

*Intervention*

**Policing Palestine Solidarity:  
Moral Urban Panics and Authoritarian Specters in Germany**

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On April 12<sup>th</sup> 2024, the “Palestine Congress – We Accuse!” in Berlin—a tribunal at which movements, human rights groups, and individuals wanted to come together to denounce the mass destruction of Gaza and its population by the state of Israel, expose the role that the German state plays, and mobilize for human rights and “Never Again” for all—was heavily criminalized through bureaucratic, mediatic, and police repression. The media has slandered and demonized the Congress and its organizers for weeks. Berlin politicians tried to ban the event, and police intimidated its organizers and the venue holder and raided their homes. Prior to the Congress, the German state suspended and froze the bank account of a Jewish organization that had been co-organizing the event. On the day of the Congress, around 2,500 police officers were mobilized to surround, control, and attack the congress with 800 ticket holders. One speaker, Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah, a Palestinian-British surgeon and rector of Glasgow University, was detained at Berlin airport and denied entry.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On May 4<sup>th</sup>, Abu-Sittah was denied admission at Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport. He was expected to speak before the French Senate. The French authorities argue that his entry ban is based on Germany's Schengen-wide ban (Barthe 2024). The Schengen visa requirements consequently became a tool for the German authoritarian

Dr. Salman Abu Sitta received a similar restriction. After less than an hour of the conference program, and after three minutes of Dr. Abu Sitta's video speech, police in riot gear stormed the venue, violently stopped the live stream, broke into the control room, turned off the electricity, and arrested conference organizers and attendees. They banned the continuation of the Congress. The next day, police severely attacked protesters against the congress ban. Yanis Varoufakis, former Greek finance minister and one of the scheduled speakers at the Congress, was also unable to deliver his speech. When he recorded his speech via video, he was given, without further legal justification, a *Betätigungsverbot* (a ban on all political activity) in Germany (Anwält\*innenKollektiv 2024; Giovetti 2024). German authorities suggest that this includes addressing a German audience via Zoom. The organizers of the Congress held a press conference to inform the public about the massive criminalization of the event. On April 14<sup>th</sup>, they further aired part of the program online and passed a resolution in which they accuse Germany of "aiding and abetting genocide" (Palästina Kongress 2024; see also International Court of Justice 2024). On the same day, the protest camp "Occupation Against Occupation", which was set up in front of the federal parliament on April 8<sup>th</sup>, was violently attacked by police. As part of the criminalization techniques, protestors were banned from using any language other than German or English (including Arabic and Hebrew) so that they could be better monitored by police forces (Al-Farooq 2024). On April 26<sup>th</sup>, the camp was then brutally removed by police, including using pain compliance holds and suffocating techniques.

What has transpired at the Palestine Congress in Germany and at the protest camp is a further escalation of the increasing state crackdown on Palestine solidarity that has been ongoing for some time now. This crackdown has been growing over the past few years and includes incidents of repression such as: the numerous bans on commemorations of the Nakba in Berlin in May 2023, where police even criminalized dancing the *dabke* (traditional folk dance performed in Palestine, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria) in public (Bynun 2023); the mass arrests for carrying *keffiyehs* and Palestinian flags in 2021 and 2022 (AFP 2021; Shakir 2022); the institutional and systemic silencing and criminalization of Palestinian

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state to limit Palestinian solidarity in Europe as a whole. Abu-Sittah was recently also banned from entering the Netherlands.

voices speaking on Palestinian rights in politics, the media, and academia for many years (Al-Taher and Younes 2023; Tzuberi and Samour 2022); the state-led antagonism and collectivized accusations of antisemitism directed towards the curators and artists of Documenta 15 and Documenta 16's curator body (Artforum 2023); the countless disinvitations of critical scholars by German universities and cultural institutions; the firing of critical journalists and scholars; and the 2019 BDS resolution passed by the German Bundestag (Nasr and Alkousaa 2019). All these examples demonstrate that censoring and criminalizing discussions about Palestinian liberation are anything but new in Germany. These measures have particularly targeted racialized and migrant communities, organizers, scholars, artists, and journalists who have spoken out strongly about contemporary colonial dynamics—including, though not limited to, issues related to the occupation of Palestine.

