

Left Party conference in Augsburg: support for Gaza genocide, NATO war against Russia, and capitalism

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In a situation in which a mass movement is developing in Germany and worldwide against genocide, militarism and war and the associated attacks on social and democratic rights, the Left Party is desperately endeavouring to present itself as a force for “peace,” “justice” and “progress.”

At the party conference in Augsburg at the weekend, the party leadership, led by the two chairpersons Martin Schirdewan and Janine Wissler, presented a new party logo and announced a “new departure” under the motto “Time for Justice.” The parting of ways with former parliamentary group leader Sahra Wagenknecht, who is preparing to found an anti-refugee and nationalist party with the “Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance—For Reason and Justice” (BSW), marked the start of a “new chapter.”

In fact, the Left Party is in shambles. With Wagenknecht and nine other deputies leaving the parliamentary group, the Left Party is losing its parliamentary group status in the Bundestag. It is increasingly hated among workers and young people due to its right-wing policies and has lost massively in the last 11 state elections since 2021. In the West, it is now only represented in regional parliaments in the city states of Hamburg and Bremen.

The Augsburg party conference will not reverse this trend, but rather accelerate it. Both the adopted election programme and the motions and speeches at the conference underline that the Left Party is a thoroughly pro-imperialist and pro-capitalist force. All its phrases about peace and social policy cannot hide the fact that it supports the policies of the German government, the European Union and NATO on all key issues.

This is particularly clear in relation to war policy. In recent weeks, the Left Party leadership has unanimously supported Israel’s genocidal actions against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. On 10 October, for example, a pro-Israeli motion was supported by all Left Party deputies in the Bundestag. Dietmar Bartsch, who was still parliamentary group leader at the time, celebrated the motion as “Germany’s contribution to the fight against terror.”

The following week, party chair Martin Schirdewan, who was chosen in Augsburg as his party’s lead candidate for the European elections, appeared at a pro-Israeli rally in front of the Brandenburg Gate. In his speech, he backed the Zionist state and called for tougher action against Iran and Qatar as the “main sponsors of Hamas terror.” The German government must “finally

make it clear to them that antisemitic terror must not be financed indirectly.”

In the meantime, the genocidal war of the far-right Netanyahu regime supported by the imperialist powers—and the Left Party—has led to more than 13,000 deaths, including more than 5,500 children and 3,500 women. Large parts of the Gaza Strip have been destroyed and horrific war crimes are being committed daily with the bombing and storming of hospitals, refugee camps and schools. Leading Israeli politicians openly celebrate the genocide and speak of a “Nakba 2023.”

In Augsburg, the growing resistance worldwide meant the Left Party felt compelled to name the suffering of the Palestinians. A “compromise motion,” which was passed on Friday, also refers to the “disenfranchisement” of the Palestinians and calls for an “immediate ceasefire.”

This does not change the party’s pro-war line. The same motion declares: “Israel has the right to defend itself.” The meaning is unmistakable. From the point of view of the Left Party, the Zionist state, which acts as a bridgehead for imperialism in the region, will continue to have the “right” to wage destructive wars and bloodily suppress the resistance of the Palestinians.

In the “debate” on the motion, support for Israel’s war sometimes took on hysterical proportions. Former Berlin senator (state minister) for culture Klaus Lederer was the most aggressive. He described the attack by Hamas on October 7 as a “genocidal orgy of violence” and a “manifestation of eliminatory antisemitism” with “references to the Nazi past.”

This is the language and propaganda of the far-right Netanyahu regime and the imperialist governments. They turn reality on its head and misuse the Holocaust to apply the same methods that the Nazis used to crush uprisings against their own tyranny and raze entire cities and regions to the ground.

At the same time, they use the false accusation of antisemitism to intimidate and suppress any opposition to genocide and war. The party conference itself showed that this is also supported by the majority of the party leadership. When delegate Nick Papak Amoozegar was the only one in the debate to call Israel’s genocide by name and condemn the “targeted destruction of a people” and “ethnic cleansing,” there were shouts of protest from the ranks of the delegates. The chair of the meeting demanded an end to the speech.

