“Stop the genocide in Gaza!”

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei holds European Union election rallies in Duisburg and Munich

Our reporters
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The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is campaigning in the European Union elections against imperialist war, genocide and fascism on the basis of a socialist programme. On May 18, it organised powerful rallies in Duisburg-Hamborn and Munich-Giesing, two working-class districts of major German cities. The SGP candidates and members explained the party’s programme and called upon workers to join the party.

In the Ruhr area, the SGP rally “Stop the genocide in Gaza” took place with around 50 participants at the Hamborn Altmarkt in the north of the working-class city of Duisburg. The speakers at the rally were Dietmar Gaisenkersting, deputy SGP chairman and North Rhine-Westphalian European candidate, who explained the party’s position against the genocide in Gaza. Hakan Özal presented the SGP programme in Turkish.

Hakan Özal said that the SGP is organising its election campaign together with the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu in Turkey, the Socialist Equality Party in the UK and the Parti de l’égalité socialiste in France. Referring to the Gaza genocide, he described the immeasurable suffering of over two million Palestinians who have been deliberately starved for seven months and displaced by constant bombing from the Israeli army. “Hundreds of thousands of people are tired, hungry and afraid. They are no longer safe anywhere,” Özal exclaimed. “This unspeakable cruelty is being carried out with the full support of imperialist powers such as the USA and Germany.”

He stressed, “The historical catastrophe of Palestine and the Middle East is a product of imperialism and will only end with its abolition.”

Özal warned against illusions in the Turkish government of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an, which is leading the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist aspirations of the masses into a dead end. He said, “Despite the demands of the masses to stop trade with Israel, the Turkish government has persistently rejected these demands for a long time.”

He pointed out that “a significant portion of Israel’s steel imports come from Turkey. Vital Azerbaijani oil is shipped to Israel via Turkish harbours. Cement, chemicals and even gunpowder, barbed wire and weapon parts have also been delivered to Israel.” The US-NATO bases in Turkey are also still in operation. “As long as the military-strategic connections of the ruling class in Turkey with their imperialist and Zionist allies continue in this way—who do they think they are deceiving?” asked Hakan to applause from the audience.

Dietmar Gaisenkersting then spoke and referred to the 76th anniversary of the Nakba, the catastrophe of Palestine, and called for an immediate stop to the genocide in the Gaza Strip. He said: “Even now, tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, are threatened by war and starvation.” The Israeli military has “deliberately bombed hospitals, schools, mosques and churches, killed doctors and paramedics, journalists, UN employees and NGO members.”

There was strong applause when Gaisenkersting emphasised: “The perpetrators are not only in Tel Aviv but also in Berlin!” He explained that the main responsibility lies with imperialism, which uses the Zionist state as a bridgehead for its economic and geopolitical interests throughout the Middle East.

Shortly before it became known that the Public Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) was demanding an arrest warrant for Netanyahu, Gaisenkersting demanded in Duisburg that the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Green Party Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock also be brought to justice. “While shedding crocodile tears, the German ruling class plays a key role in the genocide against the Palestinians.”

Just two days earlier, the North Rhine-Westphalian state government had banned the Palestine Solidarity Duisburg organisation, searched their homes and confiscated their assets. Gaisenkersting called for its defence and the defence of all pro-Palestinian protests, rejecting the slanderous accusation that they were “antisemitic.” He said:

> All of these dictatorial measures have absolutely nothing to do with the safety of Jewish lives, here in Germany, or in Israel. It is about economic interests in the Middle East and the whole world! It’s therefore absurd and totally cynical for the German government to justify its new great power policy and support for genocide with the fight against antisemitism.

He added that the danger of a renewed flare-up of antisemitism was real: “It emanates from the reactionary national chauvinism fuelled by capitalism and imperialism.” He also called for the defence of all refugees and migrants.

Finally, Gaisenkersting firmly opposed the supply of weapons to Ukraine and the coalition’s support for its war against Russia. He stressed that war abroad goes hand in hand with a war against the working population at home: “War Minister Pistorius and Defence Minister Habeck are working to once again make the country “fit for war” ... Every aspect of society is being subordinated to this purpose.”

He related that Galeria Karstadt Kaufhof, DB Cargo, Thyssenkrupp, Ford and other companies were threatening to implement mass redundancies and declared: “It is the international working class that produces all social wealth ... The SGP therefore is not making appeals to

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the parties and governments that represent capitalist interests and organise genocide. This is not only illusory, but also reactionary. We appeal to the working class: here in Germany, in Europe and all over the world."

In Munich, the SGP rally took place in the working class district of Giesing. **Thomas Schrödl**, SGP central committee member and European Union election candidate, explained the historical significance of this neighbourhood: "105 years ago, the Munich Soviet Republic was crushed here by the Freikorps sent by the SPD. Giesing workers put up the longest resistance back then."

Schrödl emphasised the importance of the working class in the fight against the genocide in Gaza: "Only if Palestinian and Israeli workers unite and take power can they end the war," and he recalled the example of the Russian workers who in 1917 "took power in the October Revolution and thus ended the First World War."

He explained why it was necessary for the working class to organise independently of the trade unions and called for the formation of action committees, the election of the SGP in the European elections and the building of the Fourth International. Schrödl said: "It is the only party that has learned the lessons of past struggles against the betrayal of the Stalinists and offers the working class leadership and perspective."