Since the October 7<sup>th</sup> Hamas-led attack and the ongoing destruction of Palestinian life and culture by the Israeli army, however, moral urban panics (Chahrour et al. 2023; Hall et al. 1978; Tsianos 2013) over Palestine solidarity stoked by the media, the entire political spectrum, and mainstream civil society have promptly led to an anti-Palestinian crackdown rendering especially Palestinian and Jewish members of solidarity movements targets of harassment, intimidation, denunciation, and arrests by German police in the name of “fighting” antisemitism.

On the one hand, the current mass criminalization enforced by the German state and members of civil society—on the streets, in social media, in political, cultural, and educational institutions—is emblematic of Germany's racist and nationalist politics of singularity around the memory of the Holocaust (Moses 2021; Prochnik et al. 2023a, 2023b). On the other hand, the hyper-criminalization of Palestine solidarity must be understood as part of an authoritarian transformation that is a result of a crisis of neoliberal racial hegemony over the last two decades, with its most prominent manifestations in the further rise of the far right, the normalization of authoritarian measures by the political center, including the dismantling of liberal political and social rights. Further manifestations include the reconfiguration of neo-imperial formations “abroad” (Germany not only expanded its

military budget in 2022 by 100 billion euros, but it is also the second largest arms exporter to Israel) and the strengthening of murderous anti-migration regimes “at home”.<sup>2</sup>

In this rising conjuncture of an “ideologically incoherent but politically effective bloc” (Toscano 2024), the far and militant right, the political center, and parts of the left further hug each other, as evidenced by the proximity of their political agenda not only when it comes to the criminalization and repression of Palestine solidarity in the name of “fighting” antisemitism but also the criminalization of anti-fascist movements and the radical climate movement, anti-immigration politics, and advocating for more policing and militarization. Currently, this reactionary alliance is crystallized around Palestine solidarity, but it is in no way limited to it.

This reactionary alliance should concern everybody who considers themselves progressive in Germany and beyond. Moreover, we need to understand this as a laboratory period that has many parallels to post-9/11 as well, as the securitization of borders and increasing policing methods that were rolled out after 9/11 were never rolled back, and accusations of “terrorism” were massively weaponized to make repression palatable and manage racial national cohesion.<sup>3</sup> At this moment, it further becomes clear that institutionalized liberal anti-racist and diversity politics that are adopted by Western institutions were never the real solution but are rather part of the larger problem. Many of the diversity agents and offices keep silent in the face of surging anti-Palestinian racism. Instead, their so-called anti-discrimination mechanisms and “safety” discourses are *used* to actively

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<sup>2</sup> This entails further strengthening of the deportation apparatus and the criminalization of migration. Recently, German states passed the introduction of the *Bezahlkarte* (payment card) for asylum seekers which prevents cash payments. On April 10<sup>th</sup>, despite strong opposition and warnings from many major and leading human rights organizations and migrant justice and no border activists, the European Parliament passed the new pact on migration and asylum, which further escalates brutal migration controls, practically abolishes the right to asylum, and further normalizes border imperialism (Walia 2013). Human rights activists disrupted the vote, chanting, “The Pact Kills, Vote No!” (Jacqué 2024).

<sup>3</sup> These accusations have been mobilized against any kind of solidarity with Palestine as well. Recently, the Federal Minister of the Interior and Community, Nancy Faeser, legitimized the repression of the Congress as a crackdown on “Islamist propaganda”, though many of the collectives and groups have distanced themselves from Islamist ideologies and organizations very clearly.

criminalize Palestine solidarity (Lennard 2024). This produces a fertile ground for policing *any* serious engagement with anti-racist struggle in Germany and beyond.

