

# Renewed massive police violence and media smears against Gaza protesters in Germany

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On Saturday, July 13, the Berlin police once again used brutal force to attack demonstrators protesting against Israel's genocide in Gaza. The action is part of the intensified persecution of opponents of the war by the German state. The police arrested 26 people and filed 28 criminal charges against demonstrators—including using insulting language, breach of the peace and “aiding and abetting a jailbreak.” Five injured people had to be taken to hospital.

According to the *Tagesspiegel*, up to 1,100 people took part in the planned demonstration called “Stop the Gaza genocide,” which led from Steglitz towards Schöneberg. Many carried signs reading “Free Palestine from Israel's Occupation” and demanded an immediate end to the genocide, which, according to a report in the renowned medical journal *The Lancet*, has now cost an estimated 186,000 lives.

Video footage of the police operation shows officers in protective gear hitting participants in the head, knocking them to the ground and against house walls, choking them, restraining them and leading them away using painful holds. Five police officers were charged with assault in the line of duty. According to the police and fire brigade, seven people were injured, one of them seriously, with talk of “injuries,” fainting and “circulatory problems.” The actual number of people injured could be far higher. A rescue helicopter was also deployed.

The police cited “bottle throwing,” “illegal and anti-police slogans” and the alleged refusal of 250 participants to comply with the ending of the demonstration declared by the rally organisers in the evening as a pretext for the use of force. According to the German constitution, peaceful assemblies of any kind are actually permitted without prior notification.

Another video documents aggressive racist hostility from pro-Zionist provocateurs against participants in the demonstration.

Statements by the police that “17 officers” were injured in addition to the demonstration participants are not substantiated by the available video material and have often proven to be inaccurate in similar operations in the past. Nevertheless, this information was immediately picked up in articles by *Tagesschau*, *Der Spiegel* and other publications and disseminated unquestioningly.

*Tagesspiegel* reacted particularly foully. Instead of asking those affected about the events, Berlin's “leading media outlet” published a video by its editor Sebastian Leber in which he justifies the smears of the bourgeois media. According to Leber, anyone not in favour of a “two-state solution” or even calling for a “liberation struggle” against the Israeli occupation must put up with being called an “Israel hater,” “antisemite” and “terror trivialiser.” He concludes by saying, “There is one main reason why the Palestinians and their supporters look so bad in public: they themselves.”

Leber's tirade is an aggressive attempt to justify government propaganda that abuses the banner of the “fight against antisemitism” and strips the term of its historical content in order to silence opposition to Israel's war crimes. The fact that the bankrupt perspective of a two-state solution—whose reactionary character has become increasingly clear in the 30 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords—is being rejected by more and more workers and young people is to be welcomed. The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) strives to develop this opposition into a conscious socialist movement of the international working class against Zionism and imperialism, for the perspective of the United Socialist States of the Middle East. This socialist perspective is opposed to all forms of nationalism and is meeting with growing support.

In a popular Instagram comment, one person replied to the *Tagesspiegel* editor: “Many people no longer go to demonstrations because they have experienced massive

police violence since day 1 and because they are framed as Israel haters by the *Tagesspiegel*, even when they gather to mourn their dead relatives. You obviously only see what you want to see. Serious journalism is different. Has there actually been a public apology from *Tagesspiegel* to the management of Oyoun [cultural centre]? A court had ruled that you were wrong to label them as antisemitic ...”

In fact, the weekend’s police violence is the latest culmination of a comprehensive campaign by the ruling class, which is taking ever more aggressive and brutal action against any expression of opposition to the war. At the end of 2023, the Berlin Senate (state executive), with the support of the opposition parties, had already initiated measures to close the renowned Neukölln cultural centre Oyoun after events organised by “Jewish Voice” and the SGP against the genocide had taken place there.

While the authorities responsible for licensing gatherings are censoring or banning demonstrations throughout Germany, the state and federal governments have intensified their efforts to increasingly marginalise the cultural sector and universities. The Education Ministry even compiled lists of critical professors who defended students against police violence in order to check whether they could have their public funding cancelled. Most recently, the cabinet introduced a drastically tougher deportation law that makes it possible to deport people simply because of a “like” or comment on social media.

The shabby propaganda of the bourgeois media and the dictatorial measures of the ruling class show that appeals to the government and its international allies to end their support for Israel’s genocide are futile. It is crucial to arm the widespread willingness to fight among workers and young people with a socialist programme and to combine the struggle against war with the struggle against its root cause, capitalism.



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