

What next in the school strike against conscription?

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE)
18 December 2025

On December 5, 55,000 students went on strike nationwide in more than 90 cities against the reintroduction of conscription. The day of action was a powerful statement against militarism and war, and it shows that we young people are not prepared to sacrifice ourselves for the interests of the rich.

But the strike will achieve nothing if it is not made part of a broad movement against the militarisation of society, against the genocide in Gaza and against war preparations directed at Russia. Students alone cannot win this struggle: the strikes must be extended from schools to the factories and workplaces.

Those who really have the power to bring the country to a standstill must join the striking students: bus and tram drivers, factory workers, teachers, postal workers and all other sections of the working class who create all the wealth and bear the full burden of war and crisis. Across Europe and around the world, strikes and protests are taking place against mass redundancies and cuts that flow directly from war policies and the enrichment of the wealthy. It is towards this social force, the only one capable of stopping militarism, that we must orient ourselves.

The fight against conscription means the fight against war!

The fight against conscription cannot be separated from the struggle against war preparations and militarism. Conscription is not simply the misguided idea of foolish politicians; it flows from the insane war course of the federal government. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) have quite seriously declared the goal of putting Germany in a

position within three years to be able to win a war against the nuclear power Russia. If this madness is carried through, it is not merely conscription that is at stake, but the survival of human civilisation.

As in the two world wars, the aim of this war policy is not defence, and certainly not for the sake of peace and freedom. It is about enforcing German economic interests by military means in the face of ever more intense international conflicts: securing trade routes, markets and raw materials.

This is shown most clearly in Germany's support for the horrific genocide in Gaza. International law and human rights mean nothing at all to the ruling elites when it comes to enforcing their interests in the region. In that case, they are prepared to do anything and support the right-wing extremist Netanyahu in carrying out the "dirty work for us," as Chancellor Merz expressed it.

In Ukraine, the German government is working with the heirs of Nazi collaborators, who are imprisoning opponents of the war and terrorising the entire population in order to wage a proxy war against Russia. To this end, Berlin deliberately provoked the reactionary invasion by the Putin regime and continues to escalate the conflict without interruption, a conflict that has already cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of young Russian and Ukrainian men.

When organisations such as Green Youth or the Left Party's Linksjugend support the war propaganda about fighting for freedom in Ukraine and back massive rearmament spending, they are not allies in the struggle against conscription but our opponents. There is nothing more repellent than such would-be militarists who beat the drums for war but do not want to end up in the trenches themselves. Let the children of workers be "voluntarily" driven to the front through ever harsher cuts to education and mass redundancies in industry, is their refrain.

No, the fight against conscription can only be waged as a fight against the insanity of war. It must not be reduced to useless appeals to those in power but must be developed into a serious movement against the root cause of war: capitalism.

The fight against war means the fight against capitalism!

When faced with pressure, the ruling elites respond with dictatorship and repression. This is shown most clearly in the United States, where Donald Trump is imposing a presidential dictatorship, with the Democratic Party largely supporting it. The fabulously wealthy financial oligarchy, represented by both Democrats and Republicans, is prepared to enforce its war policy and brutal social attacks by authoritarian means. Here in Germany too, opponents of the war policy and of the genocide in Gaza are being arrested and intimidated.

The reason for this brutality and ruthlessness lies in the fact that governments are defending a social system that is completely bankrupt. While enormous technological progress could enable a decent and dignified life for all of humanity, under capitalism it leads to war, crisis and barbarism. The private appropriation of socially produced wealth and the artificial division of the world economy into competing nation-states inevitably give rise to poverty and war.

This was already evident in the First World War, when all the great powers saw war as the only way to resolve their own crises. The result was 9 million dead and a devastated continent. These horrors were eclipsed 20 years later by the Second World War. In its attempt to reverse the unfavourable outcome of the First World War, the Nazi regime alone murdered 27 million Soviet citizens and a total of 6 million Jews in the Holocaust.

A third world war, which would put the existence of all humanity at risk, must be prevented at all costs. But that means bringing capitalism to an end. Only by expropriating the major banks and corporations and placing them under democratic control can catastrophe be averted.

This is already evident in the fact that all the parties that defend capitalism also support the war policy. The Greens long ago abandoned their pacifism in favour of aggressive militarism and even attack the federal government from

the right. The Left Party also approved war credits amounting to more than €1 trillion and props up the Merz government whenever it depends on their support.

The trade unions have likewise lined up behind the war policy. They are no longer workers' organisations, but function as factory police to enforce the mass redundancies and cuts that accompany war, against the working class.

Principles of a movement against conscription

The movement against conscription must not orient itself towards the capitalist parties and trade unions but must fight for the independent mobilisation of the working class. The strikes and protests by students are very important, but we must not stop there. The school strike movement must be the starting point for igniting a strike movement throughout the entire working class, directed against war and capitalism. Such a movement must be based on the following principles:

- It must be international and counter growing nationalism with the international unity of the working class
- It must be independent of all capitalist parties and trade unions and rely on the immense power of the working class
- It must be socialist and directed against the root cause of war: capitalism

We want to discuss these principles and our socialist perspective with all those interested at our online meeting on Thursday, January 8 at 6:30 p.m. Register now to take part. There is no time to lose. Discuss this appeal with friends and fellow students and register now with the IYSSE to link the struggle against conscription with the struggle against capitalism. You can also direct questions about this appeal and our perspective at any time to Socialism AI.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact