

Militant protest against genocide in Gaza and censorship of war opponents at Ruhr-Universität Bochum

Our reporters
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Pouring rain could not stop the loud and passionate protest of around 200 students and workers at Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB) Tuesday afternoon against the genocide in Gaza. The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) had called for a rally against the genocide in Gaza and the censorship of war opponents at RUB.

The university management had previously banned the IYSSE, the youth and student organisation of the Fourth International, from holding an event at RUB against the mass killings in Palestine. The university's management has explicitly backed Israel and its actions in Gaza.

The police imposed a whole series of conditions on the rally, which took place directly at the entrance to the university campus. In addition to the organisational requirements and the ban on certain slogans relating to Palestine, they had also provocatively banned right-wing extremist and anti-Semitic slogans and demanded that these be read out at the beginning. The assembly leader Dietmar Gaisenkersting refused to recite these hate slogans, which are familiar from right-wing extremist chats such as those of officers from Frankfurt police headquarters.

Rather, he made it clear: "This rally is not directed against the Jewish people, against Jews. We are not anti-Semites. This rally is against Israel's genocide against the Palestinians." The 200 participants expressed their broad support with enthusiastic shouts and applause.

In addition, the police had expressly forbidden shouting "Free Palestine" or "Freedom for Palestine." These "statements," they claimed, would "at least give rise to an initial suspicion of rewarding and approving criminal offences in accordance with Section 140 of the

German Criminal Code." As this was not listed in the conditions, but in attached "legal notices," it was not possible to take urgent action against this.

However, the assembled participants did not refrain from calling for a free Palestine. A young Palestinian student from RUB, who helped establish a combative and courageous atmosphere at the microphone, demonstrated his creativity and chanted loud protest slogans: "Free Gaza," "Stop the murder, stop the war," "Long live international solidarity" and "Viva Viva Palestina."

In his speech, Gaisenkersting made clear what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and the IYSSE stand for: "The interests of Arab and Jewish workers can only be secured by a secular state with full democratic and social rights for Jews and Arabs as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East."

Whenever Gaisenkersting emphasised the international perspective, referring to the unification of the working class internationally and in the Middle East, participants supported this with loud applause and shouts.

His call for the prosecution of war criminals was also enthusiastically supported: "The perpetrators are not only in Tel Aviv." In addition to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, "Biden, Chancellor Scholz and Foreign Minister Baerbock also belong in the dock of the International Criminal Court!"

There was an equally strong response to the speech by IYSSE spokesperson Gregor Link, who talked about the scandalous behaviour of the university management and emphasised that their refusal to allow an IYSSE event on the genocide in Gaza was tantamount to a

general attack on fundamental democratic rights.

He reported on the IYSSE's fight against right-wing professors at Berlin's Humboldt University: "The same forces that would teach us about anti-Semitism are themselves working very closely with real anti-Semites and neo-Nazis—and are constantly relativising and trivialising the Holocaust! We ourselves have been fighting for years at Humboldt University against the trivialisation of Nazi crimes and the rehabilitation of German militarism."

He emphasised once again that the danger of anti-Semitism did not come from those who protest against Israel's genocide, such as the 200 or so people present and the many hundreds of millions worldwide. His exclamation, "The real anti-Semites, the worst and most dangerous, sit in the Chancellery, in the Alternative for Germany (AfD), in the Foreign Ministry and in the executive floors of the big media corporations!" was supported just as enthusiastically as his call to mobilise the working class against genocide, fascism and war.

After the rally, many stayed and discussed the SGP, the IYSSE and its international socialist perspective. But many also simply came to say thank you for organising this protest: "No other party does this." Many left their contact details to plan further protests and joint actions, and to discuss further. Others registered with the IYSSE on the spot in order to help set up a group at RUB and at universities in neighbouring cities. There are plans to organise a follow-up meeting next week.



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