



“even if only for a day or an hour”

Ulm5 court statements, May 2026

Who Are the Ulm5?

The Ulm5 are Crow Tricks, Daniel Tatlow-Devally, Leandra Rollo, Vi Kovarbasic, and Zo Hailu – Berlin-based activists who, after nearly two years of protesting Israel's ongoing genocide of Palestinians and Germany's complicity, concluded that conventional means of resistance were no longer enough. With other available measures having proven ineffective, and the German government continuing to arm Israel in defiance of International Court of Justice rulings, they decided to take direct action. On September 8, 2025, they entered Elbit Systems in Ulm, the German subsidiary of Israel's largest private arms company, which develops and sells weapons and technology used by the Israeli military in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. The direct action caused only material damage; no one was injured. The human rights defenders filmed themselves, with their faces uncovered, as they chanted, sprayed the walls with graffiti, and destroyed Elbit Systems property; they then waited for the police to arrive, made no attempt to flee, and did not resist arrest. Since then, the five – citizens of Ireland, the UK, Spain, and Germany – have been held in separate prisons in southern Germany, facing harsh and arbitrarily imposed conditions, including solitary confinement, denial of proper medical care, and extreme restrictions and surveillance regarding visits, phone calls, and letters. They were denied release on bail and spent nearly eight months in pre-trial detention (longer than the six-month maximum prescribed by law) before the trial began on April 27, 2026.

The Ulm5 have been charged with trespassing, destruction of property, using symbols of organizations proscribed as unconstitutional, and membership in a criminal organization. The trial takes place in the high-security court in Stammheim, part of a prison complex in Stuttgart infamous for hosting the 1970s trials of the Red Army Faction. In May 2026, the presiding judge announced 28 additional trial dates on top of the 16 initially planned, potentially extending the trial until January 2027. Despite their lawyers' continued objections, the activists are led into the courtroom handcuffed and forced to sit in a glass box, without the possibility of direct and confidential communication with their defense teams, in violation of the European Convention of Human Rights.

On May 29, 2026, after weeks of farcical proceedings frequently interrupted and postponed by the judge, Daniel, Crow, Leandra, Zo, and Vi were finally able to give their testimonies. We publish them here (with minor edits for readability) in the order in which they were presented in court.



@ann_kiernan IG

Daniel Tatlow-Devally

Daniel wrote their testimony in English, translated it into German, and read it in German

I would first like to say that what has taken place here to date means that I am not at all convinced that this is a fair trial, and I also doubt that the court will genuinely listen to me. However, it is still important to me to say what I have to say.

My actions at the Elbit facility in Ulm were motivated exclusively by urgent humanitarian considerations. In a sense, their roots are long ago, in the recognition that Israel's seizure of Palestinian land, its subjection of a population to apartheid laws, its detention of children without charge, and its widespread practice of sexual violence against Palestinian prisoners – that the sum of these practices is straightforwardly unjust, and that to provide material and diplomatic support for them is wrong.

Because I recognised these truths, when Israel began its ground offensive in late 2023, the ensuing pattern of its behaviour came as no surprise. Multiple international bodies – including an independent UN commission of inquiry – have concluded that Israel's actions in Gaza meet several criteria for genocide, each of which is sufficient to conclude that such a crime is taking place. These include the systematic killing of members of a protected group, the systematic destruction of conditions essential for survival, the destruction of all access to fertility and maternity care, and the withholding of food and aid in a manner conducive to an artificial famine.

To look the other way when genocide takes place is reprehensible; to provide the equipment with which it is carried out is worse. In the face of mounting evidence of Israel's genocide in Palestine, Germany chose not only to continue providing and supporting its armed forces – it drastically increased its supply of weapons and war equipment to Israel's occupying and invading army. There are many things I love about my adopted home, but that Germany provided steadfast support for the mass death of the people of Gaza, expressing approval in the form of material support, and going so far as not to honour ICC warrants issued for the arrest of those suspected of instigating genocide – this was and remains disturbing and heartbreaking.

Worse still were the government's occasional statements of concern, as well as periodical announcements intended to be interpreted as meaning that weapons and other exports were no longer being sent to support the genocide – though on closer inspection, they did not mean this at all: these made it clear that Germany wished to be seen to be doing the right thing, without in any substantial way changing its behaviour.

It was in this context that I was compelled to do something that relates so deeply and yet complicatedly to democratic life, essential to it and yet rarely acknowledged: I took direct action.

By damaging the arms production facilities of Elbit Systems in Ulm, the aim was to stop – to the greatest extent possible – their material support for the crimes being committed in Gaza. For such support constitutes complicity in genocide. I acted in the hope that I might at least succeed in disrupting the continued supply of arms to the Israeli armed forces. Furthermore, I acted with the intention of publicly exposing the scandalous fact that the German government – along with arms manufacturers based in Germany – are actively supporting and profiting from the war against Gaza.

Since then, I have been held in pre-trial detention in Ulm. It is a deeply unsettling experience. I have grown accustomed to the sound of a cell door locking shut and closing me off from the world. I have only seen the sky for an hour a day – if at all. I have witnessed how kindness and deep cruelty can coexist so closely within this microcosm. I have seen the light slowly fade from men's eyes as the world seems to forget them – and wrestled with my own guilt over the contrasting outpour of solidarity and affection towards myself. Two of these men, forgotten by the world, made attempts on their lives; one succeeded. For five months, I only saw my loved ones through a pane of plexiglas – the result of an administrative error.

When I saw in the indictment that the prosecutor had sought to portray us as antisemitic, in line with a tired and fallacious argument common in the German public sphere, I wasn't surprised, though I was of course outraged. It is disgraceful to characterise resistance against occupation and mass murder as antisemitism. It was heartening, poignant and amusing to compare this rhetoric with the warm solidarity expressed towards myself by my many Jewish family members. Here I would particularly like to mention my stepfather, whose moral compass, kindness of heart, and resilience have influenced me since I was very young.

In September 2025, stopping Germany's authorised arms shipments to the IDF was a matter of utmost urgency – even if only for a day or an hour. I considered what I did to be necessary to prevent great suffering. I did this in the full knowledge that I might pay an enormous personal price for it.

Since October 2025, there has been a so-called ceasefire in Gaza – a ceasefire which does not deserve its name. Since then, nine hundred Gazans have lost their lives to Israeli bombs – the vast majority of them, as always, people who could not possibly be combatants. Since the early 1990s, the IDF has kept power generators out of Gaza – and this remains the case today, in a Gaza where almost the entire infrastructure has been destroyed. Just today, the Israeli government announced that it will seize 70 percent of the Gaza Strip. The situation in Gaza is grave. I stand here today, filled with the cautious but firm hope for a future which is fundamentally different from our present – a future in which neither the humanity nor the rights of Palestinians are viewed by European powers, or anyone else, simply as a troublesome obstacle; a future in which the displacement and persecution of these people are no longer regarded as a viable business model. A just and secure future for a free Palestine.



