

German police shoot 21-year-old Lorenz in the back—thousands protest against police violence

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Thousands of people took to the streets in Oldenburg and other German cities over the weekend to pay their respects to the latest victim of police violence in Germany. Under the banner “Justice for Lorenz,” they are demanding a full investigation into the circumstances under which the 21-year-old Oldenburg resident was executed by a police officer a week ago.

On the night before Easter Sunday, Lorenz A. became involved in a conflict with a bouncer outside a club in his hometown. Eyewitnesses report that the young man was refused entry to “Pablo’s” because of his clothing.

According to the police, Lorenz then used pepper spray against the security guards and guests of the club. He subsequently fled, and guests attempted to pursue him but ceased their chase when Lorenz brandished a knife. Lorenz then encountered a police patrol and ran away, shortly afterwards encountering a second police patrol.

Police claimed Lorenz “approached the police officers in a threatening manner and sprayed irritant in their direction. Finally, a 27-year-old officer fired his weapon. The attacker was hit several times, critically injured and ultimately succumbed to his injuries in hospital.” A few days later, the public prosecutor's office stated that Lorenz had run past the officers. The officers' body cameras were not switched on during the incident.

The autopsy results have now made it clear that Lorenz was shot from behind: three of the five shots hit him in the head, upper body and hip.

While the investigation is still ongoing, it is clear that the young man could not have threatened the police officers when he was shot.

The right-wing BILD newspaper, as well as the NDR

radio and other media outlets, initially spread the story of a “knife attacker” who was shot by the police in self-defence—a motive that has been used repeatedly in recent months to justify fatal police shootings in the cities of Herne, Göttingen, Recklinghausen and elsewhere. In Lorenz’s case, the public prosecutor's office now reports that a knife was found on the deceased, but that the police officers were not threatened by it at any time.

The police officer who fired the fatal shots at Lorenz is currently under investigation for manslaughter. However, the investigation is being conducted by the Oldenburg public prosecutor’s office in cooperation with the neighbouring Delmenhorst police department, which is particularly problematic due to both the geographical proximity and presumed acquaintance between the officers. The Delmenhorst police have themselves attracted attention in recent years for extreme police brutality.

In March 2021, for example, 19-year-old Oosay Khalaf died in police custody in the city under circumstances that remain unclear.

Oosay Khalaf, the son of a Yazidi family from Iraq, had fled to Europe to escape the reign of terror in the “Islamic State.” In his hometown of Delmenhorst, he was caught by the police with a friend smoking weed in a park and, after an unsuccessful attempt to escape, was “restrained” and taken into custody. Oosay Khalaf collapsed in his cell at the police station and later died in hospital.

His friend gave an account of the arrest that differed from the police report, saying that it was brutal: An officer knelt on Oosay Khalaf's back and didn't respond when the young man pleaded that he couldn't breathe.

An expert opinion from the University Medical Centre Hamburg-Eppendorf concluded that external violence and lack of oxygen led to Oosay Khalaf's death.

In the case of Oosay Khalaf, who died in police custody, no official investigation was even initiated. It was only after the family filed a complaint that an investigation into failure to render assistance was launched. This was closed a few months later without any results, despite unanswered questions.

In 2022, the severe mistreatment of a person in custody at the Delmenhorst police station came to light: an officer had repeatedly slammed the head of an intoxicated, suicidal 41-year-old man against the wall of the detention cell, while other police officers, including a superior, were present. However, the incident came to light rather by accident, as the violent officer's bodycam was switched on and the abuse was therefore documented.

This kind of police violence, which sometimes has fatal consequences, is not uncommon in Germany. The research and documentation website *Death in Custody* has already counted eleven cases of death in police custody this year alone.

The number of fatal police shootings has risen sharply in recent times, reaching a peak last year of 22 deaths from police use of firearms—double the figures for the previous years 2023 (ten deaths), 2022 (eleven deaths) and 2021 (eight deaths), as reported by the magazine *Bürgerrechte & Polizei CILIP*, citing figures from the Conference of Interior Ministers. A new record is likely this year, as the killing of Lorenz in 2025 brings the number of people killed by police gunfire to eleven.

While a disproportionate number of refugees and people of dark skin lose their lives at the hands of the police, as in the cases of Lorenz and Oosay Khalaf, police violence is first and foremost a class issue and not simply a problem of racism within the police force.

Racist attitudes and other forms of group-focused enmity are widespread among police officers, as a study by the Police Academy found as recently as 2024. This is undoubtedly fuelled by the current political and media incitement against refugees.

But anti-racist awareness training does not help against police violence, nor is it prevented by making “intercultural openness” a priority for the police and recruiting more black people to wear the uniform.

Police violence is state violence directed by the ruling class against the working class. Deadly police violence is the most extreme manifestation of a domestic law-and-order policy that mirrors the increasingly brutal and militarised foreign policy and the rejection of refugees and migrants at Germany's and Europe's external borders.

A state that arms itself for war acts with increasing brutality. State repression is ultimately directed against the working class as a whole, while hitting its marginalised sections particularly hard: immigrants and refugees, non-conformist youth, those with mental problems and the homeless, etc. They are harassed because they are considered to be disruptive and must be disciplined or driven away.

The tens of thousands who demanded “justice for Lorenz” and protested in solidarity against police brutality over the weekend are not only sincerely mourning the young man who lost his life so senselessly. They also sense the connection between aggressive refugee policies and foreign policy on the one hand, and police violence at home on the other.

To effectively counter police violence, the following is needed: the development of a movement in the working class that unites workers of all backgrounds, skin colours and nationalities. This is the only basis for resistance to inequality, oppression and all forms of backwardness—including the racism whipped up by the ruling class to divide the working population.



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