

THE 7TH OF OCTOBER AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

1. Preliminary note: Why this statement?

As critical communists who are active in the international radical left and are part of alliances and campaigns, we see the need to take a stand on the current anti-Semitic fervour within the German and global left. The criticism of anti-Semitism within the left, which was still much more present at the beginning of the century, seems to have faded away. We want to take this as an opportunity to criticise these current developments within the left and explain why we consider an ideology-critical, anti-authoritarian and anti-national left to be necessary. At the same time, we are experiencing a pretended form of combating anti-Semitism and solidarity with Israel by state bodies and parts of the 'majority society', which are full of instrumentalisation and even open racism. We would also like to comment on this.

However, it is not our intention in this statement to analyse individual Islamist structures, give military tactical advice or suggest an adequate solution for the conflict. We are aware that the space in which the current anti-Semitic fervour is spreading is also a reaction to the war waged by the Israeli army in Gaza. This has cost the lives of tens of thousands of people, including many civilians, and destroyed large parts of the region. We mourn the dead and stand in solidarity with the suffering population of Gaza. For an emancipatory left, it is also necessary to support those structures in Gaza that are fighting for the prospect of a good and self-determined life and against Hamas' reign of terror and reactionary images of society, for example by campaigning for their rights as workers, women or queers.

We are also aware of the conflicts and disputes within Israel, especially with the far-right sections of the government. Nevertheless, we would like to emphasise that the current war in the Gaza Strip was triggered by the Hamas terrorist massacre on October 7 2023, in which over 1200 people were brutally raped and murdered for anti-Semitic motives and 239 people were kidnapped as hostages, many of whom are still held today. Our criticism is not intended to deny the right to mourn and protest, nor to outweigh the suffering, but to address a general problem of the global left.

2. The turning point of October 7

October 7 2023 marks a turning point. The extent and details of the atrocities are shocking: Systematic torture, mutilations, kidnappings and the systematic use of sexualised violence against women. These were deliberately used to unleash anti-Semitic violence and trigger fear of extermination. The massacres were intended to target Jews as such, to activate the memory of a centuries-long history of pogroms and threats of extermination and thus also to attack the state of Israel's self-image of being a shelter for Jews against anti-Semitic persecution.

The drastic events of 7 October were reflected surprisingly little within the global left. Instead, a massive explosion of anti-Semitic attacks ignited. Tragically, large sections of the global left are the platform for this anti-Semitism and provide the fuel for it. We are witnessing defence to the point of denial and secret joy among many on the left. Others remain politically paralysed in the face of the flare-up of anti-Semitism instead of moving towards a practice of solidarity. This is not surprising, but it is disappointing - after all, anti-Semitism is a central aspect of current power relations and criticism of it is therefore a basic requirement for any endeavour towards social emancipation.

3. A new global wave of anti-Semitism

While left-wing solidarity with the victims of October 7 was almost completely absent, mostly pro-Palestinian mass demonstrations took place before the start of the IDF's military operations, the script of those demonstrations was clear and well-known: Israel is a colonial occupying power that should disappear; Israel aims to destroy all Palestinians; Israel is the evil that should be eliminated. What was brought to the streets was not simply solidarity with the Palestinians, but too often something that is in its essence virulent hatred of Israel. There was an overidentification with the 'Palestinian cause', which in large parts of the global left serves as a building block of identity, a marker of recognition, a substitute struggle and a collective ritual.

Hamas' cruel acts were celebrated and reinterpreted as an act of decolonisation, an "escape from prison" or an "act of resistance". The loud calls for 'contextualisation' of October 7 demand a justification or at least relativisation of the horrors. It is absurd with which vehemence slogans, actions and thought patterns are to be released from the appeal of anti-Semitism. A large part of the global left endeavoured to explain and excuse the massacre as perhaps somewhat overdone self-defence - if it was not immediately celebrated as an anti-colonial act of liberation. In Germany, too, a section of the left, from pro-Palestinian groups and their 'internationalist' supporters to Stalinist and Trotskyist organisations, queer-feminist circles and autonomous housing squatters in Berlin and elsewhere, had no problem reinterpreting Islamist and anti-Semitic terror as liberation. The victim-centred approach usually preached in left-wing circles does not seem to exist for Israelis, especially Jewish ones.

