

## Statement on the Ciorcal Comhrá Bheirlín incident / Ráiteas ar eachtra an Chiorcail Chomhrá Bheirlín



Documentation: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/aaDLLFzXd53siD796>

### (Gaeilge thíos/Irish below)

On April 19th, an evening of Irish song and conversation, organised by the Irish Bloc Berlin and Besetzung Gegen Besatzung (Occupy against Occupation), was unjustly and unconstitutionally prohibited. Disruption and interference by the Berlin police began even before most of the group had arrived. The given reason for this unjust disruption was the lack of a registered Irish language interpreter, despite Irish being an official EU language. This action interferes with our fundamental rights as European citizens to assemble and speak our native language. It is also a clear contravention of German and EU law.

As the event commenced, we were immediately confronted by police who demanded the removal of any Irish-language banners or flags, citing their potential political significance. Our speaking and singing in Irish was also banned, on the grounds that the camp had only two permitted languages: German and English. In recent weeks, Arabic speaking has been significantly repressed in Berlin, with certain Arabic words and slogans banned, and protesters being intimidated, recorded, and even arrested for speaking Arabic without an interpreter present. This context underscored our decision to host the *ciorcal comhrá*, aiming to highlight the contrast in police responses to us as a predominantly white Irish group versus the harsher treatment of Arabic speakers.

Initially, authorities directed us not to sit or stand together within the camp area, labelling it as encouragement for an illegal demonstration. It's important to note that our gathering was intended as a *ciorcal comhrá*—a conversation circle, not a demonstration. Forced to split into smaller groups, our attempts to continue speaking and singing in Irish were met with increased surveillance and intimidation, with police filming us and restricting our movement within the (public) space.

The police insisted that our proximity to the camp implied our involvement in its activities, justifying the prohibition of the Irish language as per their language rules. Despite moving several hundred metres away so as to no longer be considered within the proximity of the camp, sitting spread out on blankets in small groups in a public park, the police continued to harass us. They informed us that since we were now outside the camp, our gathering was illegal, and they presented us with an ultimatum: either return to the camp without displaying any symbols, banners, or flags and cease speaking or singing in Irish, or vacate the vicinity entirely, stipulating that we would also be forbidden from assembling outside of the camp. Such preemptive restrictions on peaceful assembly contravene both German and European law.

By dividing us into smaller groups, the police effectively hindered our communication with one another. Each group encountered varying levels of police interference, and some members struggled to understand instructions given only in German. Our translators faced significant challenges in keeping everyone informed, exacerbated by further enforced fragmentation by the police. This confusion peaked when the police claimed that a "Verwaltungsakt" (administrative act) had been issued to prohibit our assembly, a claim they failed to substantiate. They informed us that we were welcome to file a complaint regarding their inability to produce the act.

Feeling increasingly threatened by the aggressive police presence, and concerned that we might unwittingly cause harm to our Palestinian friends at the camp, we decided to relocate to the Haus der Kulturen der Welt museum nearby. Although this was a private space where the police had no authority to disperse us, a large number of them followed and surveilled us through the building at length, proceeding to maintain a visible presence over a period of several hours outside the café where we congregated. They continued to follow us as we left the café some three hours later, on foot as well as in a convoy of vans, as we made our way to public transport.

We as Irish people are all too familiar with having our language oppressed. This understanding motivated us to express solidarity at the Bundestag protest camp, a place where languages are unjustly repressed and prohibited by an omnipresent and aggressive police force, which has repeatedly intruded into the camp since its beginning, detaining and violently assaulting peaceful protesters.

Despite the police's clear intimidation tactics, we will persist. We are painfully aware that were we not predominantly a white-Irish group, this situation would most likely have unfolded very differently. Volunteers on camp noted that they've never observed the Berlin police so hesitant to arrest or attack people in this context. We intend to continue using our position to protect and support those who critically need it. This incident highlights the harsh realities of discrimination in 2024 Germany, and the very ominous misuse of power in what is supposed to be democracy. Language is a human right.

Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine.

Saoirse don Phalaistín.

