

# For a socialist perspective against the reintroduction of conscription in Germany!

## We will not be cannon fodder for the profits of the rich!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE)  
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We, the *International Youth and Students for Social Equality* (IYSSE), the youth movement of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and the Fourth International, call on all young people, school and university students, and workers: oppose the reintroduction of conscription! Discuss this appeal with your classmates, fellow students and colleagues, and join the building of a socialist anti-war movement!

In recent weeks, Germany's media and political establishment have launched a campaign for the reintroduction of conscription. In the supposed "debate" about its return, the issue was never about *whether*, but only about *when*. Even the discussion of it supposedly being "voluntary" is just a farce. Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democrat, SPD) himself has admitted that conscription would only remain "voluntary" as long as enough "volunteers" come forward.

**We say no to conscription—in whatever form, at whatever time! We are not cannon fodder for the profits of the rich!**

Eighty years after the end of the Second World War, the German government wants to line up an entire generation again, ready to sacrifice their lives for the economic interests of the ruling class. The return of conscription is part of the militarisation of society as a whole. The government of the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and the SPD is aggressively driving forward rearmament.

The Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) is to be expanded into the largest conventional army in Europe. With hundreds of thousands of additional soldiers, the German war machine is to be fed—and our generation is supposed to be the cannon fodder. At schools, universities, on trams, on popcorn packaging or through online propaganda, war is being aggressively promoted. This places the murderous craft of war and the normality of dying directly into everyday life. Even children are not spared. This militarisation is not just a relapse into times

past, but a deliberate preparation for a new world war, pushed forward with full force.

This is not about "self-defence." The reactionary invasion of Ukraine by Russia does not change the fact that the imperialist powers systematically provoked that war over many years. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO—contrary to all assurances to Moscow—has step by step expanded its borders eastwards and militarily encircled Russia. Berlin plays a central role in this.

The German government is continuing along its historical path from the two world wars. 80 years after the catastrophic defeat of Hitler's Wehrmacht (Army) in the Second World War, Germany now declares that its aim is to be able to win a war against the nuclear power Russia. For us, that means the same fate as young people back then, or as those in Ukraine and Russia today: forced recruitment, trenches, and death.

The barbarity the ruling class are prepared to unleash, and their indifference to "democracy" and "human rights," are already demonstrated in Gaza: for almost two years the German government has been complicit in genocide—in the slaughter of tens of thousands of children and young people. A government that supports such crimes is also prepared to sacrifice our generation in a new world war.

Even now, universities and schools are being militarised. Army officers push their way into classrooms to sell killing for the fatherland as "service to democracy." Universities are being turned into militaristic centres, while protests against war and genocide at universities are brutally suppressed by police violence.

But all this is still not enough to inject young people with the poison of militarism. Even though war has been constantly promoted in schools and universities in recent years, only 16 percent of young people are still willing to take up arms for Germany in the event of war. That is why conscription is now to be reintroduced. We are to be placed under military discipline and forced into line, in order to break this opposition.

We must not allow this! The madness of war must be stopped and conscription prevented. We will not allow our generation to be sacrificed again on the battlefields of the rich!

## Against fake pacifism!

We reject conscription not simply for individual reasons—not just because we do not want to die in a trench ourselves—but because we want no one to die in a trench. We oppose conscription because it is part of a spiral of war that claims ever more human lives.

There is nothing more repulsive than the politics of groups like the Green Youth or the SPD's Jusos (Young Socialists), who support this escalation of war and only object when their own lives are on the line. The youth organisations of the parliamentary parties support the genocide in Gaza and agitate daily for further escalation of the war against Russia. For them it is acceptable that Russian and Ukrainian youth or Palestinian children are sacrificed for profit—so long as they themselves are not led to the slaughter.

When German youth are sacrificed, these groups think it should not be themselves, but working class children who “voluntarily” join the Bundeswehr because they see no other way to obtain an apprenticeship. Every cut in education and social spending made by the governing parties is intended to increase the pressure on working class youth to “volunteer,” while sparing the functionaries from the Jusos and Green Youth.

We denounce this fake pacifism of the wealthy middle-class layers, who support war as long as it does not touch them directly. For us, stopping conscription means stopping the escalation of war!

We also reject the position of organisations like the Left Party, which formally oppose conscription, but agree that the Bundeswehr must be built up as a supposed “defensive army.” Significantly, the Left Party voted in the Bundesrat (upper house of parliament) for massive war credits amounting to one trillion euros, and then paved the way for Merz's election as Chancellor.

The escalation of war against Russia, the government's support for genocide in Gaza, and the attacks on Iran show that the build-up of the Bundeswehr is not about “defence” at all, but about enforcing criminal imperialist interests.

This raises fundamental political questions: anyone who claims that the Bundeswehr can be expanded as a defensive army is also claiming that a peaceful capitalism is possible. Two world wars, and the current development towards a third, show that such a peaceful capitalism cannot exist.

War does not simply arise from the bad intentions of individual politicians at the top of society, but from the objective contradictions of capitalism itself. The contradiction between a world market, on the one hand, and its division into rival nation-states, on the other, inevitably leads to the struggle

for markets and resources—in the form of wars.

As long as capitalism exists, there will be war. This means that a “peaceful Bundeswehr” is impossible and a dangerous illusion!

## A socialist perspective against war

This requires drawing decisive conclusions: the fight against conscription means the fight against war and its root—capitalism. That is why we fight for the building of an independent movement of the working class, based on the political principles set out by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in its 2016 statement *Socialism and the fight against war*:

- The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.
- The new anti-war movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.
- The new anti-war movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.
- The new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism. The permanent war of the bourgeoisie must be answered with the perspective of permanent revolution by the working class, the strategic goal of which is the abolition of the nation-state system and the establishment of a world socialist federation. This will make possible the rational, planned development of global resources and, on this basis, the eradication of poverty and the raising of human culture to new heights.

We call on all young people: organise yourselves in schools, universities and training centres against the reintroduction of conscription! Discuss this appeal with your classmates, fellow students and colleagues! Get in touch with us and become a member of the IYSSE!



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