

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei appeal in the German federal election

Oppose imperialist war through the fight for socialism!

No to austerity, rearmament and fascism!

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei
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The following statement has been published by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP), the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International. The Federal Electoral Committee certified the SGP to stand in the German federal election on February 23.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is contesting the federal elections to oppose the all-party coalition advocating war and austerity. Together with our sister parties of the Fourth International around the world, we are building an international movement to halt the madness of war, mass layoffs and wage cuts.

Our goal is not to reform capitalism but to abolish it. Each passing day proves anew that the capitalist system is bankrupt, producing only social devastation, war and environmental catastrophe. We fight for a socialist society in which the needs of the majority take precedence over the profits of the wealthy.

The billionaire oligarchs who dominate the global economy and financial markets can maintain their rule only through fascism and war. Nowhere is this more evident than in the world's most powerful capitalist country, the United States. On January 20, a government of criminals, fascists and multi-billionaires will assume power.

Donald Trump, a convicted felon, real estate mogul and casino operator, pursues a policy of economic extortion, military conquest and violent repression. He not only threatens China and other economic rivals with punitive tariffs and military force but also targets America's traditional allies. By arresting and deporting millions of migrants, he is laying the groundwork to suppress all social and political opposition within the United States and establish a dictatorship.

The German ruling class is following a similar path. Its answer to "Make America Great Again" is "Deutschland über alles" (Germany above all), responding to Trump by rearming at a pace not seen since Hitler. All parties represented in the Bundestag (federal parliament) are united on this. In the war against Russia, they are willing to risk a nuclear conflagration. In Gaza, they are supporting genocide. The federal election was brought forward to install a government capable of implementing the policies of war and the accompanying social cuts more effectively than the discredited coalition government led by the Social Democrats (SPD).

There is no such thing as a "lesser evil" in this election. All the establishment parties are committed to making Germany "war-ready" (*kriegstüchtig*) again and shifting the costs onto workers, pensioners and the needy. The mass layoffs and radical wage cuts at VW are only the beginning. For this frontal attack on the working class, they rely on the far-

right Alternative for Germany (AfD)—whether as part of the government or not. All other parties have already embraced the AfD's anti-refugee propaganda and law-and-order policies. Their aim is to divide the working class, incite a right-wing mob and strengthen the repressive state apparatus.

The SGP rejects the illusion that the establishment parties can be compelled to change course through moral appeals or pressure from below. Our election campaign is directed at the working class and youth—at all those who refuse to accept the genocidal pro-war policy, the stark levels of social inequality, the destruction of health and education systems and the devastation of our planet.

The international working class is a formidable social force, comprising 3.5 billion people—55 percent more than in 1991. It creates all social wealth while bearing the entire burden of war and crisis. Only if the working class intervenes independently in political life and transforms society on a revolutionary basis—expropriating the big banks and corporations and placing them under democratic control—can catastrophe be averted.

Such a movement has already begun. From the United States to Europe, Asia, and Africa, fierce industrial struggles are emerging, increasingly coming into open conflict with the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy. Despite brutal repression, millions have protested against the genocide in Gaza. The central task is to unite these struggles internationally, arm them with a socialist perspective and build a new socialist mass party. This is the goal of our election campaign.

We fight for a return to international socialism. As the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), we stand in the Marxist tradition of August Bebel, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the Russian October Revolution and the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky. The Left Opposition stands as living proof that there was a socialist alternative to Stalinism, which did not represent socialism but served as its gravedigger.

No Third World War! Stop the war in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza!

Eighty-five years ago, Nazi Germany launched a war of extermination

that reduced the whole of Europe to ruins and cost 80 million lives, including 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Today, German imperialism is once again waging war against Russia. It has supplied Ukraine with weapons worth €28 billion to date and is stationing the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) on Russia's border, risking a nuclear war that threatens the survival of humanity.

