Germany’s Social Democrats, Greens and Left Party organise police violence against peaceful demonstrators

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Hundreds of thousands of mainly young people participated in mass protests earlier this month in Germany against police violence and racism, which have spread around the world since the murder of George Floyd.

Since the demonstrations, which took place on the weekend of June 6, eyewitness accounts and videos have appeared in growing numbers on social media revealing the extent of the brutality employed by the police against protesters. The most brutal scenes occurred in the city states of Hamburg and Berlin, where the state governments consist of coalitions of the Social Democrats and Greens, and Social Democrats, Greens, and Left party respectively.

Close to 20,000 people gathered for the protest in Hamburg. Seizing on the pretext of the coronavirus restrictions, the police declared the event over, but decided against immediately enforcing the order due to the masses of people present. After the official end of the protest, the police attacked groups of up to 1,000 protesters in nearby squares and streets, or while they were on their way home.

The police ruthlessly deployed tear gas and water cannons. They made 47 arrests, including 20 underage youths and a child. Eleven people were temporarily detained, while an additional 36 were arbitrarily held in custody. Mobile phone videos of the events were shared around the world and were viewed online hundreds of thousands of times.

A subsequent report in *Die Zeit* provided further details. At around 8 p.m., the police forced 39 young people, including many who were underage, to stand up against a wall with their hands raised. According to the police, the youngest victim was 13 years old. After several hours of being held captive under these conditions, 36 of them were taken away without any reason being provided.

The police brought 10 of the youth to a nearby police station and detained them for several more hours. A 20-year-old witness told *Die Zeit* that they were forced to undress themselves down to their underwear before being photographed and locked in a single cell, without ever being told what they were being accused of.

Another witness said that the remaining 26 detainees were left standing against the wall for two hours, before being transported in two buses to a station 10 kilometres away.

Calls to relatives and discussions among the detainees were prohibited. A 16-year-old boy was phoned repeatedly by his concerned parents, but the police ordered him to switch his phone off. In Billstedt, the most easterly neighbourhood in Hamburg, the detainees were left in the buses for a further two hours while the police removed those who were underage one by one.

The witness told *Die Z eit* that she was photographed shortly before 2 a.m., before being left to find her own way home from the unfamiliar part of town. Both witnesses said that the police told them in the end that they were not accused of doing anything.

In Berlin, which is governed by the Social Democrats, Left Party, and Greens, the police arrested 93 people. Although the organisers expected 1,500 people to attend the rally, 30,000 spontaneously joined. Numerous videos and witness statements confirm dozens of police attacks against peacefully demonstrating young people.

Four witnesses told the *Tageszeitung* about unprovoked attacks and the injuries they suffered as a

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result: Joel, aged 19, was thrown to the ground by four officers so that his head struck the tarmac, causing him to bleed from his eye and suffer abrasions. “As I was lying on the ground, my shoulder bag cut off my air supply for about 30 seconds. I repeatedly said that I couldn’t breathe. The only response was, stop wiggling around.” Although Joel was the victim of a violent attack, he is being charged with “resisting an officer carrying out their duties.”

Aching (24), another protester, is being charged with “grievous bodily harm” because an ashtray fell off a table she was standing beside and allegedly struck an officer. The young woman reported that as she tried to calm down a group of teenagers, she was thrown to the ground by “a large group of police officers.”

Alphonse (25) from Berlin-Kreuzberg was attacked twice by the police. A video proves that at no point did he even act aggressively towards the police. Despite this, he found himself later that evening in a group cell with a laceration and a badly injured left hand.

The *World Socialist Web Site* previously reported on the unrestrained violence used by the police against protesters in Berlin. A video viewed hundreds of thousands of times around the world showed six police officers kicking and beating a prone person lying in the gutter near Alexanderplatz as it rained.

Left Party parliamentary group leader Dietmar Bartsch made clear that these images were politically desired so as to intimidate the young protesters. Last Tuesday, he gave his unconditional support to Germany’s police.

Bartsch told Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland (RND) that it is “not justified” to “draw a parallel to the situation in the United States.” He also contradicted SPD leader Saskia Esken, who spoke of “latent racism” existing within the German police, saying, “It is wrong to make the blanket accusation that all police officers are racist and thus discredit the entire profession ... The police do not deserve less, but rather more social recognition and personnel, especially on the streets.”

Georg Meier, the chairman of the Interior Ministers’ Conference and the Interior Minister in Thuringia’s Left Party-led government of Bodo Ramelow, told the Funke Media Group-owned newspapers that there is “no justification for calling into question the structures of our police force,” and said there were “isolated cases” that should be “dealt with using the full force of the law.”

“Especially at the current time,” politicians must “fully back the work of police officers,” he warned.

The SPD, Greens and Left Party have demonstrated that they are hostile to the young people protesting against police violence, racism, and fascism. They are resorting to police state measures to uphold their reactionary policies of social inequality and militarism.

The police violence is of a piece with the criminalisation of anti-capitalist tendencies by the Social Democrat/Green/ Left Party coalition, the comprehensive build-up of Germany’s police state apparatus, and the persecution of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, which is fighting among workers and young people for a socialist perspective.

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