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Crow Tricks

Crow wrote and read their testimony in English, and the court interpreter translated it into German

I am here today as a member of the global community that stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people and land. We are a community that acknowledges and resists against the 70 years of illegal occupation, the apartheid regime and the multiple genocides that have been committed and are currently ongoing in Palestine at the hands of the Zionist entity referred to as Israel. We are a community that, since 2023, has witnessed thousands of violations of international law by the IDF and Netanyahu being justified by the German government and legal system.

Your inaction has forced our hand. We demand not only a real end to the current genocide and efforts to establish the foregrounds for a Palestinian state, but we also demand that all land stolen by the state and settlers be returned to Palestinians, accountability be taken by those who have acted in and fueled war crimes, and reparations for Palestinians to rebuild their land and to heal from the last 70 years of violence.

To understand my motivation for the action we undertook against Elbit Systems, it is essential that we bring the context of what has unfolded in Palestine in the most recent two-year genocide in Gaza and the 70 years of occupation. Though I will not be able to convey the true history and the pain that Palestinians have lived through, I will reiterate and summarise the words of Ahmed Alnaouq, a Palestinian man, that recall what he and his family lived through.

The Israeli forces struck first in 1948, on the day we know as Nakba, in which Palestinians, who were previously under British colonial rule, were now being bombed from above by a new colonial enterprise. It is reported that hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives or were displaced from their lands under the threat of death. Israel created settlements and restricted access of Palestinians to their land. Twenty years later, Israel expanded its occupation in what is known as the Six-Day War of '67, in which tanks were introduced to murder innocent Palestinians and used to occupy the Gaza Strip, the Sinai, the Golan Heights, and southern Lebanon. He recalls his mother's description of Israeli forces shooting indiscriminately through the streets, witnessing soldiers digging holes in walls of schools to shoot Palestinian children for sport, and his aunt recalls seeing soldiers betting on the gender of a baby still inside of a martyred Palestinian pregnant woman before slicing her belly open to find out. From the Six-Day War, Israel further consolidated the apartheid regime by sectioning off certain areas through the use of checkpoints, and deliberately undermining local economies to foster dependency on occupation forces. Palestinians employed by Israeli companies were subject to humiliating strip searches by IDF soldiers and detained for hours in IDF checkpoints for no reason on the way to work.

His father recalls his Israeli boss saying: “God created Israelis as humans and the rest as animals to serve them. Israelis were disgusted with the animals and asked God to transform them into human beings and that's how you came to be.” A statement and thought that is still expressed by the then Zionist Defense Minister Gallant when he declared in October 2023: “We are fighting human animals, and we are acting accordingly.” A year before the Six-Day War, Elbit Systems, arms manufacturer of the IDF, was created specifically with the task of producing and developing weaponry to murder and oppress Palestinians and solidify and maintain the apartheid regime of the Israeli government and forces.

In 1987, with the escalating harassment by Israeli forces, the deaths of six Palestinians sparked the first Intifada by the Palestinian population demanding an end to the occupation and the second-class citizenship that was written and acted on through Israeli law. The Israeli military responded with mass arrests, curfews, violent crackdowns on freedom of movement which led to further economic strife and social unrest.

In 1994, under pressure from the international community, the Oslo Accords were signed by both Israeli authorities and the Palestinian Authority stipulating the establishment of a Palestinian state by 1999 at the latest, which to this day Israel has refused to abide by. It stipulated areas that Palestinians would control and in theory be free of Israel's authority.

Israel's refusal to abide by the Oslo Accords and allow a Palestinian state sparked the second Intifada in September 2000 in which again the Palestinians called for freedom, an establishment of their own state, and to live in dignity. The Israeli response was devastating, with the use of tanks, Apache helicopters and weapons developed and supplied by Elbit Systems to suppress the calls for freedom.

In 2007, Gaza fell under a total Israeli blockade, in which access to food, water, gas, electricity were deprived by Israeli forces. A two-year genocide followed in which Israeli forces used internationally prohibited chemical weapons like white phosphorus on the civilian population. This war took the lives of 1,400 Palestinians, injured 5,000, and destroyed 47,000 homes. In 2014, Israel launched another unprovoked attack on Gaza resulting in 2,300 deaths. Following the 13-year siege on Gaza, Palestinians decided to protest peacefully along the apartheid wall built around them. It was a demand for the right to return to the land they had lost from the Nakba until the date it occurred in 2018. Israel responded by killing 300 Palestinians, two journalists, and countless paramedics, and introduced new weapons like the exploding butterfly bullet, resulting in 300 amputees.

Then, in October 2023, Israel launched its most brutal assault on the people of Gaza and increased the acceleration of its colonial endeavour in the region dramatically. To date, sources show that in the last two years at least 72,000 innocent civilians have been martyred of which 30–40,000 are children. They have been and are currently starving the people of Gaza, refusing adequate aid into Gaza and refusing medical evacuations of 21,000 people in critical condition in

Gaza. In the last two years we have seen the bombing of civilian infrastructure including houses, hospitals, schools, places of worship; we have seen strikes on first responders, the weaponising of food and medical supplies, 300 journalists have lost their lives, families have been displaced multiple times after being issued illegal evacuation orders from Israel and then being targeted at the displacement camps.

The list goes on, all red lines have been crossed, and Israel's impunity only gets stronger. Dr. Ghassin recollects operating on a child after an explosion on a house that had killed all family members and relatives of the three-year-old. He recollects hospital capacities and equipment running so low that family members had to choose which relatives to save and which to leave to die.

Not only in Gaza have effects been felt, but throughout the occupied Palestine. Israeli forces have been raiding villages and cities in the West Bank, stealing all foreign currencies from banks owned by Palestinians, demolishing houses and farms that have been lived on by Palestinians for centuries and funding and arming settler-militias to build illegal settlements in their wake. Palestinian political prisoners that are held in Israeli prisons are subject to torture and indignity in prison. A video was released by an Israeli lawyer of a Palestinian prisoner being sexually assaulted by an IDF soldier; the lawyer was labeled as antisemitic and a traitor to Israel whilst the rapist was named a hero by the Israeli Defence Minister.

