

German politicians call for quicker deportations after attacks in Hamburg and Konstanz

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The blood of the victims in Hamburg and Konstanz has barely had time to dry and the background to both attacks remains unclear, but politicians from all of the major parties are already seeking to outdo each other with right-wing demagogy.

In the Hamburg district of Barmbek, Ahmad A., a 26-year-old Palestinian born in the United Arab Emirates, began stabbing the people around him without warning in a supermarket on Friday afternoon, killing one and injuring five before passers-by restrained him and he was detained by the police. He had travelled to Germany in 2015 and filed an application for asylum that was rejected. Since then, he has been legally obliged to leave the country.

Two days later, at 4:20 a.m. on Sunday morning, a 34-year-old Iraqi man armed with an automatic weapon managed to gain entry to “Grey,” a large nightclub in an industrial district of Konstanz. The Iraqi Kurd, whose asylum had been recognised, shot one of the security personnel and fired further shots at the entrance. Three guests and employees of the security firm were injured. Police commandos were rapidly on the scene and engaged him in a firefight, severely injuring him. He died in hospital.

Little is known thus far about both incidents, including what the motives were.

Ahmad A., after leaving behind the misery of the Palestinian occupied territories, reportedly endured a long odyssey: travelling through Egypt, Norway, Sweden and Spain. He was questioned last November by members of the Hamburg state intelligence agency because they had received information from the police that his behaviour had been flagged. According to police, religion allegedly suddenly began to play a

major role in Ahmad A.’s life; he was citing Koran verses, no longer drinking alcohol and becoming withdrawn.

Such behaviour is now sufficient to be placed under suspicion by the police and intelligence agencies. The agents apparently concluded he was not dangerous, but rather mentally unstable and insecure. Although he stated he was religious, he was close to his father and feared returning to the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

After the discussion, agents labelled him a suspected Islamist, but not a jihadi or “threat.” There have to date been no indications that he had ties to Islamic State (ISIS) or other Islamist groups. He took no legal action following the rejection of his asylum application and allegedly did not resist his departure, but complied the best he could. He wanted to return home to his father in Gaza and had repeatedly inquired if his travel documents were available.

Although the intelligence agencies recommended that Ahmad A. receive an assessment from social and psychiatric services, this never took place.

Ahmad A. lived in a container at an accommodation centre for refugees. His fellow residents told the media he “was strange in the head.” However, there is no evidence that the man, who has no criminal record, was ever given psychotherapeutic treatment.

Information available thus far suggests that the attack occurred as follows: The man bought items at the supermarket, left, returned shortly afterwards, seized a kitchen knife that was for sale, ripped it out of its packaging, and began attacking people indiscriminately, first in the supermarket, and then on the street outside. A 50-year-old man died and others were injured.

Passers-by armed themselves with chairs and anything else they could carry, and sought to detain the attacker. Someone allegedly spoke to Ahmad A. in Arabic, after he had shouted, “Allahu Akhbar,” and sought to reason with him, but without success. After continuing to stab people, he was injured by paving stones thrown at him and arrested by the police. He apparently described himself as a terrorist to the police. However, no organisation has yet claimed responsibility for his attack.

The facts known thus far at least suggest that a traumatised and fragile young person, who had experienced nothing but uncertainty and opposition from the states where he had found himself during his odyssey over recent years, and had been ignored by everybody apart from the police, intelligence agencies and officials who organised his deportation, simply snapped.

In the case of the Konstanz shooting, the attacker had lived in the area for 15 years. He reportedly always voiced criticism of ISIS on social media. His motives, as well as the events during the attack, are still under investigation. It was reported that the man moved among the violent circles of drug dealers and doormen.

Media reports said the attacker was the brother-in-law of the nightclub’s owner. Prior to the attack, he reportedly argued with workers in the club and subsequently left. Later, he returned with an M16 machine gun and shot one of the doormen.

While all indications in Konstanz point to gang crime and Ahmad A. appears to have been badly traumatised, politicians of the governing parties rushed to cynically exploit the attacks to argue for mass deportations and detention prior to deportation.

“The vicious circle of technical processes in deportations must be ended,” Christian Social Union General Secretary Andreas Scheuer told *Bild am Sonntag*. “If radicalisation is identified, we must take such people out of the line and detain them before they commit crimes.”

SPD politician Burkhard Lischka also raised the prospect of deportation detention for Ahmad A. “Even though the concrete circumstances remain unclear, the question of why the man was not in deportation detention is raised,” said Lischka to the *Heilbronner Stimme*. “Federal lawmakers expanded the possibilities for this just weeks ago.”

While this option is applicable to so-called “threats,” as elastic as this term is, the authorities did not even consider Ahmad A. to meet this definition. In addition, he apparently did not resist his deportation, but sought to leave Germany. Lischka apparently wants to put everyone legally obliged to leave the country in preventive detention.



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