

IYSSE meeting: For a socialist perspective against the reintroduction of conscription in Germany

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE)
9 February 2026

While wars are being stoked and escalated in the Middle East, Latin America and worldwide, thousands of young people in Germany are currently receiving letters to register for military service. Wherever one looks in the world—whether in Gaza, Ukraine, Venezuela, the US or Iran—the entire globe is being transformed into an inferno of destruction and violence.

In predatory raids for raw materials and sales markets, all countries are rearming. Germany, too, is bolstering itself to become a great power again and wants to secure its booty. In his government declaration, when Chancellor Friedrich Merz demanded Germany learn the “language of power politics,” he means nothing other than a return to naked imperialist violence. Conscription is intended to supply the necessary human material: they need us as cannon fodder at the front to enforce their economic and geopolitical interests.

On March 5, tens of thousands of young people across Germany will strike again against conscription and show that our generation is not prepared to sacrifice its life for the profits of the rich. But in order to win this fight, we must be aware of what we confront and what perspective is necessary.

First and foremost, the movement against conscription must be a movement against the madness of war. Conscription is not merely about a wasted year of our lives spent in barracks but, quite concretely, about us being sent to war. Such a deployment during our military service is not simply a “theoretical possibility”—the wars in which we are supposed to die are being fuelled daily.

We are currently experiencing a volcanic eruption of imperialism such as has not occurred since the Second

World War. All alliances, treaties and agreements that were decided after the Second World War to stabilise the global situation are crumbling to dust.

The US government invaded Venezuela at the beginning of the year and is now threatening war against Iran and Greenland. It justifies this quite blatantly, stating that international law no longer applies, but the “iron law” of the “right of the stronger.” With its threats to annex Greenland, US imperialism makes clear that it does not stop at former allies and that the contradictions between the imperialist powers themselves are breaking open.

Germany is reacting to this by bolstering itself to become a great power—along its historical lines: it is escalating the war against Russia and preparing for a confrontation with the USA. For this, the government is rearming as has not been done since Hitler and is militarising the whole of society.

The defence budget this year has reached a record high of over €100 billion. In the next three years, it is to rise to €150 billion—3.5 percent of gross domestic product. To finance this, schools, hospitals, local public transport and all other areas of public life are being cut to the bone. Tens of thousands of jobs are being destroyed to position companies for trade war.

The declared goal of rearmament is to be able to defeat the nuclear power Russia militarily by 2029. This can only be described as sheer madness: a war with Russia would mean the annihilation of Europe.

This is not simply about certain politicians advancing the wrong policy. The return of militarism is seizing all great powers and is supported by all capitalist parties. In Germany, the Greens are demanding an even more aggressive approach, including the massive expansion

of military support for Ukraine and the registration of all youth during the reintroduction of conscription. The Left Party also supports the government's multibillion-euro rearmament package and enforces the necessary social cuts in the federal states.

The reason for this all-party coalition for war and cuts lies in the capitalist crisis: on their hunt for profits, the major banks and corporations are willing to walk over dead bodies—with mass layoffs and wage cuts at home and military violence abroad. As in the 20th century, capitalism is leading once again to barbarism and war.

The government claims it is defending “peace” and “human rights,” but this is refuted daily by its own breaches of international law and by its support for the terrible genocide in Gaza. The horrendous defence expenditures are also not about securing our “defence,” but about aggressive economic and great power politics. Workers and youth have nothing to win in these wars, but everything to lose. They pay with mass layoffs, education cuts and ultimately with their lives. Consequently, the movement against conscription must be a movement against capitalism.

Our allies in the fight against conscription are therefore not the careerists of the youth organisations of precisely those parties driving rearmament forward, but workers all over the world who are now entering into struggles against the cuts. Especially in the US, the centre of world capitalism, a wave of protest has developed against the ICE gestapo. Now, tens of thousands of nurses in New York and California have also gone on strike and many workers are demanding a general strike against Trump’s government of the financial oligarchy.

This is the social force that can defeat American imperialism! And here, too, it is transport workers, factory workers, teachers, nurses and all other sections of the working class who can paralyse the country and stop militarism. The mass protests in Minneapolis and beyond show this.

But this requires that we work completely independently of all capitalist parties and oppose every form of nationalism and chauvinism. Precisely by fighting against the warmongers in our own country, we ally ourselves with workers and youth in the US, in Russia, Ukraine and all over the world.

Therefore, we call for the building of independent rank-and-file action committees in neighbourhoods,

schools and workplaces, which network immediately internationally and organise the fight against war and capitalism themselves. These committees must work according to the following principles:

- The fight against conscription must be a fight against war and its root: capitalism.
- The fight against conscription must be completely independent of all capitalist parties and organisations. It must orient itself instead to the working class, which is the only force that has no interest in war and is capable of overthrowing capitalism.
- The fight against conscription must be international. We must not subordinate ourselves to our own ruling class but must ally ourselves with workers in the US, Russia and all over the world.

To fight for this orientation, it is crucial to build the IYSSE (International Youth and Students for Social Equality) as a revolutionary youth organisation. We address no fruitless appeals to the rulers, but fight for the overthrow of capitalism, which has nothing left to offer us youth but environmental destruction, barbarism and war. We are the youth organisation of the Fourth International, which has defended socialist principles against social democracy and Stalinism.

We want to discuss this perspective online with all those interested on Wednesday, February 18, at 6:30 p.m. Register now at iysse.de to participate!



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact