German interior minister exploits Berlin Pride attack to demand police-state expansion

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On July 25, the Islamist terrorist Abdul Ballout drove a delivery van into the Berlin Christopher Street Day parade, one of Europe's largest annual LGBTQ+ pride events. One woman was killed and 31 further people injured. On August 4, the parliamentary Interior Affairs Committee met in special session to—as the stated aim had it—shed light on the background to the terrorist attack.

Yet as became apparent, not a single pressing question was answered. The response followed the familiar pattern that has repeated itself regularly since the 9/11 attacks in New York: the perpetrators are known to the security authorities, even act under their very eyes, yet the background to the attack is not clarified, and instead the security authorities receive new powers.

Federal Interior Minister Dobrindt (Christian Social Union, CSU) is falling over himself with demands for a further strengthening of the police state: preventive detention is to be expanded and standardised nationwide, the use of electronic ankle tags is to become standard practice and juvenile criminal law tightened.

The questions facing the Interior Committee are in fact highly explosive. Abdul Ballout, 21, a German citizen who grew up in Berlin, had been known to the authorities for almost five years as a fanatical Salafist. He had made several attempts, most recently in 2025, to join the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Syria. Arrested and imprisoned in Lebanon, he was extradited to Germany last November. Since January he had been under surveillance by the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (GTAZ), in which 40 police authorities and the intelligence services of the federal states and the federal government exchange information.

On May 12, 2026, 10 weeks before the attack, Ballout was convicted in Berlin of preparing a serious act endangering the state and sentenced under juvenile criminal law to one year and 10 months imprisonment. Yet the 21-year-old was released on the same day on "pre-probation" under juvenile criminal law. Since then, Ballout had been under surveillance around the clock. According to Berlin's state Interior Senator (minister) Iris Spranger (Social Democratic Party, SPD), use was made of "preventative police warnings," as well as covert measures and surveillance. His phone was monitored and a camera positioned outside his flat.

Yet shortly before the Berlin parade, the close-mesh surveillance was scaled back. Abdul Ballout was able to hire a delivery van unhindered, drive it into the crowd in Tiergarten, subsequently injure numerous people with a bladed weapon and then escape.

Only one day later, SEK specialized tactical police units tracked down Ballout in an allotment garden in Spandau. He was shot dead on the spot. In the van, a second mobile phone was found, containing a video of a heavily masked individual—presumably Ballout himself—declaring allegiance to IS.

All of this immediately raises urgent questions: Why was a convicted IS sympathiser known to be willing to commit violence released when his offence consisted in the preparation of a terrorist attack? Why was his surveillance suspended immediately before the CSD parade? Were there handlers for whom he filmed his video and with whom he was in contact? Who might have been holding a protective hand over the fanatical and violence-prone Islamist?

The Interior Committee gave no answer to these questions on Tuesday. At the session, held as a video conference because of the summer parliamentary recess, participants alongside committee members from all Bundestag parties included the Federal Interior Minister and the heads of the security authorities: domestic secret service president Sinan Selen, Federal Criminal Office chief Holger Münch, Federal Police president Dieter Romann, Federal Prosecutor General Jens Rommel and Berlin Interior Senator Iris Spranger (SPD). Yet the session was not public. It was already announced in advance that the intelligence services would "disclose no classified information."

The Green and Left Party deputies who had tabled the committee session accepted this secrecy. To this day they continue to demand "comprehensive clarification"—whilst relying on the federal government to provide it. Left Party spokeswoman, deputy parliamentary group leader Clara Bünger, declared innocently after the session: "We expect the federal government to provide clear answers!" But they raise no serious objections against Dobrindt's demand for stepping up state powers.

The government is using the contemptible terrorist act as a pretext for yet stricter police-state legislation. "Preventive detention for dangerous individuals is something I regard as absolutely necessary," declared Federal Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt on the *Tagesschau* news programme. A standardised nationwide regulation of preventive detention was needed, he said. He also demanded "extended authority to order ankle tags for dangerous individuals," as well as a tightening of probation law and juvenile criminal law.

