

Students at Berlin's Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences for Social Work protest against genocide in Gaza

Our reporters
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Last Monday, students at the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences in Berlin occupied the main lecture hall to protest the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip. “Stop arming Israel” and “Free Palestine” were written in large letters on the building’s windows. On Thursday evening, the protest ended with discussions and a screening of the documentary *No Other Land*.

In their flyer titled “No ‘Business as Usual’ During a Genocide!” the students declare their “solidarity and recognition for previous student occupations worldwide” and state:

After more than 450 days of brutal genocide against the Palestinian people, which is becoming more catastrophic with every second, our university administration continues to support the genocidal, racist and criminalising German state policy.

Since October 7, 2023, Germany has provided arms worth €160 million to support the genocide of the apartheid state of Israel. During this time, the racist police presence and violence at protests in support of Palestine has increased. This has been supported by a huge increase in funding for repression and criminalisation of Palestinians and people expressing solidarity. At the same time, the German state is cutting funding for the social sector in order to finance fascist forms of control and repression.

The Alice Salomon University (ASH) is one of the most well-known higher education institutions in Germany for social work and health education and offers courses and

seminars on human rights and anti-racism, the leaflet states. Students could see the banner put up by the university bearing the words “human rights, human dignity, humanity,” but their leaflet noted that the university “continues to deny the genocide in Gaza and supports the complicity of the German state. What hypocrisy!”

The university management under rector Bettina Völter tolerated the occupation of the main lecture hall, but then asked the students to leave the building overnight, which they accepted. At the same time, police had arrived with several patrol cars and positioned themselves in front of the university entrance to intimidate the protest.

The university president, Prof. Dr. Sabine Völter, bravely confronted the aggressive police officers and ordered them to leave the university entrance. In a video on Instagram she can be seen condemning the officers’ behaviour as “threatening.”

On their Instagram page—notinourname_ash—the occupiers declared that the approximately 50 students had left the university peacefully, but that a “massive police presence” awaited them at nearby Alice-Salomon-Platz. At the rally there, five people were “brutally arrested” without reason in front of the university management. According to the police, six criminal investigations were initiated. On the Friday after the occupation ended, the police were still at Alice-Salomon-Platz with their patrol cars.

Last year, the police brutally suppressed protests and occupations at Berlin’s Humboldt University and the Free University. This was accompanied by a furious media campaign against the students and calling for police-state measures on campus.

A media and political smear campaign also began after the first day of the ASH occupation. The mayor of Berlin,

Kai Wegner (Christian Democrat, CDU), criticised Völter's behaviour towards the police and defamed the student occupiers as "masked and violent antisemites." The CDU faction leader in the Berlin Senate (state assembly) Dirk Stettner even called for the resignation of the university president. The domestic policy spokesman for the Berlin Social Democrats (SPD) told t-online he was "appalled" that she had not exercised her authority to remove the protesters, and Ina Czyborra (SPD), state minister for science, demonstratively backed the police in a press release.

The notoriously right-wing *Jüdische Allgemeine* newspaper denounced the students as "supporters of terrorism." The Central Council of Jews and the Israeli ambassador to Germany, Ron Prosor, also agitated against the ASH rector and the protesters.

Members of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and its youth and student organisation IYSSE (International Youth and Students for Social Equality) supported the protest and discussed with students at ASH for several days. They also collected around 50 signatures supporting ballot status for the SGP's participation in February's federal election, as the SGP is the only party to stand for an international movement of the working class against war and genocide.

Student Noura said, "It's good that you are collecting [signatures] at ASH, because most of the students here are clearly against the genocide in Gaza. I didn't know the SGP previously and I'm very excited about your website."

Frieder was pleased that the Fourth International was still active and that the WSWs is published in so many languages: "Because we have to think internationally—whether it's the climate crisis, the development of war or environmental pollution."

Julia said at first that she did not want to sign the ballot petition until she had read the SGP flyer. Shortly afterwards, she changed her mind: "On the back there are some of your perspectives, such as 'No Third World War! Stop the NATO war in Ukraine! Stop the genocide in Gaza! Never again fascism! For a united, socialist Europe!' That speaks to me from the soul, I can immediately sign."

"It was time that a protest finally took place here at ASH, too," said another student, adding that equating criticism of the right-wing extremist Netanyahu government with antisemitism was absurd.

A fellow student also expressed her support for opposition to the genocide in Gaza. She agreed that the

crimes in Gaza were part of a broader development of war in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. The money that was now being spent on arming the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) and supplying weapons should be invested in the social sector, she said. ASH was also affected by the austerity measures of the Berlin Senate. In December, the university cancelled childcare, which is depended upon by many student parents. She said that friends who were social workers had already lost their jobs due to cutbacks.

In the discussions, some students expressed concern about the political shift to the right. Michelle said, "I am quite afraid of what will happen after Trump's inauguration as president of the United States. There is a great danger of nationalism and the growth of right-wing parties, and we must take a stand now. Fascism must not be allowed to happen again."

Italian student Valentina, who was horrified by the situation in Italy under the fascist Giorgia Meloni, asked about the causes of the shift to the right. IYSSE members discussed with her the fact that the Stalinist Italian Communist Party and the supposedly "left-wing" successor parties have repeatedly betrayed the interests of the working class, paving the way for the right.

The IYSSE supports the protest at ASH and calls on students and workers worldwide to defend students there against the right-wing attacks of the establishment politicians and the media. War and militarism go hand in hand with repression at home, whether against protesting students and school pupils or striking workers. The ruling class worldwide is resorting to the authoritarian methods of a police state and promoting right-wing extremist forces in order to deal with the growing social opposition.

But students cannot stop the pro-war policy by appealing to governments and university administrations. They must orient themselves to the international working class, the only social force that can end the genocide in Gaza through mass strikes and a revolutionary anti-war movement. That is what the IYSSE and SGP are fighting for. Get in touch with us and join in!



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)