

Final rally of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei for the European elections: No third world war! Stop the genocide in Gaza!

Our reporters
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On Saturday, as part of its European election campaign, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) held its final rally in the Wedding district of Berlin. The rally was attended by around 100 workers and young people, despite the intense heat and brief heavy rain.

The seven speakers advanced the perspective of international socialism in opposition to the genocide in Gaza, police violence against students and the escalating NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, which threatens a nuclear holocaust. The speakers also strongly condemned the arrest of Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk by the Ukrainian secret service and demanded his release.

All speakers emphasised that appeals to those in power and their pseudo-left adjuncts will not stop the genocidal and pro-war course of all the establishment parties. What is needed is the development of an anti-war movement of the international working class. They urgently warned against underestimating the danger of a nuclear strike, which the NATO powers are provoking in their escalation of the war against Russia.

Johannes Stern, editor-in-chief of the German-language *World Socialist Web Site*, opened and moderated the rally.

“We are standing in the European elections to oppose the warmongers who, after two terrible world wars and the dreadful crimes of the 20th century, are once again plunging the world into the abyss,” Stern said.

The SGP called the rally to condemn imperialist crimes and denounce the warmongers in politics and the media, expose the driving forces behind them and explain what needs to be done, Stern added. “We oppose the growing nationalism and the relapse into world war and barbarism with the perspective of the United Socialist States of Europe.”

Christoph Vandreier, the SGP chair and lead candidate in the European elections, and Thomas Scripps, the deputy national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in the UK, focused on the criminal pro-war policies of Germany, the UK and the NATO powers. They explaining the role of the establishment parties in Germany and the Labour Party, trade unions and pseudo-left in the UK.

To strong applause, Vandreier declared: “The parties of the federal coalition government—Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and Liberal Democrats (FDP) do not belong in the European Parliament, they belong in the dock! They are responsible for a bloody genocide, and they are constantly risking nuclear war!”

The same applied to the Left Party parliamentary deputies and those who have switched to the Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW) alliance, Vandreier said. They “voted in favour of supporting Israel and voted in favour of suppressing the protests against it!”

Vandreier countered the claims of nationalists, such as the far-right

Alternative for Germany (AfD) or the BSW, by stating that Germany was “not simply an appendage of the USA, but a driving force in this development.” The elites had “made the decision that they must once again enforce their economic interests globally with military power,” he said. This is “a direct continuation of the Nazis’ war aims” and that, as in the 1930s, a pro-war policy went hand in hand with dictatorship at home.

Vandreier emphasised that the AfD and BSW are hostile to the struggle of the working class against war. Their programme has “nothing whatsoever to do with a fight against war and militarism. The AfD is being built up to enforce militarism against the growing resistance, to agitate against Muslims and to suppress resistance to war!”

The SGP, “together with our sister parties of the Fourth International, opposes the growing nationalism with the international unity of the workers, across all religious, ethnic and other borders.”

Vandreier’s concluding call for the SGP to become a mass party and for those in attendance to become active was met with enthusiasm. “Don’t let the ruling class drive humanity into a catastrophe for the third time! Join the struggle for socialism!”

Thomas Scripps, who is standing for the SEP in the snap general election in the UK, said, “Our world movement sees our campaigns in the European elections, the American presidential election and the British general election as linked fronts in a single global offensive for socialism.”

On developments in the UK, Scripps reported that millions of people “week after week, month after month” were “marching in the UK in nationwide demonstrations ... demanding an end to Israeli genocide.” These people see the Conservative Party and the Labour Party as a “single party of genocide and war” and “whole generations” have learned the “lessons of the bloody occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan in which the UK played such a central role.”

Scripps also outlined the UK’s provocative role even before NATO’s proxy war in Ukraine against Russia, as well as London’s key role “in the military escalation of the conflict, sending heavy armour and long-range missiles and pushing for the delivery of F-16 fighter jets.” And it was now common knowledge “that British special forces are operating in Ukraine,” Scripps said.

It is in response to the massive resistance of workers to the war interests of British imperialism that the government under Prime Minister Rishi Sunak had called a snap parliamentary election.

Katja Rippert, SGP European election candidate and a leading member of the International Youth and Students for Socialist Equality, IYSSE, spoke about the struggles and university occupations by students and the brutal reaction of the ruling class to these protests. She also further

elaborated a perspective for the struggle of young people and students against genocide and for a future without war.

She addressed the particular significance of the massive suppression of the student protests at Berlin's Humboldt University (HU), where the IYSSE is fighting the falsification of history and the trivialisation of the Nazi regime by the right-wing extremist history professor Jörg Baberowski. "The police acted like a fascist terror unit. And they did it in the heart of Berlin on Friedrichstrasse, just a few steps away from the place where the Nazis burned books by socialists, Jews and opponents of the war in 1933."

According to Rippert, it was no coincidence that this extreme violence took place at the same university where the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union was planned and prepared over 80 years ago and where, for the last 10 years, systematic efforts had been made to "ideologically legitimise the new German great power policy."

The IYSSE had repeatedly warned that the "rewriting of history" served to prepare and justify new crimes, Rippert continued. "Today we see what that means. Today, the ruling class is arming and financing a genocide, escalating the war against Russia and taking dictatorial measures against the opposition."

The arrest of the Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk by the Ukrainian secret service was at the centre of the contribution made by SGP European election candidate Angela Niklaus.