### Spaces of Policing Palestine Solidarity in Germany

Right after October 7<sup>th</sup>, many migrant working-class districts like Berlin-Neukölln were (even more) heavily policed and practically occupied by police forces for several weeks to prevent protests with draconian measures. In Berlin, where the largest Palestinian diaspora in Europe resides, protests were banned on the grounds of supposedly “imminent danger” as well as “glorification of violence”, thereby constructing Palestinians as a violent threat (Hauenstein 2023). Over 850 related arrests were made by police just in the first weeks (Durie 2023). A special police task force was set up at the end of October (*Besondere Aufbauorganisation* / BAO) with the purpose of advising police forces on cases “in connection with the Middle East conflict” (Jackson 2024). Following the first weeks of a complete ban, demonstrations against the destruction of Palestinians in Gaza co-organized by left Jewish and Palestinian collectives and human rights groups, as well as anti-racist migrant organizations more broadly, were tightly controlled and disciplined (Schaer 2023). Another striking instance is that left-wing and anti-Zionist Jews are regularly arrested by police. In mid-October, for instance, a Jewish activist carrying a sign reading “As an Israeli and a Jew: Stop the genocide in Gaza” was arrested in Berlin (Butland 2023). She was arrested again at a demonstration in November 2023, when police proclaimed the slogan “Stop the Genocide” to be banned *during* the demonstration (Bateman 2023).<sup>4</sup> However, as organizers make very clear, Palestinians have been facing this repression for decades (Jackson 2024). Another radical leftist internationalist feminist collective named Zora in Berlin was raided by police for their standing with Palestinian liberation (DW 2023). The criminalization of Palestine solidarity is, of course, not limited to Berlin. In Dortmund, a protest in November organized by several trade unions, feminist and communist groups, and parts of the Kurdish movement,

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<sup>4</sup> Announcing bans during events and demonstrations instead of before so that protestors can adapt, is a well-known police tactic. The main demands of the demonstrators were an immediate release of all hostages, a ceasefire, and the suspension of laws that criminalize and exclude speakers who voice criticism of the Israeli government in Germany. The protestors made it clear that “Jewish safety and Palestinian freedom are not opposing causes” (Bateman 2023).

was heavily policed and controlled. Although rejecting any form of terror, Israeli state terror, and the occupation, the groups were accused of “inciting racial hatred” for holding signs with “Solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle” (NordstadtBlogger 2023).

Policing also unfolds through banning and criminalizing events, as well as through related forms of bureaucratic violence such as withdrawing state funding. For example, for the Oyouun cultural center in Berlin-Neukölln, funding was revoked by the Senate for hosting an event with Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East (Oyouun 2023).<sup>5</sup> At the event in November, based on the Jewish mourning tradition of *shiva*, the participants commemorated the people killed on and after October 7<sup>th</sup>. It has also been noted that numerous Jewish dissidents who oppose or criticize the Israeli government have been silenced, deplatformed, or fired.<sup>6</sup> As absurd as it might sound, the German state claims that such actions are intended to “protect” Jews in Germany from antisemitism, while ironically once again daring to define and question the “quality” and “authenticity” of the Jewishness of these oppositional voices. These logics also foster the racist distinction between the “good” and “bad” migrant. Recently, the district office Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg in Berlin announced the closing of the two only migrant queer youth centers, Alia and Phantalisa, located in the districts of Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg. The reason for the closures was the content of personal Instagram posts of some of the center’s staff and program coordinators, their participation in pro-Palestine demonstrations, and that one of the youth workers was scheduled to speak at the Palestine Congress (Eckhardt 2024). Here, we also see how further austerity measures, especially targeting migrant and queer social projects, are pushed in the name of “fighting” antisemitism.

The German state government’s authoritarian mentality is further exemplified by repressive and carceral measures in educational institutions. Berlin’s Education Senator advised schools to ban traditional Palestinian garments and instructed teachers to surveil students who wear any garment or symbol associated with Palestinian liberation (Fatima 2023). These carceral measures also prompt a discussion about the long-standing and

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<sup>5</sup> In their legal battle against defamation attempts, the cultural center won an important court victory over the daily newspaper *Tagesspiegel* (The Left Berlin 2024).

<sup>6</sup> Emily Dische-Becker (2024a) recently argued that about 30% of people who had been canceled from German state institutions in the last years have been Jewish, including Holocaust survivors.

ongoing debate concerning state repression in relation to clothing. In Germany, wearing religious symbols such as a cross, or any clothing that represents the Christian religion, is not considered to be politically motivated. Yet, wearing a *hijab* and *keffiyeh*—although the former is a religious garment and the latter is a cultural one—is often perceived as the manifestation of a political threat. And while the considerable and alarming risks involved in wearing a *kippah* in Germany should not be downplayed, but rather struggled against through principled anti-fascism and non-carceral means, the German state and various political fractions deploy this perception against Muslims and Palestinians, and thereby increasingly pit anti-racism and the struggle against antisemitism against each other within the conjuncture of neo-imperialism and authoritarian (re)turns. Many, including some who consider themselves on the left, are feeding this logic, in part by calling for and embracing state violence as a response to political conflict and dissent.