The Israeli Zionist agenda has been clearly stated by both Israeli ministers and American officials: Israel will not stop until it has control over the entire Palestinian land, ethnically cleansed Palestinian people, and until it has achieved its bigger picture expansion to create a "Greater Israel" in which it controls the entire Middle East. It continues to violate ceasefire deals and treaties like the one in October last year, killing close to 800 people since its signing. Though the killing by the IDF may have slowed down since the ceasefire, settler attacks and landgrabs in the first four months of 2026 were larger than the entirety of the last years' settler attacks. The legislated grip and apartheid regime have only strengthened since the ceasefire, seen in the Knesset's decision to reinstate the death penalty, a sentence only given to Palestinians, and the Knesset's decision to turn Palestinian territory, for example the West Bank, into state owned property.

From what I read in German newspapers, what I hear in speeches from politicians and from what is stated in the indictment written by the prosecutor, there is a false notion that the history of this two-year genocide called a "conflict" started on October 7th. With the context I have transmitted here, my motivation for this action should not only be understandable but also necessary considering the 70 years of unanswered calls for freedom and sovereignty for the Palestinian people.

My motivation to undertake this political action against Elbit Systems stems from the silence of the German state in the face of Israeli atrocities and from the understanding that no matter how

many red lines are crossed and war crimes committed, the German and Israeli states choose profits over the lives of Palestinians; therefore, minimising these profits would pressure the state to rethink its actions. We protested multiple times a week demanding at the very least sanctions from the German state on Israel and to hold companies that supply and fuel Israel's genocide, such as Elbit Systems, accountable for their direct role. We held protest camps outside the Bundeskanzleramt [Federal Chancellery] for months, literally chanting our demands to Chancellor Merz only for him to leave his balcony and go back inside. We made petitions. We sent direct emails to government officials. We participated in local boycott and sanction campaigns of Israeli companies profiting off of Palestinian suffering. No method that was in line with German law worked, and the death toll in Gaza only increased as our demands were conveyed. The German state made itself clear: it would protect the companies that armed a military undertaking, a genocidal company, over the protection of Palestinian rights.

The German legal system also showed its true colours as a vehicle to legitimise this violent policy of the state and incriminate those calling for an end to the genocide. We did not wake up and act in a “blind rage” as the prosecutor noted in the indictment. We reflected on our two years of campaigning and came to the conclusion that the enormous profits that companies like Elbit and states like Germany are accumulating from this genocide are far too large for them to voluntarily give up. We realised that Germany and Elbit are guided by a compass based on profits rather than morality. We realised that the only way to reduce the killing and martyrdom of our brothers and sisters in the Gaza Strip was to directly encroach on these profits and prevent the shipping of weapons from Germany to the Gaza Strip.

Outside of the direct effect our action would have in contributing to the end of the most recent genocide, my motivation was to have these court proceedings, in which the nature and ethos of Elbit Systems and position of Elbit Systems within the Israeli state structure can be brought to light, in the hopes that action will be taken against it. We know that Elbit Systems is the direct associate of a PM and Ministers that have been issued arrest warrants by the International Court of Justice and we know that Elbit Systems is the main supplier of weapons and technology of the IDF.

But Elbit Systems also directly encourages and advocates for the continuation of a genocide in Gaza as they see Gaza as a weapons testing side and a laboratory. Throughout the genocide committed over the years on Palestinian people, the international community has given a free pass to Israel and thus Elbit to use any weaponry it chooses to crush and murder Palestinians. A free pass stemming from the fear of coming under attack from the Israeli lobby, and from the false labeling of governments that stand as anti-Zionist as antisemitic. Gaza is virtually defenceless and due to its blockade by Israel cannot receive any weaponry or other means to defend itself with. Elbit takes advantage of this free pass and the enclosure of Palestinians in Gaza with nowhere to escape, to test its latest developments in weaponry and technology to receive its “battle tested” status with minimal to no losses or damage to its equipment.

With this “combat proven” status achieved from senseless killing of Palestinians, Elbit can then sell its weaponry to other nation states and private militias in Europe and to the USA at a much higher price. The evidence for this can be seen in the development and use of the “Hermes” drone by Elbit in Gaza to attack schools, hospitals, homes, and kill innocents. After it achieved its battle status in Gaza, it was then modified and sold to the British military and mass produced by a subsidiary company in the UK, and used in military opps by the British in Afghanistan and Iraq. Even in the current genocide on Palestinians in Gaza, Elbit is testing its autonomous AI-controlled drones before selling the software to European countries through subsidiaries like the factory in Ulm. Elbit is expanding into Europe firstly to build its weapons away from the instability of the Middle East, but also to access new markets. Factories like the one in Ulm were built and maintained by the killing of Palestinians and new profits coming out of these factories go out to maintain the apartheid regime.

The hand that Elbit Systems has in this 70-year occupation and most recent genocide of Palestinians is much larger than a private arms provider with no knowledge of the atrocities enacted with its weapons. The direct role in operations can be seen in an Israeli General’s direct quote in which he states: “We operate day and night in cooperation with unit 9900, Elbit, and the administration to perfect the systems...we carried out 30 operations.”

My motivation for this action was to have this court date and shed light on the inner working of Elbit Systems in the hopes that the courts will take action against it and stop its use of Palestinian people as a testing ground, stop its encouragement of the genocide in Gaza, and to stop its profiteering off an illegal occupation.

My motivation surfaced from the reality of where the power and decision making actually lie in our society, and this power is acted on outside of legal or governmental oversight, and is in the hands of the arms dealers. Our domestic politics and foreign policy undertaken by governments globally are heavily influenced by the transnational network of private arms manufacturers that are enmeshed within our government structures, and lobby and promote the manufacturing of wars, genocides, increased police repression, and colonisation of Global South lands and people that result in enormous profits for these companies that supply them.

The governments justify and camouflage their fulfillment of these profit-driven aims set by the private arms dealers through the manipulation of pre-existing social constructs and divisions based on race, gender, sex, or through the labeling of groups opposing these agendas as “terrorists”. This methodology and manufacturing of a culture of fear disguises their atrocities as acts of “national security” or “self-defense” – from the 70-year occupation and multiple genocides in Palestine to the mass killings and years of neglect of Kurdish peoples’ rights to life and to their land, to the foreign-funded wars in Congo and Sudan that have killed hundreds of thousands of innocents and displaced millions.

All of this pain and suffering I explained above was orchestrated, profited from, and lobbied into action by the Lockheed Martins, the Rheinmetalls, the BAE Systems, the Boeings, and the Elbit Systems. They prevent our society from achieving real democracy. This action was a part of a global movement that aims to reduce violence at its source. They choose profits over the lives of our peoples. My motivation for this action was when I saw the courts, the police, and other state apparatus working side by side with and following directions from these companies, to operate with this agenda and protect their right to do so.

If you will not hold these companies accountable, then the people will.



