

Student parliament at Berlin's Humboldt University approves IYSSE motion opposing state attacks on freedom of expression and academic freedom

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28 November 2024

On November 11 the student parliament (StuPa) at Berlin Humboldt University approved a resolution introduced by the International Youth & Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) entitled “Condemn the attack on academic freedom by the Federal Ministry of Education.”

The resolution condemned the “attempts at intimidation by the Federal Ministry of Education against signatories of the open letter ‘Statement by Teachers at Berlin Universities’ The open letter in turn condemns the police violence against students at the Free University of Berlin who were peacefully protesting against the actions of the Israeli government in Gaza.”

The StuPa resolution demanded “an immediate end to all state threats against lecturers, a ban on police operations on campus and an end to all repression against students with critical views.” It went on to state:

The student parliament welcomes the resignation of the Federal Minister for Science and Research and calls on the Ministry of Education (BMBF) in its new composition to fully clarify the events of recent months. To this end, it is also essential that former State Secretary Sabine Döring be allowed to again speak freely.

In June, investigations by the public broadcaster NDR and the magazine *Der Spiegel* revealed how the Free

Democratic Party (FDP)-led BMBF had taken steps to cut or withdraw funding for research projects by lecturers with critical opinions and have them prosecuted. Their offence: They had defended the democratic right to freedom of expression and assembly of pro-Palestinian students.

The protest camp at the Freie (Free) University (FU) in Berlin was set up by students protesting Israel's genocide of the Palestinians, opposing German arms deliveries and the financial and political support for Israel provided by the German state. Similar protests and camps were organized in many other cities and repeatedly faced brutal police violence.

In response to the censorship and measures of repression, several thousand lecturers signed an open letter defending the democratic rights of the student protesters and the occupation at the FU while condemning the university management for breaking off offers of dialogue and allowing the police to remove student protesters.

The reaction in political circles and the media was to target professors. The repression of lecturers sparked a scandal the BMBF was unable to control, even after the sacking of Sabine Döring. Döring was subsequently replaced by the agitator Roland Philippi (FDP), who, according to media reports, stated in an internal chat that he “wouldn't mind if politically undesired scientists should worry about their funding.”

The repression continued even after the FDP quit the coalition government and the entire ruling class moved further to the right. The Bundestag, for example, has recently passed a so-called “antisemitism” resolution

that is fully in line with the policies of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). The resolution describes the genocide in Gaza as “correct according to international law” with regard to self-defense and takes up the AfD slogan of “imported antisemitism.” Universities should “be supported in continuing to make use of their legal options.” These include “the application of domiciliary rights, exclusion from teaching or studies, up to and including ex-matriculation [expulsion] in particularly serious cases.”

In this way, the ruling class is relying on the reintroduction of reactionary public order laws, which enable university administrations to carry out extrajudicial political expulsions. This is aimed at silencing all those who speak out against the genocide of Palestinians, Germany’s military build-up and its aggressive war policy.

At the StuPa meeting, IYSSE speakers explained the significance of the resolution and called for its adoption. StuPa member Gregor Kahl said: “If those professors who criticized this massive and violent attack on students’ freedom of expression are now being persecuted by the government, then we as the StuPa must vehemently condemn these attempts at intimidation.”

IYSSE member Tamino Wilck summarized the significance of these repressive measures as follows: “This is an enormous attack on freedom of expression and academic freedom, the kind of attack usually associated with authoritarian regimes.”

For more than 10 years, the IYSSE has fought against German warmongering and the ideological and militarist mobilization taking place at universities, including at Humboldt University in Berlin. In so doing, the IYSSE has repeatedly pointed to the sharp lurch to the right by establishment parties and the ruling class, which are reacting to enormous levels of social inequality and the deep crisis of capitalism by moving towards authoritarian and dictatorial forms of rule.

The resolution in the StuPa of the Humboldt University was adopted by a clear majority after a favorable amendment by the Left List (LiLi), which updated some points and was endorsed by the IYSSE faction.

The IYSSE had already introduced the motion last semester, but the RCDS, the right-wing student organization of the conservative CDU/CSU, delayed

the vote and adoption of the motion by checking the quorum in the last StuPa meeting before the summer break.

While the RCDS voted against and the social democratic Jusos abstained, all the other lists voted in favor of the resolution. After this important victory and their electoral success in this year’s StuPa elections, the IYSSE will expand its activities and orient students and youth towards the working class, arming them with the necessary socialist perspective for the struggle against war and dictatorship.



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