

Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie e.V.

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Committee for Basic Rights and Democracy

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Work report

November 2001 to November 2003

For the Ordinary Meeting of Members

For almost two years now the managing executive board elected in December, 2001 and the new-old sub-committees within the Committee have been working and have left their mark on the Committee's work. The sub-committees have met regularly and discussed the focal points of the Committee's work. The secretary's office in Cologne has implemented its resolutions in cooperation with members of the executive board and working committee and those who have taken over the responsibility for work areas. Focal points of the working committee:

1. Peace policy

The term covered by this report began with our fight against the war in Afghanistan. On 16 November, 2001 we submitted the petition "War Must Not Be the Answer to Terror", in which we opposed the provision of the German army's military resources for a war in Afghanistan, and extreme domestic rearmament, to the lower house of the German Parliament. More than 7,500 people signed the petition.

In March of 2002 we opposed the new nuclear strategy of USA. We issued a warning about the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear operation which the USA held for possible in the future according to its drastically expanded operational scenarios.

The next war already threatened the area from May of 2002. The USA was threatening to start a war against Iraq more and more frequently. By early fall of 2002 we founded, together with representatives of other peace organizations and other activists, the alliance known as "Resist the Iraq War". We announced resistance and civil disobedience and organized support for this purpose. In January more protests took place at several military bases, in the form of sit-ins and "go-ins". We demanded that the pilots of the AWACS aircraft refuse to obey orders and to refuse to participate in a war that was illegal according to human rights and international law, and which moreover brought German soldiers to violate their constitution. At the Rhine/Main airbase we blockaded the main gate for one hour. The police broke up both gatherings, carrying the seated demonstrators away. The legal disputes are still going on. The committee is following all these procedures, passing on information, informing the press and supporting those affected.

We published informative material titled "Resolve the Iraq Conflict Peacefully! – No Blood for Oil!"

We have just published new informative material for citizens on the subject "Israel – Palestine – Endless Violence or Understanding and Cooperation?" in which we engage ourselves in solidarity with those in the peace movement on both sides for a peaceful solution of the conflict, for understanding and cooperation.

Since mid-2002 a new coordination group of part of the peace movement has joined the discussion. The group "Cooperation for Peace" was founded in January, 2003, in which 35 organizations are cooperating, has just published "Peace Policy Guidelines".

2. Vacation from the war

Together with partner organizations in Israel and Palestine, the committee organized meetings in Germany between young Israelis and Palestinians for the first time in 2002 and again in 2003 within the framework of the "Vacation from the War" action. Such meetings could at that time take place neither in Israel nor in Palestine. In both years, young people discussed the conflict in the Near East in three groups and explained their different experiences to each other.

A small group around a young Israeli woman and a Palestinian grounded the initiative group "Breaking Barriers" on the basis of this meeting. They attempted to maintain and develop the contacts they had started in Germany further in Israel and Palestine. They were able to return to Germany a second time in the summer of 2003 and meet outside the fear they faced daily at home. Both initiators of this peaceful initiative received the peace prize of the "Mount Zion Foundation" in the Benedictine Monastery on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

Furthermore, vacation games for children from refugee camps in Bethlehem, Jenin and Nablus were held in both years.

Of course the "Vacation from the War" for children from the republics of the former Yugoslavia continued in both years. In the summer of 2003 Albanian and Serbian children met on the Adriatic Sea in Montenegro. Albanian, Macedonian and Turkish children met on the Ohrid Sea; children from Serbia and the Serbian Republic, among them Muslims, Croats, Bosnians and Serbians, vacationed on the Croatian Adriatic Coast.

3. Domestic Security and the Right to Demonstrate

In publications and public statements we have opposed the developments in the area of domestic security of preventive or authoritarian security state. In April of 2002 we published the information material for citizens titled "Security Brings Loss of Freedom". The development of authority of secret services and police in the course of security panics is, according to this material, irresponsible in regard to human rights and democracy.

The petition subcommittee handed over a petition "For the Unrestricted Maintenance of the Right to Demonstrate" to the petition committee of the federal state parliament of lower Saxony in April of 2002. We thus drew a balance from the experience of the state police dealings with the right to demonstrate during the transportation of highly radioactive waste in the temporary storage facility in Gorleben in November of 2001. We criticized not only the extension of the demonstration prohibition in time and space, the restriction of the freedom of movement in the whole region by forbidding trespassing and the broad distribution of ejection notices, but also the sheer unrestricted collection of data by police, and the use of horses and unmuzzled dogs. We also published this petition in a small brochure.

4. Policy on Asylum

Jointly with the Humanistic Union we opposed the enforcement measures to deter and deport migrants which are anchored in the immigration law. We called for actions against deportation, deportation prison and exit camps for November 2, 2002. We accompanied the actions of the Frankfurt Alliance against Deportation and supported them in the effort to put up a plaque commemorating those who have been killed in the process of deportation. Unfortunately the commemorative plaque was removed and destroyed.

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