

Germany: 6 years since the racist murders in Hanau

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Six years after the racist murder attack in Hanau, thousands took to the streets again on February 19 to commemorate the victims. On the same day in 2020, the fascist killer Tobias Rathjen, 42, killed nine complete strangers, eight men and one woman, aged between 20 and 37. Six further individuals were injured, some severely.

“Say their names,” under this slogan, the memory of Kaloyan Velkov, Fatih Saraçoğlu, Sedat Gürbüz, Vili Viorel Păun, Gökhan Gültekin, Mercedes Kierpacz, Ferhat Unvar, Hamza Kurtović and Said Nesar Hashemi is kept alive.

A few days ago, a tenth victim was added: A man severely injured at the time, Ibrahim Akkuş, 70, died on January 10, 2026 from the delayed effects of the numerous shots the killer had fired at him in the Arena-Bar in Hanau-Kesselstadt. Akkuş had spent several months in the hospital after the attack, underwent multiple surgeries and had been confined to a wheelchair ever since. He required intensive care by his wife and daughter and lived isolated in a non-accessible apartment.

Even six years after the Hanau murders, the background has still not been fully clarified and hardly any consequences have been drawn. Officially, it was the act of a “confused lone perpetrator,” but numerous questions remain unanswered to this day. Evidence points to a much more far-reaching web of right-wing networks, official circles turning a blind eye and a policy that is drifting ever further to the right, into the wake of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The sequence of events on February 19, 2020 alone raises urgent questions. The perpetrator was able to visit several crime scenes one after the other—first, the pubs La Votré and Midnight-Bar at the Heumarkt in the town centre, then, the kiosk and the Arena-Bar in Hanau-Kesselstadt—and subsequently return unhindered to his parents’ house, where the police only visited him at 3:00

a.m. (and found him and his mother dead).

The 110 emergency services number was unreachable at the time of the crime, which cost the life at least Vili Viorel Păun, who wanted to report the first murders and prevent further ones. The perpetrator shot him dead in the Lidl parking lot in Kesselstadt with several shots through the windshield. Survivors from the first crime scene in Hanau had also tried in vain for 20 minutes to call the emergency services before they could pass on the license plate number of Rathjen’s car. Even then, the manhunt started extremely sluggishly.

Moreover, the killer had been known to the authorities for years as a racist and someone who was psychologically disturbed. He had appeared in several court proceedings years earlier, had sent paranoid-seeming texts to the authorities and, six months before the crime, posted a 24-page manifesto online in which he openly formulated genocidal fantasies. Nevertheless, he possessed an extended firearms license, had weapons at home and was allowed to complete several sniper training courses. His father is also known throughout the city as an aggressive racist.

Added to this is the social dimension of the crime, which did not accidentally concentrate on Hanau-Kesselstadt: a predominantly proletarian, internationally mixed residential town. The victims belonged to families whose parents had migrated from Italy, Turkey, Bosnia, Romania, Syria and Afghanistan. They had found work in construction, on the railways, in Rüsselsheim, at the airport, or in Hanau at Dunlop, technology company Heraeus and the BBC and had hoped for a better future for their children.

The murderous shots were directed against this international community—It was an attack on the working class. This is at the same time an indication of why the real connections and background have been covered up to this day and the causes not eliminated. The leading

politicians of all the establishment parties sense and recognise a growing threat in this community.

In fact, official government policy increasingly follows the anti-migrant AfD policy. The government, which is massively rearming for war and building up a police state, is at the same time proceeding ever more aggressively against migrants and refugees, trying to drive a wedge into the working class with anti-foreigner agitation and nationalism.

Under the direction of Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt (Christian Social Union, CSU), the government is sealing off the borders, further ramping up deportations—even to Syria and Afghanistan—suspending family reunification and advocating ever stricter laws directed against foreigners in the EU as well. Its rearmament policies against Russia and its open partisanship for Israel show that for the Merz-Klingbeil government, a coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, it is not the democratic and social rights of the population that come first but the economic and financial interests of a socially detached oligarchy.

Thus, the ongoing deliberate confusion surrounding the Hanau murders and adherence to the “lone perpetrator” theory is no coincidence. Rather, the official inaction of all the establishment parties contributes to creating conditions for new, even more gruesome events and rampages in a situation of growing unemployment and social immiseration.

The policy of the union leaderships of IG Metall and Verdi, who loyally adhere to the interests of German big business and elites, has a particularly paralyzing and poisonous effect here. They are “unions” in name only. They stand on the side of the government and support its policies of war and austerity, as the latest contract Verdi agreed in the public sector has proven once again. In industry, they pursue a nationalist policy of playing one location off against another, which goes hand in hand with the destruction of thousands of jobs.

For example, particularly in Hanau and the Rhine-Main area, numerous industrial plants are being closed or jobs cut, such as at Opel-Stellantis in Rüsselsheim or Goodyear-Dunlop in Hanau, and the union leaders countersign every closure and dismissal decision.

The Hanau murders must be a warning: Remembering means fighting! To prevent the return of fascism, one must not rely on the state and its authorities, the police and the intelligence services but must create independent, democratically controlled workers’ committees, some of which had already begun to emerge in the aftermath of the

murders in Hanau.

To completely uncover how the murders came about and for the protection of all workers against the right-wing danger, it is important to understand who is a friend and who is an enemy. Workers’ allies are not the state representatives, union bureaucrats and party politicians in the Bundestag (federal parliament) and the municipalities, who have proven their indifference and hostility over the past six years.

Our allies are the workers all over the world who have taken up the fight against war and fascism. In particular, this includes the workers in the United States—in California, New York, Minneapolis and Detroit, Michigan—who have taken up the fight against the Trump dictatorship and its murderous ICE immigration police.

One of them, Will Lehman, a 39-year-old socialist and autoworker from Mack Trucks in Macungie, Pennsylvania, is standing up against the corrupt leadership of the autoworkers’ union UAW and is himself running for the office of UAW president to return decision-making power to the rank-and-file workers.

Will Lehman points to the enormous potential power of the working class in a video on his election website WillforUAWPresident.org. “But this power,” Lehman says, “cannot be realised as long as workers are bound hand and foot by a union apparatus that works against us at every turn. ... The truth is that this bureaucracy cannot be reformed. It must be abolished.” And he concludes his video with a strong plea for socialism:

I am running as a socialist and an internationalist. Socialism means a society run by the working class, not the billionaires, who profit off our exploitation. We must reject every attempt to divide us by race, nationality or ethnicity and fight to unite workers across borders in a common struggle.



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