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German President Steinmeier receives Israeli President Herzog, backs genocide against the Palestinians



German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, right, and his Israeli counterpart Isaac Herzog, brief the media during a meeting at Bellevue Palace in Berlin, Germany, Monday, May 12, 2025 [AP Photo/Markus Schreiber]

Between 1904 and 1908, German imperialism perpetrated the first genocide of the 20th century with the bloody suppression of the Herero and Nama uprising in its then colony of German Southwest Africa. This was followed just a few decades later by the murder of 6 million Jews and the war of extermination against the Soviet Union—which cost the lives of up to 30 million Soviet citizens—the largest mass murder in human history.

In the 21st century, the German ruling class is seamlessly continuing these criminal traditions. At the weekend, the new German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul (Christian Democrat, CDU) travelled to Israel for his inaugural visit. On Monday, Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier rolled out the red carpet in Berlin for his Israeli counterpart Isaac

Herzog, receiving him with military honours. From Tuesday, Steinmeier makes a return visit to Israel to officially mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Steinmeier will also meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a war criminal who has been issued an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court.

A few crocodile tears from German politicians about the suffering of the Palestinians and cynical references to Germany's own historical crimes against the Jewish population—Steinmeier recalled the “breach of civilisation of the Shoah” at the joint press conference with Herzog—cannot hide the fact that German imperialism is once again playing a key role in the implementation of genocide. It is arming Israel and deliberately backing it at a critical time.

The far-right Netanyahu regime is currently taking the systematic annihilation and expulsion of the Palestinian population to the extreme. Last week, Netanyahu announced the start of the final phase of the ethnic cleansing of the Gaza Strip. A plan drawn up with fascist US President Donald Trump envisages the complete military occupation of the entire territory and the mass internment of the population. Palestinians are to be crammed into concentration camps and then forced to march through the desert or be deported by ship.

The camps are to be run by private US security companies, while the Israeli armed forces will control the distribution of starvation rations. In an open reference to the *Endlösung*—“Final Solution,” the Nazi term for the genocide of European Jews—Netanyahu threatened: “The time has come to take the final steps.” Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich declared that “within a year, the Gaza Strip will be completely destroyed.” Civilians would be “sent to a humanitarian zone in the south and from there migrate in large numbers to third countries.”

The Israeli regime is trying to implement its plan by the mass starvation of the population. For more than two months, Israel has completely blockaded the Gaza Strip and is not allowing any food, water or electricity into the area. The genocide of the Palestinians and Germany's role in it are so obvious that even leading newsweekly *Der Spiegel* published a commentary headlined “Germany makes itself an accomplice.” It states:

For over two months, Israel has not allowed any food, medicine or fuel into the Gaza Strip. Children are dying of malnutrition. Meanwhile, Israel is bombing more mercilessly than ever before in this war. Defenceless people are being torn apart in their tents. In the past week alone, dozens have died from bombs [dropped] on a school and a restaurant that also served as a soup kitchen. Children were also among the dead. And further:

And as if that wasn't enough, Israel has just announced a new offensive. The Gaza Strip is to be occupied for the long term and the population expelled once again, preferably “voluntarily.” But there is nothing voluntary about it. There is to be no right of return.

To avoid any “misunderstandings,” Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich added that “Israel will completely destroy and depopulate the Gaza Strip, and victory can be declared in six months at the latest.”

It is the height of criminality when the German ruling class justifies its support for Israel’s genocide by referring to the “fight against antisemitism” and its own historical crimes. On Monday, Steinmeier and Herzog visited the *Gleis 17* memorial at Berlin’s Grunewald railway station, from which thousands of Jews were deported to the extermination camps during the Holocaust.

At a joint press conference with the Israeli head of state shortly beforehand, Steinmeier backed the genocide against the Palestinians with the following words:

Your country was invaded by Hamas. In the face of the terrorist threat to Israel, your country cannot rest and must defend itself against Islamist terrorism and hostage-takers and kidnappings.

Steinmeier cynically declared that the “suffering of the civilian population in Gaza” left “no one untouched.” He therefore asked that Herzog “work to ensure humanitarian aid reaches the people of Gaza again quickly.” This was only to assure him in the very next sentence that Germany was “not naive as a special friend of Israel.” It recognised “the dilemma that Hamas is creating for the Israeli army by cowardly hiding behind civilians while continuing to fire rockets at Israel. I recognise the dilemma that the terrorist organisation is creating, also by enriching itself with aid.”

Over the past 19 months, leading German politicians have repeatedly used similar words to justify Israel’s war of annihilation against the Palestinian population. “We won’t duck away” when “Hamas terrorists hide behind people, behind schools. ... Then civilian places can also lose their protected status,” declared former Green Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock in the Bundestag (federal parliament) last October, openly justifying the destruction of hospitals and schools and the mass murder of civilians.

The Left Party also shares political responsibility for the deaths of tens of thousands of people—mostly women and children—and for the almost complete destruction of the Gaza Strip. Immediately after the start of Israel’s campaign of destruction in October 2023, all (!) members of the Left Party in the Bundestag voted in favour of a pro-Israeli motion tabled by the governing Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and Liberal Democrats (FDP), together with the CDU/CSU. Left Party parliamentary group leader at the time, Dietmar Bartsch, praised the resolution as a “contribution by Germany in the fight against terror.”

Heidi Reichinnek, the leading candidate for the Left Party in February's general election, was particularly aggressive in her support for the massacre in Gaza. In a speech in the Bundestag on March 21, 2024, she repeated the official atrocity propaganda of the "brutal massacre by Hamas," whose "brutal violence against children and sexualised violence against women" could "only be compared to a few events." Hamas were "not freedom fighters, but terrorists who must be disarmed. We must all agree on that here." Israel "naturally has the right to defend itself."

At the weekend, the Left Party used its party conference in Chemnitz to once again back Israel. In a resolution by the party executive titled "The right of the state of Israel to exist is not negotiable for us," it states:

The party executive distances itself from any appeal, statement or visual representation that negates the existence of Israel or propagates the extermination of Israel under the guise of solidarity with the Palestinian population.

Thus, the Left Party demonstrates not only its unconditional support for Israel's genocide, but also its hostility to a common struggle of Jewish, Palestinian and all other Arab workers against their respective reactionary regimes and for a socialist Middle East. In fact, this is the only way to stop the genocide and the developing third world war: through the building of an international mass movement of the working class against fascism and war and its root cause, capitalism.

In Berlin, Herzog made it plain that the war aims in the Middle East go far beyond the annihilation and expulsion of the Palestinians. The unleashing of the Israeli war machine is part of the imperialist powers' aim to also eliminate the Houthis in Yemen, and Iran, to intensify the war policy against Russia and China and to redivide the world among the imperialist powers.

The "heinous acts" of the Houthis, who are attacking ships in the Red Sea in response to Israel's crimes against the Palestinians, had "only one address: Tehran," Herzog threatened. Iran was providing "enormous military and financial support to this organisation." Iran must be "confronted with determination and prevented from obtaining nuclear weapons," Herzog said. This was "not only in Israel's interest," but in the "interest of all humanity."

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