The Left is also firmly in the camp of the warmongers with regard to the front of the imperialist powers against Russia in Ukraine. The party's election manifesto for the European elections regurgitates the official propaganda that Russia is the sole aggressor and expresses solidarity with the Ukrainian resistance—which is dominated by far-right forces—and NATO's war aims. At the same time, it makes no mention of the military alliance's war policy, which has systematically encircled Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and provoked the Kremlin's invasion.

“We condemn Putin's criminal war of aggression and the war crimes committed and are in favour of punishing those responsible. Our solidarity is with the people in Ukraine who are suffering, resisting, or forced to flee,” reads the section “Against the Russian war of aggression—for peace in Ukraine”.

By “peace” the Left Party means the realisation of NATO's war aims. “The war against Ukraine must end and Russian troops must be withdrawn from Ukraine. Ukraine's sovereignty must be restored.” One thing is clear: “It takes more than appeals. The aggressor Russia must be forced to the negotiating table. Putin's imperialist aggression must be stopped.”

Germany, together with the US, is at the forefront of the war offensive and, despite its historical crimes, is de facto waging war against Russia again. At the same time, the ruling class is using the war to rearm itself as a leading military power. Although the election manifesto criticises the rearmament in words, it fully supports the associated goal of establishing Europe as an independent great power under the leadership of Berlin.

It argues “in favour of an EU that is neither a pawn nor an imperial player in the new world (dis)order. For an EU that is strategically independent of the arms race and the bloc confrontation between the US on the one hand and China and Russia on the other. An EU that is committed to peace and global justice.”

The German government would also sign up to this. Yet the Left Party knows full well that for the EU, it is a matter of asserting its own global geostrategic and economic interests in the “conflict for supremacy in the world.” For example, “the EU's trade strategies in the Indo-Pacific and Africa ... reflect its endeavours to secure economic spheres of influence and sales markets”, it writes in Chapter 4, adding that the “orientation of governments and leading capital factions in the EU” is “economic and military confrontation”.

It is just as dishonest when the Left Party attempts to put on a left-wing cloak in relation to refugee and social policy and the fight against the right. The nomination of the non-party sea rescuer Carola Rackete as an EU parliamentary candidate does not change the fact that the Left Party actively implements an anti-refugee agenda wherever it is in a state government. Thuringia in particular, which is governed by the only Left Party state prime minister, Bodo Ramelow, is notorious for its brutal extraditions and high deportation rates.

The same applies to social policy. Wherever it has been or is in power, the Left Party enforces the fiercest social attacks and privatisation, and organises precisely the redistribution of wealth from the bottom of society to the top that it supposedly deplors in

party conference speeches and programmes. The strengthening of far-right and fascist forces is not only a consequence of this policy but is also actively promoted by the Left Party. In 2020, for example, Ramelow used his own vote to help the candidate of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), Michael Kaufmann, become vice president of the Thuringian state parliament. In the committees of the state parliament and at municipal level, representatives of the Left Party have also long been cooperating with the AfD.

It is important to understand that the anti-working-class character of the Left Party is ultimately rooted in the party's social and political orientation as well as its history. It has always been a bourgeois party that has articulated the interests of the capitalist state and the wealthy middle classes who depend on it. Its Stalinist predecessor organisation, the SED/PDS, initiated the restoration of capitalism in the former East Germany (GDR) and thus created the conditions for the reactionary developments since then.

In a situation in which capitalism is once again producing world war, genocide, and fascism—and, on the other hand, revolutionary resistance is developing among workers and young people—the Left Party is positioning itself as an aggressive defender of this bankrupt system. Significantly, the word “socialism” does not appear once in the entire party programme. And when a delegate proposed including the demand for the transfer of all energy companies into public ownership, Federal Treasurer Harald Wolf intervened on behalf of the Executive Board against this “buzzword [for] socialism”

Workers and young people must draw clear political conclusions from this. In the fight against capitalism and war, the Left Party is their opponent. The only party that consistently fights against the genocide in Gaza, the developing Third World War and the return of fascism and militarism throughout Europe and internationally is the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party). It is running its own candidates in the European elections and, together with its sister parties in the Fourth International, is fighting to mobilise the working class on the basis of a socialist programme.



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