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Leandra Rollo

Leandra wrote and read her testimony in English, and the court interpreter translated it into German

First of all, I'm convinced at this point this is not going to be a fair trial; therefore, I do not believe this court will properly listen to what I'm about to say. Nevertheless, that is not going to stop me from saying it. I would like to say that I had to pinch myself today, to confirm this is real. To confirm that I really am here, in court, sitting in a glass cage, after almost nine months living in a prison cell for thinking and acting upon the thought that millions of Palestinians have the right to exist in their own land. I acted upon the certainty that war crimes and crimes against humanity were and are being committed by Israel's military offensive in Gaza; namely, the bombing of hospitals, schools, universities, homes, and infrastructure; a full blockade of food, water, medicine, and electricity; children being shot in their heads in cold blood by IOF soldiers, or being murdered by starvation, or having limbs amputated without anaesthetic. Those are facts. Not political statements, not propaganda, but facts.

Since October 2023, I joined almost every single legal protest in Berlin demanding to stop the genocide, only to be met with the blatantly unjustified police brutality we ended up getting accustomed to. We were not only ignored by the authorities but physically attacked and criminalised for speaking up against mass murder. Were we really expected to do nothing while the government continued to publicly and financially support those atrocities? While the German state continued to allow the flow of money and weapons that are making bloody murder possible?

As someone cleverer than me wrote, to stop the genocide is not, primarily, a political demand but an ethical one. Because, when the machinery of oppressive power is to be trained on whoever has the least power, there is an ethical duty to stop the gears by all means necessary.

On the 27th of November 2024, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, as well as the country's former defence minister, Yoav Gallant, for alleged war crimes relating to the Gaza war. By December 2024, an Amnesty International report concluded that the "unprecedented scale and magnitude" of Israel's assault on Gaza amounts to a genocide. A conclusion Holocaust scholar Amos Goldberg had already shared earlier this year. Meanwhile, here in Germany, a democratic European country that has supposedly learned from its genocidal history, a subsidiary fully owned by Elbit Systems Ltd, Israel's largest private weapons supplier, continued to operate on German soil without any consequences whatsoever. We are referring to some property where forced labour was imposed during the Holocaust. Corporate links with National Socialism didn't seem to be a problem for Elbit Systems, as it doesn't seem to be a problem now for the German state in relation to other companies that are also profiting from the Palestinian genocide as they did from the Holocaust. Elbit Systems is a criminal corporation, a murderous business that keeps growing its revenue out

of the hideous crimes we all got to painfully witness on our phones, in real time, every single day for almost two years prior to our action.

But at the end of the day, I'm not Palestinian. I'm not part of the population that has been occupied, displaced, killed, and tortured for the past 70 years. Still, I was born in a territory that became a state out of the most brutal colonisation process in history: Argentina. Eighty to ninety percent of the indigenous population, millions of people, entire civilisations were exterminated and tortured to death in that part of the world by the Spanish empire. The very name of my city reminded me of this every day: the Kilmes was a community that used to live around 1,200 kilometres northwest from where the city of Quilmes sits. As the story goes, the entire community was displaced from their own land in the Andes in a torturous manner. They were forced to walk barefoot without food or water all the 1,200 kilometres until most of them died on the way, and the last ones did it right there, where I was born. It is said that many of them had their feet amputated during the process and were forced to continue walking anyway. Not surprisingly, I grew up questioning the very meaning of my nationality, as it didn't seem to have any. Everything around me looked European: the architecture, the food, the people on TV, the philosophers I studied in high school were European, and so was most of the literature. But the Incas' or the Kilmes' knowledge and culture was nowhere to be seen. There was one thing that did not look European: the poor kids living on the streets, breathing from plastic bags with glue, asking for food and money in the train stations of Buenos Aires. I grew up with a society and a territory broken by colonisation through an enormous and shameful class gap between brown and white people.

That's exactly why fighting against it in the present time came as an opportunity to me. An opportunity to express my deepest beliefs on freedom, and, most importantly, indigenous freedom. All that seemed to be completely taken away from us in the territory I was born in will not be taken away from the indigenous people of Palestine – the ancestral wisdom, the ways of life, in community, respectfully with the land.

But no. I did not have to pinch myself today because the current events are, actually, not surprising at all. Because it would be naïve to believe that the ones making decisions on this matter do so relying on their own moral intelligence, as if they had any. Because it must be a great relief for them to say “there is no such a thing as Palestinian people” as they stand in front of them; to whom all the boring “genocidal hysteria” must be very inconvenient to their dream of owning a yacht; to whom there is and always have been a subcategory of people that is not only born to suffer but habituated to it. As is clearly shown in the normalisation of the use of torture by Israel against Palestinians, torture is a structural feature of the ongoing genocide and broader settler colonial apartheid, which is possible because of the absence of meaningful measures taken by the European Union against the Zionist entity some of them created. This is no secret: the Zionist security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, publicly describes the degradation of prisoner conditions as one of his highest goals. In custody, Palestinians are not only kept constantly

handcuffed in dark cells with iron beds and pit toilets – they are also held outdoors, without shelter or blanket or in capes, often referred to as “monkey capes”. Detainees are kept blindfolded and fully shackled for prolonged periods, sometimes causing injuries leading to amputations. Severe physical violence is routine. Israeli guards subject Palestinian prisoners to severe beatings, burn them with cigarettes and force them to take hallucinogenic drugs. Pepper spray, tear gas, electric shocks, and assault dogs are also used. Sexual violence against children, women, and men is systematic, as is denial of medical care. I will not describe the sexual abuse to respect the victims. Senior ministers of Israel describe torture as a “holy job” and abusers as “heroic warriors”. Since October 2023, torture in detention has been used to an unprecedented scale and videos of it shared on social media.

Journalists and civilians have been allowed access to witness and even use phones to record the abuse of Palestinians. Since then, Israeli authorities have arrested more than 18,500 Palestinians, including at least 1,500 children. In addition, more than 4,000 individuals have been subjected to enforced disappearance, and it is likely that many are no longer alive. Specific groups have been targeted for detention and heightened abuse, sometimes resulting in violent death: activists, medical doctors, political figures, human rights defenders, and journalists. Hundreds of health and rescue workers have been arbitrarily arrested while performing their medical duties. And let us not forget the new law recently passed imposing the death penalty on Palestinians only. According to the bill, those Palestinians sentenced to death will be held in a separate facility with no visits allowed.

Torture has always been a central feature of the dispossession of Palestinians by the Zionist entity, and it’s not confined to cells and interrogation rooms. Across the occupied Palestinian territory, Israeli authorities have engineered a “torturous environment,” designed to break resistance and dignity. Mass displacement, siege, denial of aid and food, military and settler violence, all tools of collective torture, have turned the Palestinian territory into a space of collective punishment – punishment for existing and resisting the occupation of their own land.

