German protests in solidarity with George Floyd and against police violence

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The brutal murder of George Floyd, recorded on video, has shocked people in Germany, and many have taken to the streets in protest. Thousands demonstrated against racism and police violence in the cities of Bremen, Berlin, Leipzig and Munich. Expressions of solidarity with the protests in the United States have dominated German social media.

In Bremen over 2,500 people demonstrated on Tuesday under the slogan "Justice for George Floyd"—10 times as many as had been expected by the organisers, "Together we are Bremen." Due to the high number of participants, police at short notice changed both the route of the march and the location of the final rally.

Around 700 people attended a rally in Leipzig on Monday. The group "Fight for your Future" called the protest to demonstrate against police violence and state repression.

In the Bavarian capital of Munich, 400 people gathered Saturday evening for a spontaneous demonstration, which marched towards the US consulate in the city. Several protests also took place in Berlin at the weekend, involving far more people than organisers had expected.

On Sunday, 1,500 mainly young people attended a protest march through the Kreuzberg district of Berlin. Organisers had expected that just 100 would gather. Protesters demonstrated under the slogan, "Justice for George Floyd." Shortly before the protest in Kreuzberg, another "Memorial March against Racist Police Violence in the US" advanced towards Berlin's central Brandenburg Gate.

A demonstration was also held on Saturday in front of the US embassy in Berlin. More than 2,000 people from various ethnic backgrounds expressed their anger at brutal police tactics and violence. Under the slogan "Justice for George Floyd!," anti-racist initiatives such as "Against General Suspicion" and "Initiative Black People in Germany" (ISD) had issued the call for the protest against racist police violence.

Demonstrators discussed not just the events in Minneapolis, but also the situation in Germany. "Neo-Nazi structures in the police must be uncovered," said one speaker at the Berlin rally. One participant said, "The denazification process said to have taken place after World War II never really happened. We still have Nazis in different spheres of politics and society."

Another participant made direct reference to police violence in Germany: "It is by no means an isolated case. It happens almost every day in Germany," she said, recalling the case of Oury Jalloh, who burnt to death in a police cell. "There are structures that ensure that this always happens."

Olivia, 22, a student from the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, wrote to the WSWS to express her opposition to the escalating violence of state forces in the United States and her concerns for her relatives: "I don't want my cousins to be murdered in New York City when they go out—or my little brother. We fight for justice and the whole world fights with us. You can see on social media that we are all sticking together."

In the course of the protests, a huge graffiti with a picture of George Floyd and the words "I can't breathe" was daubed on Berlin's Mauerpark. The associated hashtag #ICantBreathe reflects the situation of millions of workers in the US, whose lives are being squeezed out of them by the reactionary policies of the financial and corporate elite.

A total of 19 similar graffities commemorating Floyd were also sprayed in Bremen. The police reacted aggressively and immediately launched a search for witnesses, and German security services immediately took over the investigation. Many protests have also taken place on social media. Under the hashtag #blackouttuesday, numerous profile pictures have been replaced by completely black pictures. On Instagram

alone, over 28 million posts were posted under this hashtag.

In Germany, 11 of the top 15 hashtags on Twitter are related to the police murder of George Floyd, such as #JusticeForGeorgeFloyd, #GeorgeFloyd, #BlackLivesMatter or #protests2020.

The developments in the US are linked by many internet users to the social and political tensions that also determine the lives of people in Germany and Europe.

The historian Patrick Bormann wrote on Twitter: "While we look at the US in horror, we should never forget that the same lines of conflict are not new in Germany and harbour a similar potential for conflict. That worries me."

Joshua, who attends a high school near Nuremberg and is active in the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), linked the reaction of the ruling class to the mass protests in the United States to the Nazis' conquest of power in 1933: "Just as in the 1930s before the rise of Nazi Germany, the state apparatus together with fascist thugs are striking out at workers' demonstrations. The bourgeois state cooperates with fascists, there is even a fascist in power, and their aim is to oppress workers."

Clemens, a 17-year-old high school student from Bavaria, who is also a member of the IYSSE, sees parallels between developments in the US and the conditions which led to the Russian Revolution in 1917: "The cause of this mass movement is clearly the enormous levels of social inequality in the US. The murder of George Floyd was the last straw, the spontaneous trigger."

It reminded him "of the history of the February Revolution 1917, when female workers gathered on March 8 for Women's Day and then these protests spread to the entire working class. The tsar fell a few hours later." Trump is mobilising "the army and the National Guard because he and his friends in the oligarchy are terrified of a socialist revolution."

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