

Germany's suppression of the Palestine Congress and the fight against genocide and dictatorship

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Eighty years after the end of the Nazi dictatorship, the ruling class in Germany is shedding its democratic mask. The suppression of the Palestine Congress in Berlin is reminiscent of the darkest times in German history.

Last Friday, 900 police stormed the peaceful gathering and arrested numerous participants, including Jewish opponents of Israel's genocide in Gaza. Approximately 2,500 police officers were mobilized in total, and they have since been brutalizing protesters demonstrating against the dispersal of the Congress.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) condemn the German state's crackdown—which is redolent of outright dictatorships and fascist regimes—on the Palestine Congress in the strongest terms. It is not only directed against the congress and its supporters, but aims to suppress all social and political opposition. Under conditions in which the ruling class is again relying on militarism and war and is planning massive attacks on the working class, protests are not allowed.

The organizers of the Palestine Congress and their lawyers were willing to abide by all police restrictions. A statement from the lawyers' collective, which worked closely with the organizers of the congress, showed that there were already several rounds of "safety talks" between organizers and the police in advance, which further restricted the congress. Nevertheless, it was brutally dissolved in the end. Even its most prominent participants were treated like criminals.

For example, the Federal Ministry of the Interior imposed a ban on the former Greek Minister of Finance and chairman of the pan-European party DiEM25, Yanis Varoufakis. The ban also includes an entry and online access ban. In other words, although a few years ago Berlin was still working closely with Varoufakis to impose the European Union's austerity dictates on the Greek working class, he is now no longer allowed to express himself politically in Germany, because he criticises the mass murder of Palestinians.

Another well-known person blacklisted by the federal government at short notice is the physician and rector of the University of Glasgow, Dr. Ghassan Abu Sittah. After the Federal Police also issued him with an entry ban, he was

detained upon arrival at Berlin Airport, subjected to an hours-long interrogation and then sent back to London by plane.

Abu Sittah worked in the Gaza Strip during the first six weeks of the war in the Shifa and Ahli hospitals, which were repeatedly attacked by the Israeli army. He testified about his terrible experiences at the International Court of Justice, where Germany has been charged with complicity in genocide, and also gave a harrowing interview to German news magazine *Der Spiegel*. Now, as an eyewitness to the mass murder, he was forbidden from reporting on the events in Gaza at the congress.

The crackdown against the Palestine Congress is the culmination of a veritable police terror campaign carried out against all opposition since the beginning of Israel's genocide. In Berlin and other major German cities, entire districts with large Palestinian and Arab populations are under siege. Anyone who wears a Palestinian scarf or in any way expresses their opposition to the government and the genocide it supports must expect to be stopped and arrested by the police.

Applying the same arbitrariness and brutality, the cultural and educational sector is being scoured and whipped into line. Exhibitions by Palestinian artists and opponents of the genocide have been cancelled, cultural institutions such as the Oyoun in Berlin have lost their funding, and teaching appointments, prizes and awards have been withdrawn. Anyone who expresses criticism as an artist, scientist or journalist first loses their job, then is branded an antisemite in a public smear campaign and destroyed by the media.

No one should be intimidated by this filthy campaign. It is the height of provocation when the German ruling class, of all people, invokes the Holocaust to justify another genocide and to criminalize any opposition to it. This also applies to Jewish opponents of genocide. Already in the run-up to the congress, the bank account of the Jewish Voice for a Just Peace, where donations for the event were collected, was frozen. When the police stormed the congress, a leading member of the organisation, Udi Raz, was arrested.

The crackdown was supported by all parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament). Social Democratic Federal Minister of the Interior Nancy Faeser praised the brutal actions of the police. It

was “right and necessary” that the Berlin police crack down on the so-called Palestine Congress, she wrote on the social media platform X.

A cross-party “Alliance against Anti-Semitic Terrorism,” which includes leading representatives of the governing Social Democrats, Green and Free Democrats, and the opposition Christian Democrats and Left Party in Berlin, like a large part of the media, waged a vicious smear campaign even before the congress began and called for its banning. The participants were concerned with “spreading anti-Semitic hatred” and Berlin should not become “the centre of terrorist glorification,” they wrote in a statement.

The established politicians and the propagandists in the media can shout until they are blue in the face, this will not change reality. The filthy narrative of the fight against “antisemitism” and “terrorism” is increasingly being exposed. It is nothing more than a cover under which the ruling class returns to its roots: fascism and war.

It is not the oppressed Palestinians and the millions of people around the world who stand in solidarity with them and protest against the genocide that promote antisemitism, but the imperialist powers and, above all, the ruling class of Germany. The very narrative that collectively associates Jewish people with the genocidal policies of the far-right Netanyahu regime is thoroughly antisemitic.

In addition, the same parties, politicians and journalists who are now shouting “antisemitism” have no problem courting the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and openly glorifying fascist forces in Ukraine in the NATO war against Russia. They also defended the right-wing extremist Humboldt University Professor Jörg Baberowski after he declared that Hitler was “not vicious” and did not want to know about the extermination of the Jews.

The ruling class is not concerned with the fate of the Jews. As in Ukraine and Russia, German imperialism is also pursuing geostrategic and economic interests in the Middle East, relying on genocide and war. The government is currently working feverishly to, in the words of Defence Minister Boris Pistorius, make Germany “fit for war” again. Domestically, as in the past, this requires the militarisation of society as a whole and the establishment of a dictatorship.

As early as 2017, Germany’s secret service, the Verfassungsschutz (Office for the Protection of the Constitution), under the leadership of right-wing extremist President Hans-Georg Maassen, placed the SGP under intelligence surveillance. And this on the exclusive grounds that the SGP advocates a socialist programme, criticises capitalism, militarism and nationalism, and opposes the established parties and the trade unions. The SGP filed a lawsuit against this and warned even then:

The secret service’s attack on the SGP is a

fundamental assault on democratic rights. It is a component of government policy that is increasingly based on authoritarian forms of rule and the reliance on right-wing extremist forces so as to enforce militarist policies, the strengthening of the repressive state apparatus and attacks on social spending, and to suppress all opposition that emerges. It recalls the Weimar Republic, when the intelligence agencies, judiciary, and police ruthlessly persecuted socialists and pacifists while strengthening the Nazis.”

This is the reality. And the suppression of the Palestine Congress is another serious warning. It underlines how aggressive the ruling class is and that, as in the Third Reich, it will stop at nothing to enforce its policy of war and dictatorship. At the same time, their Gestapo-like methods will only act to further fuel popular opposition. According to a recent survey, just 18 percent consider Israel’s actions in Gaza to be justified, while 69 percent oppose them.

The SGP bases itself on this opposition, which is part of a much broader radicalisation of the working class and the development of the international class struggle. It will use the European election campaign, together with its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International, to promote the building of an independent mass movement against genocide, war and dictatorship—and their root cause, capitalism. Our election statement declares:

Millions of people around the world have demonstrated against the genocide in Gaza in recent weeks, despite the propaganda from the politicians and the media, and have indicated how strong and globally networked the working class is today. This movement must be expanded and armed with a socialist perspective.

We demand:

- An immediate end to the siege of Gaza and the complete demobilization of the Israeli army!
- The holding of Netanyahu, Biden, Scholz and all other war criminals accountable for their war crimes!
- The fight to unite Palestinian and Israeli workers in the struggle for a common secular and socialist state!



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