



Institutskolloquium

IfP

Institutskolloquium / DEPARTMENTAL SEMINAR

Gaza and the Securitization of Higher Education in Germany

Wednesday, 22 April 2026 · 16:00 c.t.

Room 124, Institut für Politikwissenschaft
Or join online via Zoom: zoom.us/j/93089750663
930 8975 0663 (Meeting ID), 142311 (Passcode)



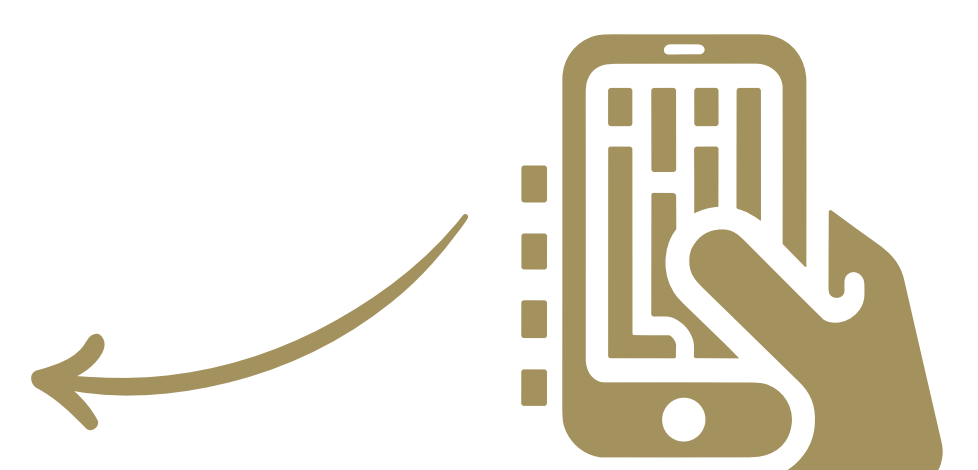
This talk examines how the Gaza war has catalyzed a transformation of higher education governance in Germany, marked by the increasing securitization of academic life. Focusing on the case of Freie Universität Berlin and other universities in Berlin, it traces how Palestine-related speech, teaching, and protest have been reframed as matters of risk management, resulting in event cancellations, intensified surveillance, police interventions, and the routinization of coercive governance on campus. Institutional responses increasingly invoke concerns about “security” and “polarization,” while reinterpreting academic freedom through the lens of controlled and “objective” exchange.

Drawing on original event data, interviews, and survey evidence, the talk shows how these dynamics have produced a climate of self-censorship, social sanctioning, and administrative restriction, disproportionately affecting scholars and students working on Palestine. It argues that this shift is embedded in Germany’s broader political commitment to Israel as Staatsräson, which has facilitated the recoding of dissent as a security concern and the institutionalization of carceral logics within the university.

At the same time, the talk highlights how students and faculty have actively resisted these developments, defending spaces of critical inquiry and rearticulating academic freedom as a practice rather than a protected norm. Campus struggles thus emerge as both a site and an early warning signal of wider authoritarian tendencies, where the normalization of surveillance and curtailed dissent within universities foreshadows democratic erosion beyond them.

Jannis Julien Grimm is an interdisciplinary conflict researcher and the director of the research unit “Radical Spaces” at the Center for Interdisciplinary Peace and Conflict Research at Freie Universität Berlin. He holds a PhD in political science from the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies on the interrelation between social mobilisation, political violence, and state repression. His current work explores the contested meanings of civil disobedience and (non)violent resistance in Sudan, Lebanon, and Palestine, and the conditions of transnational solidarity in the context of mass violence.

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For more information