

Germany: Tens of thousands take to the streets against right-wing terror

Our reporters

25 February 2020

Over the weekend, tens of thousands of people again took to the streets in dozens of German cities to demonstrate against right-wing terror. Many demonstrators addressed the complicity of the security authorities and the right-wing policies of all the parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament), which paved the way for right-wing terrorism.

The largest demonstration took place in Hanau on Saturday, with 7,000 participants. Only three days before, nine immigrants were shot to death there in a right-wing terrorist attack. The rally was dominated by the mourning for the young people whose lives the murderer so brutally ended.

Eslem, Lilli, and Chaymaa came to the rally together. "We are here because we want to support the relatives and show them that we are strong together," said Chaymaa. "To call the perpetrator 'mentally ill' downplays the danger," says Lilli. "The attack was clearly directed against Muslims and immigrants."

"When foreigners commit murders, the media likes to talk about a terrorist attack," Chaymaa added. "In this case, however, they have avoided the word. Yet it is almost as bad as last year in Christchurch." Eslem, who knew some of the victims by sight, explained that she finds it "incomprehensible how racism can still exist in the 21st century."

Seda, who also lives in Hanau, knew one of the victims personally. "I am at a loss for words," she says, "Hanau is such a multicultural city, I never thought that something like this could happen in my circle of friends. He was educated here, we often went out together. He was such a good man."

Eylem, who came with her family, said, "I am here because it could have been any of us. Those killed have fallen victim to a morbid and poisonous ideology that seeks to set people of different nations against each other. For me, the [far-right Alternative for Germany] AfD is primarily responsible, but in reality, this is politics in Germany today. This ideology also dominated under the Nazis and it never really ended. This fact should not be swept under the carpet, I think."

In the past few days, several state and federal politicians had laid flowers in Hanau and voiced words of sympathy to the press. Eylem had "not a bit of confidence in them," she said, "They appear here briefly and that's it. That's it for them."

She continued, "Nationalism and racism do not simply come out of people. Both are constantly being encouraged in the background. This is how people are to be set against each other. Those who ultimately carry it out are not the main culprits."

When asked who bears political responsibility for the murders, Seda replied, "Somehow, everyone is responsible. I feel abandoned by all the parties. Of course, the left-wing parties say they are against it. But still something like this happens! They should do something about it and not just talk."

Birgit, a pensioner from Hanau, carried a self-made sign. For her, the appearance of leading politicians in Hanau was nothing but "mendacious chatter."

"In reality, the killer was picking up what the politicians have been sowing for years. It's not just about the AfD, it goes much deeper. The rise of the AfD is a result of the right-wing policies that the major parties have been pursuing for decades. For me, this includes the inhuman practices of the immigration authorities, the right-wing hate speech about 'problems' with immigration, the talk of alleged 'overpopulation' and, above all, the social policy of the last 30 years. This began with [Social Democratic] Chancellor Schröder and his Agenda 2010, a 'social policy' that has led to endless divisions."

Ben, who was demonstrating together with Markus and other friends from the youth movement "Fridays for Future," raised the question about the role played by the security authorities. "These murders took place just two days after a major operation allegedly aimed at undermining right-wing terrorism. While the government fights against so-called 'left-wing extremism,' right-wing violence continues to kill people."

In reality, "the right wing is encouraged at every level," said Ben. "The AfD is increasingly being legitimized—under Höcke, but also overall. Meanwhile, there's general agreement about so-called 'left-wing extremism'."

"I'm afraid this attack may encourage more copycats. In my opinion, the media, such as [the tabloid] *Bild* are partly to blame. They have ruthlessly spread right-wing propaganda for years. Of course, no one among the politicians wants to be blamed for the terror. Everyone says: We don't make common cause with Nazis. But then they do, as they did recently in Thuringia. Kemmerich's statement that he knew nothing is completely unbelievable."

Christoph, who has to commute between Frankfurt and Hanau every day for work, added with regard to Thuringia and the Free Democratic Party (FDP), "Lindner's party has also fanned the flames of the right wing. Their cooperation with Höcke's AfD in the East has ensured that these people now feel strengthened."

"If the security authorities are to be given even more powers, then this is not a preventive measure," says Markus. "On the

contrary.” The case of the right-wing radical former head of the secret service, Hans-Georg Maassen, had shown this. “Even now that Maassen is gone, the dangerous structures in the secret service remain.”

