

Police besiege Berlin's Free University and attack peaceful pro-Palestinian protest camp

Rosalie Arlova, Tamino Wilck, Gregor Kahl
8 May 2024

On Tuesday, Berlin's Free University (FU) was pummeled on windows and held up signs reading "You are not under siege. In response to a peaceful pro-Palestinian protest camp, the Berlin police, in cooperation with the university administration, deployed a large contingent of officers, halted university operations, cleared the entire university building and used brutal methods to make numerous arrests.

gas.

Over a period of several hours, the police used painful grips to remove the encircled students. They then drove the

The camp was set up by students from the Student Coalition in Berlin in the theatre courtyard of the FU Berlin at around 10 p.m.

In a statement, the participants declared they were organising the camp "in solidarity with the Palestinian people." The demands included a stop to the genocide in Gaza, a halt to arms exports, the defence of academic freedom and cancellation of military research projects at the university.

They combined these demands with an appeal to their students, faculty members and academic partners" to join all.

The university management reacted immediately by calling the police and demanding the evacuation of the camp on the grounds of their domiciliary rights. The police arrived with a large contingent of 200 officers for a courtyard measuring more than 400 square metres in size and had completely surrounded the camp by noon.

Within a short space of time, around 200 students joined 100 or so encircled students and protested in the courtyard outside the camp. The police and university management reacted forcefully: the canteen and libraries in the building were closed immediately and all courses there cancelled for the day. Police officers were positioned on the roof to film the demonstrators.

When the police had driven the students out of the courtyard, the students gathered again in the building and expressed their solidarity with those trapped in the camp. They

After a meeting between the Senate (Berlin state executive) and the leadership of the Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg, the church expressed its solidarity with the students and demanded the university management to be held accountable for its actions. The church also called for a general strike in Berlin.

After a meeting between the Senate (Berlin state executive) and the leadership of the Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg, the church expressed its solidarity with the students and demanded the university management to be held accountable for its actions. The church also called for a general strike in Berlin.

randenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia (EKBO), he declared democracy in Germany. “Germany is always very loud; when it does not want a situation in Berlin like the one that exists in other countries do that they are immediately labelled as dictatorships. The media wouldn’t stop talking about it.”

Berlin’s Senator (state minister) for Science Ina Czyborra (Social Democrat, SPD) also agreed with him and thanked the university management for their quick and decisive action. A decision in further measures such as bans or criminal charges would be taken up to the university, she said, which was in intensive dialogue with the university management.

Adrian Grasse, research policy spokesperson for the CDU state parliamentary group in Berlin, expressed his concern about the number of people involved in such actions. In this context, he believed it was “right that we react politically to these developments by reintroducing [the university] regulatory law.”

Theo, who was present at the demonstrations and observed the actions of the police in the corridor in particular, called these really pointless arrests where people were just shouting, perhaps shouting with a little more anger than others.” The police then “ran up to them for no reason” and “grabbed them and pulled them out.”

He sharply criticised the actions of the police and the university management: “I find it extreme that the police deployed so quickly for what I saw was a totally peaceful demonstration. The university in particular should be a place for peaceful protest.”

For Theo, the increase in campus occupations internationally shows that the previous forms of protest have had no effect: “I think it’s extreme that people are practically forced to organise these kinds of camps as a sign that simple demonstrations are apparently not going to work.”

When WSWS reporters emphasised that it was necessary for students to turn to the working class, Theo agreed: “It will never work if only the students, only the academics demonstrate.” Workers had already shown that they have the potential to really change things, for example when they refuse to produce weapons, he said. “That is the best way for a protest to take place, because such protests make a difference, regardless of the media attention. If the weapons are not produced, they cannot be shipped. You can’t send a better signal than that.”

Melda also condemned the arbitrary actions of the police: individual students were specifically dragged out without justification. The police just came in, looked into the crowd and then simply dragged some people out with them, and other students were not allowed out.”

For Melda, the actions of the police exposed the hypocrisy of

However, despite the constant propaganda and hostility in the media, the demonstrations showed “that a lot of people are waking up... It’s a genocide. Nobody can deny that,” she said.

The police crackdown is also meeting with growing opposition among lecturers. A statement initiated by over 100 Berlin lecturers and signed by over 130 other lecturers from

Germany and abroad declares: “As lecturers at Berlin’s universities, our integrity obliges us to regard our students as equals, but also to protect them and not to hand them over to police violence under any circumstances.”

That was one of the duties of the university management “to strive for as long as possible for a dialogue-based and non-

violent solution. The Executive Board of the FU Berlin violated this duty by having the protest camp cleared by the police without a prior offer of dialogue. The constitutionally protected right to assemble peacefully applies regardless of the opinion expressed.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact