

Germany: State of emergency in Bremen following alleged terror scare

Dietmar Henning
4 March 2015

Bremen, a city of 550,000, was in a state of siege over the weekend. Military clad police armed with machine guns patrolled the inner city on Saturday and Sunday, in front of the city council, the Senate and cathedral. The police checked vehicles, searched apartments and a building belonging to a Muslim association. Data storage devices were confiscated, and Muslims temporarily detained.

Bremen's interior senator, Ulrich Neurer (Social Democrats, SPD), and the state prosecutor justified the civil war-like conditions by stating that there was a concrete terrorist warning from a federal authority, without naming the authority or the precise details of the warning. According to *Spiegel Online*, the authority was a German intelligence agency, meaning either the domestic intelligence agency (BFV), foreign intelligence service (BND) or the military surveillance agency (MAD).

The questioning of individuals, searching of properties and arrests by the police did not confirm the terrorist threat. No weapons were found, the people who were questioned were found guilty of nothing, and two people who were detained had to be released because there were no grounds to hold them.

Late on Sunday evening, the presence of heavily armed police in the city centre was reduced, with only the Jewish community still being patrolled by police.

Allegedly, a 39-year-old man of Lebanese origin procured machine guns to sell to others. "This evidence was so concrete that we could not rule out an attack in Bremen," Interior Senator Neurer commented on the stage of the investigation, which has been ongoing since the beginning of the year.

The state prosecutor claimed that the suspect was distributing the weapons to people who were close to an Islamic cultural centre. But although the police searched the Islamic cultural centre of Bremen e. V. and the home and workplace of the man, they found no weapons.

The Lebanese man, together with another man who was said to be his accomplice and whose home was also searched by the police, were temporarily detained. Both have been set free, but further investigations into their activities are ongoing. The police have accused them of breaching the law on the control of military weapons.

Responding to the question if the information about suspected weapons had been set aside or was simply false, Neurer answered, "We don't know the result of that. We have pursued all evidence."

Neurer defended the major operation. In Bremen, there was "a major Salafist scene," he told Bavarian state radio. "There are many people who have joined IS [Islamic State] and have fought in Syria, and a number of men from Bremen who have already been killed."

Later he gave more details on exact numbers and declared that the Bremen state intelligence service was observing 360 Salafists. Nineteen Muslims from Bremen, some of them children, had travelled to fight in Syria, he said, four have supposedly died in the fighting and two have returned.

The main target of surveillance were Salafists in two associations. For some time, the cultural and family association (KuF) was suspected by authorities. The group runs a mosque in Bremen-Gröpelingen and was banned by Neurer in December 2014.

Already in 2011, the Munich state court convicted two KuF founding members with promoting the terrorist group Al Qaeda and other organisations with close ties to it. One of the two was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison, because the court believed that he intended to travel to an Al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan.

SPD interior politician Burkhard Lischke also defended the civil war-style exercise in Bremen. When such warnings are made, there is no action by the authorities that can be too reckless, he told radio station NDR Info. He announced that this would not be the last exercise. He

expected further terror scares, because IS intended to bring terrorism to Europe's cities.

The police trade union (GDP), a member of the German trade union confederation (DGB), also defended the operation. GDP Chairman Oliver Malchow said on ZDF television's "Morgenmagazin" that the large operation was "certainly not an overreaction." It had been based on a justified suspicion, and therefore such an operation was necessary. The concrete threat in Germany had not just existed since the attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, he added.

Rainer Wendt, the chairman of the German police union (DPolG), told the daily *Passauer Neue Presse*, "Terrorism is no longer abstract, but rather very concrete." The German public would have to get used to this, he said.

Neurer bluntly admitted that an aim of the Bremen operation was intimidation: "We focused on a group. We wanted to make these people insecure, but we have not found enough evidence for further measures."

The Bremen action had been prepared systematically over recent months. Germany's security agencies have suspended democratic rights for a third time this year on the basis of a warning of a terrorist attack.

In January, a Pegida demonstration and all counter-demonstrations were banned in Dresden because of a terrorist threat. In mid-February, the carnival procession in Braunschweig was cancelled. In neither of these two cases did the police or intelligence agencies provide any concrete evidence of an acute terrorist threat.

Wolfgang Bosbach (Christian Democrats, CDU), chairman of the interior parliamentary committee in Germany's federal parliament, nonetheless declared, "After Dresden, Braunschweig and Bremen, it is increasingly difficult for me to say that only an abstract threat exists."

Prior to this, there had only been one official terror warning in two decades after the September 11 attacks in the United States. Then, four years ago, Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière (CDU) warned of a terrorist attack. The police closed off the dome and roof terraces of Germany's parliament building for some time, because there was allegedly evidence of plans by Islamist terrorists to attack the Bundestag.

The veracity of this terror warning was never confirmed. But it immediately triggered calls for a strengthening of state powers. This has also been the case since the events over the weekend in Bremen.

In a comment by Joachim Käppner, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* demanded an increase in police numbers as well

as a strengthening of legal restraints, such as the law on the temporary storage of data. This would enable the police "to follow over several months who had telephoned or emailed with suspects and when." Käppner cynically added, "That would have also been good to know with regard to the NSU (neo-fascist) killers."

Käppner's audacity is breathtaking. The racist murders and attacks by the National Socialist Underground were not made possible because the intelligence agencies knew too little, but because they covered up and protected the NSU. The close connections between the intelligence agencies, the Nazi scene and NSU have been proven. The Munich state court is currently examining the suspicion that an employee of the Hesse state intelligence service, Andreas Temme, who was present at the NSU's eighth murder, of Halil Yozgad, had been informed of the attack prior to it taking place.

The suspects in the terrorist attacks in Boston, Paris and Copenhagen, who are now also being used as proof of the terrorist threat, were known to the intelligence agencies. The strengthening of the state is not directed against Islamic terrorism or right-wing extremists, who are often built up and financed by the state authorities. Rather, under conditions of growing social tensions domestically and the growth of German militarism abroad, it is directed against the growth of opposition within the working class.

In Hamburg, Mayor Olaf Scholz (SPD) declared entire areas of the city to be no-go zones early last year, suspending fundamental democratic rights. Several demonstrations were broken up, over 100 residency bans imposed and hundreds of people arbitrarily detained and searched because they wore black clothes or appeared to be "left." Today it is the Salafists who are the target of the state's expanded powers; tomorrow it will be workers and youth protesting against poverty, job losses and war.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact