Show trial in Hungary: German anti-fascist Maja T. sentenced to 8 years in prison

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German anti-fascist activist Maja T. was sentenced to eight years in prison by a Budapest court on February 4 for attempted life-threatening bodily harm and membership of a criminal organisation. The court considered it proven that Maja T. was involved in an attack on right-wing extremists in Hungary in February 2023.

The case exemplifies how neo-Nazis, the right-wing extremist Hungarian government of Viktor Orbán, the compliant Hungarian judiciary, the Trump administration and German authorities, courts, media and politicians are working closely together to persecute anti-fascists and leftists and eliminate democratic rights. The much-vaunted "firewall" against the far-right, the official criticism of Orbán's authoritarian rule and the EU's rule of law proceedings against Hungary prove to be pure window dressing.

The proceedings against Maja T. were a show trial from start to finish, making a mockery of any claim to follow the rule of law. This began with the illegal extradition of the German citizen in a cloak-and-dagger operation and continued with months of unbearable solitary confinement, the interference of Orbán and Donald Trump, and a trial that was a pure farce. Nevertheless, members of the German government expressly welcomed the draconian punishment.

The pretext: A neo-Nazi meeting

A neo-Nazi meeting that took place on the so-called Day of Honour in the Hungarian capital served as the occasion for the show trial against Maja T. From February 10–12, 2023, around 2,000 neo-Nazis from all over Europe gathered in Budapest. The day serves to "commemorate" the failed attempt of Hitler's Wehrmacht (army) and allied Hungarian troops to break out from Budapest, which was besieged by the Red Army, shortly before the end of the war in 1945.

From 1997, the Day of Honour was initially organised by the Hungarian National Front, and since 2003 the Hungarian branch of the fascist network Blood and Honour has organised the event. Every year, fascist groups from all over Europe gather in Budapest to commemorate their Nazi role models. Last year, members of the neo-Nazi parties The Third Path (*Der III. Weg*), The Right (*Die Rechte*) and Free Saxony (*Freie Sachsen*) from Germany participated.

In 2023, the Hungarian Interior Ministry banned all events for the Day of Honour, but the ban was not enforced by the authorities. The central event did not take place as previously at Buda Castle in the city centre, but in a nearby forest area. Despite the ban, participants displayed swastika flags and SS symbols undisturbed. The demonstration was summarily declared a "hike" and was thus not subject to restrictions.

The "hike" was supported by the highest state authorities. It was organised by the Homeland and Tourism association, which receives lavish state funding. The association is headed by Zoltán Moys, the son-in-law of Sándor Lezsák, the vice president of the Hungarian Parliament and a close confidant of Orbán. This is just one of the countless connections of the governing party with the extreme right.

It is significant that none of the participants were arrested by the police, who instead took massive action against counter-demonstrators. In previous years, several counter-demonstrators were arrested. This culminated in 2023 in large-scale arrests and the indictment of several anti-fascists.

This year, all demonstrations and rallies against the Day of Honour are banned in Budapest. Demonstrations against the ban are also not allowed. Protest against neo-Nazis and fascism is thus officially considered a "demonstration in support of terrorist groups." Orbán and US President Trump laid the foundation for this when they classified the so-called Antifa East (Antifa-Ost) as a "terrorist organisation." It is claimed that Maja T. is a member of this group.

Italian anti-fascist Ilaria Salis was also interned in Budapest under similar conditions. She is free again only because she was elected to the EU Parliament in 2024 and thus enjoys immunity.

The classification of "Antifa East" as a terrorist organisation also has consequences for numerous other anti-fascist and socialist organisations, with several banks in Germany using it as a pretext to block their accounts. Most recently, the Association of the Persecuted of the Nazi Regime-Federation of Antifascists (VVN-BDA), which calls for protests against the Day of Honour, had its accounts terminated by Postbank without justification.

The illegal extradition

The trial of Maja T. should not have taken place in this form at all. Her extradition to Hungary in June 2024 was already grossly illegal.

On June 27, the Berlin Higher Regional Court (*Kammergericht*) agreed to the extradition, and on the same day, Maja T. was flown from Dresden to Austria by helicopter in a cloak-and-dagger operation and handed over to the Hungarian authorities at the border. This happened in such a hurry so as to pre-empt a temporary injunction by Germany's Supreme Court, which then prohibited the extradition on June 28.

In February 2025, in main proceedings, the Supreme Court then declared the extradition of Maja T. illegal. The Supreme Court found that the lower court, which had authorised the extradition, had not sufficiently fulfilled its duty to fully clarify the facts relevant to the transfer.

