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Symposium "On the Critique of Freedom and Its Repression in Liberal Democracies"

Call for donations

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Update:

The symposium “On the Critique of Freedom and its Repression” will take place

– thanks to an overwhelming willingness to donate in a very short time!

CALL FOR DONATIONS

The City of Stuttgart has withdrawn funding for a symposium organized by the Württembergischer Kunstverein that critically examines the increasing political pressure on art and academic institutions.

We need your support.

Shortly before the start of our symposium On the Critique of Freedom and its Repression, the city of Stuttgart withdrew its previously approved funding of €15,000. To ensure that the event can take place as planned from March 13 to 15, 2026, we rely on your support and kindly ask for your donation. Open public debate on controversial topics is more important than ever.

The planned interdisciplinary symposium addresses the question of artistic, academic, and freedom of expression in Germany and other liberal democracies. This is prompted by the observation that critical spaces for discourse and action are increasingly narrowing on certain topics—in particular, German “Staatsräson” (raison d'état), but also climate activism and activism against the far right. At the same time, we clearly distance ourselves from right-wing populist positions that view discrimination—whether in the form of racism, sexism, or anti-Semitism—as a natural right to freedom.

In the run-up to the symposium, the German-Israeli Society (DIG) in Stuttgart sent an open letter to city officials demanding that funding for the event be withdrawn. Without any basis, it accuses the event of "anti-Israel propaganda." The participants—including Jewish researchers—are defamed as "anti-Semitic agents."

We strongly reject these accusations. Neither the event nor its participants nor the WKV promote or relativize anti-Semitism – on the contrary.

The Cultural Office of the City of Stuttgart has now reviewed the current concept of the symposium, which has been available to it for weeks, and finally withdrew its funding shortly before the event was to begin. It justifies this step with professional objections. While it does not follow the DIG’s accusations, it does comply

with its demand to withdraw financial support. We deeply regret this decision.

A democratic society thrives on controversial and uncomfortable discussions—including those about German Staatsräson—being conducted with mutual respect. It is also up to civil society to keep spaces for discourse and action open. That is why we are turning to you.

Your donation will help us to realize the symposium in its planned form. Support and experience a factual, well-founded, and nuanced discussion with internationally renowned experts from the fields of philosophy, law, racism research and anti-Semitism research, Middle East studies, and art and cultural studies!

Join us in setting an example for open debate in Stuttgart and for independent art, science, and society!

Our goal is to compensate for the €15,000 that has been reclaimed. Every donation—whether large or small—counts. **We need to close the funding gap in the short term: if you can, please donate today!**

We thank you for your support and solidarity!

Information on the symposium
On the Critique of Freedom and its Repression in Liberal Democracies
https://www.wkv-stuttgart.de/en/program/2026/veranstaltungen/freedom

Call for donations:
https://www.wkv-stuttgart.de/en/program/2026/veranstaltungen/donations/