The SGP rejects this insane war policy. We demand the immediate cessation of arms deliveries to Ukraine, the withdrawal of the Bundeswehr from Eastern Europe and the dissolution of NATO. We reject the false propaganda claiming that NATO is defending Ukraine against a "Russian war of aggression." In reality, Berlin and Washington deliberately provoked this war.

The German elites enthusiastically celebrated Vladimir Putin and his mentor Boris Yeltsin as they dissolved the Soviet Union, sold off its social property to criminal oligarchs and dismantled the social and cultural achievements of the Soviet working class. It was only when NATO continued its eastward expansion and encirclement of Russia that Putin was transformed from hero to villain.

Not content with breaking their original promises not to incorporate Eastern Europe into NATO and the EU, Germany and the United States now seek to annex Ukraine and Georgia, divide Russia and gain direct access to its vast mineral resources. In 2014, they helped bring to power a right-wing, pro-Western regime in Kiev that venerates Nazi collaborators from World War II as heroes.

Since then, NATO has been massively rearming the Ukrainian army. Putin eventually responded by launching a military intervention in Ukraine, hoping to force NATO to withdraw. However, NATO rejected all negotiations and instead used the war as a pretext to intensify its arms build-up and escalate its offensive against Russia.

We are staunch opponents of the Russian regime and its reactionary invasion of Ukraine. However, its overthrow is the task of the Russian and international working class. Any regime that came to power in Moscow with NATO's support would be just as reactionary as the one in Kiev. Zelensky is being funded by NATO to deploy hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian men as cannon fodder while suppressing all political opposition.

Our Ukrainian comrade, Bogdan Syrotiuk, has been imprisoned without trial for nine months for rejecting the war and advocating the unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers. Numerous other opponents of the war and critics of the Zelensky regime face similar persecution.

The war in Ukraine is only one front in an escalating Third World War, with China as its main target. The United States is determined to prevent China from overtaking it as the world's largest economic power at any cost. Berlin is contributing to the military build-up against China by deploying warships and fighter aircraft to the Pacific for maneuvers.

Another front is the Middle East. Supported by the US and Germany, Israel is committing a vicious genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza, whose resistance stands in the way of the imperialist powers' complete control of the region.

Meanwhile, they have extended the war to Lebanon and Yemen and brought jihadists to power in Syria. The imperialist powers are using the heirs of al-Qaeda to roll back the influence of Russia and China in the region and isolate Iran, which they are also threatening with war.

The genocide in Gaza has claimed 45,000 victims, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. However, scientific studies estimate that the actual number is four times higher. Two-thirds of the victims are women, children and the elderly. Ninety percent of Gaza's 2.3 million inhabitants have been displaced from their homes.

Although numerous international institutions have accused Israel of genocide and the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Galant, anyone in Germany who even expresses empathy for the Palestinians

faces persecution. False accusations of anti-Semitism are used as a pretext to ban demonstrations, suppress freedom of expression, censor critical academics and artists, and bar individuals from pursuing their professions. It is only a matter of time before opponents of war are once again imprisoned in Germany.

With the same ruthlessness that drives those in power to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of young people on the battlefields of Ukraine and bomb Palestinian refugee camps today, they will not hesitate to drop nuclear bombs on Moscow, Tehran, or Beijing tomorrow.

- Stop the NATO war in Ukraine! No sanctions and arms deliveries!
- Stop the genocide in Gaza!
- Two world wars are enough! Stop the warmongers!

Stop mass layoffs, wage and social cuts!

The new era of war policy is closely linked to a new era of social policy. The enormous costs of rearmament are being imposed on the working class, undermining everything it has fought for over decades—wages, social support and democratic rights are all under attack.

Germany's military budget increased from €58 billion in 2021 to €86 billion in 2024, while the health budget was slashed from €64 billion to €16 billion over the same period, despite the ongoing pandemic. Further cuts have been made to education and housing. States and municipalities are also facing severe cutbacks due to reduced support from the federal government. The result is skyrocketing rents, crumbling schools, overburdened hospitals and the destruction of many cultural institutions.