No doubt: the living conditions of the almost 2 million people in the Gaza Strip are terrible as a result of the war. Even before the latest acts of war, conditions in Gaza were extremely harsh. However, there are horrendous double standards for measuring the human rights situation in the Palestinian territories and elsewhere. Many critics only seem to be interested in the suffering of Palestinians when Jews can be identified as the alleged perpetrators: They remain prudently silent on the destruction of trade unions, the murder of LGBTIQ* people, the hostage-taking of the Palestinian civilian population by Hamas and its supporters, and the inhumane conditions under which the neighbouring Arab states accept Palestinian refugees. They remain silent on Egypt's border fortification, which does not want to accept Palestinian refugees, and on the foreign policy interests of Iran, which makes the Palestinians a pawn in its power interests. They are also silent on the ongoing rocket attacks by Hamas and Hezbollah on Israel.

When the acts of war by the Israeli army and the suffering of the population in Gaza are labelled by the left with terms that have specific historical connotations, this often reveals a real longing to be able to identify Jews as perpetrators - in a way that often implicitly and sometimes explicitly equates them with National Socialists. When this occurs among Germans, it is a well-known guilt defence strategy. This accusation often goes hand in hand with the narrative that Israel or Jews are deliberately immunising themselves from any criticism by referring to the Shoah. In both cases, it must be clearly stated that patterns of secondary or guilt defence anti-Semitism are evident here. For many, the following seems to apply: In the past, Jews were at most victims when they were attacked by right-wingers - now they can only be thought of as perpetrators. This view coincides with the anti-Semitic perspective according to which Jews are fundamentally imagined as superior, powerful and perpetrators.

4. The ideological function of anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism functions as an explanation of the world that is based on the anti-Semites' world of thoughts and emotions. Complex social phenomena, crises and ambivalences are cancelled out without contradiction in anti-Semitic logic. Conspiracy ideologies enable anti-Semites to find simple explanations for complex and unsettling individual and structural phenomena. In anti-Semitic logic, it is important to maintain the image of the 'Jew as an overpowering figure of the ruling class' and, depending on the current social crisis, to identify Jews as the "guilty party" for it. From a critical materialist perspective, anti-Semitism must always be seen as the comprehensive social pathology of bourgeois-capitalist society and as a product of power relations. In anti-Semitism, the contradictory nature of bourgeois socialisation breaks out as an open delusion. Anti-Semitism is also a moment of inadequate or distorted attempts to understand and overcome the existing power relations.

At the same time, anti-Semitism cannot be explained as a moment of domination itself, according to the scheme of direct oppression. Furthermore, antisemitism always has an eliminatory vanishing point: antisemites do not want to 'simply' oppress or deport Jews, but to abolish or destroy them altogether. The function of anti-Semitic world views is that those who reproduce them can portray themselves as victims of the 'overpowering Jewish world domination'. This enables them not to have to deal with social and personal contradictions and, above all, not to take responsibility for their own (political) actions and thoughts. On the one hand, it follows from this that anti-Semitism cannot simply be eradicated with a little more education. This goes hand in hand with the fact that anti-Semitism cannot be resolved by specific actions on the part of Jews, but only by overcoming the deep social foundations of anti-Semitism. Jews only have the option - and they are faced with the necessity - of organising a defence against the consequences of anti-Semitism or accepting its consequences. Since the Shoah, anti-Semitism can be articulated less openly. One way of being able to act antisemitically without articulating open hatred of Jews is to project hatred onto Israel as a Jewish nation state - and as a consequence of the Shoah - which is now responsible for all evil.

5. Susceptibility to antisemitism within the left

Susceptibility to forms of antisemitism is also rooted in specific characteristics and ideological moments of some left-wing factions, which we will analyse in more detail below.

5.1 Authoritarian (neo-)Leninism

Some antisemitic thought patterns originate from an authoritarian (neo-)Leninism:

1) Lenin's thesis of the transition from competitive capitalism to his concept of imperialism goes hand in hand with a distortion of the concept of capitalist rule. This is not understood as a subjectless rule that is reproduced by actors, but consists of the process of continuous capital accumulation and unfolds a 'mute compulsion' of economic relations. Instead, it appears as the direct and arbitrary rule of monopolies and 'parasitic finance capital'. Inherent in this understanding is a tendency to personify rule, a susceptibility to conspiracy theories and a fetishisation of the 'working people' that has overlapping elements with antisemitism. At times, such antisemitism was actively pursued by the Soviet Union and its sympathisers and is otherwise at least played down.