Niklaus said that Syrotiuk was arrested in April because he had "tirelessly called for the unity of the Ukrainian and Russian working class." His life is now under threat because inmates in Ukrainian prisons "are subjected to a regime of violence" that made "cruel and humiliating abuse and torture the norm."

Niklaus therefore urged those attending the rally to join the international campaign to free Syrotiuk.

The NATO member states involved in the war in Ukraine are "just as responsible for the fate of Bogdan Syrotiuk as they are for the fate of Julian Assange and the fate of the Palestinians."

Niklaus went on to explain that Syrotiuk's arrest was not only directed against the growing opposition within the Ukrainian working class to the war and the Zelensky government.

"Together with the International Committee of the Fourth International, Bogdan and his comrades defend the theoretical achievements of Marxism and the gains of the October Revolution of 1917, and they continue the legacy of the two most important leaders of the October Revolution—Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Leon Trotsky—against the slanders, distortions and crimes of the Stalinist and ex-Stalinist regimes."

The arrest of Syrotiuk is also "an attack on the only authentic international voice for an international socialist perspective for the working class: the International Committee and its sections!"

Hakan Özal, a member of the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (Socialist Equality Group) in Turkey, warned the Turkish population against illusions in the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: "Despite the demands of the masses to stop trade with Israel, the Turkish government has persistently rejected these demands for a long time."

When Özal pointed out that "cement, chemicals and even gunpowder, barbed wire and weapon parts had also been delivered to Israel," there was a strong reaction from a participant at the rally who vehemently defended Erdoğan's policies. But Özal insisted that illusions in this government "lead the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist aspirations of the masses to a dead end."

The US-NATO bases in Turkey were also still in operation, he said. "As long as the military-strategic connections of the ruling class in Turkey with its imperialist and Zionist allies continue in this way—who do they think they are deceiving?" asked Özal to applause from the audience.

"The historical catastrophe of Palestine and the Middle East is a product of imperialism and will only end with its abolition," said Özal.

Ulrich Rippert, SGP Honorary Chairman and European election candidate, focussed in particular on the question of why building the SGP was the "key" to solving today's problems. Referring to the growing struggles of workers throughout Germany, Europe and America against wage dumping and poor working conditions, he explained that the working class would immediately come into conflict with the trade union apparatus if it wants to fight.

The working class must break through the "straitjacket of the trade unions," which defend capitalism and therefore fully support the ruling class's pro-war course. In order to develop the struggle "against war and social devastation" and "a broad mobilisation of the working class," the "working class needs its own party. That is the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei!" said Rippert.

The SGP drew its "strength and confidence" from its programme and the lessons of history. "Our movement," the Trotskyist movement, had fought tirelessly against the "lie of the century," which equated socialism with Stalinism. "We are an international party and fight for the international mobilisation of the working class against war and capitalism. We are a revolutionary socialist world party."

"Not a single one of the problems facing workers" can be solved within a national framework, Rippert emphasised. All today's problems—"war, exploitation, the climate catastrophe or the coronavirus pandemic—are global problems and can only be solved if the vast majority of working people worldwide work together and fight for an international socialist programme."

Despite the interruption due to the weather, the entire rally met with lively interest and the international orientation of the SGP was well received. Many people bought the SGP's election declaration and were interested in the Marxist and Trotskyist literature published by Mehring Verlag. In particular, the new book by David North *The Logic of Zionism: From Nationalist Myth to the Gazan Genocide* was sold and intensive discussions developed at the book table.

In conversations with SGP members, many said that no party explained the situation in the Middle East as clearly as the SGP. Some listeners were impressed to hear that "the SGP alone is calling for workers in the factories to be shaken awake"; no other organisation is addressing workers.

A construction worker at the book table stated, "What I have heard here is incredibly good. Every person who still has a spark of principle and humanity should become a member of the SGP now."

Another was particularly impressed by the SGP "as a revolutionary socialist world party." The SGP candidates' decisive conclusion that war, genocide and social attacks on the working class could only be ended "by abolishing capitalism" met with his unreserved approval.

Was it "not reasonable what Wagenknecht is calling for?" someone asked. With her comments against refugees, they said, she was not being anti-refugee, but merely pointing out the lack of daycare centres and jobs, which made it necessary to limit immigration. SGP members made it clear that Wagenknecht's attacks against refugees are reactionary and rooted in her nationalist perspective. The working class should not be divided and agitated against the weakest members of society.

The SGP defended the right of every worker to live and work in the country of their choice. Furthermore, the refugees from Syria or Iraq, for example, had not come of their own free will, but because the imperialist powers had fuelled war and bombed their livelihoods.

One university employee wanted to "stay in touch with the SGP at all costs." He had "learnt some new things" today. "Appeals to those responsible in the governments really won't change anything, you can see that."

A Palestinian woman who followed the rally with her son said that she was "very surprised" by the analysis presented on the connection between the war in Ukraine against Russia and the genocide in Gaza. "So the war

against Russia is part of a big war by the governments here and in the USA and by Netanyahu,” she concluded. She had not seen it that way before. She now wanted to read much more about the SGP and sign the petition for “the release of your comrade in Ukraine.”

A central topic in the discussion was the prospect of socialism. “If we build a new workers’ party and it comes to power, it must do what the workers demand!” said one rally participant.



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