

Stop the bank boycott of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei! Donate now!

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1 September 2024

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is facing a bank boycott that jeopardises its ability to function. The boycott is aimed at silencing it politically.

The action against the SGP is part of a broader campaign to suppress all voices raised against the genocide in Gaza, against German militarism and against social devastation. We call on all readers to oppose this attack on democratic rights and make a generous donation today to maintain the SGP's ability to function. Donations must now be transferred to this account, and existing standing orders must be changed accordingly.

On June 28, Postbank, which was taken over by Deutsche Bank in 2009, terminated the SGP's account, which it had maintained for over 50 years, without providing any reason. Even before the letter was delivered, the bank blocked the account and refused to accept donations and membership fees, which has resulted in significant financial damage. Meanwhile, Postbank has had to lift the blockage, but maintains that the account will be terminated on October 25.

As a result, the SGP attempted to open an account at over 10 other banks, but was refused—again, mostly without explanation. Even the Berliner Sparkasse, a public bank obliged to treat all parties equally and uphold fundamental rights, refused the SGP an account without giving reasons. Only the GLS Gemeinschaftsbank, which is organised as a cooperative and operates accounts for many left-wing groups and initiatives, allowed the SGP to open an account.

For the SGP, the unexpected termination and temporary blocking of its bank account are associated with enormous financial and logistical burdens. Donations received after the closure of the account will be rejected, and standing orders that have often existed for decades will be discontinued, without the relevant information about the new bank details being provided.

At the same time, it is virtually impossible to take legal action against the termination. In recent years, case law has become so ambiguous that the giant financial conglomerates are allowed to terminate any contract at any time without

having to give a reason. This affects companies as well as political parties and voluntary associations.

In recent years, this case law has been used many times to harass and pressure opponents of war and left-wing organisations. Most recently, in March, the Berliner Sparkasse blocked the account of “Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East” and demanded the peace activists provide it with a list of all their members. The reason was the group's position against the genocide in Gaza.

Deutsche Bank is playing a key role in the political campaign against opponents of the war. Under Hitler, the bank was deeply involved in Nazi crimes. It should have been broken up after the unconditional surrender of the German Reich, and central figures should have been charged with war crimes. However, under the conditions of the Cold War, German capital prevailed against the original plans of the Allies, and Deutsche Bank continued from 1957 as a nationwide financial group with the old Nazi elites still at the top.

After the 2008 financial crisis, Deutsche Bank gradually took over the previously state-owned Postbank, which had been compelled to uphold certain fundamental rights, and subsequently closed the accounts of many left-wing organisations. The fact that this action is now being taken against the SGP is part of a concerted campaign to silence the party. It is aimed at socialists and all opponents of war.

In 2014, the SGP condemned the government's proclamation of the “end of Germany's military restraint,” made the fight against the growing threat of war the focus of its work, and spoke out particularly sharply against the trivialisation of Nazi crimes. In response, the media launched a full-scale smear campaign against the SGP.

The *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit* and many other newspapers published lies and defamations that were often retracted only after intervention by the Press Council. In addition, there were far-right attacks in Berlin and Dresden on events organised by the SGP youth organisation, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE).

In 2019, the *Verfassungsschutz* (Office for the of the Constitution, as Germany's domestic intelligence service is called) for the first time included the SGP in its annual report as a "left-wing extremist organisation," enabling the state to legally place the party under surveillance. It justified this by saying it was because the SGP "fights against alleged nationalism, imperialism and militarism." After the SGP filed a lawsuit against the report, the federal Interior Ministry justified the surveillance of the party on the grounds that it fought for a "democratic, egalitarian and socialist society."

With NATO's proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, the crackdown on the SGP intensified. The SGP was the only party to oppose this mass slaughter based on the perspective of international socialism. The *Verfassungsschutz* report was used to deprive the party and its youth organisation of access to meeting rooms and to restrict their work on campus.

This took on new dimensions with the genocide in Gaza, which the German government fully supports. Berlin's Humboldt University, the Ruhr University Bochum and many other universities refused to provide rooms to the IYSSE, SGP leaflets were confiscated by the police and their distribution banned, and the Oyoun cultural centre in Berlin was cut off from funding, in part because an SGP event was held on its premises. On the same day that the IYSSE achieved a record result of 8 percent in elections to the student parliament at Humboldt University, the *Verfassungsschutz* also included the youth organisation in its latest annual report.

The bank boycott of the SGP began at the same time and represents a further escalation of the actions against the party. The SGP is not only facing significant financial burdens, but also faces the prospect of losing its new account, and thus, de facto, its capacity to function. That big financial conglomerates can cripple the ability of parties with left-wing and anti-militarist positions to function is a fundamental violation of basic democratic rights.

The SGP is in the crosshairs of these attacks because it articulates the widespread opposition to the warmongering and social devastation that the government and all the parliamentary parties are ruthlessly pursuing. The SGP opposes the growing nationalism and anti-refugee agitation with the perspective of international socialism and the unity of all workers. It opposes both NATO's proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, without adapting to the Putin regime, and the genocide against the Palestinians, along with the horrendous levels of military spending. That is why it is to be silenced.

This is not only directed against the SGP, but against all opponents of war. In its constitutional complaint against surveillance by the *Verfassungsschutz*, the SGP had already

~~Protection~~ that fundamental democratic issues were at stake. If the government were to prevail, the SGP explained, this would establish the basis for dictatorship. We stated:

Every strike by workers, every protest against rearmament and every demonstration against the far right could be banned as anti-constitutional.

This warning is now being confirmed. The German government is supporting the genocide in Gaza and is aggressively acting against any opposition to this barbaric crime. Demonstrations are being banned, organisations dissolved, and peace activists prosecuted.

In doing so, those in power are acting not from a position of strength, but weakness. They know that their policy of war and genocide is meeting with enormous opposition from the vast majority of the population. The SGP not only articulates this opposition, but also provides it with a viable socialist perspective. That is why the government and corporations are acting so aggressively against it.

Now it is essential to mobilise this opposition to defend and strengthen the SGP. We call on all readers to challenge this attack and make a donation as soon as possible to maintain the SGP's ability to function. It is especially important to set up monthly contributions and to increase existing contributions as much as possible when switching to the new account. Only in this way can the SGP offset the financial burden and intensify its fight against fascism, war and capitalism.

*The SGP's new bank details are:
Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei
GLS Gemeinschaftsbank eG, Bochum
IBAN: DE07 4306 0967 1338 6942 00
Donate now!*



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