Ar an 19ú Aibreán, cuireadh cosc go héagorach agus go mhíbhunreachtúil ar thrathnóna amhránaíochta agus comhrá Éireannach, eagraithe ag an Irish Bloc Berlin agus Besetzung Gegen Besatzung (Occupy against Occupation). Thosaigh sárú agus cur isteach ó póilíní Bheirlín fiú sar a tháinig formhór den ghrúpa. Ba é an chúis tugtha don sárú éagorach ná toisc nach raibh ateangaire cláirithe Gaeilge againn, in ainneoin go bhfuil an Ghaeilge ina teanga oifigiúil an AE. Cuireann an gníomh seo isteach ar ár gcearta bunúsacha mar shaoránaigh Eorpach le teacht le chéile agus ár dteanga dhúchais a labhairt. Is sárú soléir é freisin ar dhlí na Gearmáine agus an AE.

Nuair a thosaigh an imeacht, thug na póilíní aghaidh orainn láithreach agus d'éiligh siad go mbainfí aon bhratacha nó meirgí Gaeilge, ag lua a bhrí pholaitiúil féideartha. Cuireadh cosc freisin ar labhairt nó canadh trí Ghaeilge, ar an mbunús nach raibh ach dhá teanga ceadaithe sa champa: Gearmáinis and Béarla. Le roinnt seachtain anuas, tá labhairt na h-Araibise faoi chois go mór in mBeirlín, le cosc ar fhocail agus manaí ar leith, agus imeaglú a dhéanamh ar na h-agóideoirí, iad a thaifead, agus fiú iad a ghabháil as Araibis a labhairt gan ateangaire a bheith i láithir. Chuir an comhthéacs seo béim ar ár gcinneadh an ciorcal chomhrá a chuir i láithir, agus é mar aidhm againn an chodarsnacht i bhfreagraí na bpóilíní dúinne a léiriú mar ghrúpa geal Éireannach den chuid is mó i gcomparáid leis an dianchóireáil níos géire a dhéantar ar chainteoirí Arabacha.

I dtús báire, d'ordaigh na húdaráis dúinn gan seasamh nó suí le chéile i limistéar an champa, ag cur lipéad spreagadh le haghaidh agóid mídleathach ar. Tá sé tábhachtach a thabhairt faoi deara go raibh ár dtionól ceaptha mar *chiorcal chomhrá* - ní agóid a bhí ann. Tar éis éigeantais a chuir orainn scaradh i ngrúpaí níos lú, buaileadh lenár n-iarreachtaí labhairt agus canadh trí Ghaeilge le méadú ar an bhfaireachas agus imeaglú, leis na póilíní ag taifeadadh orainn agus ag srianadh ár ngluaiseacht laistigh den spás (poiblí).

Dhearbhaigh na póilíní gur thug ár ngaireacht dtí'n champa le fios go rabhamar bainteach lena h-imeachtaí, ag tabhairt údar ar an chosc ar an Ghaeilge de réir a rialacha teanga. Bhogamar na céadta méadar ón gcampa ionas nach meastar laistigh de limistéar an champa miad, ag suí scartha óna chéile ar phluideanna i bpáirc phoiblí, ach in ainneoin sin, lean na póilíní ar aghaidh ag ciapadh orainn. D'inis siad dúinn anois go raibh an chruinniú mídleathach toisc go rabhamar taobh amuigh den champa, agus tugtar foláireamh deireadh dúinn: filleadh ar an gcampa gan aon bratacha, meirgí, nó siombail ar thaispeáint agus deireadh a chur le labhairt nó canadh trí Ghaeilge, nó an cheantar a fhágáil go hiomlán, ar an gcoinníoll go mbeadh cosc orainn freisin teacht le chéile lasmuigh den champa. Is sárú dlí na Gearmáine agus dlí na hEorpa araon é srianta réamhchoiscitheach den sórt sin a chur ar thionól síochánta.

Trí muid a scaradh i ngrúpaí níos lú, chuir na póilíní bac éifeachtach ar ár gcumarsáid lena chéile. Tháinig gach grúpa ar leibhéil éagsúla trasnaíochta póilíneachta, agus bhí deacrachtaí ag roinnt ball den ghrúpa teoracha a thugadh i nGearmáinis amháin a thuiscint. Bhí dúshlán mhór ag ár n-aistritheoirí maidir le gach duine a choimeád ar an eolas, rud a d'éirigh níos measa ag ilroinnt bhreise a rinne na póilíní. Tháinig buaicphointe ar an mearbhall seo nuair a mhaígh na póilíní gur eisíodh "Verwaltungsakt" (acht riaracháin) chun ár dtionól a thoirmeasc, rud nár thug siad bunús le. Chuir siad in iúl dúinn go raibh fáilte orainn ghearán a dhéanamh maidir lena neamhábaltacht an t-acht a chur ar fáil.

