

Berlin's Humboldt University Student Parliament condemns police violence against Gaza protests

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Last Thursday, the Student Parliament (StuPa) of Berlin's Humboldt University passed a resolution condemning the brutal police action against the occupation of the Institute of Social Sciences (ISW) by students. The resolution, which was introduced by the Left List (LiLi), opposes

the unlawful instruction by Berlin Mayor Wegner (Christian Democrat, CDU) and State Minister Czyborra (Social Democrat, SPD) to the Humboldt University (HU) Executive Board to stop permitting the occupation, as well as the public communication by Mayor Wegner as a serious interference in university autonomy and a direct attack on students' rights. The Student Parliament advises the Presidential Board of the HU to have the illegality of the instruction established by legal action.

It also condemns

the escalating actions of the police in the course of the occupation, in particular the interference of the police in university autonomy—including by taking the personal details of the participants of the discussion event at the Institute of Social Sciences, the use of police violence against students, the attack on the press and on the professional practice of a lawyer as well as numerous anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian incidents in the context of the police operation, which are in the racist tradition of the German

state.

During the ISW occupation, the personal details of all those present were recorded. In the past few days, almost all of them have received letters from the police stating that investigations have been initiated against them for aggravated trespass. This also applies to those who had left the building in good time before the deadline set by the university management, including a lawyer, seven members of the RefRat [*Referent innenrat*, student government], who were only in the building as mediators and observers, as well as professors who were present. An application by the RefRat to the StuPa for financial support for the lawyer's fees was accepted almost unanimously.

At the same time, the Left List resolution accused the occupiers of “using anti-Semitic and Hamas symbolism” and portrayed the role of the university management as seeking dialogue. The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) tabled an amendment to delete these paragraphs. Gregor Kahl, StuPa representative of the IYSSE parliamentary group, explained the amendment:

We as IYSSE call for the student parliament to take an unequivocal and crystal-clear stand against the brutal police operations on campus and the general crackdown on student opponents of the war. We are therefore in favour of limiting the resolution to points 1 and 3 and have tabled a corresponding amendment to the LiLi motion.

We have to realise what is happening right now: The university management is trying to ensure that

the HU remains a centre for war propaganda and wants to create a situation in which nothing may be said that is contrary to German great power interests.

In recent months, it has repeatedly responded to any expression of opposition to the war with brutal police violence. Although the ISW occupation never posed any danger to people, virtually everyone involved was prosecuted. Criminal charges were even brought against an advising lawyer, and a journalist from the *Berliner Zeitung* was brutally beaten up by the police, although he clearly identified himself as a member of the press.

Several student protesters were attacked so severely by the police that paramedics had to be deployed. Even members of the RefRat who were only there to observe are now being persecuted, as we have just discussed.

But it didn't just start with the occupation: the HU management also immediately called in the police against the completely peaceful sit-in in front of the main building in May, put the entire campus under siege and had the participants forcibly removed. If we allow anti-war activists to be beaten up by the police on campus, then we will no longer have a free university.

Academic events against the massacre in Gaza are being subjected to anti-democratic restrictions, such as our own on Tuesday or the Decolonise Charité event, where a school class was prevented from entering.

At the same time, student posters are being destroyed on campus, not just our posters, but also posters from Grünboldt and the Action Weeks against the Right. Professors who have defended the democratic rights of us students in an open letter are being slandered by the *Bild* newspaper and persecuted by the Ministry of Education, as the broadcaster NDR has now revealed. And all the while, a right-wing smear campaign is taking place that equates opposition to the massacre in Gaza with antisemitism. We should not join the chorus of this campaign.

Nor should we glorify the role of the university management, as is done here in the LiLi motion. From our point of view, it is clear that the mayor, science minister and university management jointly created the situation of the police

crackdown, and it is a fact that the university management was in favour of the police deployment on campus.

Mrs Blumenthal's presidency also banned regular events against the massacre in Gaza at the university, such as an event we wanted to organise.

The StuPa meeting is not about whether we agree with individual demands of the occupation or not but should simply make it clear that we unreservedly reject the police operation and defend the democratic right of all students to protest, regardless of whether we agree with individual demands and actions of individuals or not.

The IYSSE amendment received two votes from student lists in addition to the IYSSE votes and was therefore rejected by a majority. The unamended motion of the Left List was adopted with the IYSSE abstaining and the SPD, CDU and FDP youth organisations voting against.

Elections to the StuPa are taking place on Tuesday and Wednesday. The IYSSE is the only list running with a programme against the militarisation of universities. Its election statement reads:

We are running in the Student Parliament (StuPa) elections to oppose police violence against students who express critical anti-war views and media smears against lecturers. 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. It is not only our right, but our historical duty to speak out against the terrible genocide in Gaza, which is supported by the German government in every respect.



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