

Tens of thousands in Germany demand: “Stop the genocide in Gaza!”

Our reporters
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Large pro-Palestinian demonstrations took place throughout Germany at the weekend. Slogans such as “Ceasefire now” and “Free Palestine—Free Gaza!” could be heard and seen everywhere, as well as “Equal Rights for Palestinians” and “Freedom of expression must also apply to Palestinians.”

No matter what the state and government tried to do to curb the protests through strict regulations, bans, harassment and arrests, they did not succeed.

The peaceful demonstrations in practically all major German cities testified to the growth of a genuine mass movement against war, which can no longer be stopped so easily. As it says in “A call to the working class and youth,” which the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) distributed en masse: “Despite the relentless propaganda, the sentiment of the broad mass of workers and youth throughout the world is on the side of the Palestinians.”

In **Berlin**, the red posters of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei with the slogan “Stop the genocide in Gaza” were visible from afar. The demonstration, which started at the Neptune Fountain in front of the Rotes Rathaus (seat of the Berlin state assembly) and ended at Potsdamer Platz, counted around 20,000 participants. Among them were not only many Palestinians, but also a large number of young people from Germany and various other countries around the world.

The organisers were not only Palestinian groups such as “Palestine Speaks” and “Palestine Campaign,” but also the “Jewish Voice for Just Peace in the Middle East” and the “Jewish Bund.” This alone shows the false and dishonest character of the government propaganda, which slanders any criticism of the Netanyahu government’s genocide as “antisemitic.” Many in Berlin shared the opinion expressed by one Munich participant: “We can’t believe that the media is reporting in such a one-sided way. Israel’s right to self-defence does not mean that the Palestinians can be bombed to the ground.”

The SGP took part in the Berlin march with its own delegation. Johannes Stern, editor-in-chief of the German-language WSW, spoke via the SGP’s loudspeaker van. He condemned the genocide and the complicity of the ruling class in Germany and emphasised in his speech: “The only way to end capitalist barbarism is to mobilise the international working

class on the basis of a socialist programme.”

In its appeal, the SGP formulates its perspective with the words:

There is no time to lose. Measures to end the war must not be subordinated to the political manoeuvres of capitalist governments. ... Resistance to Israel’s crimes must be based on the international working class and turn to the powerful weapon of a political general strike in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

This expressed the sentiments of many participants. Many had brought homemade signs criticising the genocide against the Palestinians: “Every 10 minutes a child dies in Gaza,” one read, while others stated, “Bombing children is not self-defence” and “How much does a Palestinian human life count?” Others pointed to the “open-air prison” in which the people of Gaza have been living for almost 20 years and demanded, “End apartheid!” and “Stop the Israeli settlement and occupation policy!”

A rally and peace march took place in **Frankfurt** on Friday, November 3, in which over 800 took part despite an intimidating police presence. Here, too, many demonstrators held up handmade posters drawing attention to the atrocious conditions in Gaza: “3,648 dead Palestinian Children—what do we want to tell our descendants?” “You can’t build a holy land on the mass graves of children” and “Bombing children is not self-defence!”

In Frankfurt in particular, where the rally was rather small, the police were extremely provocative. In the city centre, both sides of Rathenauplatz, where demonstrators gathered, were lined with closed ranks of police vans. Martialy equipped units harassed demonstrators, and police officers photographed and filmed every movement in an intrusive manner.

The main speaker, an Afghan-Bavarian Muslim woman, was constantly interrupted over police loudspeakers with threats of prohibition. The scene was eerily reminiscent of George Orwell’s novel *1984*, as a disembodied voice boomed out again and again with the threat of dissolving the protest if this or that

poster did not disappear immediately. In particular, posters depicting people being killed, posters with inscriptions such as “Völkermord” (genocide) and “genocide” (in English) and any criticism of Israel were banned. In the end, nine participants were arrested and are now facing proceedings on suspicion of incitement to hatred and “depiction of violence.”

