

European governments seize upon terrorist attacks in France and Vienna to build a police state

Johannes Stern
12 November 2020

European governments are responding to the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Nice, Dresden and Vienna by adopting the political agenda of the far right. Under the pretext of the “war on terror,” EU leaders and European leaders on Tuesday agreed on a massive expansion of “Fortress Europe,” the de facto abolition of the right of asylum, and the creation of what amounts to a Europe-wide police state.

“The work at government level is aimed at bringing our various services and authorities into line and better coordinating our efforts to fight terrorism, radicalisation with many targeted measures,” declared French President Emmanuel Macron, at a joint press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission and former German Defence Minister.

“The task now is to implement these measures consistently, for example the interoperability of databases, the linking of our databases and the cooperation of our security services also at the external borders.” Another topic “we discussed was the determination with which we want to combat terrorist propaganda and hate speech on the internet,” Macron added. “We are working to ensure that in the coming weeks a regulation on the removal and deletion of terrorist content within one hour is adopted.”

“We must also work on a reform of the Schengen rules,” Macron said. “This means that we must strengthen and better defend the external borders of the European Union and that we must better control and implement the functioning of the Schengen rules ... I hope that we will soon be able to establish a real Security Council.”

Merkel also pleaded for a strengthening of Europe’s external borders and stepped-up censorship, stressing that “the German Presidency of the Council still wanted to finalise the regulation on preventing the distribution of terrorist content on the internet.” She boasted: “We have recently given our security authorities in Germany new opportunities” for monitoring “messenger services [such as Telegram] and surveillance.”

Von der Leyen took the same line, announcing that the EU Commission’s 2018 proposal to prevent terrorist content online

“will now be finalised in the Council and Parliament triologue.” She said it was important to “focus on the speed of deleting such terrorist content. It is crucial to be fast.” This will also involve “giving greater responsibility to the major Internet platforms in the fight against illegal and harmful online content.” To this end, the so-called Digital Services Act will be “presented in a few weeks’ time.”

It is clear what this means. Under the guise of the fight against “terrorist content,” the censorship of left-wing content and websites in particular will be expanded. Only on October 28, Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google’s parent company Alphabet, admitted at a hearing before the US Senate that Google’s search engine censors the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The new directive will oblige internet giants such as YouTube and Facebook, which work closely with the secret services and governments and already censor left-wing and progressive content on a massive scale, to delete “harmful” articles, videos or other postings even faster.

In order to justify the construction of a European police state, the ruling class is seizing upon the horrific terrorist attacks of recent weeks and fueling fears of a continuing terrorist threat.

“We have a constant danger among us. We have thousands of ‘foreign terrorist fighters’ who either survived the fighting in Syria, in Iraq for the IS and returned or who did not get through at all because they were stopped somewhere when they left,” warned the Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. He therefore called for a “more robust approach to the threats throughout Europe.” If we want to “protect the freedoms of all, we have to restrict the freedom of these people.”

What Kurz concealed was that European governments are in many ways responsible for the terrible terrorist attacks of recent weeks. The thousands of “foreign terrorist fighters” did not fall from the sky, but were used by the imperialist powers and their reactionary regional allies—above all Saudi Arabia—as shock troops in the wars for regime change in Libya and Syria.

Almost all the assassins of the major terrorist attacks in recent years were known to the security authorities: Anis Amri, who drove a truck into a Berlin Christmas market on December 19, 2016, the Kouachi brothers who stormed the offices of the

French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in early 2015, and also Kujtim Fejzulaj, the assassin in Vienna.

Kurz's assertion that European governments are concerned with "protecting freedom" is a blatant lie. In fact, the policies of the ruling class do not protect freedom and life, but bring oppression and death. Due to the lethal "herd immunity" strategy, over 300,000 people have died in Europe alone since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In previous years, tens of millions of people had already been killed, injured or made refugees in the EU-backed neo-colonial wars in Central Asia and the Middle East. Tens of thousands have drowned in the Mediterranean. Within Europe, the ruling class is cultivating and using extreme right-wing and fascist forces to intimidate and suppress the growing opposition of the working class and youth.

The latest police-state measures are part of this strategy. The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the advanced economic, social and political crisis of the capitalist system. The ruling class feels it is sitting on a social and political powder keg. In recent days and weeks, teachers and students in Greece, Poland and France have protested against the unsafe reopening of schools.

These protests are only an anticipation of massive working-class struggles that will be directed against the entire capitalist system, including in the US. There, the Democrats not only play down the coup plans by President Donald Trump, who seeks to overturn the election results and establish a fascist dictatorship. They themselves appeal to the military and the state apparatus out of fear of a revolutionary development of the working class.

The same fear is also driving the nominally left-wing bourgeois parties on this side of the Atlantic. In Germany, the Greens and the Left Party, which articulate the interests of affluent sections of the middle classes, stand at the forefront of a sharp shift of the entire political establishment to the right.

Last weekend, excerpts from a so-called "eleven-point action plan" drawn up by Green Party leader Robert Habeck and others became known. Both in terms of its form and content, the paper could have also been drawn up by the right-wing extremist AfD. According to the paper, so-called Islamist "Gefährder" (potential offenders) must be "consistently and closely monitored". For that, more police and secret service agents are needed.

The Greens attack the grand coalition and its notoriously right-wing Minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer (CSU) from the right. They demand that arrest warrants against "Islamist perpetrators" be executed more consistently and that deportations be organized more quickly.

At the European level, according to a report in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the Greens demand the establishment of "a European Criminal Police Office with its own investigative teams, a uniform definition of the term 'Gefährder' and more cross-border cooperation between

national security authorities."

This is a blueprint for the creation of a pan-European police state where nobody is safe. If one takes the recent tightening of the Berlin police law by the "Red-Red-Green" (SPD-Left Party-Green) Senate majority, any person who might be willing and seems able to commit a terrorist crime can be classified as a "Gefährder." This means that anyone can be classified as a "Gefährder" on the basis of a mere presumption and thus prosecuted by the security authorities.

The Left Party leadership is also calling for a strong state, combining this with anti-Islamic agitation. In a commentary for the right-wing Springer newspaper *Die Welt*, Dietmar Bartsch, the leader of the Left Party's parliamentary group in the Bundestag (German parliament), called for an end to "ambiguity and inaction" and a "clear reaction of a well-fortified democracy."

By this Bartsch obviously understands the oppression of Muslims—among other things, he pleads for a headscarf ban "in day-care centers and primary schools"—and the criminalisation of any opposition to racism and the police state.

"It was shocking that demonstrations took place in this country after the attacks in France—against the French President," he wrote angrily in *Die Welt*.

Bartsch could hardly make it clearer where he and the Left Party stand on the class struggle. Protests against the hated "President of the Rich" Macron—who praised Nazi collaborationist Philippe Pétain as a hero and has ordered the suppression of the "yellow vest" protests—are just as taboo for the former Stalinist state party of East Germany as protests against police violence.

In early June, the Red-Red-Green senate in Berlin organized police violence against peaceful demonstrators protesting against the police murder of George Floyd in the USA. At the time Bartsch repeatedly praised the police forces, which are permeated by right-wing extremist networks, and declared that "the police do not deserve less, but rather more social recognition and personnel, especially on the streets."



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)