Since October 2023, all Palestinians have been treated collectively as “terrorists” and “security threats”. By targeting the totality of people, across the totality of the occupied land, Israel’s settler colonial genocide became the ultimate form of torture: continuous, generational, and collective. Over 150 years ago, the Zionist settlement project began as an ethno-national project addressing the Jewish question, which is antisemitism in Europe. For Palestinians who were forced to host this project, to host is to be hostage, to host is to be erased. The Palestinian story begins before the genocide, before the Intifadas and the empty peace agreements, and before Zionism and Israel.

Benjamin Netanyahu, Yoav Gallant, Itamar Ben-Gvir, and Elbit Systems executives are the ones that should be sitting in court in glass cages, not us.

On the 8th of September 2025 I not only took action against Israel's largest private weapons supplier – I took action against the extermination of the Palestinian people. I took action to insist upon the existence of a single human reality, populated by billions of sacred human beings to whom universal law of protection must and will be applied.

Long live the resistance.



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Zo Hailu

Zo wrote and read their testimony in English, and the court interpreter translated it into German; a loved one added the footnotes

Five days into this trial, I would like to preface my opening statement with disbelief, grief, disappointment, shock, offence and disgust.

Disbelief, that this court has done everything in its power to neglect us of our right to a fair trial and confidential, spontaneous communication with our lawyers according to Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights – a human rights deed binding for member states.

Grief, that Germany's fabric is so tightly interwoven with genocide that anti-genocide dissidents are an enemy of the state – allegedly threatening the state so greatly that we are being trialed in the Staatsschutzkammer[1], that we will be locked up for 16 months without a verdict, while condemned to a glass box in the courtroom like serial murderers, like animals, like scum.

Disappointment, that every single application to the judge on behalf of the accused has been rejected, except the one manipulated to humiliate us. What is the purpose of a trial when every single intervention from the defense representatives is rejected? What is the purpose of 42 scheduled trial dates over the span of 8 months, when we have been pre-judged? Is this a theatre or a courthouse?

Shock, that an official of this court carried a rubber chicken in the pocket of his uniform, squeezing it to make noises outside the doors of our cells in the basement. I had immediate fear that someone was making monkey noises in a racially-motivated hate crime. It was only when this "professional" of this high-security Oberlandesgerichtsgebäude[2] was even daring enough to squeeze this toy inside this very courtroom that I saw the rubber chicken poking out from his uniform pocket. Was this also an attempt to humiliate us?

Offence, that this court interrupted the opening statement of Daniel – while talking about genocide, and suicide in a German prison – to humiliate a member of public by choice of using the time designated to our trial to punish a person not on trial.

Should it not be the priority of this court to hear the perspective of the accused? Should it not be the priority of this court to avoid holding people unsentenced in prison for longer than is necessary?

Disgust, that the state prosecutor laughed his way through the opening statement of Mr. Düsberg, who was detailing the brutality of Israeli war crimes and crimes against humanity – in particular the cold-blooded murder of children. Denying this on account of a misunderstanding – that the prosecutor was actually surprised, which, coincidentally, was expressed through smirking and suppressing laughter – he nonetheless relegated Mr. Düsberg's statement to "having no legal

relevance”. Is not presenting the motivation of an alleged crime a core element of every legal proceeding? Or was it surprise in realising the extent of the genocide and realizing his position in protecting profiteers of the genocide?

Such reasons are why my expectation of a fair trial is reduced with every passing day. Nonetheless, I will raise my voice and deliver my opening statement with pride and a heavy heart:

My name is Zo and my surname is pronounced ‘Hailu’[3].

My ancestors are from Ethiopia, England and Scotland. I am a trans non-binary person, pronouns he/they.

As a proud African who has both suffered from British imperialism and benefited from the institutions instructed through its imperial wealth, the liberation of my African siblings in Africa and the diaspora is my compass. My people’s history has been violently interrupted by Europe, and our continent’s destiny depends on bringing an end to imperialist extraction. It is European imperialism which has destroyed indigenous peoples’ communities, way of life, knowledge systems, languages, lives and livelihoods around the globe, and this is no different in Palestine. It is Britain who was colonising Palestine and signed away Palestine’s land to the Zionists that was not their land to sign away. This criminal deal is called the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

Almost two decades before the Balfour Declaration, the Palestinian public and political figure Yusuf Diyaa El Din Pasha Al Kahlidi wrote to the father of modern Zionism extending sympathy for the plight of Jewish people in Europe, and pleading for Palestine to be left alone, warning Zionism would not only endanger Christian and Muslim Palestinians, but Jewish Palestinians, too, who constituted up to 5% of the indigenous population. His concerns were ignored.

Approaching the mid 20th century, when anti-colonial liberation movements intensified around the world, the Zionist project rebranded itself from a colonial movement to a liberation movement. It is paradoxical nonsense for a movement to attach itself to British and late German and American imperialism, build a home on the rubble of stolen cities and villages, and call itself a liberation movement. Thus, I will continue to stand against injustice and act in solidarity with people resisting imperialism and other forms of oppression around the world.

I am brought before the Landgericht Stuttgart[4] today for civil disobedience against Elbit Systems. As an arms manufacturer and military technology developer, Elbit Systems is a key actor in the genocidal assault on Gaza and the military occupation of Palestine as a whole. A company which markets its weapons as “combat-proven”, using Palestine and Palestinian people for their sick military experiments. A company which profits from war crimes. A company which the German government has allowed to continue functioning on German soil. All the while saying “Nie wieder”[5].

I stand here in full solidarity with my Palestinian siblings in all of historical Palestine, those who have been forced into exile, and those who have been martyred since the colonization of Palestine. As we approach the 78th year commemoration of the Nakba (catastrophe in English), when the UN officialised the colonization of Palestine and over 700,000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from their homeland, we – justice loving people – cannot repeat the fatal mistake of those who watched silently around the world. We cannot rest while the state called Israel continues its colonial expansion into the West Bank, Golan Heights, Lebanon and Gaza through military terror. We refuse to normalize the racist brutality of Europe/US empire-backed Israeli apartheid and massacre.

It is here in Europe and in the US empire where weapons used in genocide and other crimes against humanity are produced. It is here in the so-called Global North that consent for the murder of our Palestinian siblings is manufactured. It is here in Europe that powers grant impunity to the state of Israel, making public clowns of themselves and their double standards.

