

Workers must defend Berlin's Humboldt University students against brutal police violence: Stop the pro-war policy!

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26 May 2024

The brutality used by police against peacefully protesting students at Berlin's Humboldt University on Thursday represents an enormous escalation of violence against opponents of war in Germany. The police acted like a fascist terror unit when they evacuated the social science institute, which had been occupied by students on Wednesday to protest against the genocide in Gaza and the complicity of the university. Students and journalists were beaten up by the police and even lawyers and paramedics were arrested.

On Wednesday, when a few dozen students began to occupy the institute, the police used extreme violence: A peaceful sit-down blockade by supporters in front of the entrance to the institute was brutally broken up and the activists were taken away one by one. One person lost consciousness in the process. Access to the building was blocked so that no one would have been able to get out, even in the event of a fire.

At the same time, the university administration tolerated the occupation until 6 p.m. on Thursday and arranged a discussion with the students from 3 p.m. Around 50 students eventually took part in the discussion with Humboldt University President Julia von Blumenthal, while hundreds more were not allowed into the building. Professor Michael Wildt, one of the leading historians of National Socialism (Nazism) in Germany, also took part in the discussion and expressed his solidarity with the students.

During the talks, Blumenthal made a clear promise that all students would have the opportunity to leave the building afterwards without being subject to police violence or having their ID checked. None of these promises was honoured. While the discussions were still taking place, the police attacked the solidarity

demonstration and arrested students. Blumenthal refused to comment on this.

A short time later, the police used physical force to break into the building and beat students. All students who wanted to leave the building voluntarily were surrounded by police on the street in order to take their personal details; 130 people were briefly arrested.

When the university staff had left the building, the institute was turned into a lawless space where the police used enormous force against anyone who was still inside. Students were beaten up by the police and lawyers and paramedics were arrested.

A reporter for the *Berliner Zeitung* reported that he was thrown to the ground by a police officer and punched twice in the face. He was then handcuffed for several hours. There were abrasions and haematomas on his face, stomach and arm. His left hand was still numb the following day.

When questioned by the newspaper, the police claimed that the journalist had attacked a police officer and had not identified himself as a member of the press. With these brazen lies, the police condoned the mistreatment of the journalist. Meanwhile, a video from the *Berliner Zeitung* proves that the journalist was not guilty of anything and that he had clearly shouted "I am press" several times when he was being attacked by the police.

Such scenes, in which aggressive police units attack peacefully protesting students, journalists and even paramedics, are otherwise only familiar at the hands of dictatorships. The fact that Humboldt University, of all places—where the Nazis organised book burnings in 1933—became the scene of this terror shows how far the repression of opponents of war has progressed.

It was not simply a case of police gone wild, but a carefully planned action that had been coordinated at the highest level. Its aim is to intimidate and terrorise anyone who calls the genocide in Gaza by name and protests against the government's pro-war policy.

Blumenthal herself declared that she had received "instructions from the very top" to end the protest at the HU. The mayor of Berlin, Kai Wegner (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), Senator (state minister) for Science Ina Czyborra (Social Democratic Party, SPD) and Senator for the Interior Iris Spranger (SPD) were involved in the planning.

The federal government (a coalition of the SPD, Greens and Liberal Democrats, FDP) also welcomed the police terror. Federal Minister of Justice Marco Buschmann (FDP) spoke to the Funke Mediengruppe newspapers and expressed his full support for the police operation. There should be "no condoning of criminal offences," he declared. And Federal Education Minister Bettina Stark-Watzinger (FDP) wrote on Twitter: "Good that the police are now clearing the area. Universities are places of debate, but not lawless spaces. Criminal offences committed must be consistently prosecuted."

All other establishment parties, including the Left Party, also support the line taken by the Berlin Senate (state executive) and the federal government. The science policy spokesperson for the Left Party, Tobias Schulze, described Blumenthal's actions as "de-escalating" and "dialogue-oriented" and accused the protesting students of "glorifying terror" and "antisemitism."

The significance of the escalation of police violence—supported by the federal government and a united front of all establishment parties—goes far beyond the walls of Humboldt University. It is a matter of suppressing the widespread opposition to the genocide in Gaza and the government's pro-war policy.

The ruling class is pursuing the declared aim of making Germany "fit for war" again, despite its devastating role in the First and Second World Wars. It is playing a leading role in the NATO war against Russia, which is escalating further and further, creating the danger of a nuclear exchange. In the Middle East, it regards the annihilation and expulsion of the Palestinians as a prerequisite for asserting its economic and geostrategic interests across the entire region and

preparing for war against Iran.

This madness is incompatible with democratic rights. That is why the government is following in the traditions of the Nazis in domestic policy and establishing a police state. Workers must understand that the attack on students is also directed against themselves. Today students who express criticism are being bludgeoned, tomorrow it will be striking workers and other opponents of war.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is therefore calling on all workers to come to the defence of the students at Humboldt University. In the US, 48,000 workers at the University of California system have voted overwhelmingly in favour of a strike against police violence, but the union bureaucracy is doing everything it can to prevent a full-scale strike and limit it to several campuses.

Workers must therefore organise independently of the unions in rank-and-file action committees and unite internationally to beat back the attacks on democratic rights and stop the insane pro-war policies. And they need their own party to arm the growing opposition with a clear socialist perspective against capitalism, fascism and war. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei is fighting for in the European elections. Register now as an active supporter and take part in our election campaign.



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