

German police warn refugees not to attend carnival in Cologne

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21 February 2017

A letter written by a police department in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) has revealed the attitude of the state apparatus to refugees. “From a police point of view,” they are undesired at traditional carnival celebrations due to start this Thursday in NRW.

An official from the NRW Central Police Office (LZPD) in the city of Duisburg sent an official internal letter to the NRW district administration. It was then published by the *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*.

Under the title “Information on the 2017 Carnival,” it addressed the “counsellors of refugees and asylum seekers,” who have organised the attendance at carnival events in previous years, and said: “From a police point of view, these actions are rather to be seen critically, since they force mass attendance of refugees and asylum seekers.”

With regard to the “current security situation in Germany, and also because of the events on the previous New Year’s Eve ... we are dissuading” refugees and asylum seekers from attending, wrote the LZPD.

It warns the refugees about “strengthened police and security checks” and requests that, if they attend the carnival anyway, they must “submit to the checks without criticism.” They should have identification papers with them and “carry no large bags, backpacks or dangerous objects.”

When questioned by the press, the police department confirmed that the letter was genuine. At the same time, they distanced themselves from its content. It should “not have been published,” said Schabacker, spokesperson for the LZPD. It should have stated things differently and provided merely factual information, such as, for example, that large bags could be checked by the police.

Ralf Jäger (Social Democratic Party, SPD), who

heads the Ministry for Internal Affairs and Municipal Issues (MIK), also distanced himself from the letter when he was questioned by the *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*. “Something of that nature would be unacceptable,” he said.

These statements are transparent attempts at damage control. The LZPD is directly subordinate to the Interior Ministry under Jäger. The letter also mentions an agreement with Department 1 of the ministry, which is also responsible for foreigner affairs.

During New Year’s Eve, the police in Cologne carried out a huge deployment of over 2,000 police and claimed that more than 2,000 North Africans “flocked together.” At night, the police tweeted: “Hundreds of Nafri are currently being checked at the main train station. Information to follow.” Men who did not fit with the police interpretation of what constitutes a “German” were singled out and held by police in front of the main train station building for several hours.

The chief of the Cologne police, Jürgen Mathies, later apologized for the racist term “Nafri,” which is a police abbreviation for “North African habitual offender.” However, he stood by the claim that “the men travelled [to Cologne] from all over the country and arrived at nearly the exact same time.”

It was later revealed that the report of “violent hordes of men” from North African countries (WRD Radio Broadcasting) was a fiction. The police information was simply false. On January 13, the Cologne police sheepishly admitted that it had determined the identities of 674 people, and of the 425 whose nationalities had been established, just 30 came from North Africa.

There was also no “mob” or “showdown with the police,” or prior conspiracy to commit crimes. The presence of a few hundred young men of “foreign appearance” in Cologne, the largest city in NRW, is not

peculiar, certainly not on New Year's Eve, when 50,000 of the city's 1 million residents, a third of whom have an immigrant background, attend celebrations.

Nevertheless, the misinformation spread. No more than two weeks later, the Cologne police reported the initial results of an "investigation." "The ten investigators of the 'New Year's Eve working group' want to find out among other things why so many refugees and asylum seekers travelled to Cologne from countries such as Iraq, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria for New Year's," wrote the *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* on January 25. This was demonstrably not the case.

The newspaper quoted a report by the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), which described Cologne as a "magnet for entering North Africans."

The lies about North Africans, refugees and foreigners serve a political purpose. They are aimed at shifting the anger over social cuts, unemployment and poverty away from the responsible Social Democrats and Green politicians onto defenceless refugees, and at justifying the building up of the police and state surveillance apparatus. This is grist for the mill of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and other right-wing and far-right parties.



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