

Stop the censorship of anti-fascist meetings at Berlin universities!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Germany)

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The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is being increasingly integrated into parliamentary work and large sections of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) are flirting with the prospect of bringing the fascists directly into government. Against this backdrop the Free University (FU) in Berlin is seeking to muzzle its students and ban any criticism of the far-right party.

The university group “*Studis gegen Rechts*” (Students Against the Right Wing) had announced meetings at the three major Berlin universities. Topics to be raised at the meetings included the struggle against the AfD and the founding of its youth organisation “*Generation Deutschland*.” The Free University then banned the previously approved meeting just a few hours before it was due to begin, stating that it violated the university’s requirement of neutrality because it was directed against a specific party. For its part, Humboldt University declared that the meetings had not been registered with the HU and therefore could not take place.

Only Berlin’s Technical University allowed the students to hold their meeting, which was attended by hundreds of people. However, the university also made its approval conditional on the stipulation that “no party political statements” be made. The universities’ interventions were preceded by letters from the AfD demanding that the meetings be banned.

These acts are a blatant example of political censorship that cannot be tolerated. The IYSSE calls on all students to protest against this censorship to the FU’s executive committee and defend Students Against the Right Wing! Students must not be deprived of their right to speak out against far-right tendencies, while more and more professors espouse such positions and universities are being transformed into militaristic think tanks. Students not only have the right, but also the

historical duty to oppose war and fascism.

The FU’s pseudo-legal justification that it is forced by the requirement of neutrality required of state institutions to ban anti-fascist events is absurd and spurious. Universities behave neutrally when they allow all students to debate their political views in and through events, and not when they despotically decide which positions may be represented and which may not.

The neutrality argument becomes grotesque when it is not the promotion of a particular party that is banned, but rather any criticism of a particular party. How are students supposed to seriously discuss any political development without critically examining individual parties?

In fact, all the talk of neutrality serves only to silence students. On October 22, 2024, following its brutal suppression of student protests against the genocide in Gaza, the FU had already adopted a new “policy” that fundamentally denies students any right to express themselves on “general political” issues at meetings held at the university. This right is only permitted in the context of “research and teaching,” i.e., is reserved for professors. This is not neutrality, but Wilhelmine (i.e., royalist) authoritarianism! Professors constantly invite politicians from various parties to their universities to express their views on political issues, but students are forbidden from doing so.

In June, Humboldt University also attempted to censor a meeting organised by the IYSSE that was directed against the genocide in Gaza and the German government’s war policy. HU claimed that students were not allowed to express their views on general political issues through events on meetings. However, after a wave of protests, the university administration was forced to back down and approve the meetings.

While students face ever greater restrictions on their freedom of expression, the universities themselves are by no means neutral, but are increasingly taking sides with German militarism and defending far-right political positions. Numerous events have taken place at the FU and HU universities promoting rearmament and war against Russia. When the right-wing extremist HU professor Jörg Barberowski was criticised by the IYSSE for trivialising violence against refugees and glorifying Adolf Hitler, the university administration explicitly backed the professor and attacked the IYSSE.

Censorship at Berlin universities is part of a dangerous development. Even before the last federal elections, Chancellor Friedrich Merz (CDU) had entered into a pact with the AfD. His parliamentary group leader Jens Spahn and Bundestag President Julia Klöckner have long been preparing for the AfD to participate directly in government, with the support of the right wing Axel Springer media group.

This is entirely consistent with the logic of their politics. Trillion-euro military build-up, support for genocide in Gaza and horrendous social attacks are incompatible with democracy. In order to make Germany “fit for war” again, democratic rights are being restricted, incitement against migrants intensified and, ultimately, the fascists integrated into the government.

The only reason Merz and SPD leader Lars Klingbeil are hesitant to take this step is the fear that open cooperation with the AfD will lead to mass protests, as it did at the beginning of the year. In this respect, the Gleichschaltung (enforced conformity) of the universities, which is now to be enforced by gagging the students, is a prerequisite for integrating the fascists even further into the government.

This is an international phenomenon. In the United States, Trump is already establishing a presidential dictatorship to enforce the interests of the country's fabulously wealthy financial oligarchy against the population. In order to implement his war plans and smash the meagre social security systems, he is intensifying the persecution of immigrant workers, deploying the army domestically and collaborating with right-wing gangs of thugs. An essential part of his dictatorial ambitions is the Gleichschaltung (enforced conformity) of the universities.

The IYSSE has invited the American socialist David

North to Humboldt University on Tuesday, November 18, to report on these developments and discuss a socialist perspective in the struggle against Trump under the title “Where is America headed?”

On the heels of the censorship at Berlin universities and the integration of the AfD into official politics, the meeting takes on special significance. It is necessary to understand that the root cause of the development of war, dictatorship and inequality is the crisis of capitalism. Trump did not fall from the sky, any more than the right-wing development in Germany. Rather, these developments make clear that the power of the billionaires is no longer compatible with the needs of the population.

This gives rise to the socialist perspective of expropriating the big banks and corporations and placing them under democratic control. Implementing this requires the mobilisation of the international working class, that is, those who create all the wealth and bear the entire burden of war and economic crisis. This is the only viable perspective for defending democratic rights. We therefore call on all students who want to fight against war and fascism to join this struggle and come to the meeting with David North on Tuesday.



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