We, the ordinary people of conscience, must continue to learn and share the history of Palestine and fight for her future – a future without military occupation, apartheid, settler violence, genocide and ethnic cleansing, forced starvation, environmental destruction, generational trauma, racism, intentional water shortage, harassment and torture, and most recently the fascist death sentence which has been added to the long list of grave injustices. We must fight for a future where children grow up hearing birds, not drones, where children grow up in homes, not refugee camps, where they aren't neglected of their education by forced hunger and two-ton bombs. A future where families can visit one another without tortuous military checkpoints, where celebrations are more frequent than funerals, where olive trees, za'atar and akkoub flourish. A future which greets the returning exiled Palestinians. A future with hope and dignity. A future with self-determination.

Life in Palestine is one of survival confronting settler colonialism on the ground, and in existential struggle against erasure in rhetoric, literature and media. Understanding settler colonialism is central to understanding how the Zionist project born in mid-19th-century Europe realised the state of Israel, changing the fate of Palestine and her people ever since.

Colonialism describes the politico-economic relationship of a territory dominated by an external power, to extract its resources, human labour included. It is a process dependent on racism, dehumanization and exploitation.

Have you ever wondered how the cold miserable European states with little valuable natural resources and relatively small labour capacities are some of the richest, most powerful states globally? Surprise: colonialism. The British state has one of the largest bloodiest stains which is their colonial project. It is estimated that Britain accumulated today's worth of US\$54 trillion from the colonial pillaging of India alone. Having colonized (including but not limited to)

today's South Africa, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Nepal and Jamaica, it doesn't take a genius to figure out how Britain built its crumbling social welfare state – with stolen wealth.

Many are much less aware of Germany's colonial pillaging. In 1884 to 1885, German colonizer von Bismarck hosted the so-called "Kongo Konferenz" – the negotiations which brought greedy racist European imperialists together to partition Africa. Despite colonialism only being possible through insane physical and psychological violence, within 20 years of the partitioning of Africa, Germany made its way to the top of the list for just how savage its colonial rule was. In 1904/1905 Germany committed the first genocide of the 20th century in a war of extermination against the Herero and Nama peoples of today's Namibia. Up to 80,000 Herero people and 10,000 Nama people were brutally murdered – 80% and half of their populations respectively. This is where Germany trialled and perfected genocide by way of concentration camps. However, it took the importing of this method home 30 years later, to make "Nie wieder" relevant and even part of the "Staatsräson"[6].

Moving on to settler colonialism as a specific manifestation of colonialism, firstly, it's clear from the name that this mode of colonialism relies on settlers – people immigrating to the territory in question and not just the construction of a colonial political administration. The settlers rely initially on external powers. In the 20th century before Palestine was partitioned and the state called Israel appeared on the map in 1948, the early Zionist settlers relied on military and diplomatic support from Britain, whose own highest priority was securing access to the Suez Canal and securing other geopolitical interests in the region. Similar relations can be traced in the early stage colonisation of turtle island – today's settler-colonial state known as the USA and the state we know as Australia whose European settlers, too, relied initially on British support.

The second particular feature of settler colonialism is the motivation to control the land of the territory being occupied, and not just its valuable resources. This raises the unavoidable question of how to control the land when there are people, in this case the Palestinian people, who already inhabit and cultivate the land? Coercion, land theft, forced displacement, ethnic cleansing, and, finally, culminating in genocide. The story is fundamentally the same in the origin of the settler colony "USA" in which the European settlers committed genocide against the peoples indigenous to the land, forcibly displacing the surviving people out of their homelands and into allocated areas known as "reserves".

Let us return to 19th-century Europe when modern Zionism was transformed from a Christian religious vision into a Jewish nationalist settler-colonial project. Palestine was just one of a few options of where to establish a Zionist colony. Other options included Uganda, Azerbaijan, and various locations in the so-called Americas. In the context of increasingly violent antisemitism in Europe, it is no surprise Jewish people toiled with how to respond to this pervasive problem – to assimilate more deeply into the nations which they already belonged to, or to found a Jewish nation in and of itself. Theodor Herzl, the man considered the father of modern Zionism,

advocated for the latter, likely inspired by the budding nationalist movements around Europe and his vision very quickly became one of settler colonialism.

Brought here today, accused of antisemitism by the state prosecutor in this anti-genocide and anti-colonial action against Elbit Systems, I want to be very clear about the following: I support self-determination wholeheartedly and for this reason it is not the Jewish nationalist pillar of Zionism we bring into question, but the settler-colonial pillar of Zionism which has intentionally prevented Palestinians from self determination for around a century.

It is similar claims which the Palestinian liberation movement in Palestine and globally are accused of. In his book *10 Myths About Israel*, historian Ilan Pappé comments on this, saying the following:

The official Israeli narrative or foundational mythology refuses to allow the Palestinians even a modicum of moral right to resist the Jewish colonisation of their homeland that began in 1882. From the very beginning Palestinian resistance was depicted as motivated by hate for Jews. It was accused of promoting a protean antisemitic campaign of terror that began when the first settlers arrived and continued until the creation of the state of Israel. The diaries of the early Zionists tell a different story. They are full of anecdotes revealing how the settlers were well received by the Palestinians who offered them shelter and in many cases taught them how to cultivate the land. Only when it became clear that settlers had not come to live alongside the native population, but in place of it, did the Palestinian resistance begin. And when that resistance started, it quickly took the form of every other anticolonialist struggle.

With this, let it be known, that no amount of repression and weaponizing antisemitism will separate us from our Palestinian siblings in the anticolonial struggle.

So after the Nakba – the initial partitioning of Palestine – and the 1967 war, in which the remainder of historical Palestine became militarily occupied, the state of Israel has escalated its colonial aggression in the last few years. The genocidal assault on Gaza by the Zionist state has become widely dubbed the first-ever live-streamed genocide.

As Gazan Palestinians have been terrorised by two-tonne bombs, drones, snipers, white phosphorus and jets, regardless whether elderly or newborn, waving white flags, or sick in hospitals, the world has been terrorised by the blinding violence too. Bombing so relentless multi-generation families have been massacred all at once. Parents collecting the pieces of their children into plastic bags. Limbs amputated on kitchen tables without anaesthetic or other necessary medical supplies. Voices begging for help from under the rubble of their bombed homes. People. Burnt. Alive.

These are not anomalous occurrences. They are all fragments of the systematic and intentional erasure of every sphere of life in Gaza. 2/3 of murdered journalists worldwide in 2025 were murdered by Israeli war criminals. Every hospital in Gaza has been partially or completely destroyed by Israeli war criminals. Hospital staff and ambulance responders have been targeted by Israeli war criminals. Schools have been targeted by Israeli war criminals. Refugee camps have been targeted by ... Israeli war criminals. The project of so-called Greater Israel. Emboldened Zionist politicians publicly announce their intention to continue genocide and ethnic cleansing in the region surrounding Palestine. This is why immediate civil action is a must.

