

German police state to be expanded following the auto attack in Magdeburg

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The horrific attack that left five people dead and more than 200 injured at the Christmas market in Magdeburg on December 20 is being exploited by German politicians to expand the powers of the police and intelligence services and establish a police state.

This response is no way related to the attack itself because it emerged that the perpetrator, who drove a car at top speeds into the crowded Christmas market, had previously come to the attention of the German state.

Taleb al-Abdalmohsen had come into conflict with the law on several occasions. He had already been sentenced to a fine in 2013 after he threatened to attack the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Medical Association in a dispute over the recognition of his status as a specialist doctor.

Since then, he has repeatedly attracted attention with a series of wild threats. The association Secular Refugee Aid, which had tried to work with him, reported that its members had been subjected to slander, threats and stalking by al-Abdalmohsen. According to the refugee aid organization, a trial at the Cologne Regional Court, which al-Abdalmohsen lost in October 2023, ended with him threatening the judge in a “fit of rage” and being led out of the courtroom by security personnel.

Al-Abdalmohsen also left a broad trail on social media, hinting at an attack in Magdeburg and his careful preparations for the deed. The Saudi secret service had warned the German authorities about him, and in September 2023 and October 2024, he received visits from the police under suspicion of being a potential terrorist.

If the security authorities allowed al-Abdalmohsen to remain free despite the various incidents, announcements of violent acts and tips from foreign intelligence services, this was primarily due to the fact that he did not fit the stereotype of an Islamist but rather was a sympathizer of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and a hater of Islam.

As such, he fit into the political climate created by all of Germany’s main political parties which have adopted the AfD’s anti-immigrant policy and, in particular, agitated strongly against refugees of Islamic background. Although

his personal behaviour was already conspicuous, two of Germany’s mainstream dailies, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Frankfurter Rundschau* published interviews with al-Abdalmohsen in 2019 in which they presented him as someone who assisted women being persecuted by Islamic forces. The British BBC also reported on al-Abdalmohsen and his website at the time.

On Monday, December 30, the German parliament (Bundestag) held a special session of its Internal Affairs Committee to report on the status of the investigation into the Magdeburg rampage. A comprehensive analysis of the entire incident and the events leading up to it is pending. This concerns possible errors in the security concept for the Christmas market and the question of why information from security authorities about the perpetrator was not effectively collated.

At the same time numerous internal affairs politicians are using the attack to call for extended powers for the security authorities and tougher action against refugees. Politicians from the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the two largest parliamentary groups, are already essentially in agreement on creating new means for mass surveillance by the police and intelligence services. A more stringent version of the security package presented by the governing parties in October is to be launched before the general election due to take place in February.

Shortly after the attack in Magdeburg, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser (SPD) argued in favour of passing new, stricter laws on internal security, such as a new Federal Police Act, and announced the legal possibility of biometric mass surveillance.

In an interview with *Der Spiegel* magazine, Faeser called on CDU-governed states to stop blocking the “security package” passed by the government in October in the Bundesrat. “All of our draft laws could be passed immediately if the CDU/CSU and FDP (Free Democratic Party) give the go-ahead,” said the SPD politician. In order to protect the people in Germany from major acts of

violence, Faeser said, “our security authorities need all the necessary powers and more personnel.”

Faeser’s legislative initiative from October is, as the WSWs wrote at the time, “a further step towards a police state.” The so-called “security package” further restricts the right of asylum and residence, tightens gun laws and grants more powers to the federal police and the domestic intelligence service, for example, via the expansion of biometric surveillance.

Artificial intelligence-supported data analysis of images published on the internet and the systematic use of biometric procedures to analyse video surveillance in public spaces effectively mean the end of privacy and the complete surveillance of the entire population.

The government has not commented in detail on the technologies to be used. The fact that the use of biometric procedures is to be used only for the prosecution of “particularly serious offenses,” as stated by the Ministry of the Interior, serves to obscure the real nature of the measure. Biometric procedures for criminal prosecution are based on mass surveillance. Law enforcement agencies then gain access to extensive data collections and can analyse them or use commercial AI providers for this purpose.

The public sphere and internet provide a wide array of data. Potentially everyone, not just criminals or asylum seekers, has his or her face and voice recorded, scanned, classified according to biometric characteristics and stored—and know nothing about it. The databases created in this way are then analyzed with the help of artificial intelligence. The technologies used for this are not transparent, and the results cannot be effectively traced.

The CDU has blocked the security package in the Bundesrat, not because it rejects the aim and scope of the surveillance measures, but because they do not go far enough. It is demanding that data retention without cause be extended. In particular, communication data, such as IP addresses, should be stored even without indication of a criminal offence (committed or planned)—i.e., another building block in the comprehensive mass surveillance of the population.

This corresponds to the demands for “more operational leeway,” as the President of the Federal Intelligence Service (BND) Bruno Kahl and other top representatives of the German secret services have been formulating for some time. Positively disguised as a reduction in bureaucracy, control over the activities of the intelligence services is to be reduced. This is the only way to work effectively, BND employees state in the right-wing Springer press, claiming a “turning point” for the practices of the intelligence services, particularly in the area of online surveillance.

The Greens have also taken up the term “domestic turning

point” in a recent party document. In it, Konstantin von Notz, the Green Party chairman of the Parliamentary Control Committee (which is supposed to monitor the intelligence services), calls for more powers for the security authorities—including undercover investigations into social networks and better dialogue between the police and intelligence services. The security authorities need more personnel and technology, and these resources would have to be procured via a special fund, the paper argues.

This, in turn, is entirely in line with the demands of the police union, which is calling for more powers, more staff and better equipment and technology. The CDU and CSU explicitly welcome the use of biometric procedures, but the ruling coalition’s security package did not go far enough when it came to extending the powers of the police.

Sahra Wagenknecht has also attacked the proposed legislation from a right-wing, authoritarian point of view, condemning it as “largely ineffective.”

The attack in Magdeburg, carried out by an AfD supporter and Islamophobe, has now been seized upon by the government and opposition parties as a pretext to agree on a tightened security package with sweeping powers for the police and secret services in the Bundestag-Bundesrat mediation committee. At the same time, controls at Germany’s external borders are to be extended beyond March.

The “security package” is directed against the entire population—against refugees and migrants, as well as against all those residents in Germany for generations. It massively expands police state surveillance on a new legal basis. The state is preparing not only for further wars but also to combat growing political and social resistance to the war economy and social cuts.

Germany’s proclaimed “turning point” and “readiness for war” cannot be reconciled with liberal and democratic rights. The right to move freely and without being watched—in public spaces and on the internet—is a fundamental democratic right. Mass surveillance, on the other hand, creates a climate of fear and censorship.

The governing and opposition parties in the Bundestag are united in pursuing mass surveillance and repression. It is up to the working class to defend democratic rights and link this to the fight against war and social inequality.



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