

Four days after the G8 summit

German police raid eleven premises on suspicion of “terrorism”

Our reporter
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Only days after the end of the G8 summit, German police conducted new raids against left-wing and anarchist organisations in northern Germany. Early on Wednesday morning the federal prosecutor’s office and police carried out surprise searches of a total of 11 premises in Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein.

The operation involved several hundred police and officials, who confiscated computers and documents from offices and private dwellings. The raids were carried out under Paragraph 129a of the German penal code, which makes it an offence to establish or support a criminal organisation. The police arrested no one and reported that no warrants for arrest had been issued.

Petra Kneuer, spokesperson for the German prosecutor’s office, immediately denied that the raids had anything to do with the G8 summit. Instead she claimed that the coordinated action was connected to alleged arson attacks on property and vehicles carried out by groups and individuals going back as far as 2002. She also said that the latest raids were unconnected with those already carried out by police against left-wing groups prior to the G8 summit.

On May 9 German police carried out a series of raids, planned long in advance, against anti-globalisation and left-wing organizations across Germany. On that occasion nine hundred police searched a total of 40 locations in northern Germany—also on the basis of suspicion that the organizations raided were involved in the “creation of a terrorist organization.” At that time the prosecutor’s office argued that it had indications that terrorist attacks were being prepared in connection with the G8 summit.

The claim by the prosecutor’s office that its current raids have nothing to do with the G8 summit is absurd.

The raids on Wednesday can only be understood as part of a systematic offensive by the German government and interior ministry aimed at criminalising left-wing and anarchist organisations and systematically undermining basic democratic rights.

The connection between the raids on Wednesday and the G8 summit is made by a number of leading German newspapers (including *Der Spiegel* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*), which begin their accounts of the police action by noting the outbreaks of violence and the clashes between police and demonstrators on the eve of the mass demonstration held in Rostock June 2. In its own report on the raids, *Die Welt* features prominently a picture of ominous, black-garbed anarchist demonstrators from the “black bloc” at the anti-G8 demonstration.

While seeking to use the clashes that erupted in Rostock as a justification for the latest round of police raids on left organisations, none of these newspapers report that considerable evidence now indicates that police provocateurs and undercover agents were active in initiating the violence in Rostock and at other events surrounding the summit.

During the summit last Wednesday, a police provocateur was unmasked by protesters in the course of a blockade by G8 opponents of the security fence surrounding the conference hotel and premises. The undercover police agent was dressed in ‘anarchist’ gear and aroused the suspicion of demonstrators with his loud appeals to throw stones at the police. Demonstrators unmasked the man and handed him over to police who showed little interest in apprehending or dealing with their colleague.

Following the incident, the head of police responsible

for enforcing security in Heiligendamm conceded that officers were active in an undercover role amongst protesters. This was normal procedure, he claimed. While it may well be ‘normal procedure,’ such infiltration contravenes the right to assembly. What remains entirely unclarified by the police officer’s admission is the precise role played by his officers in the violent clashes in Rostock, which resulted in the injury of several hundred opponents of the G8 summit.

The latest raids on left-wing organisations can only be understood as part of the campaign by the German Interior Ministry led by Wolfgang Schäuble to equate demonstrations, protests and the activities of left-wing organisations with terrorism.

Following the initial “anti-terror” raids May 9, Schäuble and the German chancellor Angela Merkel (both Christian Democratic Union) stressed that they respected the right of assembly and peaceful protest. At the same time the German government stepped up its repressive measures in preparation for the G8 summit.

Soon after the May 9 raids, it emerged that the “evidence” confiscated by investigators and police included samples of odor from the clothing of those persons raided. In a sinister homage to the methods of the notorious East German Stasi secret police, the human odors were to be given to sniffer dogs at a later date to allow the detection of “suspects.”

Schäuble pointedly refused to denounce such a practice and also announced plans for the “preemptive” arrest of demonstrators to prevent any disruption at the G8 summit—another measure which patently violates the basic right to assembly stipulated in the German constitution. Police then called for a ban on all demonstrations within a 40-square kilometer area around the Baltic resort of Heiligendamm and the Rostock airport. Following appeals by organizers of the planned demonstration, this decision was recently upheld by Germany’s highest court—the Constitutional Court.

Parallel to the unprecedented security operation surrounding the summit, which involved the use of 16,000 police officers (the biggest domestic mobilization in Germany since the end of the Second World War), police and security services have conducted widespread and intrusive sweeps of private mail and online raids of computers and Internet sites in its efforts to obtain information about the activity of

protesters and left-wing organizations. Once again such measures make a mockery of the basic constitutional right to privacy.

In another unprecedented move, German fighter planes were mobilized to spy on demonstrators in the course of the anti-summit protests. Following complaints from protesters, the German defence ministry confirmed on Tuesday that two of its jets, currently deployed for reconnaissance flights in Afghanistan, were reassigned to monitor the area surrounding the G8 security fence.

Following the recent controversial decision to send German military aircraft to participate in “anti-terror” operations in Afghanistan, Defence Minister Franz Josef Jung has now permitted the use of the same aircraft to help harass and suppress domestic opposition.

For his part, Interior Minister Schäuble has been campaigning for some time for permission to use German military forces to combat “terrorism,” in which category he lumps anti-capitalist protesters and left-wing organisations. The latest police raids in the wake of the G8 summit represent a flagrant breach of constitutional norms.



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