In February, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Berlin decided to distribute the brochure “Mythos#Israel1948”, in which the Nakba is described as a “myth” in high schools (Ertel 2024). In schools located in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, police distributed informational material stating that it would be considered “incitement to racial hatred” if students were to label the events unfolding in Gaza as a genocide. Such actions exemplify the profound impact of oppressive state violence on both adults and children, especially if they are Palestinian.

In many German universities, administrators called the police on student protests showing solidarity with the people in Gaza. At Freie Universität Berlin, police brutally dissolved a lecture hall occupation in riot gear in December 2023 (Transnational University Solidarity Initiative 2024). At Universität Kassel, where students organized a vigil in early November to commemorate their fellow student, Yousef Shaban, who was killed by Israeli forces in Gaza on October 24<sup>th</sup>, the university administration demanded that students take off traditional Palestinian clothing and then switch off their microphone (Küster 2023). The university administration ended the event because students contextualized the killing of their fellow student as the consequence of Israel’s ongoing occupation (Jamal 2023). Currently, the Berlin Senate, with the support of many conservative and liberal student organizations, is pushing for the expansive reintroduction of the “regulatory law” at universities so that students can be expelled/ex-matriculated more easily because of “political reasons” (a move



that was first brought up by the far right) (Jawabreh 2024). For foreign students, this would result in the loss of a residency visa and the right to work. This law was previously abolished in 2021 because of its disciplinary function as an instrument of authoritarian repression (Rüstemeyer and Kley 2024). On May 7<sup>th</sup>, the university administration of Freie Universität Berlin called the police again on its students, who joined the international encampment movement, demanding “stop the genocide”, boycott, divestment and sanctions, the protection of academic freedom and end of repression against Palestine solidarity, and a recognition of Germany’s “colonial legacy” (Student Coalition Berlin 2024). The police brutally cleared the camp, detaining many students and leaving many with severe injuries. A statement by more than 300 Berlin university lecturers and further lecturers from other parts of Germany and beyond, which defends the students’ right to protest and right to assembly, whether the signatories agree with their demands or not, was smeared by Federal Minister of Education and Research, Bettina Stark-Watzinger, on social media and in Germany’s *Bild* tabloid, published by Axel Springer SE (The Berliner 2024), which actively benefits from Israeli settlements in the West Bank (Hauenstein 2024). While *Bild*’s smear campaign, in which especially racialized scholars are individually attacked, is not surprising, the support of authoritarian measures by liberals points to the actualization of a growing reactionary coalition. However, it is also important to note that despite excessive police violence, institutional and administrative suppression, political defamation, and lack of support from many faculty members,<sup>7</sup> university students have been organizing demonstrations, direct actions, and interventions, and creating their own initiatives all over Germany, defying criminalization of their solidarity with Palestinian civilians (UdK Jewish Solidarity Collective 2024).

Policing is also increasing in the social media sphere. The German government is now using the internet to not just silence but criminalize anti-colonial and pro-Palestinian

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<sup>7</sup> We are aware that faculty are supporting students individually, and that various faculty networks are pushing against further criminalization and repression in university spaces. Further, besides the recent statement in support of students’ right to assembly and protest, open letters have also been initiated in Germany by critical scholars (see Boston Review 2023) and critical faculty continue to speak out against disinvitations of scholars who are critical of the Israeli state (see, for instance, CTB 2024). It needs to be stressed, however, that these critiques need to be strongly connected to previous attacks on critical scholars, especially of racialized scholars within Germany, and to a more explicit defense of many students who are doing the work of principled action.



sentiments. No one should be surprised that when governments respond to offline protests with authoritarian tactics, people use the internet to voice their opposition. It is well-known that authorities swiftly block websites and punish users for their social media activity, particularly when these voices seek protection online from the state-sanctioned forms of violence and police brutality offline. When it comes to solidarity with Palestine, police increasingly draw on social media control and digital criminalization. Bans, police raids, house searches, and arrests as a result of social media policing and criminalization are accumulating with regard to Palestine solidarity in Germany. For instance, German police and prosecution offices are regularly raiding homes and arresting people based on the monitoring of social media accounts (for slogans such as “From the River to the Sea”; Generalstaatsanwaltschaft Berlin 2024).<sup>8</sup> After the Palestine Congress, police started criminal investigations into various speakers based on their tweets. A large portion of Germany’s civil society is aiding in this kind of internet policing by vilifying social media accounts and engaging in personal denunciations of those who support Palestinian causes or who speak out against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Taking screenshots and archiving posts of dissident voices has become an everyday activity for some Germans, promoting themselves as the “good anti-antisemites” at the cost of many left migrant, Jewish, and Palestinian voices.

Collective punishment and destruction of Palestinians in Gaza is not only aided and abetted by Germany ideologically and materially, but Palestinians who speak out against this and those who are in solidarity are also exposed to collective punishment *within* Germany. The German government’s criminalization of struggles for Palestinian liberation in the name of anti-antisemitism has long been based on the claim that migrants and refugees, particularly those who are Muslim or come from Muslim-majority countries, “import” antisemitism to Germany. The government uses this claim to justify the further deportation of migrants and refugees. The interview with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz by *Der Spiegel* at the end of October is illustrative of this point; in it, Schulz declared that “We must finally deport on a

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<sup>8</sup> Although the Constitutional Court in Hessen recently ruled that the slogan is not per se antisemitic, and the Administrative Court of Bremen found that the prohibition of the slogan by authorities was most likely unlawful, other states’ constitutional courts, like the one in Baden-Wuerttemberg, ruled that it ought not be used as a slogan for a manifestation because the slogan is supposedly “antisemitic”.

large scale those who have no right to stay in Germany” (Hickmann and Kurbjuweit 2023). The German government, through proclaiming a fight against antisemitism by all means, is actually further expanding the deportation apparatus and the fortification of Fortress Europe, as the recent passing of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) demonstrates. Political pushes for making the pledge to Israel’s right to exist a precondition for naturalization (which is already the case in the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt) as well as asylum are further examples (Deutscher Bundestag 2023). The state thus continues to wage war against asylum seekers and the poor in general.

Many migrant communities and their anti-racist comrades were not surprised by this new level of racist-authoritarian rhetoric and crackdown. Instead, they see it as the expansion and escalation of a new form of insidious alliance between the major political parties and the far-right in the manufacturing of state racism and racial national cohesion towards authoritarianism at “home” and neo-imperialism “abroad”.

While all these modes of state and civic repression are rolled out under the guise of “fighting antisemitism”, German state and structural antisemitism and the deeply anchored antisemitism in German society are on full display as the country relentlessly targets Jewish communities that publicly reject the Israeli occupation of Palestine and platforms antisemitic far-right forces. As Germany tries to spin its antisemitic past and present in the context of Palestinian liberation, it has fashioned itself in the image of a moral authority while ushering in actual authoritarianism and proxy Israeli nationalism.

### **State Anti-Antisemitism as Authoritarian Carceral Racism**

Antisemitism as well as racism, especially anti-Palestinian racism, are surging in Germany. There has been an ongoing increase of antisemitic attacks in German cities (such as the arson attack on the synagogue in Berlin’s Brunnenstraße, the recent attack on a synagogue in Oldenburg, the daily assaults of Jewish people on the streets, in their homes and workplaces, and the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and memorial sites), even before October 7<sup>th</sup>. The vast majority of antisemitic attacks are perpetrated by German right-wing extremists and white supremacists, attacks that flourish in a society in which antisemitism is deeply anchored. Racist attacks against people read as Muslims are also further rising. In fact, right-wing, antisemitic, and racist terrorism has been flourishing in Germany for many decades