Ag mothú go rabhamar faoi bhagairt ag na póilíní, agus imní orainn go bhféadfaimis dochar a dhéanamh i ngan fhios dár gcairde Palaistíneacha ag an gcampa, bheartaigh muid athlonnú go dtí músaem Haus der Kulturen der Welt in aice láimhe. Cé gur spás príobháideach seo nach bhfuil údarás ag na bpóilíní miad a scaipeadh, lean grúpa mór acu muid ag faire orainn tríd an bhfoirgneamh i bhfad, ag leanúint orthu le láithreach infheicthe a choimeád orainn thar thréimhse roinnt uaireanta lasmuigh den chaifé inar tháinig miad le chéile. Leanadar miad agus muid ag fágáint an chaifé trí uair an chloig ina dhiaidh sin, ag siúl, chomh maith le conbhua veaineanna, agus muid ag dul i dtreo iompar poiblí.

Mar Éireannaigh, táimid ró-eolach ar ár dteanga a bheith faoi chois. Spreag an tuiscint seo miad chun dlúthpháirtíocht a thaispeáint le campa agóide an Bundestag, campa ina bhfuil teangacha faoi chois go héagórach agus coiscthe ag fórsa póilíneachta ionsathach agus uileláithreach, atá tar éis brúigh isteach ar an gcampa arís agus arís eile ón uair gur thosaigh sé, ag gabháil agus ag ionsaí agóideoirí síochánta go foréigneach.

In ainneoin teaicticí imeaglú na póilíní, leanfaimid orainn. Is eol dúinn go nimhneach murar grúpa geal-Éireannach a bhí againn den chuid is mó, bheadh tortha go hiomlán difriúil ar an gcás. Thug oibrí deonach ag an gcampa faoi deara nár fhaca siad póilíní i mBeirlín chomh éiginnte riabh chun daoine a ghabháil nó a ionsaí so chomhthéacs seo. Tá sé i gceist againne leanúint orainn lenár gcéim a úsáid le tacaíocht agus chosaint a thabhairt leo siúd a bhfuil sé de dhíth orthu. Leagann an eachtra seo béim ar fhirinní crua an idirdhealú in 2024 sa Ghearmáin, agus ar an mí-úsáid cumhachta i dtír atá in ainmse a bheith ina daonlathas. Is cearta daonna í teanga.

Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine.

Saoirse don Phalaistín.

## Timeline of Statements & Coverage

20 April 2024 - **Twitter**: Written statement from Polizei Berlin

[https://twitter.com/Ruairi\\_Casey/status/1781657860616675477](https://twitter.com/Ruairi_Casey/status/1781657860616675477)

21 April 2024 - **Brave New Europe**: *What New Age Fascism in Germany Looks Like: Statement on the Ciorcal Comhrá Bheirlín Incident*

<https://braveneweuropa.com/what-new-age-fascism-in-germany-looks-like-statement-on-the-ciorcal-comhra-bheirlin-incident-raiteas-ar-eachtra-an-chiorcail-chomhra-bheirlin>

22 April 2024 - **Irish Independent**: *Activists in Berlin Told to Stop Speaking Irish at Palestine Solidarity Event at Reichstag Building*

<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/berlin-police-ban-irish-protesters-from-speaking-or-singing-in-irish-at-pro-palestine-ciorcal-comhra-near-reichstag/a234500393.html>

22 April 2024 - **District Magazine**: *Irish Pro-Palestine demonstrators in Berlin were prevented from speaking Irish during a ciorcal comhrá.*

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C6D1gswsU52/>

22 April 2024 - **Tuairisc**: *Stop curtha le húsáid na Gaeilge ag agóid ar son na Palaistíne in Berlin*

<https://tuairisc.ie/stop-curtha-le-husaid-na-gaeilge-ag-agoid-ar-son-na-palaistine-in-berlin/>

22 April 2024 - **RTE**: *Tús Áite Dé Luain 22 Aibreán 2024*

<https://www.rte.ie/radio/rnag/tus-aite/2024/0422/1445052-tus-aite-de-luain-22-aibrean-2024/>

