

Hundreds of thousands demonstrate across Germany against promotion of the fascist AfD

Our reporters
3 February 2025

The decision in Germany's parliament (Bundestag) to allow the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to secure a majority with its votes has triggered a political earthquake. Hundreds of thousands of people have since taken to the streets to protest against the return of fascism.

On January 29, the conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and Free Democratic Party (FDP) parliamentary groups in the Bundestag made common cause with the AfD to pass a motion calling for an intensification of the policy of sealing the borders and deporting refugees. In doing so, they made it clear that the "firewall" against the far-right party with its fascist "wing" is an illusion.

On Wednesday evening, Thursday and Friday, thousands of people marched in front of the CDU/CSU party headquarters to protest against the return of fascism. "Those who stay silent consent" and "There is no room for repetition in our history book," read placards.

On Saturday and Sunday, there were demonstrations and rallies in practically every major city. The largest gatherings took place in Berlin and Hamburg, with 250,000 and 80,000 participants respectively. On Saturday, 44,000 took to the streets in Stuttgart, 40,000 in Cologne and over 10,000 in Bremen and Leipzig. In most cases, the number of participants far exceeded the expected numbers registered by the organizers with the authorities, such as in Essen, where more than 14,000 people turned up instead of the expected 3,000.

In Bavaria, 20,000 gathered in Regensburg on Sunday to demonstrate against right-wing extremism. Thousands also took to the streets in Würzburg, Augsburg, Passau, Kempten and Ingolstadt. In Munich, more than 6,000 people gathered in front of the CSU headquarters immediately after the Bundestag session on Wednesday.

In Göttingen, Hildesheim, Mannheim, Karlsruhe, Koblenz, Mainz, Trier and Aachen, around 5,000 protested against the AfD's involvement in federal politics. In Frankfurt, a planned trade union demonstration against social cuts was turned into a protest against right-wing and racist politics,

while over 10,000 people attended a rally in Neu-Isenburg, south of Frankfurt, to protest against an AfD election rally. In Apolda, in the state of Thuringia, almost 2,000 also took to the streets against a meeting of the AfD youth organization Junge Alternative.

Posters and banners with slogans such as "Never again is NOW," "No human being is illegal" and "Colorful instead of brown" were carried everywhere. In addition to slogans against deportations and racism, many texts were also directed against the CDU/CSU chancellor candidate, such as: "No Merz from March," a reference to the federal election set for February 23, "schMerz ease up," a play on words since "Schmerz" is the German word for pain, or "Human rights instead of Merz and the right." On Friday, Friedrich Merz tried for the second time in the Bundestag to shred the last remnants of the right to asylum together with the AfD. However, the attempt to pass a law aimed at closing the borders to refugees failed to gain a majority.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to numerous participants who expressed their solidarity with migrants and refugees. Johannes, a Berlin student, said: "Minorities have been targeted here for years. I always imagine what it would be like if I were on the run myself. When I arrive somewhere, I would like to be welcomed and included." He also found it wrong that "attacks are constantly being instrumentalised."

Many of the participants were very young, and their statements and the numerous homemade cardboard signs testified to their anger and great willingness to fight. The concern about the return of fascism was palpable.

At the same time, however, a certain helplessness was evident. "We have to wake up," said one participant in Berlin. "Democracy is going in the wrong direction." Nadine, a nurse, said: "It makes me proud that so many people are going to the demonstration. But I'm already thinking that these demonstrations won't be enough."

The Social Democrats (SPD), Green and Left Party politicians, who suddenly appeared on the scene, did their utmost to channel the willingness to fight against the right

into their respective election campaigns. All they had to offer was platitudes and hypocrisy. Against the backdrop of their right-wing policies, the politicians' appearances were the height of cynicism.

In Cologne, SPD Health Minister Karl Lauterbach marched alongside Green politicians in the demonstration. Jan van Aken from the Left Party spoke out against "billionaires like Elon Musk." In Berlin, the SPD leadership around Lars Klingbeil and Saskia Esken was on site, and Frankfurt publicist Michel Friedman, who left the CDU just three days earlier, recalled weakly the passage in Germany's Basic Law that "human dignity is inviolable."

The questions remained open as to how it could have come to this and what was the point of voting for the SPD, the Greens or even the Left Party today. The same parties have been tightening migration policy themselves for years, advocating "deportations on a grand scale" (SPD Chancellor Olaf Scholz), actively supporting both the war in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza financially and politically, and thus opening the door to the AfD.

"Merz didn't fall from the sky," said Christoph Vandreier in Berlin. He made clear: "The SPD, Greens and Left Party are not allies in the fight against the fascists." In fact, it was the SPD that deployed German tanks against Russia for the first time since World War II, supported genocide in the Gaza Strip and practically abolished the right to asylum. Vandreier urgently called for an international mobilization of workers and said: "The workers are the ones who create all the wealth in society and have to bear the entire burden of war and social polarization. They are the social force that can stop fascism."

And he warned: "The rulers are increasingly relying on fascist and authoritarian methods to enforce war and social polarization." The Socialist Equality Party (SGP) was in fact the only political force to warn at the weekend's protests against this general course of development, explain its causes and show how it can be stopped.

At three separate rallies in Leipzig, Duisburg and Berlin, the SGP candidates warned: "If you pass motions and bills together with a far-right party, you can also govern together with it." They appealed to the participants to become politically active themselves and to help build the only international and socialist party, the SGP.

Thousands of copies of the SGP statement with the headline: "The fight against fascism requires the fight against capitalism and war!" were distributed in many cities. It was sometimes almost snatched from the hands of SGP members. It says the following about the SPD and the Greens:

these parties bear a central responsibility for the rise of the AfD. The SPD and the Greens are not opposing the AfD and CDU's refugee agitation and their racist law-and-order campaign but are instead fueling it.

SGP National Committee member K. Nesan also addressed the question of "Why?" in Stuttgart. He emphasized that 80 years after the end of the Nazi regime, Wednesday's vote in the Bundestag had set the course for a repetition of the Nazis' deportations. "The AfD, which calls for the 'remigration' of refugees and foreigners in its election program, is ready to form the next governing coalition," said Nesan.

He was speaking at a memorial event at Stuttgart's Nordbahnhof railway station in memory of the many thousands of Jewish men, women and children who were deported from there to extermination camps. On the current return of fascism, he raised the question: "How is this possible?" And he answered: "The open coalition of Friedrich Merz and the CDU with the AfD is the culmination of years of SPD and Green Party policies that implement the anti-immigration, anti-worker policies of the AfD. In the midst of the immense capitalist world crisis, the ruling class is turning to fascist forms of rule to suppress the emerging international class struggles."

Nesan shouted: 'This must be stopped, and it is possible to stop it! The prerequisite for this is the rejection of the pretensions of the SPD, the Greens and their accomplices in the Left Party and the pseudo-left that they are supposedly defending democracy. War and fascism can only be stopped through the intervention of the working class, which is fighting to end the capitalist system on the basis of a socialist perspective.'



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact