

Defend the president of Technische Universität Berlin against right-wing smear campaign! No to the resignation of Geraldine Rauch!

IYSSE Berlin
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A smear campaign against the president of Technische Universität Berlin, Geraldine Rauch, has been running for over a week. She is being falsely accused of antisemitism because she “liked” three posts critical of Israel against the genocide in Gaza on Twitter/X. Although she subsequently apologised and reacted extremely defensively, a phalanx of politicians, media and organisations such as the Central Council of Jews launched a defamation campaign against her in order to force her resignation.

The German government’s antisemitism commissioner, Felix Klein, and the Israeli embassy have also publicly denounced her. Most recently, on Friday, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democrat, SPD) removed the university president from his advisory body, the so-called “Council for the Future.”

On Wednesday, the Academic Senate of the Technische Universität (TU) met to discuss the Rauch case and gave its opinion: 13 Senate members voted in favour of her resignation, 12 against. Rauch then declared that she would not resign but would initiate disciplinary proceedings against herself in order to clarify the matter.

The 41-year-old mathematician received support from students and staff at her university. According to broadcaster rbb, 129 employees, mainly academic and student staff as well as some professors, signed a letter of support in which they criticised the “disproportionate hostility towards Geraldine Rauch as a person.” Before the Academic Senate meeting, students had protested and put up a banner on the TU’s Studienkolleg (Preparatory School) that read: “University autonomy instead of witch-hunt—Geraldine stays!”

The Berlin International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) condemns the smear campaign against Geraldine Rauch and defends the professor against the right-wing attacks. The false accusation of antisemitism is being

used to intimidate professors, lecturers and students. Against the backdrop of international student protests against the genocide in Gaza, this campaign aims to silence legitimate and necessary criticism of the governments’ pro-war policy, its complicity in the genocide in Gaza and the shift to the right at universities.

For “liking” three social media posts, Rauch is now being dragged through the wringer. One post criticised the “genocide” in Gaza, another criticised the “war crimes” of the Israeli army and a third post read: “Thousands of Turkish citizens are currently taking to the streets to demand a ceasefire in Gaza and condemn the operation in Rafah!”

This last post, which is now being used as the hook for the accusation of antisemitism, also showed two pictures of the Turkish protests; in one of them, demonstrators hold up a cardboard figure of far-right Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with swastikas painted on his chest. As Rauch emphasised afterwards, she had only liked this post because of the call for a ceasefire.

The fact that Geraldine Rauch is being pilloried as an antisemite for liking this post is absurd and a pretence. In fact, the campaign has a larger political background. As reported by newsweekly *Der Spiegel*, in April and May the TU president had criticised the police eviction of the protest camp against the Gaza war at Freie Universität Berlin and the violent eviction of the Institute for Social Sciences at Humboldt-Universität being occupied by students.

At the beginning of the year, in February, Rauch spoke out against the right-wing “Netzwerk Wissenschaftsfreiheit” (Academic Freedom Network) founded in 2021 in an article for the online newspaper *Table Media* and correctly explained that this association of professors, including some from TU, “strengthens the narrative of the New Right.”

Shortly before the campaign for her resignation began, she had appointed historian Uffa Jensen as the TU’s

antisemitism officer, drawing criticism from pro-Zionist organisations such as the Central Council of Jews. Jensen has worked at the TU's Centre for Research on Anti-Semitism since 2018 and is a co-signatory of the "Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism" from 2021, which is directed against the International Holocaust Remembrance Association's (IHRA) definition of antisemitism from 2016, which is used to equate criticism of Zionism and Israel's policies with antisemitism. The IHRA definition serves as an ideological and legal justification for suppression of opposition to the far-right Netanyahu regime.

The case at the TU Berlin is not about a fight against "antisemitism" or "hatred of Jews." On the contrary: the ruling elites are currently pursuing an extreme right-wing agenda that is fuelling actual antisemitism and strengthening the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Academics such as Geraldine Rauch and Uffa Jensen are a thorn in their side. They do not want universities where anti-war activists and steadfast academics study, but as ideological training schools for their pro-war policies in the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

Geraldine Rauch is now to be made an example. Accordingly, any academic who utters a critical word about the genocide in Gaza should have to fear for their reputation and their job. Precarious working conditions have prevailed in the academic world for years, especially for mid-level academic staff, who are fobbed off with fixed-term contracts and have to worry about their position being renewed every two to three years. Will they be fired or forced to resign in future if they publicly position themselves against Israel's far-right policies and "like" or even share posts denouncing war crimes?

With this latest smear campaign and the police attacks on student protests, the political conformity of universities is being further enforced. "Critical discourse" and "freedom of opinion" are becoming empty phrases and are only used to justify right-wing extremist agitation: for example, when the right-wing extremist Professor Jörg Baberowski at Humboldt University trivialises the Nazi war of extermination. This process began 10 years ago with the announcement of Germany's new foreign policy turn, which was accompanied by a reactionary ideological campaign in the field of education.

We call on all students and university employees to show their solidarity with TU President Geraldine Rauch and protest against the demands for her resignation. Rauch is displaying courage by refusing to resign. But with her defensive reaction and the disciplinary proceedings she has initiated herself, she has already given in to right-wing political pressure to a certain extent. However, the attacks on democratic rights, which are currently underway throughout

Germany, can only be repelled with a political counteroffensive.

We at the IYSSE are currently conducting this offensive as part of the elections to the student parliament at Humboldt University. At our next events, we want to discuss two questions that are at the centre of the campaign against the TU president: "What next in the fight against police violence and genocide?" (June 11, 7 p.m.) and "The false accusation of antisemitism and the trivialisation of Nazi crimes at Humboldt University" (June 17, 7 p.m.), both in Audimax II on the HU's North Campus.

In our election statement we emphasise:

We will not allow opponents of war to be silenced at Humboldt University and for it to be turned into a training school for German militarism.

The same must apply to the TU and all German universities. But students and university employees alone can stop neither the massacre in Gaza nor the escalation of war in Ukraine, as we write in our election appeal:

The only social force capable of ending the genocide and defending democratic rights is the international working class, the great majority that creates all the wealth of society. As the youth organisation of the Fourth International, we stand for the unification of workers across all national, religious and ethnic boundaries in the struggle against capitalism and war.

The brutal violence against opponents of war shows that it is pointless to appeal to the government. A world war can only be prevented if capitalism is overthrown and replaced by a socialist society in which the needs of working people come before the interests of profit.



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