

State interior minister in North Rhine-Westphalia bans “Palestine Solidarity Duisburg”

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While the genocide in Gaza reaches a new murderous climax with the Israeli army’s offensive on Rafah, opponents of the genocide are being criminalised in Germany.

On Thursday, Herbert Reul (Christian Democrat-CDU), the interior minister of Germany’s most populous state North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), banned the group “Palestine Solidarity Duisburg” and had four homes, including that of spokesman Leon Wystrychowski, searched by the police. The group’s supposed “antisemitism” and alleged support for Hamas served as a pretext.

The police confiscated laptops, mobile phones, PCs, materials and documents. Around 50 officers carried them out of the homes of four members in cardboard boxes. The group’s websites were also banned and had to be taken down, and the organisation’s assets were confiscated. The formation of substitute organisations and the use of the association’s logo were also banned.

Reul announced in the state capital Düsseldorf that the initiative for the ban came from the North Rhine-Westphalian Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as the domestic secret service is called. As the organisation was only active in North Rhine-Westphalia, the NRW Interior Ministry was able to prepare and issue the ban.

The Duisburg group, which was founded by activists and individuals at the beginning of 2023, had mainly been active since October 7. It organised and took part in demonstrations against the genocide in Gaza. In its press release, the NRW Interior Ministry confirmed that “Palestine Solidarity Duisburg” was an association “that has set itself the task of carrying out Palestine solidarity work, primarily in Duisburg, but also

nationwide.”

Only on Wednesday, the group held a rally in Duisburg city centre to commemorate the Nakba, the “catastrophe” of 1948 when, 76 years ago, around 800,000 Arab inhabitants of Palestine were expelled from their villages and towns by Zionist troops. The rally, like all others, had previously been peaceful and without incident—apart from the increasingly absurd restrictions imposed by the police, which forbid speaking the truth about the massacres in Gaza.

The ban is now being justified by the fact that the group describes its aim as expressly striving for the liberation of Palestine “within the borders of 1947 and thus before the founding of the state of Israel in 1948” and “expressly expresses solidarity with the Palestinian resistance in all forms,” “which also includes the armed struggle of the terrorist organisation Hamas against Israel.”

The Duisburg district court had already charged and sentenced Wystrychowski on April 10 on the basis of a similarly absurd construction. This was based on two sentences he had uttered as a speaker at a pro-Palestinian demonstration in the Duisburg district of Hochfeld on October 9: “Yalla Intifada, from Duisburg to Gaza” and “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” According to district court spokesman Dr. Rolf Rausch, he is said to have condoned the murder of Israeli citizens.

The judge had to concede that the supposedly incriminating sentences would not have led to an indictment if they had been uttered at the time of the trial—i.e., in April 2024. However, as they were made in “temporal proximity” to the Hamas attack—two days after October 7—they had the effect of condoning the

“mass murder by Hamas.” Wystrychowski was ultimately sentenced to a fine for condoning criminal offences committed abroad.

State Interior Minister Reul also used the false accusation of “antisemitism” when banning the pro-Palestine group. Behind the solidarity with Palestine lay “nothing other than hatred of Jews,” he said.

In reality, the group explicitly speaks out against antisemitism both at its rallies and in the presentation of its aims. However, it rejects Zionism and is in favour of a joint state for Jews and Palestinians in Palestine.

The NRW Interior Ministry, on the other hand, equates criticism of Israel and condemnation of the genocide in Gaza with antisemitism. “The ideological orientation of the group is characterised by an anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic world view,” reads the ministry’s press release. The association thus spreads hatred and violence in the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians and jeopardises “the life and limb of fellow Israelis and Jews living in Germany.”

The ban on “Palestine Solidarity Duisburg” is the latest escalation in a long series of persecutions and repressive measures against opponents of the Gaza genocide. Homes are searched, demonstrations are banned or restricted, and premises such as the Oyoun Cultural Centre in Berlin are closed. In the Berlin district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, two girls’ leisure centres were even closed because an employee had been spotted at a pro-Palestinian demonstration.

Academics, such as anthropologist Ghassan Hage from the Max Planck Institute in Halle, are being dismissed. The Palestine Congress in Berlin was broken up by the police. The account of “Jewish Voice” had previously been frozen. The university administrations of Humboldt University, Freie Universität Berlin and Leipzig University deploy the police against their students and brutally disperse student protest camps.

These dictatorial measures are not directed against antisemitism. On the contrary, many Jewish opponents of the genocide are also affected. They serve to suppress opponents of the war and any opposition to the policies of the ruling class. Striking workers will be the next to be affected.

Berlin supports the far-right Israeli government not out of concern for Jewish lives but due to imperialist interests. The genocide in Gaza is one front in the

developing global war for the redivision of the world. Alongside the US, Germany is one of the main driving forces behind this war—in the Middle East, Ukraine and the Far East. This is the reason why it justifies its great power policies and its support for genocide with the cynical reference to the fight against “antisemitism.”

The danger of a renewed rise in antisemitism in Germany is real. But it does not come from the opponents of the genocide in Gaza, such as “Palestine Solidarity Duisburg.” It emanates from the German government itself, which is in cahoots with genuine antisemites and Nazis in Ukraine in order to subjugate Russia. And it emanates from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which is being courted and built up by those in power in politics and the state.

Reul declared that the ban on “Palestine Solidarity Duisburg” came at the right time and sent the right signal. “The state has demonstrated a clear stance against extremism today.” The state has indeed shown a “clear stance” against opponents of genocide and the right to freedom of expression.



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