

Student general assembly at Berlin's Humboldt University agrees to fight right-wing shift and pro-war policies

IYSSE Humboldt University
15 December 2024

Last week, a well-attended general assembly took place at Humboldt University in Berlin under the slogan “Students against the Right.” The meeting passed important resolutions against the right-wing shift in official politics, against repression by the police and university administrations, and against right-wing teaching and support for war.

With around 1,500 students—divided between five lecture halls at three locations, which were connected via livestream—the gathering was the largest general assembly at the university in years.

The general assembly called for an “end to repression on campus,” the introduction of a “civilian clause” banning military research at universities, no presence of police and military on campus, and called on university management to exclude “any form of cooperation” with the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and to publicly rule out “political exmatriculation” or the application of the reintroduced “regulatory law” used to discipline students for political activities. In addition, university management was called upon to “publicly take a stand on right-wing professors like Jörg Baberowski.”

In his speech, one of the organising committee spokespersons tried to limit the practical conclusions of the general assembly to a blockade of the AfD federal party conference on January 11, in Riesa, Saxony. At the same time, he suggested to those present the perspective of a “broad alliance against the right,” arguing that the fight against fascism could supposedly be agreed to by “all parties except the AfD.”

In the subsequent debate, two amendments were immediately tabled by conservative participants which aimed to tone down the criticism of the university management’s right to impose order and of right-wing professors.

Gregor Kahl, spokesperson and member of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in the student parliament of Humboldt University, spoke out clearly against the watering down of the demands and declared to great applause:

We welcome this plenary assembly and say that the fight against the shift to the right and against fascism requires the mobilisation of the working class against capitalism. The fight against the right must be linked to the fight against war and social cuts and can only be waged as a class struggle.

It is wrong to claim that all parties except the AfD are anti-fascist. On the contrary, all bourgeois parties actively contribute to strengthening the fascists and realising their programme.

Why are the right-wing parties growing in all countries? The reason is that the whole of politics is moving to the right and supporting policies of social attacks and war. That is why the EU Commission supports the European extreme right. That is why Social Democrats and Greens in the EU Parliament supported a fascist as vice president of the Commission.

That is why Biden is handing over the US government smoothly to Trump and his fascist cabinet. Here in Berlin, opponents of the massacre in Gaza are subjected to police violence and media smear campaigns and are prosecuted.

The fight against the far right therefore requires a fight against all Bundestag (parliamentary) parties. They have rolled out the red carpet for the far-right and are implementing their policies. This also applies to the Left Party, which is deporting refugees on a massive scale and has helped enforce years of social cuts here in Berlin.

Following the speech, several students proposed motions and demands to supplement and sharpen the text of the resolution.

Members of the group “Decolonise HU” tabled several motions that comprehensively opposed “the curtailment of fundamental rights such as the right to asylum, academic freedom, freedom of assembly and organisation freedom and freedom of expression,” demanded a “stop to German complicity in the genocide in Gaza” and called for “an

immediate halt to all arms and military equipment deliveries to Israel.” Another motion was directed against the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which “equates criticism of the state of Israel with antisemitism.”

The proposals were adopted by an overwhelming majority. To great applause, another student also demanded that the university administration should not only “take a critical position” on Professor Baberowski, but should clearly distance itself from him.

At various points in the assembly, some members of the organising committee, who are connected to the SDS [Socialist Democratic Student League] which has close ties to the Left Party, tried to channel the widespread willingness to fight against the right to benefit the ailing Left Party, suggesting that a “renewal” of this party could avert the right-wing danger. Among others, Ferat Koçak, a member of the Berlin state parliament for the Left Party, was invited to speak to the assembly via livestream, while a trade union activist ceremoniously announced her candidacy for the Left Party in the federal elections.

However, when Kahl intervened to explain that the fight against the right must also be directed against the Left Party, which shares responsibility for the social cuts in Berlin and was deporting masses of refugees, the plenary responded with particularly strong applause. In a contribution to the debate, a student from the “Decolonise” group also noted that “the Left Party has already governed and the right-wingers have nevertheless grown.”

In fact, it is the social cuts carried out by the Left Party, the Greens and the Social Democrats (SPD) under the banner of supposedly “left-wing” politics that have created the political confusion and despair that the AfD is now demagogically exploiting. The strong applause for the criticism of the Left Party and the broad rejection of support for Israeli war policy thus highlighted an important contradiction between parts of the organising committee and the majority of those present at the meeting.

The general assembly also ultimately endorsed by a majority a series of demands raised nationwide by the alliance “Students against the Right,” including a nationwide rent freeze, “solidarity right of residence for all,” “effective taxation of large fortunes,” the abolition of the debt brake limiting public spending and “affordable public transport.” While these demands are urgently necessary and justifiably popular, their realisation also requires a break with the SDS’s bourgeois perspective which wants to co-opt the movement behind the Left Party and steer it into a dead end.

Summing up at the end of the general assembly, IYSSE spokesman Kahl said:

The fight against right-wing politics cannot be waged with bourgeois forces that themselves implement right-

wing politics, but only against them. That is why we strongly oppose the “renewal” of the Left Party, as advocated here by SDS members. Wherever it governs, the Left Party has implemented the programme of the bourgeoisie. It carries out mass deportations, has helped to push through social cuts here in Berlin and has fully endorsed Israel’s massacre in the Gaza Strip.

While Dietmar Bartsch supports the economic plundering of Ukraine and [Gregor] Gysi calls for a stronger German great power policy, Bodo Ramelow is setting up a government in Thuringia consisting of the Christian Democrats (CDU), SPD and Wagenknecht’s party and calling for the deployment of German troops in Ukraine.

Instead of appealing to bourgeois parties like the Left Party, we must turn to the working class, which is looking for a way to fight against the ruling class. In doing so, we also turn against the privileged trade union bureaucrats who, with the help of the police, throw opponents of war out of the May Day demonstrations and, with their support for the war policy and the reduction of real wages, have helped to create the breeding ground for the fascists.

We call for the establishment of rank-and-file action committees in the factories and at all workplaces that stand in the tradition of the Arbeiterräte [workers’ councils formed at the time of the 1918 German revolution]. They must be independent of the trade union bureaucracy and open to all workers, regardless of nationality, company or union affiliation. Set up IYSSE groups at all universities to fight for a socialist perspective!

We must counter the nationalism of the fascists and the far right with the unity of the international working class! In this way, we can not only beat the fascists, but also overthrow the capitalist system, which is the cause of the shift to the right, social cuts and war.

At its last meeting, at the request of the IYSSE faction, the HU student parliament decided to convene a further general assembly to discuss and organise the fight against the Berlin state executive’s billion-euro cuts. The struggles against cuts, war and fascism cannot be separated from each other but must be waged as a class struggle. We want to discuss this perspective with all those who are interested. Get in touch with us and take part in the preparation of the general assembly!



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