

“Independent” German political website censors SGP candidate for European elections

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei
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Imperialist war is incompatible with democracy. The more openly the German government pursues rearmament and war, the more the freedom of expression must give way to political censorship and conformity. This applies not only to the government and state institutions that use brutal repressive measures against opponents and defenders of the Palestinians, but also to the media and organisations associated with it.

Marianne Arens, who is running for the European Parliament for the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP), recently experienced this fact first-hand. The online platform *abgeordnetenwatch.de*, which translates as “deputy watch,” subjected her political views to far-reaching censorship. Although it describes itself as “impartial and institutionally independent,” the platform strictly refused to publish political views that contradict the official line of the government and established parties.

Abgeordnetenwatch.de is backed by a registered society, but maintains close relations with government agencies and various media outlets. Former president of the Federal Constitutional Court Jutta Limbach was the patron of the project, which maintains a media partnership with the online editions of *Der Spiegel*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Stern*, *Die Welt*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and *Tagesspiegel*.

In several federal states, including Hesse, the platform asked the European election candidates to briefly introduce themselves in a profile and answer 11 prepared questions about the European Union (EU).

When Arens submitted the requested texts, the platform refused to publish her profile, which described the Israeli onslaught on the Palestinians as a “genocide.” It also rejected five out of 11 answers to the prepared questions and demanded that they be changed, amended and smoothed out. Otherwise, the sentences objected to would be deleted.

In a protest letter to *abgeordnetenwatch.de*, Arens firmly forbade the texts “to be published in an altered or shortened form.” She described the concerns as “political censorship,” which resembles “a dictatorship, but not a democracy.” “Only what is in line with official government policy is allowed,” she wrote. “Democracy begins, however, where you can say what contradicts the government.”

Arens submitted the following text on her profile:

My main concern is to stop the impending Third World War. I turn to the working population, who will pay for it in every way. We must understand that the capitalist governments only know the answer of war and dictatorship to their crisis and therefore attack jobs, wages and democratic rights. They

suppress resistance to the Gaza genocide, which they slander as “anti-Semitic.” The Socialist Equality Party, which bases itself on Leon Trotsky, counterposes the international unity of the working class to this deadly course.

The reply was sent in the form of an email, which read:

You have made an unsubstantiated factual claim that we cannot release in this form (“They suppress resistance to the Gaza genocide, which they slander as ‘anti-Semitic’.”). You are welcome to rephrase this statement according to the facts and, above all, omit the term “genocide,” or we will delete the passage from the description for you.

Arens replied:

It must be permissible to describe the Israeli attack on the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as “genocide.” This term is justified and used all over the world. On January 26, 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concluded regarding South Africa’s lawsuit against Israel that the facts were sufficient to classify the lawsuit as “plausible.” South Africa had sued under the 1948 UN Genocide Convention.

“A textbook case of genocide,” said Craig Mokhiber, former director of the New York office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Since November 2023, dozens of UN members have supported the call of the Special Representative for Human Rights in Palestine, Francesca Albanese, and her UN team of experts to protect the Palestinians in Gaza against genocide.

These UN members, i.e., recognised heads of state, as well as billions of people around the world, use the term “genocide”— but it is impermissible on *abgeordnetenwatch.de*?

Meanwhile, the Israeli army has killed at least 40,000 Palestinians, more than half of them children and women. Israel has cut off Gaza from water, electricity and food, bombing about 80 percent of homes to rubble. On the same day that *abgeordnetenwatch* sent its criticism, more than 300 bodies of shot patients were found in four mass graves next to the bombed-out hospitals in the Gaza Strip.

The shooting of defenceless sick people is further proof that

Israel (with active arms assistance from Germany and the US) is striving for nothing other than the “final solution of the Palestinian question.” An attack on Rafah, with which Israel wants to complete the expulsion of around two million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, is imminent.

Abgeordnetenwatch also exercised blatant political censorship when it came to the rejected answers to the prepared questions. In this part of the presentation, candidates can answer “Agree,” “Disagree,” or “Neutral,” and justify their opinion with a short statement that must not be longer than 300 characters.

