

Increase in violent attacks on mosques and Muslims in Germany

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20 June 2022

There was a total of 768 violent attacks on mosques and Muslims in Germany between January 2014 and June 2021. In particular, the years 2020 and 2021 stand out, with over 140 attacks, although the unreported number of such hostile actions—including vandalism, incitement, arson attacks and bodily harm—is likely to be significantly higher.

There have already been numerous attacks on mosques this year. In January, the WSWs reported that the Islamic Cultural Centre Halle Saale e.V. was shot at with an air rifle.

The figures were published by Brandeilig.org, the first nationwide reporting centre for anti-Muslim racism. The independent anti-discrimination organisation Federation against Injustice and Racism e.V. (FAIR), based in Cologne, had launched the initiative to raise awareness of anti-Muslim racism in society.

According to the Interior Ministry, between 4.4 and 4.7 million Muslims live in Germany, which is slightly more than 5 percent of the total population. Most originate from Turkey, although one in two Muslims now comes from another country. There are also about 2,350 mosques nationwide. Germany thus has the second largest Muslim population in Western Europe after France.

Through annual reports, Brandeilig.org now wants to close existing information gaps regarding mosque attacks and violence against Muslims. Last May, the initiative published the inaugural Brandeilig report, for 2018, as this was the first year in which a reliable amount of information was available; further reports are to follow.

Information was collected on the numerical extent of the attacks, in which federal states they occurred, the motivation for the crime as well as the sequence of

events and types of attacks.

For 2018, Brandeilig.org registered a total of 120 violent attacks. Overall, violence of varying degrees was used in 84 percent of cases, in addition to considerable damage to property and personal injury. In 4 percent of cases, the perpetrators left pig limbs in the vicinity of the mosques—a particularly disgusting action, as many Muslims do not eat pork for religious reasons.

Bavaria had the highest incidence of violence against Muslims or mosques, with 25 attacks, or 21 percent of the total. North Rhine-Westphalia follows close behind with 23 attacks (19 percent). There were 14 attacks in Lower Saxony and 12 in Baden-Württemberg, each corresponding to about one tenth of the total number.

Violence against Muslims also occurred in 10 other federal states, with some people fearing for their lives. Only in Brandenburg and Saarland were there no attacks against Muslims or mosques recorded by Brandeilig.org in 2018.

A total of 54 attacks—almost half of all incidents—can be attributed to the right-wing extremist spectrum. In seven cases, the offence was characterised by the use of racist vocabulary or racist symbolism (e.g., daubing buildings with swastikas).

The most frequent type of attack (44 percent) was vandalism of various kinds. This included graffiti, leaving an animal carcass or broken windows, whereby the overall crime patterns are subject to a broad spectrum. There have also been nine attacks in the form of arson, e.g., the use of homemade Molotov cocktails against mosques, in which two people were injured.

Other types of attacks recorded were incitement (21), insults (7) or threatening behaviour (7). Two people were injured through the use of air rifles. Premises associated with a mosque—such as libraries, function

rooms or residential units—were also attacked.

A particularly repulsive act, which according to the report cannot be assigned to any category but apparently has a right-wing extremist background, occurred in Bavaria. On the building site for a mosque in Regensburg, crosses were erected bearing the names of victims of the 2016 terrorist attacks in Brussels. At the time, the right-wing Identitarian Movement of Bavaria had claimed responsibility for the Regensburg incident. This was an attempt to tar all members of the Muslim religious community as terrorists and stigmatise them, even if this is not stated in the report.

By conducting an additional survey of 68 of the 120 affected communities, the Brandeilig initiative was also able to paint a more detailed picture of the vast extent of violence against Muslims.

In the process, 77 percent of those surveyed stated they had repaired the damage themselves because the insurance company would not cover the costs. About €211,230 were raised through donations to pay for such repairs. While the report does not give any information on the financial scale of the property damage, the money raised for repairs gives at least a rough idea of its extent. In one case, the insurance company cancelled the contract with the affected municipality after the costs were covered.

It is also alarming that about half of respondents answered “yes” to the question whether there had been previous attacks. Moreover, in some cases, the police were only notified when the attacks had become more frequent. This underlines the assumption that there was far more hostility than documented by Brandeilig.org.

While the Brandeilig report presents the attacks on mosques and Muslims in Germany in detail, making an important contribution to publicising such crimes, the causes of this wave of violence are only superficially hinted at and largely obscured.

The report’s authors state that the “right-wing populist wing in Germany’s party-political landscape is gaining strength and that extra-parliamentary right-wing extremist and Islamophobic groups” are also a cause for concern. However, the report also states that there is hardly any “awareness in society as a whole of the seriousness of the situation.”

The main responsibility for the increasing violence against Muslims lies with the ruling class, which has moved further and further to the right in recent years. It

has created the ideological climate and political structures in which violence against Muslims and other minorities is now taking place.

Leaders of all the establishment parties and the media have joined in the agitation against Muslims. At the same time, the federal and state governments have de facto adopted the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) anti-refugee policy. Since its entry into the Bundestag in 2017, the AfD has been included in all parliamentary work, even functioning as the official opposition under the last government.

Right-wing extremist forces and terrorist structures—often with close ties to the state apparatus—are emboldened by this and are increasingly willing to resort to deadly violence. In recent years, the Hanau massacre (11 killed), the attack on the synagogue in Halle (2 killed) and the murder of leading Christian Democratic Union politician Walter Lübcke were three of the worst right-wing extremist terrorist attacks in Germany since the end of the Second World War. Right-wing violence can only be stopped by the independent intervention of the working class, which vehemently opposes right-wing extremism, militarism, and war.



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