2) Instead of an analysis of global capitalist relations, hierarchies and colonial continuities as well as a critique of the form of the nation state, a simplified division of the world into oppressors and oppressed takes place. This makes 'national liberation' - as liberation through the nation state and as a national collective - the emancipatory goal par excellence. This view is in turn based on the uncritically positive reference to the nation that Stalin and many real socialist projects after him propagated with the idea of 'socialism in one country'.

At the same time, 'oppressed peoples' - also through the Maoist continuation of the model - were made the representative subject of the revolution: Palestine was understood as the oppressed people par excellence and the struggle 'for the liberation of Palestine' became the symbol and substitute for all liberation struggles. Historically, the foreign policy of the Soviet Union also played a role in this, strengthening Palestinian nationalism against Israel, which was supported by the USA, in the context of the Cold War.

3) Another reason for the positive reference to people and nation lies in the populist moment: those whose primary goal is the conquest of state power do not need to focus on the collective self-enlightenment and emancipation of all people, but rather want to mobilise a mass. If the concept of class no longer works, Leninists therefore often have no problem addressing this mass as a people and a nation.

4) The goal of seizing power also leads to a tendency to justify wrong means. This can then also be Islamist terror. The focus on the fight against 'imperialists' leads to alliances with explicitly regressive forces, including for example Islamists.

5.2 Postmodern identity politics

A second source of susceptibility stems from some varieties of identity-focussed postmodern activism. Such positions are represented in some queer feminist and anti-racist circles, but also in parts of the climate movement. They are linked to decisive progressive struggles of the present. Here, the rejection of a critique of social conditions in their totality interacts with an exclusive focus on the experience of being affected, places of speech and identities.

1) The impossibility of representing one's own experience of suffering and discrimination through others is declared to be the sole starting point for criticism. Only those who are affected by a form of oppression can speak the truth about it. Their perspective is directly normative and there is no need for any further criticism of the circumstances or arguments about terms and analyses. This overlooks the fact that every articulation of an experience is already mediated by theories and concepts and that it is precisely in these approaches that a stereotypical way of thinking is often reproduced. In order to articulate one's own experience of suffering and oppression, one must in turn commit to a certain identity and understand oneself as part of a collective. The pure focus on one's own identity constructions and supposed external attributions and the associated pure argumentation on one's own supposed affectedness(es) not only prevents a materialistic critique of the origins of racism, anti-Semitism and anti-feminism, but also a discourse that goes beyond one's own horizon of experience and emotions. Once again, it is striking that the experiences of Jews are ignored with a certain consistency. Especially for Jews who see themselves as left-wing, the lack of solidarity, the silence regarding the Hamas massacres and even the open exclusion from queer and anti-racist spaces was a moment of desolidarisation of supposed allies.

2) Instead of criticising the power-loaded, social mediation of an inherently contradictory totality, which is constituted via antagonisms and produces coercive collectives, the focus is on 'structures' that would supposedly superimpose authentic identities. This often corresponds to a power-analytical approach in which the consequence is made the cause: Certainly, the given socialisation leads to groups having more power and associated privileges due to their different social location. However, both the conditions that are the cause of this power imbalance and the fact that the fundamental form of domination is precisely that of the conditions themselves are ignored. This also leads to the false assumption that domination is to be understood merely as a binary and linear power relationship, as the direct oppression of one group by another more powerful group and exclusively as a binary struggle of the oppressed against the precisely identifiable oppressor.