The slash-and-burn approach at Volkswagen, where 35,000 jobs are being eliminated and wages slashed by up to 20 percent, is the most visible expression of the frontal assault on the working class. Opel, Ford, Audi, Mercedes, the supplier industry and the chemical sector are pursuing similar plans. Millions of jobs, the future of entire regions, pensions, health care, social services and education are at stake.

The fierce attacks on jobs and wages are accompanied by a staggering orgy of enrichment. Billionaire oligarchs are demanding ever higher profits be squeezed from workers. In June, Volkswagen distributed €4.5 billion to its shareholders and now aims to increase its profit margin from 3.4 percent to 6.5 percent through the austerity measures it has implemented.

The orgy of enrichment accelerated during the pandemic. Nearly 200,000 people have died of coronavirus in Germany due to the "profits before lives" policy, millions are grappling with long-term effects of the disease, and nurses are burning out in underfunded hospitals. Meanwhile, the super-rich have enormously increased their wealth.

Since 2021, the number of millionaires in Germany has increased by 73 percent, rising from 1.6 million to 2.8 million. Over the same period, the five richest Germans have grown their wealth from \$89 billion to \$155 billion. Meanwhile, 17.5 million people in Germany live in poverty, struggling with ever-rising rents, and 10.5 million workers earn less than €15 gross per hour.

Society can no longer afford the oligarchs, who will stop at nothing to maximize their profits, plunging humanity into disaster. To prevent a world war and establish social equality, the big banks and corporations must be expropriated and placed under democratic control.

Such a socialist program can only be realized through class struggle and the international mobilization of the working class. The international working class is the most powerful and significant social force on the planet, the source of all value in capitalist society. Yet its power is systematically silenced and suppressed.

The trade unions play a key role in this. The German Trade Union

Confederation (DGB) and its affiliates, such as IG Metall and Verdi, fully endorse the government's pro-war policies. Their well-paid functionaries and corporatist works council representatives stand on the side of shareholders and management. They pit workforces from different plants and countries against one another and are willing to make any concession to keep "their" location competitive in the global race for lower costs and higher profits. At Volkswagen, IG Metall and the works council have supported the cuts, cynically celebrating them as a "Christmas miracle."

To defend jobs, wages, and rights, workers must organize independently of the trade union bureaucracy and unite internationally. We call for the establishment of action committees that are controlled by and responsible only to the rank-and-file. These committees must defend every job at all locations as a matter of principle and reject any concessions on wages and social benefits.

This struggle must be waged internationally. The action committees must overcome the divisions within the workforce—between permanent and temporary employees, between different locations, and between car brands—and establish networks with action committees in other plants, companies and countries. We have launched the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) for this purpose.

- Not a penny for armaments! Health and education instead of armaments and war!

- Defend all jobs! Build independent action committees!

- Expropriate the landlords, energy companies and war profiteers without compensation!

Never again fascism! For a united socialist Europe!

The alliance between Tesla CEO Elon Musk, the world's richest man, and figures like Donald Trump, Argentina's Javier Milei, Italy's Giorgia Meloni, Germany's Alice Weidel, and Nigel Farage's Reform UK Party epitomizes the relationship between capital and fascism.

The oligarchs need the fascists to subordinate all social needs to their unrestrained enrichment and the demands of war, eliminating any obstacles to these goals. The state is to be reduced to its repressive functions—police, secret services, and military—while social functions such as education, health and infrastructure are to be privatized or, in the case of social welfare, nursing care, pensions and environmental protection, eliminated altogether. As head of the newly created Department of Government Efficiency, Musk has been tasked with cutting the US budget by \$2 trillion and eliminating hundreds of thousands of jobs on behalf of Trump.

