

Attack on German Christmas market in Magdeburg: the bitter fruit of right-wing extremism and anti-refugee agitation

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The scenes that took place in Magdeburg on Friday evening were gruesome. A large BMW SUV raced several hundred meters through the cheerfully celebrating people in the crowded Christmas market, killing five and injuring 200, 40 of them seriously.

The massacre is reminiscent of the attack on Berlin's Breitscheidplatz eight years ago, where a truck raced into a Christmas market, killing 12 people and injuring 48. Only that this time the perpetrator is not a jihadist, but an Islam-hater and supporter of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The assassin was well known to the authorities. Several warnings had been received about him, he had repeatedly come into conflict with the law, had left a broad trail on social media and had hinted at his deed and carefully prepared it. But because he did not shout "Allahu akbar," but agitated against the alleged Islamization of Germany, the warnings were not taken seriously.

The now 50-year-old Taleb Jawad al-Abdulmohsen came to Germany from Saudi Arabia in 2006 to complete his medical studies with a specialist training. Since then, he has lived in Germany. He worked in several cities, since March 2020 as a specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy at the state-owned Salus Clinic Bernburg near Magdeburg. There he supervised addicted offenders in involuntary treatment.

In 2016, Abdulmohsen successfully applied for asylum. He justified his request by saying that he was persecuted in Saudi Arabia because he had turned away from Islam and helped women to flee the country. A cultural attaché at the Saudi embassy warned him that he was threatened with execution in his home country.

According to *Spiegel's* research, the Rostock District Court had already sentenced him to a 90-day sentence three years earlier for "disturbing public peace by threatening crimes." The reason is said to have been threats he had made because his medical education was only partially recognized.

In May 2019, the *F.A.Z.* had a two-and-a-half-hour

telephone conversation with Abdulmohsen. Although it became clear that, as the *F.A.Z.* writes today, he was "a driven man" and jumped from one topic to another—"his deep aversion to Islam, the dramatic situation of Saudi Arabian women, his family who had rejected him"—the newspaper published a long interview with him in June 2019. It appeared under the headline: "I am the most aggressive critic of Islam in history."

Abdulmohsen portrayed himself as a champion for the rights of Arab women and told horror stories about fathers who abuse and murder their daughters. The *F.A.Z.* does not seem to have checked what was fact and what was invented. In any case, the interview fit perfectly into a political atmosphere in which all parties fomented resentment against refugees and Muslims, and the short-term opening of the borders in the summer of 2015 was declared the original sin of German politics.

Abdulmohsen's Twitter/X account, which already had 15,000 followers in 2019, developed accordingly. While he had initially railed against Islam and the Saudi authorities, he felt increasingly persecuted by the German authorities, whom he accused of Islamising Germany.

"Germany is hunting Saudi asylum seekers inside and outside Germany to destroy their lives. Germany wants to Islamize Europe," said the English-language short biography of his X account. He fiercely attacked even refugee organizations that seek help for religiously persecuted people. For example, he accused "Secular Refugee Aid Germany" of misuse of donations and corruption.

"The traces that Abdulmohsen left behind online in recent years give disturbing insights into a world disconnected from reality," reports *Der Spiegel*. "Abdulmohsen's role models: Elon Musk, the US agitator Alex Jones, the right-wing extremist Briton Tommy Robinson. He openly sympathized with the AfD and dreamed of a joint project with the largely right-wing extremist party: an academy for ex-Muslims." He called for the death penalty for former

Chancellor Angela Merkel.

In August 2023, he threatened to kill Germans indiscriminately on his X account, the cover of which is decorated with an automatic handgun: “A purely philosophical questionnaire: Would you blame me if I killed 20 Germans indiscriminately because Germany is taking action against the Saudi opposition?” The entry was deleted—probably by himself—but copies were retained.

In May 2024, he spoke on X in Arabic of a “war” with the German authorities and announced that it was likely “that I will die for it later this year.” He also repeated this in private messages with other X users, which *Der Spiegel* was able to view.

Most recently, Abdulmohsen wrote up to 250 messages per week on X, in which he portrayed himself as a fervent supporter of the AfD and posted video excerpts of an Islamophobic account. Ten days before the crime, he threatened in Arabic that the West only understood “carnage and violence.” He added, “Those who do not blow up and kill are not respected by the Germans.”

Eight days before the crime, an Islamophobic US blog published a video interview with Abdulmohsen. In it, he accuses the German state of conducting a “covert secret operation” to “hunt down and destroy the lives of Saudi ex-Muslims worldwide.” At the same time, he said, Syrian jihadists were granted asylum in Germany.

According to *Spiegel*, the Saudi intelligence service warned the German Federal Intelligence Service about Abdulmohsen three times in 2023 and 2024. The warning is said to have been about the post, in which he threatened that Germany would pay a “price.” The warning also reached the police. According to *Welt*, however, the State Criminal Police Office in Magdeburg and the Federal Criminal Police Office came to the conclusion that “there was no concrete danger” from him.

Abdulmohsen apparently carefully prepared the attack himself. A few days before, he stayed in a Magdeburg hotel, probably to explore the area. For the attack, he rented a heavy, powerful BMW and advanced via the only access road to the Christmas market, which was not secured by barriers and could only be reached via a pedestrian zone. After the attack, he returned to the main street, where he was stopped and arrested by the police.

Before details of the attack were known, right-wing extremists tried to exploit it for their own purposes.

Elon Musk, who had called for support for the far-right party a few hours before the attack with the words “Only the AfD can save Germany,” demanded the immediate resignation of Chancellor Olaf Scholz in response to the attack, whom he called an “incompetent fool” and an “incompetent idiot.” He also shared an article that linked the

events in Magdeburg to “mass immigration.”

Even after the perpetrator was identified and his right-wing extremist, Islamophobic attitude known, the AfD is trying to exploit the terrible attack for its reactionary purposes. Party leader Alice Weidel intends to take part in a demonstration in Magdeburg today, Monday.

Sahra Wagenknecht, whose party is in no way inferior to the AfD when it comes to anti-refugee agitation and the call for law and order, called on the German government to “finally present a convincing security concept with a clear focus on protecting the population.”

The political background of the Magdeburg attack shows that right-wing extremism, anti-refugee agitation and terrorist violence against the population go hand in hand. Of course, the personality of the perpetrator plays a role in such terrible massacres. But political hatred and paranoia can only lead to such a monstrous crime in a sick society where violence and killing people have become the norm.

In the Mediterranean alone, the European Union’s inhumane closed-border policy from January to November of this year has claimed 2,000 lives, six a day, not counting the undeclared figure, in the last 10 years, there have been almost 31,000 deaths. In Gaza, several Magdeburgs have been taking place every day for 14 months, when Israeli fighter jets bomb homes and refugee camps, killing children and women indiscriminately. And in Ukraine, hundreds of thousands of young men are being sacrificed for a war that serves the imperialist powers of NATO.

The established parties responsible for this policy also bear responsibility for the Magdeburg disaster. They defend a sick capitalist social system that can only survive through war, oppression, social cuts and intensified exploitation. As a result, fuses are short-circuiting more and more often, as in the US, where school shootings are now commonplace.

This development can only be stopped by building a movement that unites the working class across all borders and fights for a human, i.e. socialist, society.



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