This results in a clear division of the world into oppressed and oppressor, similar to (neo-)Leninism. Instead of an analysis of (neo-)colonialism, imperialism and hierarchisations on the world market, there is a simple division into the evil Global North and the good, because oppressed, Global South. Contradictions and conflicts within the countries and regions of the Global South are given little consideration. Antisemitism is often completely ignored; Jewish people, as long as they have light-coloured skin, are simply regarded as white, and thus as profiteers of racism. On the one hand, this denies that all Jews are also racialised as 'others'. Secondly, it overlooks the geographically diverse origins of Judaism and the fact that many Jews can also be affected by racism at the same time. Antisemitism cannot be understood precisely because it cannot be understood as linear oppression, but is the result of contradictory power relations and the inability to understand them. If those affected by racism say that the Hamas massacre was an anti-colonial act of liberation, then this does not need to be questioned according to this postmodern identity-political logic. The fact that, from a feminist and antisemitism-critical perspective, the victims of the massacre would deserve solidarity and empathy is ignored because they are Israelis and, in this binary logic, Israel is simply seen as a white, colonial state and part of the Global North. This linear view of oppression is in turn accompanied by a positive reference to the coercive collectives that produce these relations of domination, and thus also to the affirmation of regressive ideologies and groupings when they emerge among subalterns.

3) Forms of oppression are understood as formally analogue and exist side by side - a group with power oppresses another group without power. As a result, the specifics of each remain underexposed, which is particularly striking in the case of antisemitism.

On the other hand, their real and differentiated interaction within the given power relations is not understood. The attempt to somehow account for this then takes the form of a series of declarations of solidarity: Each statement must mention all other forms of oppression. However, if all forms of oppression are analogous, it makes sense to look for a basic model and a form of oppression that summarises everything: The 'Palestinian cause' is readily made into this (for no real reason). In 'solidarity with Palestine', every other form of solidarity is also represented: So every demonstration must be a 'free Palestine' demonstration.

4) Precisely because the criticism of real conditions is missed, activism is often carried out as a declaration of one's own good intentions, as an affirmation of belonging to the group of the good and as a self-referential gesture of supposed rebellion and radicalism. Reflection and criticism are replaced by mobilisation, which is primarily intended to create an identity. This form of supposed solidarity with Palestine has almost nothing to do with an interest in the situation of Palestinians. All too often, it becomes an identity factor, a marker of recognition, a substitute struggle, a marker of one's own radicalism and a collective ritual, and is also used as such. This self-mobilisation can be reinforced antisemitically.

As emancipatory communists, we know that the liberation of society only goes hand in hand with the liberation of the subject, but this also means that there is no 'good' or 'evil', but that we have to endure contradictions and ambivalences in the world around us and within us. It also means taking seriously that ideologies, meaning false ideas about the world, arise in all sections of the population, including the left. Ideologies arise from the structures that people find and in turn reinforce them. A critique of ideology, including a critique of nationalism and antisemitism, must therefore be part of emancipatory practice.

6. Blank space Islamism

Where ideological criticism is at best secondary, there is sometimes a willingness within the left to view Hamas as somehow 'objectively emancipatory'. This also has to do with the void of Islamism within left-wing criticism.

As an Islamist organisation, Hamas strives for the extermination of all Jews and the establishment of a theocracy. Its religious fundamentalism also goes hand in hand with an extremely patriarchal view of gender and the oppression of women and queers. It does not care about life, not even that of Palestinians, from whom it demands the willingness to sacrifice themselves - and already presupposes this in their abuse as human shields. Their program is therefore fundamentally opposed to any striving for human emancipation.

Islamism, like fascism and right-wing populism, is a modern crisis reaction. Instead of analysing the disruptions of capitalism and overcoming these conditions, salvation is sought in imagined communities such as the nation or even the ummah (the community of devout Muslims), accompanied by isolation and even extermination of everything that does not belong there – or is not subordinate. Like fascism, Islamism attempts to enforce its political program and its idea of society with murderous consistency. Therefore, for Islamism, political and religious power must also lie in one hand. Perhaps this is precisely why it is so attractive: Not just blathering, but also doing everything in its power to fulfil the ideas of the higher power with suicidal dedication. In many regions of the world, Islamism therefore represents a major enemy of left-wing emancipatory endeavours. As communists, we should therefore neither dismiss the problem of Islamism nor join the nationalists in declaring 'Islam' to be the enemy.

7. No false one-sidedness

To make one thing clear after the previous criticism of forms of 'pro-Palestine' activism by large sections of the left: It goes without saying that there is no getting away with some drifting anti-Germans (Antideutsche) who dehumanise the entire population of Gaza, who don't care about the situation and future of the Palestinians, who don't recognise the tragedy and the specific need to criticise the military actions of the Israeli army. Who instead erupt in enthusiasm for war, who have no problem with the fact that tens of thousands of civilians have been killed, millions of people have lost their homes and had to flee and the majority of buildings have been destroyed. Who have no criticism for the right-wing Israeli government and Netanyahu's own power interests. The term 'anti-German' is used inflationarily and often incorrectly in left-wing debates in order to ward off any criticism of antisemitism. In the actual anti-German movement, however, there are some positions worthy of criticism that often go hand in hand with anti-Muslim racism and are far removed from any sensible ideological criticism. In order to do justice to the complexity of the current situation, such excesses must also be criticised.

This also means recognising the suffering of the people of Gaza, which we observe with great concern. Tens of thousands¹ of people have been killed in the course of Israeli military operations. Even if some of them are combatants of Hamas and other organisations, the number of civilian deaths is enormous. The humanitarian situation is catastrophic due to the shortage of supplies, the homelessness caused by the destruction of buildings and forced evacuations, and the medical crisis. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to leave their homes, while virtually no area in Gaza can be called safe. Those who argue, that Hamas and its ideology cannot be defeated by appeasement, are faced with the question of whether the current warfare is suitable for this purpose.

¹ It is difficult to give exact figures. On the one hand, because the war continues on a daily basis and claims new victims, which is why quoting the figures would quickly become outdated. But also because the figures available come from Hamas and are difficult to verify.

An emancipatory critique also looks with great concern at developments in Israeli politics. The far-right sections of the government are also pursuing an explicitly anti-Arab racist policy that instrumentalises the Israeli population's need for security and causes escalations. This policy also risks the lives of the hostages still being held in Gaza with its warfare. Netanyahu's policy is often determined by actions in favour of his own interests in maintaining power, for which he makes pacts with the right-wing extremists and the violent sections of the settlement community in the West Bank. All of this is also being thematised within Israeli society, as the protests of the hostages' relatives show, which are also venues for criticism of their government.

8. Criticising the state's fight against anti-Semitism

Our criticism also applies to aspects of a supposed form of combating anti-Semitism and solidarity with Israel by state bodies and parts of the majority society, which are partly full of instrumentalisation and even open racism. Criticism of anti-Semitism is frequently not invoked here to actually combat anti-Semitism, but shows up as a collective ritual of purified Germans and as a self-assurance of bourgeois-liberal ideology. Several problematic aspects can be observed here. Not all efforts against anti-Semitism fall under this criticism. To claim this would wipe from the table all other reflections on the Nazi past and its continuities, which were largely demanded of this society by Jews and leftists.

1) The reactions of the German majority society and state institutions amount to publicised opposition to anti-Semitism – they remain indifferent to the fate of living Jews. This is shown not only by the enormous rise in the number of anti-Semitic violence in recent months. The self-proclaimed world champion of reflection its own history knows that it is essential to distance itself from overly open hostility towards Jews, but without having a more precise concept of anti-Semitism. This results in symbolic politics whose lack of impact on the fight against anti-Semitism corresponds to its actual explosiveness in other areas. The example of bans on alleged or actual anti-Semitic demonstrations is a good illustration of how little it weakens these mobilisations and what a high price is paid for this, namely the suspension of the fundamental rights upheld by this state. This approach does little to combat anti-Semitism, but it does serve to demonstrate the state's ability to act. The fact that such repression is never used against right-wing anti-Semites is just as much an unpleasant truth as the fact that it is predominantly migrants who are affected by such measures. Racist police violence and racial profiling, for example, have increased since 7 October. Racist resentment and practices have not only manifested themselves since the Hamas massacre, but this has been used as a justification for holding Muslim people in particular, or people perceived to be Muslim, hostage to Hamas atrocities, which often also affects children and young people in school lessons. In this context stricter asylum laws, increased deportation practices and the restriction of fundamental rights are formed. The fight against anti-Semitism is being used by the state to manifest racist practices. We are clearly opposed to anti-Semitism and racism being played off against each other.

