alibi for the continued existence of the old elites. Now it is peeling off like old wallpaper.

Politicians, judges and journalists are trampling on the fundamental right to freedom of assembly and expression. Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) personally laid down the line when, appearing alongside Netanyahu, he declared Israel's security to be Germany's “reason of state” and promised to ban all demonstrations critical of Israel. “Glorifying, celebrating violence is inhuman, abhorrent. It is forbidden and will be punished,” he said.

Compliant judges immediately jumped into line to translate Scholz's brief into court rulings. For example, the Hamburg Administrative Court banned one demonstration on the grounds that its slogan “Stop the war on Gaza and support human rights!” expressed a “one-sided pro-Palestinian orientation”—and further complained that the slogan “Freedom for Palestine” is “typically used in circles that question Israel's right to exist as a whole.”

Other courts allow demonstrations only under strict conditions, with compliance monitored by an intimidating show of police force. Among other things,

the demand for a contiguous Palestinian state territory, “From the River to the Sea—Palestine will be free,” is banned on a regular basis.

However, all the bans on demonstrations, intimidation and witch-hunting by the media and political parties have failed to repress the resistance to the genocide in Gaza. Last weekend, millions took to the streets worldwide, with tens of thousands joining protests in Germany. In Berlin-Kreuzberg 11,000 took part, in Munich 7,000, in Dortmund 2,500 and in Hamburg 1,500. In dozens of other cities, such as Aachen, Giessen, Duisburg and Karlsruhe, protests took place with more than 1,000 participants in each case.

This coming Saturday, November 4, at 2:00 p.m., a broad alliance under the motto “Free Palestine will not be cancelled” is calling for a major demonstration on Berlin’s Alexanderplatz, with tens of thousands expected to attend. Among the many organisations supporting the call is “Jewish Voice for Just Peace in the Middle East.”

The Socialist Equality Party welcomes and supports the mass demonstrations against the genocide in Gaza and calls for their expansion. However, they need a clear perspective. The genocide cannot be stopped by appealing to the German government and its NATO allies. They have already given the Israeli government carte blanche and sent their own troops into the region to cover their backs. The only way to stop the war is to mobilise the international working class.

The German government supports the Israeli government, not out of concern for Jewish lives but rather to advance its own imperialist interests. For over 30 years, the US, Germany and their allies have pursued the goal of subjecting the Middle East to their complete control. They have devastated one country after another—Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen and others—without achieving their goals. In Ukraine, they are waging a proxy war directed against Russia that is currently deadlocked. Now they are making a new attempt to conquer the Middle East, preparing war against Iran and are quite ready to plunge the whole region into an inferno.

The German government cannot wage war abroad without at the same time declaring war on its own working class and youth. War Minister Boris Pistorius has demanded that Germany once again makes itself

“fit for war” and undertake a corresponding “change of mentality in society.” There is no support for such policies, and strong opposition is emerging against the huge costs of rearmament, which are being passed on to workers through social cuts, wage reductions and layoffs. This opposition coincides with class struggles in other countries.

The government is preparing to suppress this resistance by force. The very same bans directed against demonstrations in defence of Palestinians today will be used to suppress strikes and workers’ protests tomorrow.

Resistance to the genocide in Gaza, war and militarism, the defence of democratic rights and the struggle against wage and social cuts are directly bound up with one another. The success of the movement against war depends on transforming it into a socialist movement of the international working class. This is the perspective of the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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