

Verdict in neo-Nazi trial maintains the fairy tale of a lone perpetrator

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On Thursday, November 17, the verdict in the trial of the neo-Nazi “NSU 2.0” threatening letters was pronounced in Frankfurt. The Regional Court found the defendant, Alexander M., 54, from Berlin, guilty of numerous offences, including public incitement to commit crimes, incitement of the people, disturbing the peace and using anti-constitutional symbols (such as swastikas). He was sentenced to five years and 10 months in prison.

All the letters were signed “NSU 2.0,” an allusion to the neo-Nazi terrorist cell National Socialist Underground (NSU), which murdered at least 10 people between 2000 and 2007. According to the court, Alexander M. was behind at least 81 of the well over 100 threatening letters sent in recent years to lawyers representing NSU victims, as well as to politicians, cabaret artists, journalists and public figures.

Among those receiving the threatening letters were lawyers Seda Basay Yildiz and Mustafa Kaplan, Left Party politicians Martina Renner, Janine Wissler, Evrim Sommer and Anne Helm, as well as Green Party representative Renate Künast and Jutta Ditfurth from ÖkoLinX, in addition to satirist Jan Böhmermann and cabaret artist Idil Baydar, journalists Denis Yücel and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah, presenter Maybritt Illner and more. The death threats each contained personal details of addressees that were not publicly known, coupled with the most vulgar fascist insults. As a rule, they ended with “Heil Hitler.”

The verdict once again repeated the fairy tale of a lone perpetrator. The court considered it proven that Alexander M., as the sole culprit, had written and sent the letters by email, fax or SMS. Presiding Judge Corinna Distler told the defendant, “We are convinced that you wrote them all alone.”

However, even the judge conceded that the

background to the case had not been clarified. It had not been the task of the trial to clarify the question of who had obtained the information in the letters, which were shown to have come from several police computers, the judge said, formulating it as follows: The court had not considered that its task was to clear up the Frankfurt police scandal.

In fact, the NSU 2.0 threatening letters point to the widely interlinked networks that reach deep into the state. The threatening letters had begun more than six years ago, and in the case of most of them, the personal details they contained had been retrieved shortly beforehand from internal police computers in Frankfurt, Wiesbaden or Berlin.

As the sender of numerous threatening emails, Alexander M. is undoubtedly deeply involved in the fascist threats of violence. However, he repeatedly emphasized in court that he had been a member of a larger chat group on the Darknet. The Frankfurt trial blocked investigations in this direction with the implausible explanation that Alexander M. had obtained the—in part extremely detailed—information about his victims by calling the police and pretending to be a police officer. Thus, his conviction as an isolated lone perpetrator can only be understood as a diversion from attention to the right-wing extremist networks within the state apparatus.

The first threatening letter in particular, sent to lawyer Seda Basay Yildiz, had early on heavily incriminated the Frankfurt 1st Precinct police station.

At the time, the lawyer received a fax with death threats that included the name of her two-year-old daughter and other information that was not publicly known. The fax was sent at 3:41 p.m. on August 2, 2018. As is now known, data from three different databases were retrieved from a service computer at the

1st Precinct on Frankfurt's Zeil (shopping lane) between 14:09 and 14:15 the same afternoon. For six minutes, searches for information on Seda Basay Yildiz, her husband, her daughter and her parents were carried out. In the process, her name was entered 17 times.

On the same day, her private address also appeared on the Internet with a request that "German patriots" take care of the lawyer.

A chat group was discovered on the cell phone of the policewoman who was logged onto the duty computer in question at the 1st Precinct, in which at least five officers from the same station glorified Hitler and the Holocaust and shared anti-Semitic, racist, misogynistic and fascist content.

All these details were uncovered more than three years ago. The police officers were suspended, but so far they have not been convicted. Even in 2020, the lawyer received further threatening letters to a new, strictly protected address, which was known only within the police.

A member of the chat group, Frankfurt police officer Johannes S., is almost certainly the author of the first threatening fax to the lawyer. To disguise the sender, the fax was sent from a mobile device via a Tor browser, a technique with which Johannes S. is well acquainted. He also sold his tablet shortly after August 2, 2018.

Although Ms. Basay Yildiz and her lawyer had presented all these details as the representative of the plaintiffs in the trial, the court refused to indict Johannes S., who is accused of incitement of the people, but whose trial has been delayed for years. On this issue, the judge followed the prosecution, which had affirmed that the circumstantial evidence was not sufficient for an indictment.

In an interview with *Die Zeit*, Ms. Yildiz expressed serious criticism of this: "From my point of view, the public prosecutor's office had no interest in presenting a police officer as the perpetrator of the first threatening letter. On the contrary, it tried to divert any suspicion from police officer Johannes S. Moreover, it had no interest in investigating the group of right-wing officers at the 1st Precinct, to which the officer in question belonged."

She rejected as "outrageous" a claim by the prosecutor's office that it was "not a police scandal."

As she pointed out, "After all, an officer also specifically retrieved data about my daughter in order to harm us. He thus exposed me and my family to a danger that continues to exist."

The Hesse state government, under the Christian Democrats (CDU) and Greens, has systematically prevented an investigation. Even when Alexander M. was arrested in Berlin in May 2021, Hesse state Interior Minister Peter Beuth (CDU) publicly absolved the Hesse police. "According to everything we know today, no Hesse police officer was ever responsible for the NSU 2.0 threat emails," Beuth claimed. Now the entire Hesse police force could "breathe a sigh of relief," he added.

The reality is very different. Leading politicians, prosecutors and judges maintain a protective hand over the right-wing extremist networks within the state. The terrorist threats, which include using information from police computers, are intended to intimidate anyone who speaks out against militarism, fascism and social inequality. Since the war policies and attacks on the working class being carried out by those in power are incompatible with democracy, they are once again resorting to the methods of dictatorship.



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