

German police claim latest racist rampage was not the work of a far-right extremist

Marianne Arens
7 April 2020

On February 19, Tobias Rathjen selected his victims very precisely. That evening, he cold-bloodedly targeted people whose appearance and immediate surroundings pointed to an immigrant background. He shot dead nine young people in the city of Hanau before driving home and taking his mother's and his own life.

Having investigated the incident, the German Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) has asserted there is no indication that this gruesome, racially motivated crime was the act of a far-right extremist.

There is nothing to indicate that Tobias Rathjen was a supporter of right-wing extremism—

This was the conclusion of a preliminary BKA report, according to reports by various German media outlets, including the *Süddeutscher Zeitung*. There is no evidence of “typical extreme right-wing radicalization” of the perpetrator, the BKA concluded. Instead, “conspiracy theorists” had sought to use the racist murder to gain attention for his paranoid vision of a total surveillance state, argued the BKA.

This is what BKA officials wrote about a mass murderer who speculated in a 24-page letter on the internet about the number of Germans who were “pure-bred and valuable.” In the letter, he proposed the “total annihilation” of the (mainly Muslim) population of the more than two dozen German states and drew up plans for genocide that would have gone further than the crimes of Adolf Hitler.

Despite the overwhelming evidence, BKA investigators portray the mass murderer of Hanau as just another mentally disturbed individual and claim he could not have been a far-right terrorist. One could equally argue that Hitler himself was “not a right-wing extremist” but rather a mentally disturbed man reacting to his rejection by the Vienna Art Academy by instigating dictatorship, World War II and the Holocaust.

In fact, the Hanau massacre is the most serious in a series of right-wing extremist terrorist attacks, ranging from the 1980 Oktoberfest bombing to the National Socialist Underground (NSU) murders, the murder of the

conservative (Christian Democratic Union) politician Walter Lübke and the attack on the Halle synagogue on October 9, 2019.

Relatives of victims and survivors in Hanau were stunned by the BKA's verdict. “You can twist it round however you like, but you can't hide the truth,” said Kemal Kocak. Kocak owned the kiosk where Rathjen murdered five people and seriously injured others.

The killer was a 100 percent racist, there is no doubt about it, Kocak said. A local newspaper (*Hanauer Anzeiger*) reports Kocak asking how the BKA would have reacted and what conclusions it would have drawn if the perpetrator had been “a Muslim or a foreigner” and the victims were nine innocent Germans.

The “February 19 Hanau Initiative” also wrote on Twitter and Facebook that with its assessment the BKA was ignoring “all the lessons to be drawn from the NSU complex.” Evidently, it said, even someone responsible for the “killing of nine people for racist reasons is not to be classified by the BKA as a right-wing extremist.” Those affected by the tragedy in Hanau, it continued, are left with “the fear that such an act could happen again.” Several other media outlets also dealt with the criticisms raised of the BKA report.

On April 1, BKA head Holger Münch sought to distance the organization from the reports on its initial findings. “The BKA rates the crime as clearly right-wing extremist in nature,” he wrote on Twitter. “The crime was based on racist motives,” he added. The “alleged final report,” however, did not exist at the moment.

One reader countered in the comment column: “Does ‘not at the moment’ mean up until yesterday?”

In fact, the initial BKA version comes as no surprise. The German authorities consistently play down the threat from the far-right. Right-wing extremist terrorist attacks are repeatedly torn out of any political context and dismissed as marginal events and/or the work of psychologically disturbed “individual offenders.”

For many years, the series of murders (from 2000 to 2006)

carried out by the NSU neofascist terror gang was described as “Kebab murders” by the police and intelligence agencies, thereby implying that the killings were an internal affair of the Turkish community. For three years, the massacre at the Munich Olympia shopping center in 2016 was officially designated a killing spree by a mentally disturbed and bullied student. Even in the murder of the president of the Kassel government Walter Lübcke, the state criminal investigation agency (LKA) took a full two weeks before focusing its investigations on the neo-Nazi milieu.

The fact is that Germany’s police and security agencies share much in common with the far-right, racist and Alternative for Germany (AfD)-like positions that are widespread within the authorities. While broad masses of the population reject and despise fascism, the security services, the country’s intelligence services, the BKA and the entire state apparatus are all permeated by far-right networks.

This was already evident three years ago at the G20 summit in Hamburg. At that time, a “black list” drawn up by the BKA became public. The list denounced 32 journalists on the basis of “security concerns,” causing them to lose their accreditation to the G20 summit.

When the journalists refused to accept this decision and demanded access to the file containing the list, it emerged that the BKA had for years arbitrarily and indiscriminately collected data on hundreds of thousands of people on suspicion of “left-wing extremism.”

The secret services are increasingly turning into organs of an all-powerful surveillance state aimed at suppressing growing social resistance. A succession of new laws allows the BKA to conduct baseless investigations and access databases using the most up-to-date technology. This trend has a long and nefarious history.

Following World War II in 1951, the BKA was established as the central authority for internal security. From the very start it was based on personnel drawn from the fascist Third Reich. This continuity is well documented (see: “The fascist roots of Germany’s post-war Criminal Police Office”).

Hundreds of former Nazis who had functioned as criminal investigators during the Third Reich were able to continue their careers in the BKA until they could claim their lavish pensions. They were the same people who, under Himmler and Heydrich, were directly responsible for the murder of hundreds of thousands in concentration camps or in occupied “enemy territory.” Their job was to track down so-called “enemies of the people,” i.e., Jews, Sinti, Roma and homosexuals, as well as all those from the working class, the youth, the intelligentsia, the trade unions and leftist political parties who opposed fascism.

They regarded their main opponents to be “leftists” and all those groups and parties based on the working class. This

tradition was revived by the BKA and continues up to this day.

One of the first indications of the bias of the BKA was its investigation into the German Communist Party (the KPD), which culminated with the undemocratic ban of the party in 1956.

According to the author Dieter Schenk, who himself worked as a director at the BKA for many years, “The process of criminalisation began where there was any suspicion of communism, while the sphere of right-wing extremism was largely ignored.”

“Blind in the right eye”—this assessment remains true today. The BKA sees no threat from the extreme right wing, while it gathers files on “left-wing extremists” at a rate that puts the former East German Stasi secret police in the shade.

It is no coincidence that the initial BKA assessment of the events in Hanau won warm praise from the far-right AfD. The AfD leader in the state of Brandenburg, Andreas Kalbitz (a member of Björn Höcke’s neo-Nazi “Flügel” wing of the AfD), immediately demanded that all those who had quite correctly said that the AfD shared the blame for the bloodbath in Hanau “apologise for this shoddy instrumentalisation.”

From the very start, AfD leader Alexander Gauland claimed that Rathjen was a “confused person ... a sick person, a madman who should not be free in society.” AfD spokesman Jörg Meuthen added, “This is neither terror from the left nor the right. It is the delusional act of a madman.”

Despite Münch’s semidisavowal, the preliminary BKA report confirms the insistence of the WSWS that the revival of fascism in Germany is not based on popular support. Rather, it is being encouraged and promoted at the highest levels of the state. As Christoph Vandreier wrote in his book *Why are they back?*, “With the escalation of international conflicts and the intensification of social tensions, the German elites are returning to great power politics and the dictatorial forms of rule of the past.”



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