

# Halle, Germany: Government moves to establish a police state after fascist attack

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In the two weeks since the attack on a synagogue in Halle, the German government has made no attempt to clean out the extreme right-wing networks in the police, judiciary and Bundeswehr (armed forces), which have been known about for years. Instead, it is using the fascist attack as a pretext to further arm the repressive state apparatus and implement its long-held plans to comprehensively spy on journalists and Internet users.

The new Intelligence Authorisation Act, which until now had been hidden in the drawers of the Interior Ministry, is to be deployed for this purpose. “For months, the draft...remained simply lying around,” the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote on Sunday. “Now things could move quickly.”

A spokeswoman for the Justice Ministry had informed the newspaper that the “law for the harmonisation of secret service powers” was now already in departmental coordination with the Justice Ministry. “Seehofer’s old bill,” the newspaper continues, “suddenly seems like a current answer to the crime in Halle.”

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in March, the law is a comprehensive attack on freedom of the press and fundamental democratic rights. It provides, among other things, for the secret service to use trojan spyware to spy on journalists and editorial offices—without judicial authorisation and without the persons concerned having committed a criminal offence.

Providers of encrypted messenger services would also be forced to record the communications of their customers and transmit them to the authorities based purely on suspicion.

At the beginning of last week, Thomas Haldenwang, president of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as the secret service is called, and Holger Münch, head of the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), used the attack in Halle as an opportunity to promote the law and to announce an increase in staffing by 300 and 440 new posts, respectively. They will be used to establish “new units” to combat extremism.

According to the broadcaster MDR, the two federal

authorities are also calling for “stronger surveillance of the Internet,” “further bans on voluntary associations” and measures against right-wing “festivals” and “concerts.” The German domestic intelligence service will in the future also be allowed to monitor children under the age of 14 and infiltrate video game platforms.

According to a report by broadcaster Deutsche Welle, at their conference in Kiel, the interior ministers already decided to tighten up the firearms law and to “obligate Internet platforms” to report “relevant content under criminal law” immediately so that it can be deleted or those responsible prosecuted. Furthermore, the police and state intelligence agencies of Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein are to cooperate even more closely in the future—also within the North German network.

At the same time, Family Minister Franziska Giffey (Social Democratic Party, SPD) announced to the *Osnabrücker Zeitung* that a new law against the radicalisation of young people would be introduced this year.

The newspaper quotes the family affairs minister saying that “certain risks of interaction” on the Internet “must be prevented or minimised from the outset by technical measures.” The “targeting of young people on the Internet” must be “prevented as far as possible.” To this end, the “providers” of digital platforms should be “made more responsible.”

Long experience shows that such measures—once introduced—will be directed primarily against the left. Two years ago, the then interior minister, Thomas de Maizière, banned the anti-fascist website “linksunten.indymedia” and declared its editorial staff to be part of a “listed association” in order to circumvent the right to freedom of the press.

Two years later, the public prosecutor’s office in Karlsruhe suspended all criminal proceedings against the presumed operators of the website because it was unable to prove any criminal offence against them. Last year, the Saxony state secret service branch listed the concert “We are more,” directed against the right-wing extremist riots in

Chemnitz, under the heading “left-wing extremism” in its annual report.

In close consultation with German government circles, Google has censored the *World Socialist Web Site*. And the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) has been listed in the secret service report for two years because—as the government’s response to the SGP, which lodged a legal complaint against it, says—“fighting for a democratic, egalitarian, socialist society” and “agitation against supposed ‘imperialism’ and ‘militarism’” are unconstitutional.

Just a few weeks after the murder of Kassel’s regional government president, Walter Lübcke, Giffey’s ministry had cut off funds for numerous civic programmes. At least 120 organisations were affected, including the anti-racist Amadeo Antonio Foundation and the well-known right-wing extremism exit programme “Exit,” the financing of which for the period after 2020 is now unclear. In future, a total of €8 million will be cut from civil society projects.

Meanwhile, in a feverish campaign, all parties in the Bundestag (parliament) are working to further strengthen a state apparatus that is riddled with right-wing extremists. The budget of the Interior Ministry increases by €720 million to €15.3 billion in the new federal budget; €6.4 billion alone will be spent beefing up the federal police, the BKA and the cyber authorities. During the budget debate in the Bundestag, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer had already announced—almost four weeks before the attack in Halle—the creation of new BKA and constitutional protection units with “hundreds of posts.”

A report by news weekly *Der Spiegel* illustrates the extent of the expansion of the repressive state. According to the report, the BKA has grown by almost 50 percent since 2013, from 5,012 to 7,562 officers in 2020. During the same period, the Federal Police grew from 38,297 to 46,848 posts in the current year. According to the draft budget, another 2,000 additional jobs are planned for 2020.

At the same time, the number of employees at the Bonn Federal Office for Information Security (BSI) is expected to almost triple—over 1,400 civil servants are expected to work for the Cyber Combat Authority in the coming year. In addition, the Munich-based Central Office for Information Technology in the Security Sector (ZITiS) is to grow from 190 to 232 employees. According to its own reports, the digital weapons foundry that was formed in 2017 develops tools for “cryptanalysis” and “telecommunications surveillance” for the federal security authorities.

The budget debate in the Bundestag in September showed that there is no opposition in parliament to the establishment of a police state. If there was criticism of Interior Minister Seehofer’s plans, it came from the right.

Burkhard Lischka, SPD spokesman for domestic policy, said, “A good domestic policy relies on a strong state. What we have achieved in the area of internal security is really something to be proud of.” Stefan Ruppert of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) said, “You don’t hear much about the Interior Ministry. We think—too little, because the tasks are still very big.” He called for the more consistent deportation of refugees.

Irene Mihalic, domestic affairs spokeswoman for the Green Party parliamentary group, also attacked the plans of the interior minister from the right and made an aggressive plea for a further strengthening of the security authorities.

“You want to create 7,500 new posts in the security authorities,” she shouted at the interior minister, “So far so good. We also support all of this, but new posts do not yet mean new employees. Aspirations and reality are miles apart here! Thousands of positions are still vacant.” She shouted at the parliamentary plenum, “There has been no investment in the security authorities for 10 years, but massive savings have been made in the area of personnel, which really cut to the bone!” Such a “retreat of the state at the expense of security” should “not be allowed to happen again.”

André Hahn, Left Party deputy faction leader, spoke in a similar vein. After he had also pointed to “thousands of posts” that could not be filled, he shouted at the interior minister, “What you are doing here, Mr. Seehofer, is action for action’s sake that does not solve a single problem.”

The breathtaking increase in the repressive state apparatus and the massive expansion of the powers of the security authorities are directed against the widespread opposition among workers and young people who reject militarism, war, state armament and social cuts.



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