

Demonstrations in over 100 cities commemorate the 2020 fascist murders in Hanau, Germany

Marianne Arens
24 February 2022

On the second anniversary of the fascist murders in Hanau, Germany, thousands participated in vigils, silent marches and demonstrations.

Events were held in over 100 cities to denounce the state racism and right-wing extremism that had made the fascist attack possible and to finally demand answers. “A state that doesn’t protect, a police force that doesn’t help—Hanau is everywhere!” a participant in Frankfurt wrote on her poster.

Under the motto SayTheirNames, a nationwide movement has developed to ensure that the victims are not forgotten. The names of the nine young Hanau residents were Kaloyan Velkov (33), Fatih Saraço?lu (34), Sedat Gürbüz (29), Vili Viorel P?un (22), Gökhan Gültekin (37), Mercedes Kierpacz (35), Ferhat Unvar (22), Hamza Kurtovi? (22) and Said Nesar Hashemi (21). A racist known to the authorities murdered them on February 19, 2020 before driving home unhindered and shooting his mother and himself.

The crime has still not been solved. Numerous questions arise about the events before, during and after these murders, which the state of Hesse has still not answered satisfactorily. Why was the murderer, a right-wing extremist known to the police, in possession of several weapons? Why was the 110 emergency number unreachable for a long time, and why were the families left in the dark for hours and days about the fate of their relatives?

As is now known, on the night of the crime in Hanau, a unit of the Special Operations Command (SEK) of the Frankfurt police was in action, which was later disbanded in June 2021 because of right-wing extremist activity. Nevertheless, the Hanau murderer is officially considered a “lone perpetrator.”

Even two years after all this, little has changed on the part of the state in its dealings with the victims’ families. On Saturday, the victims complained bitterly that the organisation of the central memorial service at Hanau’s main cemetery had been planned over their heads and partly against them. The state of Hesse hosted a ceremony there with about 100 invited guests. Among them were Hesse state Premier Volker Bouffier (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), German Minister of the Interior Nancy Faeser (Social Democratic Party, SPD) and the Mayor of Hanau Claus Kaminsky (SPD). But few friends and supporters of the families were admitted.

Emis Gürbüz, the mother of the murdered Sedat, was critical that the state of Hesse had appropriated the commemoration at the main cemetery and that the relatives were not allowed to have a say in who attended. “They’re taking everything away from us,” she said. “That I, as a mother, cannot decide who can attend the memorial service—that decision has been taken away from us. Who gives them the right to do that?”

The “19 February Hanau Initiative,” which had called for the commemorative actions, received over 19,000 followers on Twitter in a short time. The call to take to the streets “against forgetting and concealment and against fear” spread throughout Germany and beyond within a few days. Commemorative events took place in Berlin, Bonn, Bochum, Duisburg, Düsseldorf, Erfurt, Frankfurt/Main, Freiburg, Fulda, Giessen, Göttingen, Halle, Hamburg, Hanover, Heidelberg, Kassel, Cologne, Munich, Nuremberg, Saarbrücken, Rostock, Vienna and Basel, to name just a few of the over 100 cities.

In Hanau, hundreds gathered on Saturday evening at the two crime scenes, Heumarkt (city centre) and Kurt-Schumacher-Platz (Hanau-Kesselstadt). Among them were friends, colleagues and classmates of the victims and supporters of the families who did not want to leave them on their own. “It could have happened to any one of us,” one person said in Kesselstadt. On the window of the Arena Bar today is Ferhat Unvar’s sentence: “We are only dead when we are forgotten.”

In Frankfurt, around 1,500 people took part in a procession that began under the Friedensbrücke, where a large black and white mural depicts the faces of those killed. On Friday evening, 700 participants spontaneously participated in a demonstration through the Gallus district. Many demanded that the state of Hesse, which has locked away the files concerning the three neo-Nazi NSU murderers for 30 years, finally provide a complete explanation. “Hanau was not an isolated case” was written on placards, as well as the demands: “Remembrance, justice, clarification, consequences.” The demonstrators chanted: “Nazis murder, the state participates—the NSU was not a trio.”

In Berlin, there were several commemorative events, including a minute’s silence and light show at the Maxim Gorki Theatre, where the faces of the victims were projected onto the façade. Meanwhile, hundreds gathered for demonstrations and rallies in the Wedding, Kreuzberg and Treptow-Köpenick districts.

A smaller but moving memorial service took place in Duisburg. A young woman, herself close to tears, read the account of Filip Goman, the father of Mercedes Kierpacz, who had been shot in a kiosk in Hanau-Kesselstadt. “The crime could have been prevented!” her father is convinced. Afterwards, a speaker stressed that Hanau was not an isolated case, but joined many right-wing murder attacks. The neo-Nazis were deeply involved in the state, and the cause of racism was capitalism, she said.

In Saarbrücken, a commemoration at the Europa-Galerie was abruptly disrupted when a right-wing extremist unfurled an imperial German flag at the vigil and deliberately tried to provoke the participants. In Munich, it was the police themselves who brutally disrupted a memorial demonstration and rally.

There, huge contingents of security officers had been assembled in the city because of the Munich Security Conference taking place at the same time. An absurdly

large police contingent also occupied Munich’s Königsplatz, where the Hanau commemoration was taking place. Finally, the police used pepper spray and batons against participants who were demonstrating peacefully, and did not stop even after the rally had ended. Videos show police in full riot gear, wearing helmets with closed visors, tackling the youth and literally beating a group into the underground station.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact