

Ambassador of Germany to Ireland,

Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to Ireland,

31 Trimleston Ave,

Boosterstown,

Co. Dublin

A94TX94

Subject: Condemnation of Civil Liberties Abuses in Berlin

Dear Ambassador Meier-Klodt,

We, the undersigned Irish parliamentarians, write to you today with deep concern regarding recent events in Berlin that have raised serious alarm about the protection of civil liberties and fundamental rights in Germany.

Specifically, we condemn last Friday's police repression of the Berlin Palestine Conference (Palästina Kongress Berlin), an event co-organized by Jewish Voice for Peace (Jüdische Stimme). The Conference was billed to feature an array of Jewish and Palestinian speakers alongside international public figures such as former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, Irish parliamentarian Richard Boyd Barrett, Dutch-Israeli politician Yuval Gal and the Rector of the University of Glasgow, Dr Ghassan Abu Sittah.

On the basis of merely potential violations of speech laws, German police mobilised 930 officers, cut off the electricity at the venue, arrested key organisers and forcibly shut down the Conference shortly after it began. Dr. Abu Sittah, a reconstructive surgeon witness to humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, was detained at the airport and prevented from entering the country to speak. Mr Varoufakis, Dr Ghassan Abu Sittah and Mr Salman Abu Sitta were subsequently issued a ban ("Betätigungsverbot") on travelling to Germany or carrying out political activity in the state. Each of these individually represents a flagrant violation of basic political rights and freedoms. Taken together, they undermine foundational democratic norms in Germany and across Europe.

As a fellow European Union member state, it is additionally unacceptable that an elected member of the Irish parliament, along with other public figures in European politics, were blocked by

German authorities from convening to discuss one of the greatest humanitarian crises of our time, and to advocate nonviolent, human rights-based solutions to end the violence. The provisional measures of the International Court of Justice against Israel under the Genocide Convention demonstrate that humanitarian criticism of Israel is well-founded and does not constitute “Islamist propaganda and hatred against Jews”, as suggested by the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

Germany has an obligation to uphold civil, political and human rights above all other considerations, and has a special responsibility with regard to the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. The suppression of the Conference and arrests of Jewish and Palestinian activists for political activity represents an abrogation of this responsibility and a clear threat to democratic principles. We call on German authorities to release the political bans imposed on all speakers, to permit the Conference to be held on a new date, to investigate those responsible for violations of civil liberties and to issue an apology to all adversely affected by the dissolution of the Conference.

Yours sincerely,

Bríd Smith TD

John Brady TD

Richard Boyd Barrett TD

Seán Crowe TD

Paul Murphy TD

Holly Cairns TD

Gino Kenny TD

Cian O’Callaghan TD

Mick Barry TD

Garry Gannon TD

Thomas Pringle TD

Violet-Anne Wynne TD

Joan Collins TD

Senator Frances Black

Catherine Connolly TD

Senator Lynn Ruane

Mairéad Farrell TD

Senator Eileen Flynn

Mark Ward TD

Senator Alice Mary Higgins