“You can’t deport a movement—Stop all deportations! Defend the #Berlin4!”

Berlin protesters oppose the deportation of four anti-genocide activists

Our reporters
8 April 2025

Around 500 demonstrators gathered near the Berlin House of Representatives (state assembly) on Monday morning to protest in defence of four anti-genocide activists facing deportation. Although they have not been convicted of any crime by a court, the three EU citizens and one US citizen have been ordered to leave Germany by April 21. Otherwise, they are to be forcibly deported.

At the same time, a meeting of the Interior Affairs Committee of the Berlin Senate (state executive) was taking place in the House of Representatives, chaired by Social Democratic Party (SPD) Interior Affairs Senator (state minister) Iris Spranger.

The protest, under the slogan “You can’t deport a movement—Stop all deportations! Defend the #Berlin4!”, was organised by an alliance of various pro-Palestinian groups, including the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN), the Irish Bloc Berlin and Sozialismus von unten (Socialism from Below), until recently a state capitalist group within the Left Party.

Shane O’Brien, one of the four activists concerned, was among the first speakers. The 29-year-old Irish citizen, who is threatened with deportation, denounced the German government:

“Since Israel broke the ceasefire on the 18th of March, they've murdered 500 children with the full support and backing of the German government.”

He described the brutal crimes in Gaza, such as the “cold-blooded execution“ of 15 aid workers and the arrest of hospital director Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya. “The Earth is shaking in Gaza. Gazan bodies are flying dozens of meters through the air.”

The deportation order against him was a “pathetic and feeble attempt to intimidate those of us who stand up against the genocide,” O’Brien said, calling for more resistance: “If you are not actively resisting the genocide, you are complicit.”

Katja Rippert spoke for the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE). She called for the protest to be the starting point for a broad and international campaign to prevent the deportations.

“Our answer must be that the attack on Shane O’Brien, Roberta Murray, Kasia Wlaszczyk and Cooper Longbottom is an attack on us all! Because what is the alleged crime for which they are being criminalised? All four have protested against the genocide in Gaza, which, according to official figures, has claimed over 50,000 victims. Here in Germany, of all places, people are again to be deported for taking to the streets against genocide.”

Rippert emphasised that the persecution was directed against the entire working class and youth. The Berlin case was part of an international development of war and repression.

She pointed out that exactly 92 years ago—on April 7, 1933—the so-called “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service” came into force in Nazi Germany. It provided the framework for the cleansing of universities and public authorities of Jews as well as political opponents of the Nazi regime.

Rippert told the rally:

In the United States, we are once again

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> witnessing the enforced conformity [Gleichschaltung] of universities. University administrations are bowing to Trump's demands and enabling the deportation of opponents of the war.
>
> Here in Germany, too, the elites are building a police state. Despite their differences with Trump, they agree on one point: any protest within their own population should be suppressed by all means.

Eighty years after the Second World War, the German government was supporting genocide and rearming to an extent not seen since Hitler, Rippert said. This warmongering policy was supported by all bourgeois parties. Rippert emphasised that the Left Party had also agreed to war credits of €1 trillion for rearmament and associated spending, defended the genocide in Gaza and deported refugees in all state governments where it is involved.

The genocide could not be stopped by putting pressure on governments or appealing to the capitalist parties, "Only the international working class–the most powerful social force–can stop the war madness," Rippert said.

> The IYSSE will do everything it can to support a broad campaign in defence of the four activists. But their fate depends on building a revolutionary movement in the working class that fights against war and its root cause: capitalism.

Numerous representatives of other organisations spoke at the rally, including Ramsis Kalil, whose family was killed by an Israeli air strike in Gaza in 2014 and who himself was expelled from the Left Party last December for his pro-Palestinian stance.

Two members of the Neukölln Left Party, Ferat Koçak and Ahmed Abed, also spoke. But the official party bodies have maintained a deafening silence on the case of the four Gaza activists.

Another speech was dedicated to the journalists killed in Gaza, including 24-year-old Al Jazeera correspondent Hossam Shabat, who was murdered by a targeted Israeli air strike on March 24.

On the day of the demonstration, Israeli forces fired on a press tent in front of the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, killing at least two people and seriously injuring several. One of the victims was journalist Helmi al-Faqawi.

In her speech, Rachel Shapiro of IJAN, a descendent of Holocaust survivors, recalled the history of the protest venue in the centre of Berlin—very close to the former *Reichskolonialamt*, where the colonial genocides of the German Empire were planned, and just one block from the headquarters of the Gestapo, "which kidnapped and disappeared millions and deported them to their deaths."

In an interview with the WSWS, Shapiro said that the actions of the German authorities "are eerily similar to what my ancestors went through in the '30s and '40s."

She said that Jewish people have a particular responsibility to protest against the Zionist regime in Israel as well as the authoritarian policies of the German state. She said that it was not just about the four people affected, but about preventing all deportations. Germany had supplied hundreds of millions of euros in weapons to Israel, and the money for the armaments was "poured into murdering people in the Middle East."

The WSWS also spoke to a stateless Palestinian who wanted to remain anonymous for fear of possible persecution. He said, "A live-streamed genocide is taking place in Gaza. And the Western states are doing nothing about it because they and the arms companies benefit from the fact that the genocide continues."

He fears that all pro-Palestinian activists could be subject to similar reprisals, adding that two Palestinians had already been deported to Greece a few weeks ago. "We should take action against every deportation," he said, and concluded, "Your work is important. Journalists now have a very great responsibility to publish the information here in Berlin and in Gaza."

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