

Hamburg police searching for G20 protesters Europe-wide

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The Hamburg police want to significantly expand their controversial search operation for alleged “rioters” and “violent criminals” on the periphery of the G20 summit in July 2017. The measure is part of a massive stepping up of state powers at home and corresponds to the plans of the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Union parties (Christian Democratic Union-CDU/Christian Social Union-CSU) for coordinated policing practices across Europe.

In December, the Hamburg police had already widely published photos of alleged suspects. In an action coordinated with the tabloid *Bild*, they posted photos of 104 alleged rioters on the Internet. What the Hamburg police have described as “one of the largest public search operations in German history” is an unlawful, prejudicial action in which those affected are publicly pilloried without due process of law.

The search is now to be extended to other European countries, such as Spain and Italy, as Hamburg state interior minister Andy Grote (SPD) announced on 1 February. In a lengthy interview with the *Hamburger Abendblatt*, he threatened, “For the first time, perpetrators cannot feel safe, even months after riots took place, but are being consistently hunted down.”

The G20 summit was the occasion for massive attacks on basic democratic rights. The entire city was placed under siege, accompanied by attacks on freedom of expression, assembly and the press. The police sought to escalate the conflict and used the situation for an exercise that had the character of civil war manoeuvres.

Peaceful opponents of the G20 summit were repeatedly attacked with pepper spray, truncheons and boots. At the same time, there were clashes between those in uniform and the so-called black bloc, with a certain division of labour. The rioting was deliberately

provoked to provide the press with the pictures it wanted. It is known that individual acts of violence were carried out by right-wing provocateurs or undercover informants and secret service agents.

Immediately after the G20 summit, a campaign against “left-wing extremism” began. In July, Justice Minister Heiko Maas (SPD) called for the introduction of a pan-European “extremist database” and, a little later, a “rock against the left” concert. At the end of August, federal Interior Minister Thomas De Maizière (CDU) banned the left-wing Internet web site “linksunten.indymedia” and on December 4 the police organized large-scale raids in several federal states to arrest alleged “perpetrators of violence” at the Hamburg conference.

In fact, the fairy tale of “extreme left-wing violence” was already collapsing shortly after the G20 summit. On several police videos, which came into the public domain, it could clearly be seen that the violence unleashed in Hamburg came from the security forces. Most of the violent scenes reported in the media were either fictitious or systematically inflated. Significantly, to date, there have been few legal charges, and almost all the alleged offences have been misrepresented. Even the photos that the police have posted on the Internet to aid their public search operation do not provide evidence of the serious crimes alleged.

Nevertheless, the judiciary has acted with draconian harshness from the start. At the end of August, a young Dutchman was sentenced to two years and seven months’ imprisonment, solely based on police statements. Two police officers had accused him of throwing empty glass bottles at a policeman. A 24-year-old art student from Warsaw was given a six-month suspended sentence for carrying pepper spray, goggles, seven firecrackers, “clothing typical for the [anarchist]

scene” and two marbles in his backpack, at the time of the arrest.

Fabio V., a 19-year-old northern Italian worker, was detained for four months. Although not a single act of violence could be attributed to him personally, he was nonetheless accused of a serious breach of the peace. In November, he was released on bail of 10,000 euros, and at the end of January, the Hamburg-Altona district court was forced to lift the warrant for his arrest, as there could be no imprisonment without probation.

On the other hand, not a single police officer has been charged, let alone convicted, despite the documenting of many cases of brutal assault, as the case of Sarah Nothdurft shows. According to a video from *Spiegel Online*, the police assaulted the young worker as she was on her way home, pulling off her bike for no reason, dragging her across the floor and kicking her. They broke her wrist and elbow. The video also shows an unprovoked orgy of police violence against demonstrators.

Such scenes must be understood as a warning. They serve to intimidate young people who are prepared to oppose social inequality and war. The Europe-wide search operation can only be understood in the context of the evolving explosive struggles of the working class. The bourgeoisie is reacting by abolishing elemental fundamental rights, censoring the Internet, and building a Europe-wide police state.



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