After Schrödl's speech, **Clemens Huber** spoke on behalf of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth organisation of the ICFI, stressing that there are more than 600,000 children and young people among the Palestinians trapped in Gaza, and that they also make up about a third of those killed in Gaza. He angrily pointed out that Germany is Israel's main sponsor alongside the US and that the German government has increased arms exports to Israel tenfold since October 7: "How many schools, museums, sports facilities and hospitals could be financed by this sum!"

He opposed the reintroduction of compulsory military service: "Young people are once again to be led to the slaughter." Clemens welcomed the Palestine protest camps at universities, which demonstrated that the rejection of, and anger towards the official war policy is worldwide. But protests alone would not change the situation, with governments responding with unmitigated police violence. He called out, "Students, turn to the working class! Go to the factory gates and make a stand for the perspective of an international general strike. Discuss with workers the perspective of an international mass movement of workers and youth against the war."

Marianne Arens, the Hessian SGP European Union election candidate, then called for the defence of the courageous Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk in Ukraine. The Zelensky regime had arrested the 25-year-old because he had called on Russian and Ukrainian workers to unite against the war. Arens explained that there was no democracy in Ukraine: "Many parties are banned. Elections have been suspended and it is a crime to recall the history of the Soviet Union." She explained:

> Bogdan has been arrested because he is a communist, because he fights for social equality and the international unity of the working class. His arrest is the spearhead of the reactionary state attacks on the working class. It is directed against all of us, especially against the International Committee of the Fourth International. To be a socialist, to be in favour of international unity, is a crime in Ukraine today.

Finally, **Ulrich Rippert**, the honorary chairman of the SGP and one of the party's leading candidates, explained the party's programme and goals in the European election campaign. He said: "The future will not be decided in the Berlin Chancellery or the Bundestag and certainly not in the European Parliament. The future depends on what we do."

He explained that all the catastrophes that afflicted humanity in the 20th century—"world war, genocide, the dropping of nuclear bombs, fascism, economic crises, pandemics"—have returned with a vengeance today, in the 21st century. "The cause of these problems," said Rippert, "lies in the nature of capitalism, a social system based on private ownership of the means of production and the division of the world into rival nation states."

He referred to the war against Russia and said, "Ukraine is being crammed full with state-of-the-art weapons, and the battle tanks will soon be followed by fighter bombers and ground troops. ... The danger of a third world war has never been as great as it is today."

Millions of people in Europe and around the world were following the news of the war with great concern, he continued. "Many are asking themselves: Have those responsible in politics and the media gone mad? Have they forgotten what it was like here in Germany—and the whole of Europe—after the Second World War? Have they forgotten what Hiroshima and Nagasaki looked like after the atomic bomb was dropped?" And he warned: "The Second World War ended with nuclear weapons, the Third World War will begin with nuclear weapons."

But the counter-movement is also growing, said Rippert: "The same contradictions of the capitalist system that lead to war, the police state and fascism are also intensifying the class struggle and radicalising more and more workers and young people." He recalled the nationwide strike by construction workers and the repeated strikes by train drivers recently, saying, "Last year, seven million workers were in the wage struggle." In France, Great Britain, Holland and Belgium and numerous other countries, including the US, the class struggle is constantly on the rise. Rippert also recalled that hundreds of thousands took to the streets in Israel last summer against Netanyahu's far-right government.

However, in order to link the class struggle with the fight against war, it is necessary to "break through the straitjacket of the trade unions," said Rippert, because, "Wherever workers take up the struggle, they immediately come into conflict with the trade unions that defend capitalism." The more capitalism revives its brutal traditions of war and oppression, the more "the working class must also return to its historical tradition, i.e., the struggle for socialism."

For this, however, the working class needs its own party: "That is the Socialist Equality Party!" And he explained, "The strength of our party is the historical tradition it represents. That is the strength of the Trotskyist movement—the Fourth International." Stalinism had not emerged from the Russian Revolution, but as a reaction against it. All socialist leaders had been murdered by Stalin. Rippert contradicted the lie of the century, which equates socialism with Stalinism. The crimes of Stalinism were thus used to fuel anti-communist sentiment. Understanding this is of the utmost importance, he said, because, "Socialism is not the past, it is the future!"

"We are not running for the European Parliament like other parties. We are not interested in posts and careers," explained Rippert. "We are taking part in this election campaign and using it to publicise a socialist programme." It is about "organising a movement of the working class against war and genocide. If we are elected, then we will use the parliament—the European Parliament and every other parliament—as a tribune of class struggle." Rippert said:

> We are taking up the struggle carried out by the German socialist revolutionary Karl Liebknecht, who stressed during the First World War: 'The main enemy is in at home!' Today, a third world war can only be prevented by building a new socialist mass party that unites the working class internationally and eliminates capitalism and all its evils once and for all.

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The two rallies, in Duisburg and in Munich, made clear that the Socialist Equality Party differs from all other parties in the European election campaign. The SGP is the only party to put the fight against war and German militarism at the centre of its campaign. As part of a revolutionary world party, the Fourth International, it opposes nationalism and the deafening war propaganda with the international unity and cooperation of the working class.

The next rally of the SGP will take place next Saturday in Stuttgart: "Stop the genocide in Gaza. Against world war and social devastation, for international socialism." ***Saturday, May 25, 2024, 3:00 p.m. Stuttgart, Dandelion Fountain, (Königstraße 13)***

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