In January 2024, the International Court of Justice accepted the case brought forward by South Africa, ruling provisionally that there was already probable grounds indicating the state of Israel was committing genocide. Since then, the genocidal assault has intensified and an international arrest warrant for war crimes has been issued for the architect of the genocide, Netanyahu. And what has the German government done since? Continued with state visits and diplomatically supporting the state of Israel. Continued exporting weaponry and military technology essential for sustaining the genocide. Continued profiting from this very genocide.

“Nie wieder” and complicity in a genocide cannot coexist.

Theoretically, an essential element of democracy is the separation of powers. So, while the executive branch – the German government – has very clearly chosen complicity, what will the judicial branch – the Landgericht Stuttgart, in this case – choose: complicity (in genocide) or “Nie wieder”?

Notes:

[1] The State Security Chamber of the Higher Regional Court, while the trial is by the Regional Court.

[2] The Higher Regional Court building.

[3] Pronounced “Hi Lou”. The judge repeatedly mispronounced Zo’s last name during the trial.

[4] The Stuttgart Regional Court.

[5] Never again.

[6] Raison d’état or reason of state.



@ann_kiernan IG

Vi Kovarbasic

Vi wrote and read their testimony in German; a loved one has authorised this translation

Elbit Systems, Israel's largest private arms manufacturer, has its headquarters in the heart of Ulm. Whilst the people of Ulm take their children to school, do their shopping in the pedestrian zones, and enjoy the spring sunshine in the parks, instruments are being built in the immediate vicinity, in the halls of Elbit Systems, which have been used for decades to surveil, terrorise, and murder people in Palestine and elsewhere.

The vast majority of the drones deployed in Gaza – which reduced entire neighbourhoods to rubble and bombed supposedly safe places such as hospitals and schools – were and are produced by Elbit Systems.

There is no longer any functioning medical care in Gaza. Imagine having to endure a caesarean section without anaesthetic, or having your child's limbs amputated without anaesthetic – conditions brought about by the murderous weapons manufactured by Elbit Systems, through which this company has made and continues to make enormous profits. Elbit Systems boasts that its own products have been tested in Gaza – murder, destruction, and the mass extermination of the civilian population as a special mark of quality.

Every day, people like you and me are dying as a result of Elbit Systems' products. Civilians. People with hopes, ambitions, and dreams. Among them, above all, children, whose murder has wiped out an entire generation. A friend living in Gaza told me how people, on the brink of starvation and desperately queuing for the little flour still available, were blown up by drone strikes or deliberately shot at.

In the occupied West Bank, Palestinians are being monitored, harassed, murdered, and stripped of their dignity. Here too, this is made possible largely by Elbit Systems' products.

And all this has been going on for a long time. Since 1948, for 78 years, Palestinians have been oppressed, robbed of their land and their culture. Heavily armed soldiers are breaking into the homes of the Palestinians living there and forcing them to hand them over to Israeli settlers. The violence of the Israeli occupiers has been a daily reality since 1948. Gaza and the West Bank are open-air prisons. Countless martyrs have died and continue to die in resistance against the degrading living conditions and the theft of their land.

Well before 2023, drones were flying continuously over Gaza and the West Bank. Just imagine: the moment you wake up, you hear the noise of the drones. It is the noise of the drones that keeps you awake at night. Whilst you are cooking, sleeping, working, celebrating weddings, or mourning the loss of your loved ones at funerals. You always hear the noise of the drones. Those

drones that monitor you and can destroy your home or kill a loved one at any moment. This is nothing short of torture. The vast majority of these drones are produced by Elbit Systems.

The reality in Gaza is almost impossible for me to put into words. After the mass murder and destruction, Gaza is nothing more than a pile of rubble. Countless bodies lie beneath the rubble. Among the rubble are children without parents. The soil and the water have been poisoned by the war. Fields have been destroyed. According to leading experts, it would take 80 years to restore the already catastrophic state of the natural and infrastructural foundations of life for the people of Gaza that existed prior to October 2023.

None of this would have been possible without the equipment manufactured by Elbit Systems, the sale of which has generated enormous profits for the company.

How is it possible that such a company is allowed to operate right here in Germany, in Ulm?

The German government supports the genocide politically, militarily, and financially. The German government continues to delegitimise recognised international institutions. Despite the ruling of the International Court of Justice, which found plausible grounds for the claim of genocide in Israel's actions, and despite the arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court against Netanyahu and other ministers in his government: Germany supports the crime against humanity being committed against the Palestinians.

All of this is unbearable for me as a human being capable of empathy and compassion. It breaks my heart. To stand by and watch the mass murder in Gaza is unimaginable to me.

That is why I have been politically active for years. Just like thousands of other people in this country. My – our – political activities to date, our campaigning for a free Palestine, have not only gone unheard; I – we – have also faced extreme state violence.

Pro-Palestinian demonstrations stopped being allowed to march through the streets of Berlin; they were physically suppressed or banned outright from the outset. Absurd restrictions were imposed on peaceful demonstrators. For example, a sticker of a watermelon was enough to be beaten by police officers, and pro-Palestinian comments on social media were sufficient to obtain a court order authorising a violent raid of someone's home.

