

German government raids and shuts down left-wing Indymedia site

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German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière ordered the shutdown Friday morning of the left-wing website linksunten.indymedia.org. The website, one of the two German subsidiaries of the global media site Indymedia, was removed from the internet shortly afterwards and will not be accessible until further notice.

In the early hours of the morning, units of the Baden-Württemberg police and the federal police reportedly raided the homes of the alleged administrators of the site in Freiburg, and confiscated computers and other objects. Later, the Baden-Württemberg state police office presented knives, batons, pipes and slingshots to prove the alleged “left-wing extremist” background of linksunten.indymedia.org.

In a press statement, de Maizière thanked “all police forces involved in the operation” and the “intensive preparatory work by the Federal Office for Domestic Intelligence,” without which “today’s measures would not have been possible.”

De Maizière formally justified the ban by asserting that the website was directed against “the constitutional order” and was “in its intent and activity acting contrary to criminal law.” The site had been used for years “to sow hate against those who think differently and the country’s representatives.” Ultimately, “the events at the G20 summit in Hamburg showed the consequences that such agitation can have.”

The reference to Hamburg is sufficient to make clear that the banning of linksunten.indymedia.org is part of a right-wing political campaign. For weeks, the so-called “events in Hamburg” have been vastly exaggerated by politicians and in the media to spread the fairytale of violence by “left-wing extremists,” strengthen the state apparatus, and restrict basic democratic rights. Four weeks prior to the federal election, the government is

now moving to openly criminalise and ban left-wing, anti-fascist and anti-militarist websites.

The second German subsidiary of Indymedia, de.indymedia.org, which was not affected by the ban, described the shutdown of linksunten.indymedia.org as a “serious attack on the left-wing movement and press freedom.” The website was seen “as the most widely circulating platform for left-wingers in Germany, where articles could be posted by anyone and were minimally moderated.”

The statement pointed out that Indymedia’s roots were in the “anti-globalisation movement” that emerged from the protests against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in 1999. The media platform was established “to make independent reporting on the summit protests possible.” Since then, “hundreds of Indymedias have been founded around the world to provide a platform for left-wing protest.”

The now banned linksunten.indymedia.org was “initially founded as a platform specifically for southern Germany. Over recent years, the website had “however expanded its reach,” and published “reports on demonstrations, commentaries on political events, statements by organisations, as well as statements claiming responsibility for militant attacks.”

A central focus of the publications on linksunten.indymedia.org, which are no longer accessible, was the struggle against right-wing extremism. Many articles called for protests against the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and other right-wing extremist organizations, criticised “Germany’s federal refugee policy,” or presented background research on the National Socialist Underground terrorist organisation. Other subjects included the struggle against war and militarism.

The fact that “statements claiming responsibility for

militant attacks” appeared on linksunten.indymedia.org made it a relatively “easy” target for de Maizière. The Interior Ministry declared in a press release that “on the website, under the protection of anonymity... statements of responsibility for crimes committed nationwide” were published.

However, it remains entirely unclear how many of these statements actually came from violent anarchist and autonomist groups, or whether they emerged from right-wing or even state-sponsored provocateurs. A statement claiming responsibility for an attack on the Fatih mosque and International Conference Centre in Dresden in the name of Dresden Antifa and the Anti-Unification Celebration Alliance 3Oct (October 3 is the day when German reunification is commemorated), which appeared on the site, turned out to be a fake. It later emerged that a spokesperson for the right-wing Pegida movement, which enjoys close ties to the Saxony state police and intelligence services, was behind the attack.

The state censorship of linksunten.indymedia.org is a dangerous development and could well form the prelude to much more wide-ranging measures against left-wing and progressive websites and organisations. Under conditions of growing opposition to inequality and militarism, any critical voice raised against war and militarism is to be silenced. The initial responses from the media and politicians leave no doubt about this.

Social Democratic (SPD) Justice Minister Heiko Mas, who introduced the so-called Network Enforcement Law in July and called for the creation of a European-wide database for left-wing extremists in the wake of the Hamburg events, wrote on Twitter, “Important strike against left-wing extremists prepared to commit violence. Extremism, regardless from which side, can have no place with us—not even online.”

Andreas Geisel, the Social Democratic interior minister in the red-red-green Berlin state government, also explicitly welcomed the ban and spoke of a step in the right direction. “Left-wing extremists used the site to plan assaults and attacks and to boast about them afterwards. We know this only too well in Berlin,” he noted in a statement.

The AfD (Alternative for Germany) parliamentary group in Thuringia issued a statement that made clear the direction in which the ruling class is moving. The ban was only the first step on the path to classifying the

entire Antifa movement as a terrorist organization, it wrote. “The federal government must now prove that the ban was not an electoral tactic. They must take decisive action against Antifa if they want to be credible,” said AfD interior policy spokesman Jörg Henke.



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