

Four fatalities following arson attack in Solingen, Germany

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An arson attack in Solingen, North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), claimed the lives of a family of four last Monday. Twenty-one other people were injured, some of them seriously. Although investigations are still ongoing, it is highly likely that the attack was motivated by right-wing extremism.

The attack took place during the night hours last Monday in the Höhscheid district of Solingen. All but one of the occupants were Muslims of Turkish origin from Turkey and Bulgaria. The fatalities were two young parents, a three-year-old child, and an infant of Bulgarian nationality.

The fire started in the stairwell of the old building. From there, it spread to the roof within a few minutes. According to the expert report, “clear traces of an accelerant” were found in the wooden stairwell. Based on this finding, “deliberate arson” had to be assumed, they said.

When the fire brigade arrived, the stairwell was already completely on fire, so that the escape route was blocked. Several residents jumped out of windows in panic and were seriously injured. One hundred twenty firefighters were deployed to bring the blaze under control.

The public prosecutor’s office is investigating the possibility of murder and attempted murder charges. It is notable that the office stated immediately after the crime that there were no indications of a xenophobic motive.

On Thursday evening, the spokesperson for the public prosecutor’s office told broadcaster WDR that it was an “interpersonal offence.” A day later, the public prosecutor’s office announced that a man who had been provisionally arrested had been released after lengthy questioning and his alibi had been checked. Continuing investigations were now “open-ended in all directions.”

In fact, a xenophobic background to the offence is more than likely. “Unfortunately, we have to assume that there are racist motives behind this cowardly attack,” Tayfun

Keltek, chairman of the NRW State Integration Council in Düsseldorf said on Wednesday evening. “The current socially heated situation leads me to this conclusion.”

After more than 150 people attended a commemorative rally at the scene of the fire on Thursday, around 1,000 people gathered on Saturday for a funeral march for the victims of the arson. The participants marched from the city centre to the burnt-out house, shouting “clarification” and “justice for all” in Turkish. Hardly anyone doubted the right-wing extremist background to the crime.

The attack took place just a few weeks before the anniversary of the May 1993 racist arson attack that killed five women and girls of Turkish origin in Solingen. Four young men aged between 16 and 23 who belonged to the right-wing extremist scene were subsequently convicted of five counts of murder.

The 1993 murders were the culmination of a series of violent attacks on asylum seekers and foreigners throughout Germany. In Hoyerswerda, Rostock, Lübeck and Mölln, right-wing extremist terror showed its face on the streets. But the main perpetrators sat in the government and in the parliamentary parties.

After the reunification of Germany in 1991, the Treuhand, set up to sell off, privatise and close the former state-owned property, had destroyed over 2.5 million jobs and hundreds of thousands of livelihoods in the East. The destruction did not stop at the border to West Germany either. For example, the Krupp steelworks in Duisburg-Rheinhausen closed in 1993. The workers there had fought bitterly against this for years, but were sold out by the IG Metall union and the Social Democrats (SPD).

To counter the growing militancy in the working class against closures, the Kohl government launched a xenophobic campaign. Politicians and the media constantly agitated against the “flood of asylum seekers,” just as they agitate against the “wave of refugees” today.

Just three days before the attack in Solingen, the

Bundestag (parliament) restricted the right to asylum by amending the constitution. The SPD provided the Christian Democrat-Liberal Democrat (CDU-FDP) coalition under Chancellor Helmut Kohl with the necessary two-thirds majority for this. Neo-Nazis consequently took this as a signal to run riot against immigrants and refugees.

The situation has worsened in recent years. The official scapegoating of refugees and immigrants has led to a massive increase in right-wing extremist attacks and assaults.

In 2016, right-wing extremist David Sonboly killed nine people with an immigrant background in Munich. Later, a neo-Nazi known to the police shot and killed Kassel District President Walter Lübcke. In October 2019, over 70 participants at a Yom Kippur celebration in the synagogue in Halle narrowly escaped a massacre by right-wing extremist Stephan Balliet. In 2020, a neo-Nazi killed nine people in Hanau. The involvement of the police and secret services remains unclear and any discussion of this possibility is being suppressed by the authorities by any means necessary, but it is well known that they are heavily involved in the far-right scene.

These acts, as well as the most recent attack in Solingen, took place against the backdrop of increased attacks on refugees and immigrants by the German government and all opposition parties. They have all adopted the programme of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and put it into practice.

Last October, on the cover of Germany's largest circulation weekly *Der Spiegel*, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced: "We must finally deport on a grand scale." Since then, all the establishment parties have been attacking the most vulnerable members of society.

In January, with the votes of all the government coalition parties—SPD, FDP, Greens—and amid mass protests against the far-right AfD, the Bundestag passed the so-called "Repatriation Improvement Act," drastically restricting the rights of refugees. Asylum seekers without a right to remain, and who have been living and working in Germany for years, can now be picked up without warning, detained for almost a month and forcibly deported. The police are not only allowed to search without permission their accommodation and mobile phones, but the accommodation of neighbours as well.

The law also criminalises anyone who helps refugees. Those conducting rescues at sea could be prosecuted for "aiding illegal entry directly into Germany"—even when it comes to rescuing minors.

SPD co-leader Lars Klingbeil has called on the state governments to speed up the deportation of refugees. "The federal states now have the [legal] possibilities, and they must utilise them," Klingbeil demanded in an interview with the *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung*. "The state must function when it comes to repatriating people who cannot stay with us."

While the xenophobic campaign of the 1990s served to counter resistance to job and social cuts, opposition to war and militarism has now been added to the mix. The German government is in the process of doubling and quadrupling military spending while cutting social spending accordingly. It is waging a proxy war against the nuclear power Russia in Ukraine and supporting the genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza. Anyone who protests against the government's pro-Israel policy is persecuted as an "antisemite," while the real antisemites from the AfD applaud the attacks on democratic rights.

Such a pro-war course is not compatible with democracy; it requires fascist methods. This is the reason why the government, establishment parties and media are agitating against refugees and immigrants and stirring up the fascistic dregs of society.

Under these circumstances, resistance to job and social cuts, the defence of immigrants and democratic rights and the fight against militarism and war are inseparable. They require the mobilisation of the working class against the bankrupt capitalist system that produces these evils.



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