

“May Khamenei rot in hell”: Left Party leader van Aken backs murderous regime-change war against Iran

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The chairman of the German Left Party, Jan van Aken, initially responded to the illegal attack by the US and Israel on Iran with what appeared to be a condemnation. In an official statement, he spoke of a “major danger for the population and the entire region” and described the attack as a violation of international law. But this criticism is merely a political cover. Behind a few phrases about diplomacy and international law, the Left Party openly aligns itself with the strategic aims of the imperialist war.

Van Aken made this unmistakably clear at a press conference on Monday. There, he openly celebrated the killing of Iranian head of state Khamenei and other leading figures by Israeli and American bombs. He declared verbatim:

There is absolutely no doubt that we all—I personally as well—am glad that Khamenei is dead, that many figures from the regime are dead. One should never rejoice over the death of a human being, and yet I think it is good that they are gone and may they rot in hell.

Everyone should take note of these words. The leader of a party that officially describes itself as pacifist and left-wing welcomes the targeted killing of a country’s political leadership through foreign bombardment. The attack itself is, as van Aken acknowledges, a clear violation of international law. At the Nuremberg trials, such a war of aggression was condemned as a “crime against peace.” Anyone who applauds the results of this crime—moreover in language reminiscent of the fascistic US President Trump—politically identifies with it.

Substantively, van Aken’s position differs little from that of the federal government under Friedrich Merz (CDU). While Merz openly supports the attack and justifies the

“enforcement of fundamental interests, if necessary with military force,” van Aken merely worries that this violence could have the “wrong” consequences, such as a “years-long civil war” like in Iraq or Libya. His objections are directed not against the imperialist character of the war but against its tactical execution.

This becomes particularly clear in his central argument regarding an Iranian nuclear bomb. It is “right that an Iranian nuclear bomb must be prevented at all costs,” van Aken declared. Only this should preferably not be done with bombs but through “negotiations and close-meshed monitoring on the ground.”

In doing so, he fully adopts the premise with which Washington and Tel Aviv have justified their aggression for years: that Iran represents an existential nuclear threat whose elimination has the highest priority. That it was the United States which unilaterally withdrew from the Vienna nuclear agreement, even though Iran demonstrably adhered to the agreed inspections, is mentioned by van Aken only in passing. That the most recent “negotiations” themselves served as a cover for preparing the attack, he ignores entirely.

His insistence on “monitoring” is in reality nothing other than the demand for an even tighter subordination of Iran to the imperialist powers. This is not about peace but about enforcing the same strategic aims by other means.

Van Aken openly speaks of the “hope” that the Iranian “democracy movement” might now prevail. Here lies the core of his position: The war is not rejected in principle but judged according to whether it is suitable for bringing about a pro-Western regime change. He does not fear imperialist intervention as such but rather its possible failure. If the bombardment achieves the goal sought by the imperialists, he supports it.

“The attempt to bomb democracy into existence from the outside is, I believe, very difficult,” he cynically declares. Nevertheless, it is “not automatic that the country will

disintegrate, that there will be a civil war.” Therefore, he still has “hope that in the end the democracy movement could prevail after all.”

In reality, neither the fascists and perpetrators of genocide Trump and Netanyahu nor the no less criminal European governments are concerned with democracy. Iran is a historically oppressed country that, due to its geostrategic position and rich natural resources, stands in the crosshairs of imperialist war policy. In its statement “Stop the criminal US-Israeli war against Iran!”, the Socialist Equality Party in the United States characterizes the war as follows:

The war against Iran is, in this sense, a war for global hegemony, directed not only at Tehran but at Beijing, Moscow and the European capitals whose dependence on Middle Eastern energy gives Washington an instrument of coercion. The Trump administration has threatened not only Iran but also its nominal allies—imposing tariffs on European goods, threatening Greenland, seizing control of Venezuelan oil, and making clear that in the emerging era of great-power competition, the United States intends to use its military supremacy to maintain dominance over every strategically significant region on Earth.

The German bourgeoisie does not want to stand aside in the imperialist redivision of the world and therefore largely supports US war policy—at least as long as it is not yet in a position to act militarily independent of, and ultimately even against, Washington. When some of its “left” representatives, such as van Aken, raise the issue of the obviously illegal actions of the US and call on the Merz government to do the same, this reflects not only growing transatlantic conflicts but also concern that the war of aggression against Iran could undermine the propaganda with which NATO justifies its war offensive against Russia.

“If the West itself violates international law, it will be all the more difficult to win global support for Ukraine and the fight against the violator of international law Putin,” van Aken complains. For Putin, February 28 was therefore “once again a good day.” This once again makes clear what is actually at stake for him: not principled opposition to imperialist wars but their ideological justification.

This argumentation corresponds to the entire function of the Left Party as an extended arm of the federal government and German militarism. It supported the multibillion-euro war credits in the Bundesrat and helped Merz secure a rapid election as chancellor in the Bundestag. As with the

genocide in Gaza and last year, when it politically flanked the attacks on Iran, it now once again stands firmly in the camp of German imperialism.

That van Aken calls on the federal government to initiate investigations under the “principle of universal jurisdiction” against Iranian officials underscores this course. Such measures do not serve the protection of human rights but the legal preparation of regime change. They are part of the same political project that is being advanced militarily with bombs and politically with sanctions.

The aggressive pro-imperialist course of the Left Party does not come out of nowhere. It was never a socialist or anti-imperialist party. It emerged as a bourgeois project to integrate social opposition into the framework of capitalism. Its social base lies in privileged middle class layers, state institutions and academic milieus whose orientation is closely tied to the interests of German imperialism. In times of escalating great-power conflicts, this emerges ever more openly.

Workers and especially young people who voted for the Left Party in opposition to war and social inequality in last year’s federal elections must draw conclusions from this. The notion that pressure can be exerted “from the left” through this party is a dangerous illusion. On decisive questions—rearmament, NATO war policy, illegal regime-change wars—it stands firmly on the side of the ruling class.

A genuine struggle against war requires a political break with all parties of imperialism, including the Left Party. It must base itself on the international working class and consciously oppose the capitalist system, whose internal contradictions continually produce new wars. Only on this basis can a new socialist anti-war movement be built that puts an end to the barbaric course of the ruling elites.



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