

Islamist attack on Berlin CSD: Government intensifies police state offensive

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The Islamist attack on Christopher Street Day (CSD) in Berlin on Saturday evening, in which a woman was killed and 29 other people were injured, in some cases seriously, is a vile, reactionary crime. It was directed specifically against queer people and against the right of every individual to live free from discrimination and violence.

Islamist hatred of homosexuals and trans people must be condemned without reservation. It is no more an answer to racism or imperialist crimes than fascism is an answer to social misery. Both tendencies direct the despair and anger produced by capitalism against particularly vulnerable sections of the population and defend authoritarian social relations. At the same time, such acts are systematically instrumentalised by politicians and the media to intensify agitation against Muslims and refugees and to expand the state apparatus of repression, which in turn strengthens the far right.

What is known about the attack? On July 25, at around 10:00 p.m., a white delivery van coming from Potsdamer Platz raced through Ahornsteig in the Tiergarten and drove into or knocked over numerous people before crashing into a tree. According to the investigations so far, the perpetrator is then said to have attacked other passersby with a cutting and stabbing weapon, presumably a machete. The Federal Prosecutor's Office has taken over the investigation. All the injured are now out of danger.

The suspected attacker, 21-year-old Abdul B., was shot dead on Sunday evening during a police operation in an allotment garden in Spandau. According to the police, he attacked special forces with a stabbing weapon. Whether other persons were involved in the attack is the subject of the investigation. Police initially stated that a passenger may have fled from the vehicle used in the attack.

It is already clear that the perpetrator had been known to the security authorities for years. B., a German citizen born in Germany, was classified as an Islamist *Gefährder*,

a person deemed a potential security threat. He had repeatedly attempted to travel to Syria and join the "Islamic State." He was arrested in Lebanon and, after his return to Germany, again remanded in custody. On May 12, he was sentenced to one year and 10 months in juvenile detention for preparing a serious act of violence endangering the state and for violations of the Associations Act. Although the Office of the Prosecutor General had requested a higher sentence and the continuation of detention, he was released pending an appeal.

This raises urgent questions: What did the police and intelligence agencies know about his concrete plans? What surveillance measures were in place? With whom was he in contact? How was a person classified as radicalised and willing to use violence and convicted of preparing a serious act of violence able to carry out such an attack?

Instead of answering these questions, government politicians immediately called for a further build-up of the state apparatus. Chancellor Friedrich Merz declared at a memorial event that the attack was intended to rob society of "our openness and our freedom." Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier spoke of an attack on the "open society," while CSU leader Markus Söder demanded action "with the utmost severity." Leading politicians are calling for the intelligence service reform to be completed quickly. The chairman of the German Police Union is demanding online searches and source telecommunications surveillance. Green Party domestic policy spokesman Konstantin von Notz has also called for expanded powers for the security authorities.

The talk of "freedom" and the protection of queer people from the mouths of these politicians is hard to surpass in its hypocrisy. In reality, video footage shows police attacking peaceful participants in the Internationalist Queer Pride in Berlin because they were

protesting against Israel's genocide of the Palestinians, which is supported by the government and all parties in the Bundestag.

Just last year, Merz defended the refusal to fly the rainbow flag over the Bundestag for Berlin CSD with the sneering remark that parliament was "not a circus tent." The Interior Ministry headed by Alexander Dobrindt also refused to fly the flag for CSD. Dobrindt himself, as CSU general secretary, denounced supporters of equal rights for same-sex couples as a "shrill minority."

The AfD (Alternative for Germany), which is now exploiting the attack for its racist agitation against Muslims and migrants, is a spearhead of the attacks on queer people. As recently as March, it demanded in the Bundestag, among other things, that rainbow flags no longer be flown at German diplomatic missions abroad. In June, the Union, AfD and SPD jointly rejected several motions aimed at protecting queer life. The vast majority of anti-queer violence in Germany, moreover, is carried out by right-wing extremists.

In addition, the federal government itself is dismantling democratic rights at breakneck speed. The current demands are not a spontaneous response to the attack but part of a police state offensive that has long been underway. At the Interior Ministers' Conference in June, it was decided to permanently integrate the Bundeswehr and the Defence Ministry into the structures of the conference. Under the slogan of "total defence," the police, intelligence agencies, judiciary, administration, business and military are to be merged in order to "expand military and civilian defence capability with the same consistency and speed by 2029."

Shortly beforehand, Dobrindt had opened the "Joint Centre for Defence Against Hybrid Threats." The deliberately boundless terms "disinformation," "influence" and "hybrid threat" create the basis for treating political opposition to rearmament, war and social cuts as a security risk. The build-up of the police and military apparatus is the domestic side of the preparations for war against Russia. The ruling class knows that the gigantic arms spending, the destruction of social rights and the militarisation of all society will encounter growing resistance.

Equally hypocritical is the claim that the federal government opposes Islamism on principle. At the end of March, Merz and Steinmeier rolled out the red carpet in Berlin for Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa. Al-Sharaa, under his former name Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, was the leader of the al-Nusra Front, the Syrian affiliate of al-

Qaeda. In the Chancellery, the two governments agreed on close political and economic cooperation, German investment projects and cooperation in the return of Syrian refugees.

German imperialism and its NATO allies supported Islamist militias in the Syrian regime change war so long as they served their geopolitical aims. Today Berlin is courting a regime that emerged from these forces. Reactionary Islamists are judged not according to whether they trample on "freedom" and human rights but according to whether they can be used as allies against Iran, Russia and China and as partners in deportations and German business projects.

The attack also recalls the terrorist attack on the Breitscheidplatz Christmas market. On December 19, 2016, Anis Amri drove a truck into the crowd; a total of 13 people died and dozens were injured. Amri was known to the authorities under 14 identities, was under surveillance and was followed by the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre. State informants were operating in the Islamist milieu in which he moved; at least one of them was in contact with Amri. Nevertheless, he prepared the attack effectively under the eyes of the authorities. Afterwards, he was shot dead by police in Italy, while the federal government used the crime to intensify anti-refugee agitation and expand police powers.

In light of these experiences, it would be politically naive to rule out from the outset the involvement, deliberate inaction or influence of sections of the state apparatus in the current attack. Precisely for this reason, all files, surveillance measures, possible informant contacts and decisions must be disclosed and independently investigated.

Whatever details emerge about the latest attack, it is already clear that it plays politically into the government's hands. It is being used to stoke fear, strengthen racist and right-wing forces, and expand a repressive apparatus that is ultimately directed against the entire working population. The struggle against this reactionary offensive requires the independent mobilisation of the working class on the basis of an international socialist program.



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