22 April 2024 - **Irish Central**: *Irish Banned Berlin*

<https://www.irishtoday.com/news/irish-banned-berlin>

22 April 2024 - **thejournal.ie**: *Irish Pro-Palestine Activists Stopped From Speaking Irish at Protest, Berlin Police* (top story on the homepage)

<https://www.thejournal.ie/irish-pro-palestine-activists-stopped-from-speaking-irish-at-protest-berlin-police-6361297-Apr2024/>

22 April 2024 - **Sunday World**: *Protesters Told They Are Not Allowed to Speak Irish by German Police at Pro-Palestine Protest Camp*

<https://www.sundayworld.com/news/irish-news/protesters-told-they-are-not-allowed-to-speak-irish-by-german-police-at-pro-palestine-protest-camp/a46636262.html>

23 April 2024 - **iamexpat.de**: *Berlin Police Say Protest Can Only Be Held in German or English*

<https://www.iamexpat.de/expat-info/german-expat-news/berlin-police-say-protest-can-only-be-held-german-or-english>

23 April 2024 - **Newstalk**: *No Irish Allowed Outside the Bundestag: Why?*

<https://www.newstalk.com/podcasts/highlights-from-the-hard-shoulder/no-irish-allowed-outside-the-bundestag-why>

23 April 2024 - **The New Arab**: *Berlin Bans Protesters From Singing in Irish and Hebrew at Pro-Palestine Rally*

<https://www.newarab.com/news/inside-pro-palestine-encampment-front-bundestag-berlin>

23 April 2024 - **Official Statement from Sinn Féin**: *Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD demanding an apology from German Government*

<https://vote.sinnfein.ie/ni-mor-do-rialtas-na-heireann-leithsceal-agus-meas-do-chearta-an-duine-a-lorg-on-ngearmain-aengus-o-snodaigh-td/>

24 April 2024 - **Neues Deutschland**: *Dangerous Language Bans at Pro-Palestine Camp in Berlin*

<https://www.nd-aktuell.de/artikel/1181746.irish-dangerous-language-bans-at-pro-palestine-camp-in-berlin.html>

24 April 2024 - **The Local.de**: *Fact-Check: Are Foreign-Language Protests Really Forbidden in Germany?*

<https://www.thelocal.de/20240424/fact-check-are-foreign-language-protests-really-forbidden-in-germany>

24 April 2024 - **Middle East Eye**: *Berlin Police Told Demonstrators at a Pro-Palestine Rally to Stop Speaking or Singing in Gaelic or Hebrew, Irish Media Reported*

<https://www.instagram.com/middleeasteye/p/C6JxPCDCFmN/>

24 April 2024 - **Fire.org**: *German Police Forbid Speaking Irish at Berlin Protest*

<https://www.thefire.org/news/blogs/free-speech-dispatch/german-police-forbid-speaking-irish-berlin-protest>

26 April 2024 - **Belfast Media**: *German Police Break Up Irish Camp Supporting Palestine in Berlin*

<https://belfastmedia.com/german-police-break-up-irish-camp-supporting-palestine-in-berlin>

26 April 2024 - **EU Parliament**: *Clare Daly Raises in the EU Parliament*

<https://x.com/claredalymep/status/1783873016180453807?s=46>

29 April 2024 - **Podcast**: *Corner Spaeti*

<https://x.com/cornerspaeti/status/1784860859237343457>

30 April 2024 - **Irish Parliament**: *Question Raised in the Dáil Eireann*

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2024-04-30/155/>

17 May 2024 - **Megan's Megacan**: *Saoirse Don Phalaistín*

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/megans-megacan/episodes/Saoirse-don-Phalaistín-e2jq196>

Mentioned

26 April 2024 - **Deutsche Welle (DW)**: *German Police Clear Pro-Palestinian Camp in Berlin*

<https://www.dw.com/en/german-police-clear-pro-palestinian-camp-in-berlin/video-68934568>

23 April 2024 - **Junge Welt**: *Sprachverbot Des Tages Hebräisch*

<https://www.jungewelt.de/artikel/473956.sprachverbot-des-tages-hebr%C3%A4isch.html>

5 June 2024 - **Private Eye**: *Letter from Berlin*