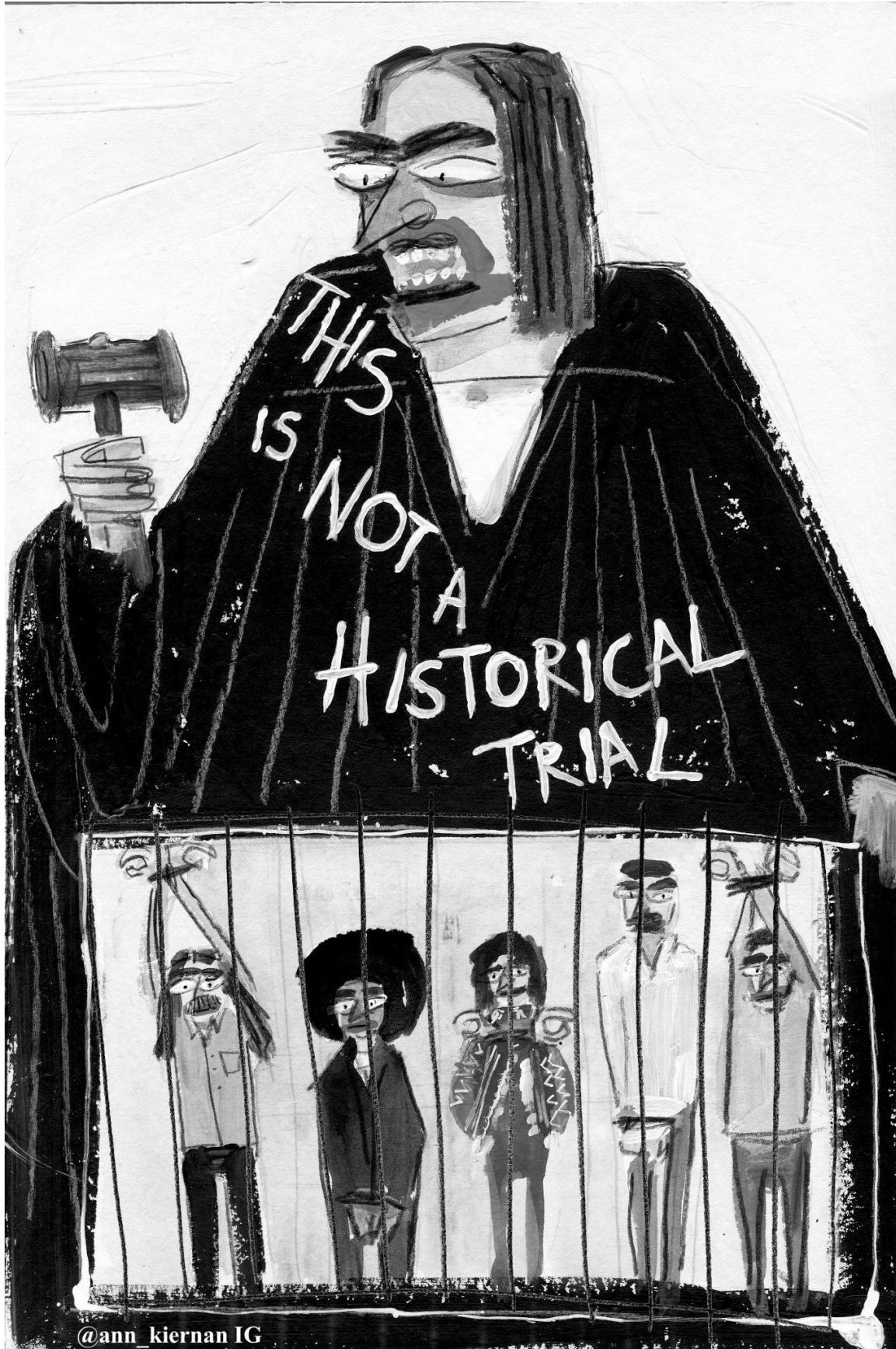
In Berlin alone, thousands of criminal proceedings are being brought against people who have peacefully opposed the genocide. Most of these are for 'speech offences'. Artists have been disinvited and defunded. Professors who speak out in support of their students' right to peaceful protest are defamed in the press as antisemites and silenced – the same baseless supposition with which the prosecutor's office is also attempting to politically and morally delegitimise our action.

What else could I do to stop this terrible bloodbath, this horror, this crime against humanity?

I had no choice but to use my own hands to prevent the construction of yet another drone. In the hope that perhaps one fewer person might have to die. To intervene where these objects – designed solely for murder, destruction, and surveillance – are being produced. And to do so within my own community, using the means at my disposal. In Germany.

I demand an end to this terrible violence. I demand a free Palestine. I demand: Elbit Systems needs to get out of Germany.

My comrades and I are in custody because we are demanding an end to this never-ending, horrific violence and have taken a stand against it – because we are demanding humanity. Our criminalisation, our imprisonment, is an attempt to deny the legitimacy of this demand, of this struggle. If you convict us for this, you are protecting profit through mass destruction, violence, the total destruction of land and people, and the fuelling of the war machine, supporting the crime against humanity being committed against the Palestinians.



Call for Support

Despite the judge's repeated denial of its historical importance, the Ulm5 trial is unambiguously political and, as such, demands public attention, especially because court hearings are not recorded in Germany. The presence of critical media, independent journalists, human rights observers, legal experts, politicians, and members of the public is essential to bear witness and document the proceedings. Attendance is open to anyone with a valid ID; all court hearings start at 9 am and last for several hours with breaks.

Members of the public have been repeatedly subjected to extensive, and at times intrusive, searches upon entry and their expression has been routinely repressed in court. The judge has forbidden the visitors from making any sounds and gestures of support during the proceedings, and on a few occasions visitors have been removed from the courtroom and denied reentry for the remainder of the day. The public's right to pen and paper for note-taking has also been continuously denied, on the presumption that pencils could be dangerous if thrown over the glass wall. These are just a few examples of tactics used by the court to discourage and punish solidarity with the Ulm5.

If you do not wish to enter the building, you can also join to support outside the court. The public from Stuttgart and across Germany has mobilized to create rallies outside the Stammheim prison where speeches, music, letter-writing materials, food, and more has been provided for those who mobilize in support of the Ulm5. All are welcome!

Court address:

Oberlandesgericht Stuttgart (Stammheim), Asperger Str. 47, 70439 Stuttgart

Trial dates:

Originally scheduled dates for 2026:

Apr 27

May 4 (cancelled), 6 (cancelled), 11, 20, 22, 29

June 15, 19, 29

July 1, 3, 22, 24, 27, 29

Additional dates the court added on May 18, extending the trial into 2027:

August 14, 26, 28

September 23, 25, 30

October 2, 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, 30

November 4, 6, 11, 13, 20, 25, 27

December 4, 9, 11, 16, 18

January 8

How to stay informed?

ulm5.info

<https://www.instagram.com/theulm5/>

<https://theleftberlin.com/>

How to support the Ulm5?

Donate:

<https://chuffed.org/project/167228-support-the-ulm-5-political-prisoners-for-palestine>

Write letters:

<https://ulm5.info/en/page/letter-writing-guidelines>

Organize soli events to raise awareness and funds.

Organizations supporting leftist prisoners and fighting criminalization of Palestinian-solidarity activists

Rote Hilfe: <https://rote-hilfe.de/>

3ezwa عزوة: <https://3ezwa.de/>

Solibus e.V.: <https://www.soli-bus.org/>

CAGE International: <https://www.cage.ngo/>

European Legal Support Center: <https://elsc.support/>

SUPPORT PALESTINIAN PRISONERS

As their court statements clearly manifest, the Ulm5 stand in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners who face grave human rights violations under Israeli occupation. Here is a selection of resources to stay informed and support them:

Adameer (Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association): <https://addameer.ps/>

Palestinian Prisoners' Society: <https://www.ppsmo.ps/>

Palestinian Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs: <https://cda.gov.ps/>

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights: <https://www.mezan.org/en>

Al-Haq: <https://www.alhaq.org/>

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