Palestine Solidarity Duisburg: Ahmad Othman wins again in court against the state of North Rhine-Westphalia

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Ahmad Othman, an activist against the genocide of the Palestinians, has successfully sued against the second dismissal issued against him. On 26 March, the presiding judge at the Dortmund Labour Court, Dr. Kirchner, ruled that "the employment relationship of the parties is not dissolved by the dismissal by the defending state of 11 July, 2025." Ahmad Othman remains an employee of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW).

Ahmad had been active in Palestine Solidarity Duisburg (PSDU), which the North Rhine-Westphalian state Interior Ministry under Herbert Reul (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) banned on 16 May 2024. The young IT specialist was immediately suspended—in June 2024—by his employer, the State Agency for Quality Assurance and Information Technology in Teacher Training (Laquila).

In mid-November, he received his notice of dismissal, effective 31 December 2024. He successfully sued against this. In April 2025, the Dortmund court ruled in the first instance that the dismissal was invalid. The state of NRW then issued a second dismissal in July 2025. The state withdrew an appeal against the first dismissal in October 2025.

While the first trial was primarily concerned with the alleged danger posed by Ahmad due to his membership in PSDU and his work as an IT employee, the real reason for the repression against him became clearer last week: "You just carry on," as lawyer Christian Althaus of the Kümmerlein law firm put it.

What he meant was: Ahmad continues to draw attention to the genocide in Palestine by the Israeli government and continues to protest publicly against it. "You don't play by the rules," the lawyer told the state employee.

The lawyer went on to say that Ahmad "does not distance himself from his political standpoints" and distributes "symbols of terrorist organisations" (referring to the inverted red triangle as an identifying mark of Hamas). He added that the slogan "From the river to the sea" and Ahmad's appearance at a Palestine conference in Vienna were "subversive."

In Vienna, Ahmad had reported that he and his family "originally came from Haifa." The state of NRW accused him in both dismissals of being a liar because he was born in Syria. In fact, his grandparents had been driven out of Haifa by the Israelis, and Ahmad has a right of return to their home, the village of Balad al-Sheikh near Haifa, registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

The defence of the Palestinians' right of return to their homeland, which is guaranteed by UN Resolution 194 from 1948, had already been characterised as "antisemitic" when the PSDU was banned. "An unrestricted right of return for Palestinian refugees and their descendants [...] would mean the end of the Israeli state in practical terms," the NRW Interior Ministry wrote in 2024.

Lawyer Althaus explained that it was therefore "unreasonable for the state as an employer" to continue employing Ahmad.

It is clear that the attempt to force Ahmad Othman out of his job is an act of deliberate political repression. The court again saw no grounds for a dismissal under employment law. The judge emphasised several times that she was not evaluating the ban on the PSDU or the alleged criminal liability of individual slogans. She was solely evaluating whether the plaintiff's behaviour justified a dismissal. Her verdict was "no."

In both hearings before the Dortmund Labour Court, it became apparent that Ahmad had never given cause for complaint in the performance of his duties at Laquila. On the contrary, the state agency was highly satisfied with his work.

In court, his lawyer drew a parallel to the "Radicals Decree" (*Radikalenerlass*) passed by the federal and state governments in 1972 under Chancellor Willy Brandt (Social Democrat, SPD). At that time, teachers, railway workers, postmen and many others were removed from employment

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in the public sector or not hired because they had been politically active on the left.

In both the first and the second dismissal, the state of NRW had not cited any specific misconduct for the firing but relied solely on the ban of the PSDU by the same state of NRW.

The claim in the first proceeding that Ahmad posed a danger as an IT specialist was also briefly discussed in the second trial. However, when asked by the judge whether there was any evidence of this, the state's Human Relations representative was forced to answer with a monosyllabic "no." Ahmad emphasised once again that he had neither the technical access nor the will or motive to hack Laquila, other state authorities or even the Interior Ministry, as the state had insinuated.

The first dismissal had ultimately failed due to a procedural error. The staff council had not been properly consulted. But the second dismissal shows that the state of NRW believes it can simply dismiss employees with the "wrong political attitude," employees who do not submit to "German state policy" (*Staatsräson*). The dismissal included no reference to misconduct or specific accusation.

When the PSDU was banned, the WSWS noted that this was intended to criminalise any criticism of the Israeli genocide in Gaza and the federal government's pro-war policy. The ban, it stated, was a "blueprint for a police state" and continued "the methods of suppression of the [Kaiser's] Empire and the Nazi dictatorship."

The state of NRW and the federal government used various means to put Ahmad under pressure. After NRW stopped his salary payments, the Federal Employment Agency imposed a block on benefits for a period during which Ahmad received no financial support. The pretext was the failure of the state government to provide the required employer's certificate for months. When the state finally sent it at the request of the labour judge, it stated that Ahmad had been dismissed for behavioural reasons, which was not true. The agency nevertheless continued to withhold benefits.

After his first court victory, Ahmad was deregistered with the agency but not reinstated by the state. Thus, all payments to him were stopped again and he lost his health insurance cover. It was not until the end of June in 2025 that the employment agency admitted that Ahmad had been wrongly sanctioned and deregistered. Nevertheless, it took another month for his unemployment benefit to be paid out.

When the judgement from the first trial became legally binding and Ahmad stopped receiving money from the employment agency, the state delayed his salary payments for over four months. When these finally arrived, Ahmad discovered that he had been incorrectly placed in tax class VI. As a result, his back payments shrank. He was even expected to pay back taxes.

Because the small courtroom held only 18 spectators, Ahmad reported on the verdict to about twice as many supporters waiting outside the court building after the trial and thanked them. At the conclusion, when he shouted the slogan "From Dortmund to Gaza–Yalla Intifada," he was seized by the police and dragged away, allegedly to establish his identity.

The authorities have tried, unsuccessfully, to wear Ahmad down and break him. He is one of many who are targeted to be intimidated into silence. Anyone who opposes Germany's imperialist interests is criminalised and gagged.

The actions against Ahmad and other opponents of the genocide in Palestine and the Israeli government are aimed at suppressing all opposition to the redivision of the world among the imperialist powers. Israel serves the US and Germany as a military bridgehead in the resource-rich and geopolitically central Middle East. The genocide against the Palestinians, the current war against Iran and the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, which has been going on for years, are part of the same global war strategy.

Germany's economic and geopolitical interests, as well as the growing rejection of the policies of the US, Israel and the German government by the population, form the background to the harsh persecution of opponents of the genocide in Gaza. This repression serves as a test run to crush popular opposition to war and social devastation.

Stopping the genocide in Gaza and the wars in the Middle East and in Ukraine requires the mobilisation of the international working class in a united struggle against capitalism—the root cause of war and oppression. Against this background, Ahmad's legal success against the state of NRW is to be welcomed.

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