Probably the largest demonstration took place in **Düsseldorf**, North Rhine-Westphalia, the capital of Germany’s most populous state, which includes the Ruhr region. Here, the number of people protesting in favour of stopping the massacre in Gaza and for solidarity with Palestine exceeded the originally registered number of 1,000 many times over. While the police spoke of 17,000, around 30,000 took part in the final rally on the banks of the Rhine, according to social media.

A banner at the head of the demonstration expressed the international orientation. It read, “We are one human family.” The numerous placards not only denounced the massive number of casualties in the Gaza Strip, especially women and children, but also the complicity of German politicians and the hypocrisy of the leading media outlets.

Many drew comparisons with the war in Ukraine and explained that, according to official figures, many more children have already been killed in Gaza than in NATO’s proxy war against Russia, which has been going on for more than a year and a half. The streets of Düsseldorf city centre echoed with thousands chanting, “Free Palestine!”

Here too, SGP members distributed several hundred leaflets within a very short period of time and spoke to demonstrators about the perspective needed to stop the genocide in Gaza. Many participants expressed their outrage at the fact that all parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament) have shown solidarity with the far-right Israeli government. Some Turkish women from Duisburg repeated several times: “We are so disappointed with the attitude of the German government. They deny us Muslims the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, even though it is written in the constitution. We are also citizens of this country. Why are they treating us like this?”

Participants also repeatedly contradicted the politicians and media, who equate and criminalise opposition to the war as alleged “antisemitism.” “We are not antisemites,” said many, and “Our protest is not directed against Jews, but against the Israeli government.”

In **Stuttgart**, around 3,000 people gathered on Schillerplatz and marched peacefully through the city chanting “Free Palestine!” An important slogan here was “Germany finances, Israel bombs.” “That’s simply true,” Joel, a law student, told the WSWs team.

Joel expressed what millions are currently feeling: “It’s terrible and awful that the Western world accepts and condones this. You can’t justify one genocide with another, as Israel does. You have to take to the streets against this.”

And she said, “Our government no longer represents us as far

as this is concerned, especially in Germany, where there is always talk of imported antisemitism, as if Germany itself had not carried out a genocide against Jews 80 years ago. Blaming antisemitism on immigrants is rubbish, and justifying the fact that Israel is slaughtering people in Gaza is even more rubbish. None of this makes sense.”

The speaker at the Stuttgart rally on Schillerplatz was 16-year-old Lebanese Salma Y., from Böblingen, who spoke strongly in favour of peace. She said that as a child she had assumed that what government politicians and the media said was true, that Germany was a free and peace-loving country. Since the Middle East conflict, this had all turned out to be a lie.

Salma said, “I am afraid that my citizenship will be revoked and that I will be deported. I was born and grew up in this country. But as a young German of Lebanese descent, I am currently no longer allowed to speak out without fear of being accused of antisemitism.”

In her speech, she referred to Stauffenberg (a leading figure in the plot to assassinate Hitler), the Scholl siblings (from the White Rose anti-Nazi group, hanged for their protests) and Nelson Mandela: “All of these people were labelled terrorists in their time. Today they are considered heroes.”

Salma told the WSWs that she used to “actually be a big fan of the Greens and the Social Democratic Party” and agreed with many of their promises. “But I find the policies they are now pursuing simply incomprehensible and very, very unfair.”

In Stuttgart, many workers had come with their families. One of them, Kul, from Turkey, spoke out in favour of the Palestinian trade unions’ proposal that workers should refuse to ship weapons to Israel. “That would be a necessary measure,” said Kul. “I think we have to do everything we can to stop the war, whether in speech or in action.”

In **Munich**, around 500 participants gathered on Sunday afternoon for an “Islamic prayer for the dead and protest march” for Palestine on Odeonsplatz. Here too, in front of the Feldherrnhalle, many young people protested with slogans such as “Olaf Scholz, shame on you!” “We want peace” and “Palestine is in need, has no water and no bread.” Others shouted, “Palestine is in need, many children are already dead” and transformed the call “Long live international solidarity!” into “WHERE is international solidarity?”

The SGP team, which was the only political party to make an appearance, distributed flyers with the WSWs appeal at lightning speed. Almost without exception, everyone accepted them gratefully. Here, too, it became particularly clear what a great need there is for a perspective.



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