

Germany: MERA25 parliamentary candidate dismissed for expressing solidarity with Palestine

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On February 28, MERA25 parliamentary candidate Melanie Schweizer was dismissed from her job at the federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and stripped of her civil servant status as a result of a political smear campaign. The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) has well documented differences with MERA25, however, the dismissal of Schweizer represents a massive attack on fundamental democratic rights, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms.

Schweizer was a civil service lawyer and worked as a consultant in the Ministry of Labour. In this year's federal election, she ran on the Berlin state list for MERA25 and as a direct candidate in Berlin Mitte. The hate campaign that led to Schweizer's dismissal was triggered by a December 6 post on X in which she accused the Zionist Malca Goldstein-Wolf of waging a "defamation campaign" because she had called the renowned journalist Georg Restle an antisemite for his criticism of Netanyahu's war.

Goldstein-Wolf apparently researched Schweizer's occupation and, when she found out that she worked for the Ministry of Labour, made this known on X and initiated a smear campaign against her. Hundreds of Zionist trolls then spread the most vicious slanders against Schweizer and demanded that she be fired.

The media also immediately joined in the smear campaign. On December 11, the tabloid *Bild* ran with the headline "Heil shocked! Employee spreads vile hatred of Israel" and went so far as to accuse Schweizer of trivialising the Holocaust.

Schweizer was then invited to a staff meeting, then suspended in January and finally dismissed without notice from her job and stripped of her civil servant status in February. At the same time, in the final days of the federal election campaign, her LinkedIn account was blocked without explanation.

In the official letter of dismissal she was, among other things, accused of wearing watermelon-shaped earrings at work, considered a political symbol of Palestine. Some employees had stated that they no longer wanted to work with Schweizer and that her political views were having an impact on the service. Furthermore, it was said she had violated the "moderation requirement" for civil servants with her statements on X.

Schweizer said that she had never been accused of misconduct before. Furthermore, she said she had often raised the issue of Palestine with colleagues even before the events of October 7, 2023.

The decision to dismiss Schweizer and the reasons given for it are a far-reaching attack on fundamental democratic rights. Schweizer did not make her political statements in her official capacity, but as a candidate in the federal elections. MERA25, for which she stood, is a party founded by former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis. The party does not challenge the capitalist order in its programme or in practice. Schweizer's condemnation of the genocide in Gaza is in line with the assessments of numerous UN institutions and other human rights organisations. There can therefore be no question of a violation of the

“moderation requirement” for civil servants.

Rather, the action against Schweizer is intended to intimidate and criminalise all those who condemn the policy of war and genocide. Even candidates for the Bundestag (German parliament) from a bourgeois party are removed from office if they dare to criticise the Israeli genocide against the Palestinians and its support by the German government.

Schweizer’s case is just one of the most prominent. Since most of these dismissals do not come to public attention, there are no statistics about them. According to Schweizer, it can be assumed that the number of opponents of genocide who have been dismissed for political reasons since October 7, 2023 is well over 100.

Countless journalists and academics have also been dismissed or threatened with dismissal for criticising Israel. In the arts sector, all critical organisations and initiatives have to fear the cancellation of their funding. For example, the renowned cultural centre Oyoun had all funding cancelled as early as November 2023, resulting in its closure. In May 2024, the banning of the Palästina Solidarität Duisburg (PSDU) and the dismissal of one of its leading activists followed. Furthermore, shortly before the federal elections, Munich and Berlin universities censored a lecture by UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese.

A far-reaching case also occurred recently in Munich. There, climate activist Lisa Poettinger was banned from starting her teacher training internship in mid-February, which is tantamount to a professional ban. The reasons given by the Bavarian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs are sweeping. Among other things, she is accused of criticising the system of “profit maximisation” in an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and of advocating “class warfare, which is deemed not compatible with the constitution. It is also stated that she is a member of the Left Party. In addition, she is accused of participating in climate protests in Lützerath and tearing down a transphobic poster from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The actions taken by the federal and state authorities are a clear warning signal. Against the background of the greatest militarisation and rearmament offensive in Germany since Hitler, which is currently being prepared by the ruling class, any form of opposition to capitalism, fascism and war is to be suppressed.

The accusations against Poettinger by the Bavarian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs are similar to the justifications used by the state and courts to justify placing the SGP under surveillance by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (as the domestic secret service is called). The SGP is accused of “Marxist class thinking and the propagation of class struggle” and also “agitation against alleged ‘imperialism’ and ‘militarism,’” which are deemed not compatible with the constitution.

As early as 2022, the SGP warned in a statement that this was paving the way for an attack on countless organisations and all left-wing opposition. “Booksellers distributing Marxist literature, workers striking for higher wages, or peace activists could be criminalised with the stroke of a pen,” we explained. This is now being confirmed and underlines the urgency of the SGP’s perspective. The defence of democratic rights requires the development of an independent movement of the working class that links the struggle against social inequality, war and dictatorship with the struggle against their cause, capitalism.



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