

Hundreds of thousands again protest on the streets of Germany against the far right

Marianne Arens, Gregor Link, Max Linhof
5 February 2024

Over the weekend, hundreds of thousands of people once again took to the streets against the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the shift to the right in official politics. In Berlin alone, up to 300,000 demonstrated in front of the Bundestag (federal parliament), so that the protest flooded the entire government district, from the Brandenburg Gate to the Chancellery and beyond.

In total, rallies were held in many hundreds of cities. According to the organisers, there were around 30,000 participants in Augsburg, Freiburg, and Dresden; 20,000 in Bremen; 15,000 in Krefeld and 10,000 each in Hanover and Kassel. Some 4,000 took part in counter-protests in Simmern, with a population of 8,000, where AfD leader Alice Weidel appeared at a “citizens’ dialogue.”

The wave of protests continues unabated into its fourth week. The fact that millions of people keep taking to the streets shows how hated the far right is and that they only see their anger articulated through ongoing demonstrations. This demonstrates how deeply rooted the opposition to fascism and war is in the consciousness of the masses. Objectively speaking, the protests are therefore not only directed against the AfD, but against the right-wing policies of all the parties in the Bundestag that are putting the AfD’s programme into practice.

In addition to numerous handmade banners against the AfD, or slogans such as “Human rights instead of right-wing people,” the government’s deportation policy and the general shift to the right were also repeatedly denounced, with slogans such as “Organised misanthropy has many faces” and “All together against the shift to the right.”

However, the demonstrations were contradictory. The organisers often consisted of pro-government organisations that have attempted to put a stop to the

protests and suppress criticism of the coalition government’s pro-war and mass deportation policies.

With few exceptions, the speakers at the rallies were representatives of the establishment parties or their youth organisations, trade unions, churches and universities. They invoked “democracy” and “anti-fascism” but remained silent about the role being played by the government—a coalition of the Social Democrats (SPD), Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Greens—and the growth of outrageous social inequality in Germany, which is no longer compatible with democratic conditions.

In Dresden, where, according to the organisers, a total of 30,000 gathered on Theaterplatz in front of the Semper Opera House, several speakers tried to distract attention from the capitalist reality with fine words about democracy and tolerance. At the same time, they made clear what sort of reactionary programme they support.

For example, Dirk Röhrborn, chairman of the Executive Board of the Silicon Saxony industry association, called for more job and social cuts in the name of “democracy.” He said: “Unfortunately, politicians often lack the courage to tell the truth: that it will not be easy, that there cannot be compensation from the state for every loss, and that we will have to continue to work hard in the future to earn our prosperity.”

Röhrborn also summed up the organisers’ consensus on militarism and armament: “So what does the economy need? It needs trust, it needs investors who invest billions here and it needs planning security.” This trust was not only based on “democracy,” he said, but on “a reliable administration, security, unfortunately also military security, and the freedom that we enjoy as part of Europe.”

In Berlin, the slogan “We are the firewall” and the human chain around the Bundestag were designed to fuel illusions in the same bourgeois parliament and the same parties that are implementing the AfD’s policies.

It was only on January 18 that the Bundestag passed the so-called “Repatriation Improvement Act,” which makes it possible to tear people who have been living in Germany for years out of their beds at night without warning, detain them and forcibly deport them. A few days ago, SPD leader Lars Klingbeil called for the planned mass deportations to be carried out more quickly. All parties in the Bundestag are supporting the genocide in Gaza in order to enforce Germany’s great power interests in the region.

Numerous bourgeois and government politicians mingled with the crowd in Berlin, including SPD Chairwoman Saskia Esken, Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (SPD) and Federal Minister for Family Affairs Lisa Paus (Greens), and were interviewed by the bourgeois media.

The contradiction became clear to many participants when Reporters Without Borders and several representatives of immigrant and anti-fascist initiatives also had their say in addition to the speeches by the Protestant Church, the main union umbrella organisation DGB, the Left Party parliamentarian Ferat Koçak and the Green politician Luisa Neubauer.

These included the Association of the Persecuted of the Nazi Regime–Federation of Antifascists (VVN-BdA) and the 19th February Initiative, which was founded after the racist murders in Hanau four years ago. These speakers received special applause and attention. A contribution that condemned the war crimes of the Netanyahu government in the Gaza Strip and made it clear that such criticism has nothing to do with antisemitism, was followed particularly closely.

Speaking to reporters from the WSWS, participants agreed that the fight against the AfD must also be a fight against the government, which is increasingly embracing AfD policies. One demonstrator remarked that the deportation policy is constantly being tightened, “And that’s complete rubbish.” There needs to be “a class struggle like there hasn’t been for a long time.” Another declared that she would immediately support “a class struggle against capitalism.”

Many of those taking to the streets against the AfD understood the social dimensions of this struggle. Tanja

and Gesina, two participants in Berlin, answered the question of how the ground was being prepared for the right: “Through a very anti-social society! We don’t live in a social society. The distribution of wealth is simply so unfair,” Tanja said. They reported that they had just seen another young homeless person under an archway: “There are so many issues that we need to tackle, and I think we can only do that if we take at least a little bit away from the super-rich.”

Many people also saw the connection between the fight against fascism and the fight against the genocide in Gaza when it comes to the issue of Palestine. One young woman carried a sign that read: “Jews against the AfD and Zionism: for a free Palestine,” while another read: “Israel is an ultra-right-wing government. And that’s why it’s so important for me to speak out in favour of Palestine!”

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) also participated in the demonstrations with its own placards against the genocide in Gaza and explained how the fight against fascism could only succeed as an international movement of the working class against capitalism. The SGP members and supporters were able to collect hundreds of signatures in favour of the party’s participation in the European elections in June.

The SGP statement, “How can the AfD be defeated?” reads: “The AfD is not a foreign body in an otherwise healthy organism, but the worst symptom of a thoroughly sick system. Just like 90 years ago, the deepening capitalist crisis is once again leading to fascism and war.”



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