(Burschel and Balhorn 2020).<sup>9</sup> Germany is the country with the most right-wing terrorist attacks all over Europe (The Economist 2020). The terrorist attacks of the so-called National Socialist Underground, a German neo-Nazi terrorist organization that committed ten murders of (post-) migrants in the years between 1998 and 2011,<sup>10</sup> as well as more recent antisemitic and racist supremacist terrorist attacks such as the ones in the cities of Halle (Oltermann and Beckett 2019) and Hanau (Forensic Architecture 2022), are only the most striking accounts. These attacks also reveal the involvement of the police and the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution in right-wing terrorism, as they were explicitly or implicitly involved through forms of collaboration with neo-Nazis, the criminalization of victims, or the overall generation of conditions that made it easier for terrorist attacks to occur. The series of racist and antisemitic chat “scandals” within German police forces, as well as the overall flourishing of far-right activity within police and military institutions, are another example (Moore 2021) that points to the close (historic) inherent relationship between state racism, antisemitism, and far-right structures. It is thus not surprising that the German state wages war against Palestine solidarity while the far-right is holding mass meetings to discuss their plans of “mass deportations” of refugees, migrants, people with migration biography, and German nationals with “opposing views”, and while antisemitism within the mainstream society is rising (Connolly 2024).

Combating antisemitism (and all other forms of racism, all connected to the capitalist social order) is, especially in Germany, considering its past of industrial mass murder of six

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<sup>9</sup> To those who think Germany has dealt “well” with its genocidal past, we must say that the ideological and political process of de-nazification after 1945 was never taken seriously to begin with. Positions of judges, lawyers, military personnel, and doctors remained filled with Nazis until the 1970s, and companies that profited from the forced labor, dispossession, and extermination of Jews, Roma, Black people, people with disabilities, queer folks, communists, anarchists and other political dissidents, were also not held to account and counter-dispossessed. Far-right groups and terrorism have been widely active in the Federal Republic of Germany since the 1960s, also against the background of state attacks against anti-fascist structures. Rising attacks in the 1980s and 1990s, especially but by no means exclusively in the new German states, ranging from weekly attacks on leftists, migrants, and houseless people, refugee shelters and migrant homes such as in Solingen and Mölln, and pogroms such as in Rostock-Lichtenhagen and Hoyerswerda, also did not develop in a vacuum but in concert with state-sanctioned racism and anti-communism (Nobrega et al. 2021).

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.nsu-tribunal.de/en/> (last accessed 14 May 2024).

million Jews, an absolute necessity, no matter where antisemitism occurs. This includes opposing the attacks against synagogues and all forms of Jewish life by any means, and opposing the idea that Jews should be held responsible for the actions of the Israeli state. This is an antisemitic conflation that is also reproduced by German state authorities when claiming that the critique of the Israeli state and of the occupation of Palestine harms Jews *per se* in Germany.

Radical anti-racist activists and scholars, especially leftist Palestinian and Jewish voices within Germany, have long argued that state anti-antisemitism and the carceral turn in the struggle against antisemitism operates as a tool of domination and a national cohesion project in times of German neo-fascistization. Leftist Jewish groups clearly state that what makes them unsafe are right-wing politicians and Nazis, increasingly taking over in the German parliament, the collaboration of police, military, and the far-right, the structural and cultural racism within German institutions, and the externalization of blame for antisemitism to racialized communities (Jewish Bund 2023). The German state not only re-frames itself as the one that recognizes its violent past and acts upon it, but also transposes antisemitism onto the racialized (especially Muslim), the other(ed), also to cover up widespread antisemitism among Germans within this conjuncture of authoritarian (re)turns. At the same time, as Germany places its historical responsibility onto the Palestinians (while neglecting any responsibility for the mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians), it continues to super-exploit, exclude, and criminalize these populations while neglecting genuine antisemitism (Dische-Becker 2024b).

A narrative that undergirds this strategy of moral and neo-imperial political deflection is that of Germany's *Staatsräson* (Kundnani 2024), articulated as an unconditional solidarity with the state of Israel "abroad" and the fight against antisemitism "at home". While the struggle against antisemitism and for a universal German memory culture has been a left civil society project in the past decades (Prochnik et al. 2023a, 2023b), and increasingly became a state-building project in the 1990s against the background of German unification (while right-wing mobilizations and attacks were rampant), there has been a further shift since the 2000s towards explicit and unconditional solidarity with Israel. It is no surprise that this shift (towards a proxy-nationalism) also occurred against the background of the neo-imperial "War on Terror", the rise of neoliberal state racism, and the further expansion of carcerality.