The CDU/CSU young deputies' parliamentary group in the Bundestag has additionally put forward a 10-point plan that

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supports all these demands and further calls for the use of AI to improve surveillance. In reality, the laws already in existence would have been more than sufficient to protect the Christopher Street Day and prevent the attack.

The case is strongly reminiscent of the attack by Anis Amri on the Christmas market at Breitscheidplatz in Berlin 10 years ago. There, too, the background to the attack remained in the dark. Anis Amri was also kept under unbroken surveillance by several police and intelligence service authorities. Yet shortly before the murderous assault, the surveillance was discontinued. Later, documents were leaked to leading media suggesting that the authorities were aware of Anis Amri's plans for an attack.

Both cases, the attack on Breitscheidplatz and the attack on the Christopher Street Day event, were abominable and reactionary crimes that must be condemned unreservedly. But the federal government's current outrage is fraudulent. It has itself stoked hostility towards the LGTBQ+ movement. Only last year, Chancellor Friedrich Merz (CDU) refused to fly the rainbow flag over the Bundestag for the Christopher Street Day events, with the sneering remark that parliament was "not a circus tent." Dobrindt himself long opposed the equal treatment of homosexual couples.

For him and others, the attack came at an opportune moment. They are cynically exploiting it to implement their surveillance and police state plans. The expansion and nationwide standardisation of preventive detention is particularly important to Dobrindt. In Bavaria, where he was CSU general secretary for years, the Bavarian state government already introduced virtually unlimited preventive detention with its "dangerous individuals law" in July 2017. Only following a constitutional appeal did the law have to be amended and preventive detention limited to a maximum of two months.

Incarcerating people preventively, without them having been convicted of a criminal offence, amounts to a massive infringement of the civil liberties of those concerned, as guaranteed by the German constitution. The presumption of innocence is circumvented. It is reminiscent of the Nazis' "protective custody," when political opponents of the Third Reich were thrown into prison and concentration camp by the Gestapo allegedly for the "protection" of the population.

Today as well, this measure is not directed only against "dangerous individuals." That was demonstrated by a decision of the Bavarian state government in September 2023, when it placed 27 known climate activists from the "Last Generation" group in preventive detention during the IAA motor show. The legal instrument could in future also be used against workers in oppositional struggle, for example, against Berlin being transformed into a centre of war production.

It is by no means only the Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU) and the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) that support the expansion of preventive detention. As early as 2005, Interior Minister Otto Schily (SPD), previously a founding member of the Greens, had called for the introduction of preventive detention.

Earlier this July, a departmental head in Dobrindt's Interior Ministry took part in a fascist propaganda conference at the US State Department that denounced alleged "communists" and "socialists" as terrorists. A follow-up event is to take place in Germany shortly.

For Dobrindt, the attack on the Christopher Street Day parade is a welcome occasion to take further steps in the construction of a police state: with his demands for preventive detention, ankle tags and the tightening of juvenile criminal law. It fits his project of a sweeping reform of the intelligence service apparatus, with which he wants to expand the powers of the domestic and foreign intelligence agencies whilst simultaneously making parliamentary oversight more difficult. Instead of merely using surveillance as before, the intelligence services are in future to be permitted to intervene actively.

While government politicians are expanding the police state in order prepare for resistance from the working class, they simultaneously have no difficulty whatsoever collaborating with brutal Islamists when political calculations demand it.

Only six months ago, Merz visited Saudi Arabia with a large business delegation, where he met Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Bin Salman is known for personally ordering the bestial murder and dismemberment of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, and under his rule, the number of executions grows every year. The German government has for years approved massive arms exports to the regime, which is waging a devastating war against the desperately poor Yemen. Berlin also maintains vigorous economic relations with Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

All these regimes are known for the brutal, systematic persecution of homosexuals, who face draconian prison sentences, torture and even execution.

This confirms what the WSWS wrote shortly after the Christopher Street Day attack:

"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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