Fear in the Ranks: Berlin's Mayor-Designate and the Reach of Militant Groups

2 NOVEMBER 2026

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Eralp's private fears of a PFLP-linked activist fuel doubts over handing her party control of Berlin.

Berlin's likely next mayor, Elif Eralp of Die Linke, is under pressure after her office mistakenly sent *Der Spiegel* internal notes on an interview. They stated that she and her husband feared "these people", reportedly referring to Ibrahim Ibrahim, a pro-Palestinian activist described in media reports as PFLP-linked, who has praised Hamas leader Sinwar; he denies supporting terrorism. Eralp says she will not be intimidated. Nonetheless, the CDU and parts of the SPD question her suitability, while the Central Council of Jews warns against giving the party responsibility for protecting Jewish life in Berlin. Die Linke is currently pursuing coalition talks.

The debate has so far centred around whether Erlap is suitale to govern. But there is a more consequential question: What does this episode reveal about Germany's counterterrorism toolkit? Since 7 October 2023, Germany has relied on association bans and prosecutions, and these have worked against attack plots. In March 2026, a Berlin court jailed four Hamas members over weapons caches, and seven alleged operatives were charged in September over plans to attack Jewish or Israeli targets. But those efforts targeted membership and violence, not the grey zone in which figures like Ibrahim reportedly move: publicly glorifying terror and attending party events, but without belonging to a banned group. Yet it left Erlap afraid to name names, and police reportedly advised her not to- a sign authorities treat this as a serious personal-security issue.

This matters beyond Berlin. If extremist milieus can silence a senior politician, intimidation achieves what bans are meant to prevent: influence over democratic decision-making. Whoever governs, the case shows Germany's counterterrorism framework lacks answers to quieter threats of intimidation of elected officials with the prospect of political violence.

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