Berlin: Die Linke state parliamentary group expels Israel critic and paves the way for austerity coalition with Greens and SPD

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The expulsion of pro-Palestinian deputy Vanessa Emde from the Die Linke (Left Party) parliamentary group in the Berlin House of Representatives (state assembly) shows that the party is not simply the target of the frenzied media campaign against opponents of the genocide in Gaza, but is itself a driving force. The genocidal policy of the federal government has thus become the basis for a possible Die Linke–Green–SPD coalition.

The expulsion was preceded by a smear campaign against Emde, backed by all the major media outlets and every party in the Bundestag (federal parliament). Emde was vilified as a "supporter of terrorism" and an "antisemite." Writing in *Die Welt*, Christian Democrat (CDU) politician Burkard Dregger even accused her and the majority of Die Linke of "eliminationist antisemitism"—that is, of wanting to annihilate the Jews. The Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens made Emde's expulsion from the parliamentary group a precondition for a coalition.

These are monstrous slanders with no factual basis whatsoever. The entire campaign rests on statements Emde made in May this year. Referring to Israel, she declared at the time, "There is no right of existence 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.

This democratic and humanist position has nothing to do with antisemitism and is also discussed by Jews around the world. The experience of recent years has shown that nothing endangers Jewish life in the region more than a state that violently excludes the Palestinian population and makes its survival dependent on doing the "dirty work" for imperialist interests in the region, as Chancellor Friedrich Merz put it.

Equating the demand for equal rights for Palestinians and Jews with antisemitism serves the transparent aim of justifying German support for the brutal genocide in Gaza and suppressing all opposition to it.

That the Shoah, of all things, is being abused to justify Germany's return to militarism and genocide is the height of cynicism. In the country where Nazi antisemitism led to the greatest crimes in human history, the term is being turned into its opposite and directed against those who protest for human rights and against genocide. In this way, the historical crimes of German imperialism are to be minimised and its return given ideological support.

That is why "Israel's right to exist" became the central issue in the Berlin coalition negotiations. In doing so, the three prospective coalition partners are agreeing on the basic thrust of their policy in the service of Germany's militarisation. In their exploratory paper, the parties have already agreed to make savings at social service providers and to strengthen the police instead.

This is why the campaign against Emde, who won 46.2 percent of the vote—the third-highest share of any directly elected candidate in Berlin—was backed from the outset by Die Linke itself. At the beginning of the month, Gregor Gysi had already called for Emde's expulsion in a podcast. Her statements on Israel's right to exist were "antisemitic and, above all, beyond the pale for my party," Gysi said.

Die Linke's federal co-chair, Ines Schwerdtner, has also demanded Emde's removal. Although she did not officially justify this on grounds of antisemitism, she called her a "dissident" who did not abide by party decisions and was putting on an "ego show."

Tobias Schulze, leader of the Berlin state parliamentary group, justified Emde's expulsion by saying she was not prepared to abide by the party's positions "on the subject of antisemitism" and "on Israel's right to exist." This is all the more remarkable because the party's deputies, and even entire parliamentary groups, regularly vote against official party policy without facing any consequences. This was the case, for example, with the governing parliamentary groups in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Bremen, which voted for the massive rearmament programme in the

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Bundesrat (upper house of parliament).

Emde's expulsion was carried by an overwhelming majority. Thirty-three deputies voted in favour, six against and four abstained. Schulze stressed that these ten deputies had also spoken out against Vanessa Emde's conduct and merely considered expulsion too harsh an instrument.

Die Linke's unambiguous stand on the side of German militarism and the Israeli genocide is nothing new. As early as 12 October 2023, its Bundestag parliamentary group voted unanimously for a motion that pledged Israel "every support" in its attacks on the Gaza Strip and called for pro-Palestinian demonstrators to be deported from Germany. Emde and several other candidates were allowed to win votes during the election campaign by criticising the genocide, but now they have served their purpose and are expected to toe the line.

Die Linke's aggressive crackdown on any criticism of Israel is not only linked to its push to install its own candidate as the capital's mayor for the first time. The party is also responding very deliberately to the sweeping protests by young people and workers spreading across the continent. In France, Italy, Spain and many other countries, millions are demonstrating against war policy and social devastation. In Germany, 120,000 young people took to the streets for the same cause.

In Berlin, many of them voted for Die Linke on 20 September in the hope that the big housing corporations would be expropriated, that education and healthcare would be improved, and that the genocide in Gaza and militarisation would be called by their name. With Emde's expulsion, Die Linke is making clear that it will not allow these sentiments and protests to have any influence on the actions of a Die Linke–Green–SPD state government.

What the leaderships of Die Linke, the Greens and SPD are currently negotiating behind closed doors is the exact opposite of Die Linke's flowery campaign slogans. In the exploratory paper, they had already stipulated that all the minor improvements listed are subject to available funding and, if implemented at all, must be financed by cuts in other areas. A "limit on spending growth" for social service providers has already been announced. The police, on the other hand, are to receive more money.

In Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, where the SPD, Die Linke and the Greens have already concluded coalition negotiations, they have likewise agreed on a rigid austerity budget. In the public sector alone, 1,000 jobs are to be eliminated, and civil servants are to work longer hours with no increase in pay. This is the direct result of the rearmament spending that Die Linke itself approved in the Bundesrat.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) stood its own slate in the Berlin election and warned during the campaign of Die Linke's capitalist and right-wing character. It explained:

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 [state executive] and the SPD-Die Linke-Green Senate. She will intensify them. She will line up behind the war policy.

The SGP described Emde, Neukölln district mayoral candidate Ahmed Abed and pseudo-left organisations such as RIO (Revolutionary Internationalist Organisation), SAV (Socialist Alternative), Sol (Socialist Organisation Solidarity) and GAM (Workers Power) as left fig leaves for these right-wing policies. Emde's expulsion has confirmed that Die Linke will not be deflected from its right-wing course. Yet these groups continue to cling to Die Linke.

Emde herself responded to her expulsion from the parliamentary group by defending the party. The parliamentary group had merely acted under pressure from the SPD and Greens, Emde said. "And I would like to say to the many comrades who may be wrestling with themselves right now and considering whether to leave the party: Please stay."

The bankruptcy of the "left" could hardly be summed up more clearly. Its representatives are quite consciously playing the role of covering the party's left flank and steering the enormous movement developing against capitalism and war into the wake of the right-wing Die Linke. That would mean destroying the movement. Instead, a conscious political break with Die Linke and all other capitalist organisations is necessary. The movement must turn to an international and socialist perspective and fight the root cause of war and fascism: capitalism. This requires building the SGP.

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