

Berlin Left Party commits to excluding critics of the genocide in Gaza

Christoph Vandreier
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Eighty-eight percent of Die Linke (Left Party) voters and 60 percent of all Berlin voters approve of the party “voicing clear criticism of the Israeli government.” This emerged from a post-election survey by Infratest dimap. Yet during the campaign, lead candidate Elif Eralp had already attacked not Israel but members of her own party who called for resistance to the Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Even before the start of exploratory talks on forming a coalition for the state executive with the Greens and the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Eralp and the other negotiators went further and made unmistakably clear that Die Linke stands firmly on the side of the Israeli government and German imperialism. According to the will of all three prospective coalition partners, the massive opposition to the brutal genocide in Gaza that contributed to Die Linke’s electoral success is not to find the slightest expression in the actions of government.

In a joint statement, the negotiators of Die Linke, the Greens and the SPD affirmed Israel’s “right to exist,” announced campus bans for pro-Palestinian activists at Berlin universities and committed to strengthening “the police and the *Verfassungsschutz* (domestic intelligence agency) in their task of protecting Jewish life in Berlin.” All of these are familiar formulations that do not protect Jewish life but criminalise any criticism of the brutal genocide in Gaza and strengthen the police state.

The prospective coalition partners did not stop at declarations of intent. Die Linke, the Greens and SPD agreed that each parliamentary group will act independently against any dissenter who violates the agreement—“up to and including the expulsion of members.” If one of the three groups sees “antisemitic incidents” in another group, it can also refer the matter

to an expert panel. The group concerned must then impose measures at its own discretion on the basis of the panel’s opinion. If the Greens and SPD disagree with individual statements by Die Linke deputies, they can thus press the group to expel those concerned.

A report in the *Bild* tabloid underscores what this means. According to the report, Vanessa Emde is not to be admitted to Die Linke’s parliamentary group in the state assembly at its inaugural session today. Emde received 46.2 percent of the vote, the third-highest result of all 78 of the party’s constituency candidates. In May this year, she stated, according to *Morgenpost*, “There is no right to exist for states—people have a right to exist.” The demand for a “democratic one-state solution” with equal rights for all people was politically legitimate and must not be criminalised, Emde said.

In Die Linke, such restrained, humanist considerations are evidently enough for someone to be slandered as an “antisemite” and excluded from the parliamentary group.

The party’s stance is by no means new. In the joint document, Die Linke, the Greens and SPD state that they will continue to work on the basis of a resolution of the Berlin Senate (state executive) of March 14, 2019. The three parties had already formed a governing coalition at that time and jointly adopted the document.

The resolution is explicitly based on the definition of antisemitism drawn up by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and supplemented by the federal government. The IHRA definition is an ahistorical and anti-democratic construct that defines any political opposition to Zionism and to Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians as “antisemitic.”

The document also smeared the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign for boycott and sanctions against the Israeli state as “antisemitic.”

“Organisations, associations and individuals that delegitimise the existence of Israel as a Jewish state,” the document declared, would not be provided with “premises or spaces. Nor should they receive any grants or subsidies from the state.”

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU)-SPD Senate, which followed the SPD-Die Linke-Green state executive’s lead, relied on this document when it “cleansed” Berlin’s entire cultural landscape, cancelling funding for premises, cultural centres, art associations and individuals because they spoke out against the genocide in Gaza.

The genocide in Gaza is not a side issue. With their joint document, the three prospective coalition partners commit themselves to the policy of the federal government that Israel is an “affair of state” for Germany. They are lining up behind the methods of genocide in order to assert Germany’s economic and geostrategic interests internationally. Die Linke has also voted in the Bundesrat (Germany’s upper house of parliament) for the multi-trillion-euro rearmament package and, in the state governments, is helping to recoup the money for it through social cuts.

The joint document shows that a government led by Die Linke in Berlin will also follow this line. Pointing to the coffers emptied by rearmament, it will continue the severe social cuts that it had already pushed through in the first SPD-Die Linke Senate and later in the SPD-Die Linke-Green state government.

The deputies who are now coming under fire are not principled fighters against genocide and war either. They are candidates of a party of militarism and social attacks and serve it as a left-wing fig leaf. During the campaign they were allowed to collect votes with a few left-wing phrases; now they are expected to support the government line. And that, essentially, is what they are doing. Ferat Koçak, the party’s left-wing and pro-Palestinian figurehead, responded to the campaign against him by voluntarily relinquishing his posts and withdrawing.

The reason for the right-wing politics of Die Linke—and of its left wing—lies in its pro-capitalist character. As the SED (Socialist Unity Party), the party had already brutally suppressed workers in the GDR (East Germany) and ultimately reintroduced capitalism. In the 1990s, it supported the social attacks associated with this. In Berlin, the first SPD-Die Linke Senate

initially rescued the bank holding company Berliner Bankgesellschaft with billions, only to recoup the money from public sector workers and from healthcare and education. As the capitalist crisis intensifies, it will impose far more severe cuts. During the election campaign, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) had already stated:

In this situation, in which capitalism is once again leading to war, misery and barbarism, every party that defends capitalism will pursue the policies that correspond to it. And that is why a Mayor Elif Eralp will not simply continue the right-wing policies of the SPD-Die Linke Senate and the SPD-Die Linke-Green Senate. She will intensify them. She will line up behind the war policy. ...

We do not need left-wing fig leaves for Die Linke. What we need is an international and independent movement from below. Independent of all capitalist parties, independent of the trade unions, which only enforce the interests of the companies. An international movement of workers against capitalism, the root of war, fascism and barbarism.

The SGP stood in the Berlin elections on this programme. This is now being confirmed. Anyone who is serious about fighting the genocide in Gaza, rearmament, the war against Russia and the social attacks must not place hopes in a left wing within Die Linke, but must join the SGP.



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