

# Germany: Anti-Semitism victim beaten by police in Bonn

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Professor of Philosophy Yitzhak Melamed, who teaches at the University of Baltimore in the US, was brutally beaten up last Wednesday in Bonn in an anti-Semitic attack and was then subsequently beaten by police officers.

Melamed had wanted to deliver a guest lecture on Spinoza at the University of Bonn, and had taken a walk beforehand in the busy Bonn Hofgarten with a colleague, when a 20-year-old German with Palestinian roots addressed him about his yarmulke and asked, “Are you a Jew?”

As the professor told the *Berliner Morgenpost*, the attacker said that he was Palestinian. Melamed told him he had nothing against Palestinians or Muslims. The attacker then insulted Jews in German and English, tried to tear the yarmulke from his head and repeatedly pushed him around. Passers-by called the police, but they did not arrive until 20 minutes later. During this time, the attacker ran away several times into a meadow and then came back again. Melamed defended himself by kicking his assailant’s leg.

When the police finally arrived, the attacker fled and the professor tried to follow him in order to tell the police which way he had gone. “I thought, if he’s out of sight, you can’t arrest him anymore. And he also looked psychologically confused to me. I did not want him to keep running around being so aggressive. That was not a good situation. And maybe that was my mistake,” Melamed told the *Berliner Morgenpost*.

However, the police did not follow the attacker, but overpowered the 50-year-old professor, who still wore his yarmulke. Four police officers threw him to the ground, jumped on him, pinning him down and beating him brutally in the face. Although he repeatedly asserted that he was the wrong person, he claims to have been beaten “about 50, 60, 70 times”.

Finally, the police left him alone and followed the perpetrator. But one of the officers threatened Melamed, “Don’t make trouble for the German police.” Whereupon he answered, “I am not afraid of the German police. My grandfather was murdered by the German police, my grandmother was murdered by the German police, my aunt was murdered by the German police, my uncle was murdered by the German police. And I’m no longer afraid of the German police.”

Melamed eventually drove to the precinct with the police officers, where he described the incident to the “Political Crimes” unit. An hour later, and with new reading glasses because the police had broken his old ones, he was finally able to deliver his lecture.

The next morning, just before leaving for the US, the Bonn police chief came to his hotel, apologised for the behaviour of the officers concerned and promised that there would be an investigation. Even the mayor of Bonn apologised to Melamed. The professor accepted the apology, but also said that he did not understand why the police had confused him with the assailant: “I was wearing my yarmulke.” He was also angry that the police had spread false reports in the press that he had resisted them. He was not “100, but 500 percent passive,” he told the newspapers of the Funke Media Group.

The attacker was caught by the police and taken to the psychiatric hospital shortly thereafter because he had apparently taken drugs, but was quickly released. He is known to the police for drug-related crimes. However, there were insufficient grounds to keep him in custody.

Recently, the German media and politicians have massively hyped anti-Semitic attacks involving refugees or perpetrators with a Muslim background.

Every refugee with a Muslim background is branded as a potential anti-Semite. Above all, this has served to aggravate attacks on refugees, to strengthen the powers of the police and to dismantle democratic basic rights.

Not only the incident in Bonn, but the official statistics also paint a different picture. There are anti-Semitic attacks by Arabs and Palestinians, who are outraged by the brutal Israeli occupation policy, but the vast majority of anti-Semitic attacks are perpetrated by right-wing extremists, who feel strengthened by the anti-refugee rhetoric of the government and the media. The police are also losing any inhibitions, in view of the constant tightening up of the state police laws, as the incident in Bonn shows.

In North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), the number of anti-Semitic crimes increased in 2017 from 297 to 324, according to official statistics from the State Interior Ministry, an increase of 9 percent. Of these 324 offences, 294—i.e., over 90 percent—were committed by right-wing extremists. But the media is largely silent about this.

It is no coincidence that the mistreatment of a Jewish professor by Bonn police officers coincides with a drastic tightening up of the NRW police law. Since the exaggerated and often provoked clashes at the G20 summit last year, the police laws have been massively tightened up in Bavaria, NRW and many other federal states. Democratic rights are being restricted; personal rights, such as the right to self-determination regarding one's own data, are under attack; the right to free movement, the right to strike and freedom of assembly are threatened, and the door has opened wide to arbitrary police actions. As a result, the police feel encouraged to act as they did last Wednesday in Bonn's Hofgarten.

On July 7, 20,000 people protested in Düsseldorf against the new police law, almost falling victim themselves to arbitrary police action. The Düsseldorf police had only wanted to approve the demonstration under strict conditions, as the "protest against alleged police violence or police powers...brings with it an immediate threat to public safety and order." Anyone who demonstrates against arbitrary police action is therefore considered a threat to public safety.

Yitzhak Melamed explained this connection very well to the *Berliner Morgenpost*. "The incident with the young man who insulted me was bad, of course," he

said. "But it was nothing compared to the violence perpetrated by the police. ... There surely is a problem with anti-Semitism, but there is also a problem with brutal police violence."



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