

SGP election campaign meeting discusses socialist perspective in the fight against genocide in Gaza

Our reporters
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Against the backdrop of the escalating genocide in Gaza, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) first online campaign event for the European elections took place on Thursday, May 16. The lively discussion, in which over 60 workers and young people took part, focused on the question of what perspective is necessary to politically mobilise the working class in the fight against genocide and war.

The SGP streamed its first election broadcast on Sunday, which formed the basis of the discussion. SGP chairperson and lead candidate for the European elections, Christoph Vandreier, placed the genocide against the Palestinian population in the context of the historical development of imperialism and explained the SGP's revolutionary socialist perspective. Based on documents from the Fourth International, which as early as 1947 had characterised the Zionist movement as a "pawn" of the great powers and condemned the prospect of a Jewish state as a "reactionary and utopian project," Vandreier explained:

Israel repeatedly served the imperialist powers as a military bridgehead in the region. Ethnic and religious tensions were deliberately fuelled for this purpose. The oppressed Palestinians were nothing more than a pawn in the Arab regimes' manoeuvres with the imperialist powers.

The current genocide in Gaza is part of a rapidly expanding global conflict between the NATO powers over the redivision of the Middle East and the entire world. It also marks the low point of the degeneration of Zionism, whose hostility towards socialism and internationalism has meant a "rejection of the progressive, democratic and socialist tradition" of Jewish workers and intellectuals and which today has "a thoroughly racist and fascist character."

In the election broadcast, Christoph Vandreier and SGP candidate Gregor Kahl also demonstrated that the German ruling class is continuing its fascist traditions in its support for the Israeli genocide and the brutal persecution of opponents of the war. The "antisemitism" smear is used deliberately to intimidate opposition to the massacre and to trivialise the historical crimes of German imperialism. Vandreier concluded:

Appealing to the parties and governments that represent

capitalist interests and organise the genocide is therefore illusory and reactionary. The same applies to the various proponents of a multipolar world who pin their hopes on one or another regime of a smaller capitalist country ... The only way to stop the genocide and prevent a third world war is the international mobilisation of the working class against capitalism, i.e., the great majority that creates all the social wealth and bears all the burden of the crisis and the wars.

At the online meeting, the SGP's socialist perspective provoked a lively discussion. One participant, who is involved in protests against the genocide at Berlin universities, reported a growing mobilisation among students despite extensive censorship, media smears and increasing police repression, which is supported by university administrations. She raised the question of how it could be possible to "mobilise the working class and unite students and workers."

A Thyssen-Krupp worker from Duisburg said, "The politicians are not interested in us and the future of the younger generation. We have a criminal chancellor, that's a fact.

"In my opinion, we need a revolution. It can be initiated by the workers. Ways and means must be found to bring workers onto the streets, to shut everything down for a few weeks. An older colleague said to me, 'Sometimes it takes drastic means to bring about drastic change.'"

However, the worker expressed his concern that, despite "speaking carefully," he would be "wrongly pigeonholed" if Israel's war was discussed or even described as genocide. As soon as there was talk about strike action—Thyssen-Krupp produces military submarines, among other things—you would be confronted with intimidation from the works council representatives. He raised the question of whether many workers were "too fed up" or "too old" to wage such a struggle.

Another participant took up the fact that 48,000 academic workers in the United States had voted to strike in defence of students and to fight against the Biden administration. She raised the question of how workers can fight back against a bureaucracy that is doing everything in its power to suppress opposition to the war. A third participant expressed concern that openly advocating socialism and the building of the Fourth International was likely to deter workers.

These comments and questions were taken up and answered by several SGP members and other participants. Gregor Kahl condemned the role of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) and emphasised the SGP's perspective of building independent rank-and-

file action committees. These were directed against the trade union bureaucracy and aimed to unite workers across national and sectoral borders in the tradition of the revolutionary workers' councils:

Not only has the DGB done nothing to oppose the genocide in Gaza, it has declared its solidarity with Israel and Germany's pro-war policy and is actively taking action against opponents of the war. Gaza demonstrators were forcibly excluded from the May Day demonstrations. IG Metall, the largest trade union organisation in the world, has published a statement together with the arms lobby calling for the German arms industry to be strengthened. In doing so, they are supporting a programme in the industry aimed at gearing all production towards war.

Elisabeth Zimmermann-Modler, who has been a member of the Trotskyist movement for 50 years, rejected the view that the struggle against war and capitalism was a generational issue and emphasised the need for Marxist leadership, referring to the Spanish Civil War. The question of political perspective was also decisive in the struggle of the working class against Hitler and later against the reintroduction of capitalism in the former East Germany, she said.

Peter Schwarz, International Secretary of the International Committee of the Fourth International and a long-time editor of the German-language *World Socialist Web Site*, placed the fundamentally changed role of the trade unions in the context of capitalist globalisation:

Production has developed enormously; it has taken on global forms. Technology has developed enormously, but under capitalism it leads to growing competition, to the concentration of all production in the hands of a few financial groups. The nation state is completely at odds with the global nature of production. Private property is not compatible with the current character of the productive forces. According to the latest figures, there are 226 billionaires in Germany who have more money at their disposal than the bottom half of society put together. This is no longer compatible with democracy and social progress.

Workers were confronted with the fact that all bourgeois parties fully defend these conditions and worked directly with fascist forces to develop their pro-war policies, Schwarz said. "Workers are ready to stand up for their interests and the interests of their class as soon as they see a way to wage this struggle." He continued:

We are a party that is building a new socialist revolutionary leadership in the international working class. The founding programme of our party, the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International of 1938, begins with the words: "The world political situation as a whole is characterised above all by a historic crisis of proletarian leadership." The working class needs a revolutionary party that pursues the programme of overthrowing the capitalist order and replacing it with a

socialist one.

Referring to the lessons learned from the October Revolution, but also from more recent revolutionary events such as the uprisings in Egypt in 2011, Schwarz concluded: "You can't produce such a party from thin air. You have to start building it now. The strength of our party lies in the fact that we can draw on 100 years of experience and historical tradition."

Christoph Vandreier underlined this conclusion and summarised the discussion:

The core of our discussion is that it is not simply about wrong policies and a reckless government—or about Israel being ruled by right-wing extremist politicians. It is about the fundamental contradictions of capitalism, of imperialism, which again leads to world war and genocide. In Gaza we see most clearly the cruelty to which the ruling class is once again prepared to resort.

But this means that this war can only be stopped by an international movement against capitalism and in favour of socialism. Marx wrote that capitalism creates its own gravedigger—the working class. We base our politics on the class struggle. We understand that socialism is not just a nice idea, but that it arises from the contradictions of capitalism itself.

This does not happen automatically, but in the class struggle, which must be made conscious and needs a revolutionary socialist leadership. Then the potential of the working class can be unleashed and capitalism overthrown, the banks and corporations placed under democratic control.

If you understand that the same processes that cause war also fuel the class struggle, then a completely different perspective emerges—one that you can fight with and that is characterised by revolutionary optimism. We support every demonstration and every strike against war and genocide. But we are fighting for a sustainable and realistic—i.e., socialist—perspective. We have taken an important political step today. But it is necessary to engage with our programme and to build the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei.

The SGP's next election broadcast, "How to stop the Ukraine war and prevent a nuclear war," will be streamed on YouTube next Sunday, May 19, at 8 p.m. Register here and discuss it with us next Thursday, May 23, at 7 p.m.!



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