Maja T.'s defence lawyers had asserted before the lower court the inhumane detention conditions in Hungary as an obstacle to her extradition, citing affidavits from persons who had been in Hungarian detention centres and submitting reports from the European Committee for

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the Prevention of Torture and the non-governmental organisation Hungarian Helsinki Committee. As a non-binary person, Maja T. also had to expect special harassment and discrimination in Hungary, where discrimination against LGBTQ+ people is official state doctrine.

The lower court based its judgement solely on assurances from the Hungarian Justice Ministry, which falsely claimed that Hungary had submitted to EU rules and that no violent or other assaults connected with the gender identity of the person concerned were known.

Maja T.'s detention conditions in Hungary were correspondingly catastrophic. She was put in solitary confinement and constantly monitored by video. Food quality and hygienic conditions were inhumane; the cell was infested with vermin. The detention conditions were so extreme that Maja T. decided in the summer of 2025 to go on a 40-day hunger strike.

"Here in Hungary, I am buried alive in solitary confinement," Maja declared in writing. The hunger strike was a last-ditch attempt to obtain a fair trial and be transferred to Germany.

The farce of the trial

The trial before the Budapest court was a farce. The prosecution originally demanded 24 years in prison as a "deterrent." The defence called for an acquittal. The court itself had to admit that there were no witnesses and no evidence of the defendant's involvement in the alleged crime. The verdict relied solely on footage from a security camera, on which the defendant is supposedly seen near the crime scene.

In court, four witnesses testified that they had not recognised Maja T. among the attackers. The prosecution stated that a person with a red hat on the security camera footage was the defendant. But this could not be verified. Furthermore, the footage shows how this person walks past the crime scene, returns and subsequently moves away from the crime scene, i.e., is in no way involved in the act.

Sven Richwin, Maja T.'s German lawyer, described the entire procedure as a "production." The defendant stood practically alone before the judge, while the defence lawyer had to sit at the other end of the room, meaning there was no possibility to confer. In addition, large parts of the court documents were not available in translated form for the defence at the start of the trial, while the prosecution already had German reports translated. There was also no explanation for the announced sentence.

How things will proceed after this verdict is still unclear. Both the defence and the prosecution have announced they will appeal. The initiation of appeal proceedings could take up to half a year, during which time Maja T. continues to be exposed to unbearable detention conditions.

The verdict: Propaganda for right-wing extremists

The verdict triggered great outrage. It has long been known that Hungarian head of government Orbán had spoken in favor of a harsh verdict. In view of falling poll ratings before the upcoming elections, Orbán has tried to utilize the case to mobilise his narrow right-wing extremist base. Currently, the opposition alliance is about 7 percentage points ahead of Orbán's ruling Fidesz-KDNP in polls. The elections take place on April 12.

Since Orbán took office 15 years ago, it is no longer possible to speak of an independent judiciary in Hungary. Almost all key positions are filled with people loyal to the government, who not infrequently have a right-wing or openly fascist background. The 2025 EU Rule of Law Report highlights serious and lasting deficits in the areas of judicial independence, anti-corruption and media freedom.

Most recently, Donald Trump wished Orbán success in the elections, called him a true friend and expressly praised his tough stance on migration issues. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio travelled on from the Munich Security Conference to Hungary to support Orbán. Trump had already announced in January that he would visit Hungary before the elections.

In January, Orbán published a campaign video on X in which European right-wing extremists support him, including Italian head of government Giorgia Meloni, Marine Le Pen from France, Alice Weidel from the far-right Alterantive for Germany (AfD), Herbert Kickl from the Austrian FPÖ as well as Israeli head of government and war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu.

Approval of the verdict by representatives of the German government must be seen in this context.

Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) declared, "This is a non-final judgement in an EU country. And we respect that." The Foreign Ministry also emphasised it had taken note of the judgement and "respects the jurisdiction of the Hungarian judiciary." The ministry did not comment on the question of a possible transfer of Maja T. to Germany. Since the illegal extradition, the Foreign Ministry has not lifted a finger to improve her detention conditions, let alone arrange for a return.

Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt (Christian Social Union, CSU) defended the verdict even more openly. He told the *Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland*, "Most serious bodily injuries took place there. One person suffered a skull fracture. That must lead to a conviction." With this, Dobrindt lines up with the right-wing extremist AfD, which also welcomed the verdict.

The entire case shows how closely German government politicians, authorities and courts work together with right-wing extremists all over the world to persecute anti-fascists and leftists. The case of Lina E. had already shown how the government and security authorities brutally pursue any opposition to their right-wing policies in the name of the fight against "left-wing extremism," while right-wing extremists are treated with kid gloves or covered up.

The reason for this is not simply the right-wing mindset of individual politicians or judges. Germany's return to great power politics and militarism and the associated social attacks require authoritarian and fascist methods of rule.

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