In Europe, fascist parties are increasingly being incorporated into governments for this purpose. In Italy, Giorgia Meloni holds power; in France, President Macron relies on Marine Le Pen; in the Netherlands, Geert Wilders dominates the government; and in Austria, the fascist Herbert Kickl is poised to become chancellor.

In Germany, the far-right AfD is being built up and promoted to suppress resistance to war and social devastation. The establishment parties have adopted the key elements of the AfD's program and are actively implementing them. They are rearming, supporting the genocide in Gaza and resorting to authoritarian methods to silence opposition. In migration policy, they compete to outdo each other with right-wing propaganda.

In Saxony, the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, supported by the Left Party and its anti-immigrant splinter group BSW, have included the AfD in the work of the state government through regular consultations for the first time. Also for the first time, a major daily newspaper, *Welt am Sonntag*, has published an election appeal for the AfD, written by Elon

Musk, on its front page.

The fight against fascism requires opposing all establishment parties and is inextricably linked to building a socialist mass movement. We counterpose the international unity of the working class to the fascists' nationalist poison and anti-immigrant agitation. Refugees and migrants are not responsible for the social catastrophe caused by the government's policies of war and austerity. They are themselves an integral part of the working class.

We counterpose the European Union of banks and corporations, of mass death and war, with the perspective of a Socialist United States of Europe—the unity of the European working class to break the power of the banks and corporations. Instead of fighting one another, we call on Russian and Ukrainian workers to unite against the warmongers in their respective countries.

- Against the EU of banks and corporations, of mass death and war! For a Socialist United States of Europe!

- Defend democratic rights!

- Equal rights for migrants and refugees!

Workers need their own party!

Not a single party in the Bundestag represents the interests of the working class, even in the most rudimentary way. All of them defend the capitalist system and respond to its crisis by closing ranks and shifting further to the right.

The Social Democratic Party (SPD) abandoned its roots as a workers' party decades ago. Under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, it oversaw the first military deployment of the Bundeswehr and, through the Agenda 2010 welfare and labor "reforms," initiated the most comprehensive social cuts since the founding of the post-war Federal Republic. Under Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the SPD declared a "new era" in its war policy and, in close cooperation with the trade unions, drastically reduced real wages. The SPD is prepared to continue this role under Friedrich Merz, a former BlackRock manager and the Christian Democratic Union's (CDU) leader and chancellor candidate.

The Greens have always been a party representing well-off urban middle-class layers. When founded in the early 1980s, they professed pacifism and environmentalism. However, the class interests of their wealthy clientele have now triumphed over any remaining pacifist scruples. Green chancellor candidate Robert Habeck is calling for a tripling of the defense budget. Meanwhile, the "feminist foreign policy" of Green Party leader Annalena Baerbock culminates in support for the massacre of Palestinian women and children and political genuflection before Mohammed bin Salman and Syria's new Islamist rulers.

At its federal party conference, the Left Party abandoned its last pacifist pretenses and endorsed arms deliveries to Ukraine and Israel's "right to self-defense." Having emerged from the Stalinist state party of the former East Germany, it embodies the concentrated contempt of the repressive state apparatus for ordinary workers. Wherever it participates in state governments, it implements the same reactionary policies as other capitalist parties. Its sister parties, Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain, have similarly pushed through EU austerity measures and pro-war policies despite massive resistance.

Sahra Wagenknecht's breakaway party, BSW, has nothing to do with anti-militarism. The BSW critiques the war against Russia from a nationalist standpoint, advocating for German-European rearmament independent of the United States. Wagenknecht's goal is to stabilize the decaying capitalist system and divert growing opposition into nationalist channels. Her agitation against refugees bears the stench of the AfD.

The working class needs its own socialist mass party to abolish the bankrupt capitalist system. We call on everyone who agrees with this perspective: Share this appeal as widely as possible, come to our events and rallies, make generous donations to our election campaign, actively support it and become a member of our party!

The struggle against poverty, oppression and a Third World War is the struggle for socialism worldwide!



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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