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IYSSE Humboldt University Group

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Berlin's Humboldt University censors criticism of genocide in Gaza

Amidst the deafening propaganda for a further escalation of war in the Middle East, Humboldt University has banned the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) university group from holding an event entitled “Stop the Genocide in Gaza.” This is an act of political censorship designed to suppress any discussion of the German government’s brutal policies in the region. We call on all students and WSWS readers to send protest emails to the university administration at praesidentin@hu-berlin.de (copy to iysse@gleichheit.de).



The faculty of justice of the Humboldt University is pictured in Berlin, Germany. (AP Photo/Michael Sohn) [AP Photo]

The university administration has justified its censorship by saying that the IYSSE is exercising a “general political mandate” with the event, “which is not covered by the tasks assigned to the student body by university law.” This is obviously a flimsy pretext.

The IYSSE has been represented in the student parliament for nine years and has independently organised dozens of events on general political issues as a university group during the same period. Other university groups such as the LHG (FDP), the Jusos (SPD) or the Left List also organise general political events. Only the constituted student body itself is prohibited from making general political statements, but not the university groups represented in it.

It is therefore quite obvious that with this absurd argumentation the university administration wants to enforce censorship of what can be said on campus. While the federal government supports and promotes genocide against the Palestinian population, the university administration wants to ban any discussion about it.

There can be no doubt about the nature of this policy. The collective punishment of the entire population of the Gaza Strip by cutting off food, water and electricity alone constitutes a vicious war crime. The massive bombardment of the densely populated area has already killed over 5,000 people, including over 2,000 minors. An additional 1.1 million people have been sent on a death march to the south of the country, where they continue to be bombed.

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These colossal crimes of the far-right Israeli government are not supported by the German government in order to protect Jewish lives. On the contrary, the Israeli population itself is being used as cannon fodder to push through the far-reaching geopolitical goals of the US, Germany and other imperialist powers.

The wars waged by the US and also Germany since 1991 in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, and many other countries in the region have already cost the lives of over two million people, but the imperialist powers have not succeeded in bringing the region under control.

Now, with their threats of war against Lebanon, Syria, and Iran, they want to stage a new attempt that would have even bloodier consequences—including for the Israeli population. The US has already sent tens of thousands of soldiers and two aircraft carriers to the

region, and Germany has also moved forward with a frigate and special forces. Chancellor Olaf Scholz did not rule out a full-scale Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) deployment in an interview with newsweekly *Der Spiegel*.

It is particularly foul that this genocidal policy is being justified with the experiences of the Holocaust! As if the prison break of people oppressed and humiliated for decades could be compared to the industrial mass murder of six million Jews by one of the strongest imperialist powers! It is not the Arab workers and youth shouting “Free Palestine” who stand in the tradition of German imperialism and the Nazis, but the ruling class of Germany with its support for genocide!

The German elites have long been rehabilitating the Nazis and their antisemitism. On September 22, German Ambassador Sabine Sparwasser honoured Waffen SS veteran Yaroslav Hunka with a standing ovation in the Canadian Parliament. The paper *Politico*, from right-wing publishers Springer, now campaigning most vociferously against alleged antisemitism, then declared that the main task of the SS had not been the genocide of the Jews and Hunka’s membership in the Nazi unit did not make him a real Nazi!

The applause for Hunka is not an oversight. In its proxy war against Russia, the German government is collaborating with the regime in Kiev that erects monuments to Nazi collaborators like Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych.

Humboldt University is a centre for the trivialisation of Nazi crimes and the justification of new wars. From here, Eastern Europe History professor Jörg Baberowski told *Der Spiegel* in 2014 that Hitler was not vicious, and that the Holocaust was basically the same as shootings in the Russian civil war. Two years later, Baberowski downplayed the role of antisemitism in the Holocaust in his book *Spaces of Violence*.

When the IYSSE sharply criticised these positions in leaflets and at events, it was fiercely attacked by professors, the history department and university management. Media attacks on the right-wing radical professor were “unacceptable,” the university presidium announced. Even when Baberowski physically attacked one of our Student Parliament deputies and threatened to “punch you in the face,” the university management defended this as “humanly understandable.”

This year, university president Julia von Blumenthal opened the atrocity propaganda exhibition “Russian War Crimes,” held in the foyer of the main building, explaining that it was intended to counteract the “gradually decreasing support for arms supplies” to Ukraine. The university thus placed itself directly in the service of German militarism, which for the third time is gearing up to defeat and subjugate Russia militarily.

Now, students who criticise these right-wing and militaristic positions are to be muzzled on campus! In this way, the university administration is continuing the worst traditions of the self-enforced conformity of universities as happened under the Nazis. While right-wing radical professors are allowed to spread their falsifications of history and the university itself becomes an exhibition site of atrocity propaganda, critical students are to be silenced.

We therefore call on all students and all WSWS readers to protest against this act of censorship to the university administration at praesidentin@hu-berlin.de (copy to iysse@gleichheit.de). German universities must not be allowed to be turned into centres of war propaganda.

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