The broader German population has long relativized its responsibility for the Holocaust, claiming that the majority of Germans were not aware of the industrial mass murder of six million Jews in concentration camps (Steinhoff 2001) or willfully imagining that their relatives were hiding Jews from the threat of extermination. With the German debate around “imported” antisemitism, however, Germans are further projecting their responsibility for the mass murder of Jews onto migrants,<sup>11</sup> especially people read as Muslim, in order to police belonging and citizenship as well as to justify political repression and neo-imperial interests. State and carceral anti-antisemitism is a project of national racial cleansing and national cohesion building within the broader conjuncture of authoritarian transformation. Like this, the contract between the far-right and the political center is not only further strengthened. People in Germany are further interpellated into a politics of de-solidarization from above, including the de-solidarization between Jewish and other racialized communities. Multi-directional struggles against the legacies of genocide (especially with regard to Germany),<sup>12</sup> mass violence, and (internal as well as external) colonial projects are thus further rendered impossible.

### **Towards Abolitionist and Multi-directional Solidarity against Authoritarian State Violence**

The events and developments outlined in this essay show that the specter of authoritarianism has returned to Germany in full force. But there is resistance. Critical Jewish, Palestinian, and migrant voices as well as non-migrant folks are doing the work of building solidarity and antifascist abolitionist safety through struggling against antisemitism and other forms of

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<sup>11</sup> The claim that calls for a ceasefire and an end to the occupation stand for the extermination of Jews in Palestine/Israel is a striking example of this form of German projection and the equation of German National Socialism with the Palestinian struggle for an end to the occupation and equal rights for all (Samudzi 2024).

<sup>12</sup> Germany played an active role or aided in more than three genocides or in what has been classified as genocide. “It was against the heroic people of Namibia that the Germans unleashed a policy of genocide”, as Walter Rodney once said (Moses 2021; Samudzi 2020). After the genocide against the Ovaherero and Nama people, the German Empire also played an active role in the genocide against Armenians in the Ottoman Empire (Altanian 2024; Ihrig 2016; Kollektiv Ararat et al. 2022). The Holocaust cannot be separated from this complex colonial and imperial history. Neither can what is currently happening in Palestine be disconnected from these legacies.

racism, including *within* marginalized and racialized communities. They are building the solidarities beyond racialized, national, and religious identifications that enable liberation futures without occupation. They further oppose the authoritarian turn not through liberal but through radical means and without calling upon and thereby expanding the carceral racist state, which is not only complicit in antisemitic attacks but also provides the ground for these to flourish. Radically universalizing “Never Again for Anyone” instead of exceptionalizing human life and preciousness (Gilmore 2022), many collectives in Germany refuse to be silenced, even in the face of all the repressive measures. They connect the complex but related legacies of dispossession, structural violence, and genocide through a memory politics that articulates through present struggle and solidarity (*Erinnern heißt Kämpfen!* / “Remembering means struggle!”).

Various groups of leftist Jews and Palestinians, as well as those who are working towards emancipatory futures, are engaging in peace work and reparative justice, including supporting each other against antisemitic and racist attacks and envisioning collective futures of co-existence without occupation, dispossession, and exploitation everywhere. Student collectives in solidarity with Palestine are joining Palestinian rights groups and anti-Zionist Jewish groups. Union initiatives like Health4Gaza and TradeUnionists4Gaza are growing. Grassroots efforts to monitor, document, and counter repressive attacks are plentiful,<sup>13</sup> and critical voices within academic and cultural institutions are increasing as well. Subaltern political culture puts a focus on Palestine solidarity,<sup>14</sup> and many collectives are further connecting struggles against policing and borders with struggles against the military-industrial complex and safe worlds for everyone. This protest and organizing demonstrates that the people will resist authoritarian governments, fascism, neo-imperialism, and their interdependent modes of oppression, and carcerality no matter where they are located. If the specter of authoritarianism wanders around Germany, so does the Palestinian spring of resistance.

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<sup>13</sup> See for example the work of the “Archive of Silence—Cancellation & Silencing Public List”:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Vq2tm-nopUy-xYZjkG-T9FyMC7ZqkAQG9S3mPWAYwHw/edit#gid=1227867224> (last accessed 14 May 2024).

<sup>14</sup> See for instance the recent track by Sorah, “Palestine Will Be Free”, produced by Tis L:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJpyX5P483k> (last accessed 14 May 2024).



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