

Berlin Senate plans increase in police powers

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Last week, the Berlin Senate, a coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Left Party and the Greens, discussed a far-reaching new security plan for the German capital. The “red-red-green” coalition plans to step up both the militarisation of the city’s police force and the prosecution of alleged “perpetrators.”

According to a report in the *Berliner Morgenpost*, the plan is aimed at “reorganising the police force in the sphere of Islamism and increasing personnel.” The reference is to the department for Religious Ideology (Islamism), which is attached to the department of “Police State Security,” which is in turn part of the State Office of Criminal Investigations (LKA).

Also planned is a new unit of the intelligence service to concentrate on “Islamist terrorism.” The additional funding for these agencies will be provided from the country’s current budget surplus.

In response to an inquiry by the *World Socialist Web Site*, senate spokesman Martin Pallgen said that the internal security paper, entitled “Living Safely in Berlin,” presented by Interior Senator Andreas Geisel (SPD) and Justice Senator Dirk Berehndt (Greens) at a closed-door meeting, was not intended for public consumption.

But Pallgen did confirm that about €100 million from the budget surplus would go towards domestic security. In all, 802 new jobs are planned for the police in the years 2018-2019, with 150 allocated to the LKA, Pallgen said. In addition, 1,100 police officers will be promoted in the first quarter of this year.

According to the *Morgenpost*, police in Berlin will receive five “mobile centres” for €500,000 to start work this summer. In addition, each Berlin police department will receive its own new mobile station. One has already been set up in the city centre, known as the “Alex-Wache.” The armoured police container on Alexanderplatz, which cost around €1 million, was opened in mid-December last year.

The Senate is thereby continuing and intensifying the reactionary law-and-order policy of Berlin’s previous conservative-led administration. Back in 2012, then-Interior Senator Frank Henkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), set up the first mobile police unit at Alexanderplatz, which remains there in the form of a tactical vehicle. The locations of the new mobile units are to be determined by the police.

A second aim of the security plan is the prosecution of so-called foreign perpetrators by accelerating their processing and transfer to deportation centres. For this purpose, a former juvenile detention facility in the district of Lichtenrade in south Berlin is to be turned into a deportation centre. Crimes that fall under the rubric of “Islamist terrorism” will then be dealt with exclusively by the relevant department of the LKA and the Berlin Attorney General.

Simultaneously, new police structures are to be implemented at a local level. This is the purpose of the “prosecutor on site” initiative, which was launched as a pilot project in Neukölln in October 2017 under the aegis of the SPD, and is now to be extended to other districts. Arguing she wanted to crack down on organised crime, the SPD mayor for Neukölln, Franziska Giffey, set up an office in the district court where three prosecutors cooperate with different authorities such as the departments for schools, youth welfare, and public order and employment, to identify offenders and prosecute them more ruthlessly—especially immigrant youth.

The new security paper is part of a series of measures directed at establishing a veritable police state in Berlin. After the state elections in 2016, the red-red-green Senate used coalition negotiations to prepare a massive upgrading of the police. Shortly before the election, Berlin had already announced the arming of the police with potentially deadly Tasers. The controversial three-year test run of the Tasers began in

February 2017. The stun guns have been used twice since, and repeatedly used to threaten assumed offenders.

In mid-January, Interior Senator Geisel presented a long list of proposed acquisitions for the police to the Interior Committee of the Berlin Senate: 10,000 new service pistols, better protective helmets, tablet computers for emergency vehicles, modern radio equipment, assault rifles and an armoured vehicle. According to local media, €33 million are to be invested in the new equipment. In addition, five new training centres with modern shooting ranges are planned, at an estimated cost of €125 million.

The automatic face-recognition pilot project at Südkreuz station, which has been running since mid-2017 and was due to finish at the end of January, is also being extended. The introduction of surveillance cameras that scan and recognise the faces of passersby in an automated process is a blatant attack on basic democratic rights. Despite fierce criticism, Federal Interior Minister Thomas De Maizière (CDU) drew a positive balance of the surveillance measures last December and extended the test run for another six months, after which facial recognition could be extended to other locations.

At the same time, a large-scale personnel and structural expansion of the special unit of the federal special operations unit, GSG9, is planned. The anti-terrorist force is to receive one-third more staff and a second headquarters in Berlin. Until now, the GSG9, founded in 1972, had its headquarters in St. Augustin, near the former federal capital of Bonn. It has been deployed on average around 50 times a year, and since December 2015 has been assisted by the paramilitary Proof and Arrest Unit plus (BFE +).

The commander of GSG9, Jérôme Fuchs, justified the unit's expansion to Berlin with the supposed increased threat of terror in capital cities. This means you have to "be better organised," Fuchs declared. "The aim is clear: faster reaction in the capital."

This all follows a well-established pattern: The ruling class uses the lie of the "fight against terror" and protection from "foreign dangers" to massively upgrade its security forces at home and abroad. In fact, it is preparing to suppress coming class struggles. The latest strikes in the metal industry and the growing opposition of workers and youth to the entire political

establishment are harbingers of the turbulence to come.

Ruling class fears of worker resistance are especially pronounced in Berlin, where the SPD and the Left Party shared power for many years, implementing wave after wave of austerity policies. Their response to the resulting devastating social inequality is more police, more surveillance, and more repression.



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