Statement no. 1 concerned whether the European Council should decide matters of foreign and security policy by unanimous consent, which is set to be abolished. Abgeordnetenwatch complained:

On statement no. 1, you write: “The European Council is a conspiracy of the most powerful corporations, banks and states in Europe. The capitalist crisis, the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the conflicts with the US aggravate the historical contradictions among them.” We ask you to remove these unsubstantiated statements.

Abgeordnetenwatch reacted similarly to the answer to statement no. 10, in which Arens had written: “The EU is a lobby of European, mainly German banks and corporations.” In response, Abgeordnetenwatch.de “asked” for “reputable sources.”

Arens answered in her reply:

Why don’t you ask the farmers who have been protesting against EU governments for months? Just ask the Greek workers and pensioners who have lost their income due to the EU decisions! Or the thousands of refugees trapped in internment camps like Moria or pushed back into Libya into the hands of torturers?

I repeat: Prohibiting such statements that contradict official policy is political censorship.

The political censorship became especially blatant when the issue of the German government’s war policy was directly raised. Statement no. 3 invoked the “need” for higher defence spending “to ensure security in Europe.” Arens wrote on this:

Two world wars are enough! The claim that rearmament projects, which of course must be paid for by the working population, serve our “security” is a dangerous lie. Hundreds of thousands are already dying in Ukraine and Russia, in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere.

Abgeordnetenwatch replied that it was suggested here:

That hundreds of thousands are dying in Ukraine because the

EU is investing more in defence. Instead, however, hundreds of thousands die as a result of Russia’s war of aggression in violation of international law. We also ask you to change this statement.

First of all, it should be noted that Abgeordnetenwatch does not deny that “hundreds of thousands die” in this war. It merely repeats the mantra of the Scholz government that the war guilt lies solely on the Russian side. They come back to this in connection with statement no. 7 (“A swift accession of Ukraine is in the interest of the EU”), where Arens wrote: “I disagree. It was precisely the takeover of Ukraine by the EU and its rearmament with NATO weapons against Russia that provoked the oligarchic Putin regime to attack.”

Here, too, Abgeordnetenwatch “asks for reputable sources that clearly prove that the EU and NATO are responsible for the Russian invasion of Ukraine,” otherwise the statement would have to be “adapted.”

However, it is a fact that the Russian invasion was a reaction to the constant expansion of NATO to the east, culminating in the 2014 coup in Kiev orchestrated by Washington and Berlin. Since then, NATO has systematically reorganised and rearmed the Ukrainian army, which the Putin regime necessarily perceived as an existential threat.

The SGP is a staunch opponent of the Putin regime. However, its overthrow is not the task of NATO, which wants to carve up Russia, subjugate it to the status of a semi-colony, and misuse the Ukrainian population as cannon fodder. Rather, it is the task of the Russian and international working class.

The SGP firmly rejects the NATO war against Russia and calls for an immediate halt to all arms deliveries. It advocates the building of an international anti-war movement based on the working class, combining the struggle against war with the struggle against its cause, capitalism. It works closely with the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, who are campaigning in Russia and Ukraine for an end to this murderous war.

Abgeordnetenwatch finds this principled, socialist stand against war impermissible. This exposes the platform as a propaganda and censorship tool of the government.

It comes as no surprise that it also censored an answer from Arens that explicitly opposes censorship. Statement no. 5 (“Internet platforms should be obliged to search private chats of all users for criminal offences and report them to the authorities”) was rejected by Arens on the grounds that: “In order to suppress resistance to their wars, European governments and states are once again resorting to censorship. This is part and parcel of their shift towards dictatorial methods.”

Here, too, Abgeordnetenwatch threatened to remove the answer if it was not attributed to “reputable sources.” Reputable sources? Their own behaviour is the best evidence of the spread of censorship in all areas of public opinion. The SGP demands that Abgeordnetenwatch publishes Arens’ statements in their entirety and refrain from all forms of political censorship.



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