2) In part, this form of (supposed) combating anti-Semitism is carried out as a strategy of relieving and externalising. The proclaimed opposition to anti-Semitism becomes completely bigoted in view of the attempt to externalise it as a migrant import. Without question, there are specific forms of anti-Semitism. It is a misunderstood form of anti-racist caution not to name them. The externalisation of anti-Semitism, however, is an expression of German defence against guilt. It actually serves above all to avoid dealing with the anti-Semitism of one's own (great-)grandparents, its after-effects in the German successor society and the anti-Semitic potential of bourgeois conditions. The doubly perfidious trick is that Germany, which is called upon to take the moral high ground as a result of its self-attested purification, often also lives out its racist needs and, in doing so, characterises Muslim people in particular as the real perpetrators. The different treatment of the Bavarian 'philanthropist' Hubert Aiwanger, for example, whose leaflet affair even made him emerge as a stronger politician, is emblematic of the racist double standards with regard to anti-Semitism. However, it is precisely this guilt defence anti-Semitism that also applies to German non-migrant and non-Jewish leftists who see themselves as 'morally superior' and 'good anti-fascists'; admitting their own family's involvement in Nazi crimes and their own perpetrator potential and coming to terms with it is a painful process of learning and reflection.

3) When the bourgeois centre stages itself as the chief critic of anti-Semitism, it is about more than the mere need to ultimately be on the morally correct, good side. On the one hand, the bourgeois state and the bourgeois centre are absolved of anti-Semitism and anti-Semitism is turned into a problem of the 'extremes' in terms of extremism theory. At the same time, bourgeois-capitalist society and its political form are suppressed as an important source of anti-Semitism. Instead, a rather clumsy approach is taken against the left and the well-practised repertoire of anti-Muslim racism is hammered out, in which Muslim people are portrayed as backward and unenlightened, tending to be violent and tending towards radical views.

Even more perfidious is the attempt to establish a double package between combating anti-Semitism and the current racist deportation and isolation policy and the accompanying racist tones in public discourse. Entire communities and neighbourhoods are being criminalised and some real threat situations for Jews are being used for authoritarian law and order policies. This is being practised on (supposed) Palestinians in particular: An alleged criticism of anti-Semitism is used here to generalise against all Palestinians - who in turn often have a particularly difficult time as stateless persons under the control of German migration authorities. Anti-Semitism and racism are different in the way they function, but have concrete (violent) effects on the realities of the lives of those affected. Playing off anti-Semitism and racism against each other, as is so often the case at the moment, or creating a hierarchy of the suffering of those affected is contrary to any practice of solidarity and materialist criticism.

In summary: combating anti-Semitism is too often instrumentalised for a political and discursive agenda. Germany has come to terms with its National Socialist past and feels like a world champion in reflecting this past. Now we can turn our attention to the anti-Semitism of others. That is why Germans can now confidently be who they are in the world again. That is why, as a bourgeois state, we are the peak of civilisation. An anti-national critique of the state must also attack this national consensus in Germany and the normality of bourgeois conditions.

9. Conclusion

Against the anti-Semitic dehumanisation of Jews as well as against the racist dehumanisation of Palestinians and the false contradiction of the fight against anti-Semitism and racism, we stand up for a left with the goal of universal liberation. For us, this would be a state in which people can be different without fear. We are therefore in favour of an ideology-critical, anti-national and anti-authoritarian left. As leftists and communists, we must take seriously the fact that authoritarian ideologies that oppose emancipation are emerging in this society in all sections of the population, including within the left. Criticising these and developing a practice in which these ideologies can dissolve through the perspective of a reasonably organised society in which everyone can live well, an anti-authoritarian communism, must be the task of a radical left. It is also important to recognise anti-Semitism in its specificity as an ideology that aims to exterminate Jews - precisely because anti-Semitism remains often unrecognised and likes to present itself as anti-capitalist and rebellious. The goal remains the abolition of capital utilisation and nation states in a communist world society, which no longer produces misanthropic ideologies such as anti-Semitism and which enables the association of people on a free and conscious basis, as well as identity definitions freed from forced subjectivisation.

In this sense: We remain unforgiving.

For an anti-national, ideology-critical and anti-authoritarian left!

Against all anti-Semitism, for communism.

**We look forward to constructive questions, comments
and contributions to the debate. Write us an email to:
info.antisemitismustext@systemli.org**

written by:

**Basisgruppe Antifaschismus Bremen, Eklat_MS, URA-Dresden,
Antifa_nt München, Kritik&Praxis FFM, Redical [M] Göttingen,
CAT Marburg, In/Progress Braunschweig**