Joachim is a philosophy teacher and adult education lecturer in Hanau. In discussion with Christoph and the WSWS, he recalled the case of the neo-Nazi Thuringia Homeland Security and the series of murders committed by the National Socialist Underground (NSU), “In Thuringia, the secret service fomented the fascists and financed the right-wing scene. It can’t be that, as in the case of Halit Yozgat, official files are shredded. Actually, there should be no secret service at all, the whole concept must be completely restructured.”

“In my opinion, you have to get down to the causes,” said Christoph. “One must ask oneself, How did xenophobia develop? How are people played off against each other? And how was this prepared?”

Markus sees things similarly. “Germany obviously has a racist problem again,” he says. He sees the main cause in capitalism. “Without capitalism, there is no racism. You have to ask yourself the question, Where does it come from if it’s not about dividing and exploiting people? Capitalism is the key. You have to start there.”

Chiara is a ninth grade student in Miltenberg. In her eyes, the reason for the rise of right-wing forces is that “the gap between rich and poor is widening.”

“The richest 1 percent at the top owns as much as all the others combined. And then the right-wing projects the bogeyman image of refugees to divide people so that they don’t rebel against capitalism but attack refugees.”

Despite all the dangerous parallels to the rise of the National Socialists (Nazis), Seda also sees important differences from the 1930s. “Back then, you could almost believe that everyone was behind the Nazis,” she explained. “Today, everyone is against them and yet these murders happen!”

That the shift to the right actually comes from above, “I can well imagine,” she said. “That would suit the government well. The way I see it, either they don’t care what happens here or they think it’s really quite all right. Why else would they allow this to happen?”

Only a few days before the massacre in Hanau, the right-wing extremist history professor Jörg Baberowski (“Hitler was not vicious”) had physically attacked a socialist student and was subsequently defended by the university leadership. “I can’t stand it when I hear that someone is publicly trying to celebrate Hitler,” says Chiara. “It’s really irresponsible.”

Seda adds, “It is precisely such statements that lead to the crimes of the Nazis being downplayed. Such a thing should not exist at a university. If this chapter of history is no longer discussed with shame, it will lead to its repetition one day.”

Duisburg

In Duisburg, about 500 people marched through the city centre to commemorate the victims of Hanau and to demonstrate their willingness to stand up against the fascist terror.

Many of the participants were aware that the right-wing terrorist attack in Hanau was not the result of a mentally ill individual.

They also were not seduced by the official announcements of the Berlin parties to look for the guilt of the fascist terror only in the AfD. No one has been oblivious to the role of other parties, the state apparatus and the media in recent years.

Cihan has been a steelworker at Thyssenkrupp for about three decades. For him, it is not only “against the fascists” but also “for more humanity,” he said. He sees politicians and the media as bearing a major responsibility, which made the AfD socially acceptable in the first place. “The AfD was made popular by politicians and the media. No matter what news programme you watch, the AfD always gets a say.” The same was the case with the press. “The AfD is being given far too much space.”

He was stunned by how one person could kill nine humans and then his mother and himself. “For 200 years, Hanau has been associated with fairy tales,” he says—the Brothers Grimm were born there. “Now, like other cities, it stands for racist murders.”

The steelworker was not sure whether everything has really been uncovered. “In the attack in Keupstrasse in Cologne, it was also only years later that it was discovered that the NSU had done this. Who knows what else will come out of this case. Maybe the bomber had accomplices or backers.”

“Unfortunately, this is not simply a problem in Germany either,” he said. “Nationalism is also popular again in Turkey, France, the USA and in many countries. We must stand up against it everywhere.”

Twenty-six-year-old Oliver told the WSWS he came to the demonstration because he feared “that history will repeat itself and that what happened before will happen again. We should learn from history so that such brutal crimes do not happen again,” the worker said.

When asked who was responsible for the resurgence of fascism, he said, “The entire political establishment. Now they are trying to distance themselves from the AfD, but they don’t do anything for the enlightenment of society.”

He comes from Hannover and had previously lived in Luckenwalde in eastern Germany. “There, I met people who said that politics had failed. So they voted for the AfD in protest. I am completely against the AfD and its anti-refugee policy. My grandmother was a refugee. I don’t want to become a refugee and I want to help refugees so that everyone can live well.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact