

Germany marked an increase in violent attacks on refugees in 2019

By Isabel Roy
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According to the German Interior Ministry there were more than 1,700 attacks on refugees, including children, in 2019. The figures are based on the answer to a question from German parliament (Bundestag) deputy Ulla Jelpke (Left Party). Of these offences, 128 were attacks on asylum accommodation and 78 were attacks on refugee aid organisations and helpers. The remaining 1,620 offences include assault, property damage, racist speech and insults. As a result of these incidents, 229 people were injured; explosives, weapons and arson were involved in 260 cases.

The numbers once again highlight the dramatic growth of far-right violence in Germany. Already in 2018 there were 1,775 attacks against refugees, 173 of them on asylum accommodation facilities. The actual number of violent acts in 2019 is likely to be much higher since the current statistics still lack a significant number of reports from individual police stations. Based on the experience of recent years, it can be assumed that the numbers for last year could be up to 50 percent higher than currently reported.

The statistics known to date also show that far-right violent offenders are frequently not detected and remain at large. Just 1,039 suspects were identified in 840 criminal offences, i.e., less than half of all attacks. Suspects were identified in 27 cases of attacks on asylum accommodation. That corresponds to not even one-fifth of the total number of cases.

This represents a continuation of the trend of recent years regarding racist and right-wing extremist criminality. The above numbers register only those attacks directed against refugees. The total number of right-wing extremist crimes also skyrocketed last year. A total of 20,856 offences, including 917 acts involving violence, is the figure for 2019 emerging from the government's response to official enquires

into "Politically Motivated Crime—from the Right," raised monthly by the Left Party.

This figure could also go even higher following the publication of the 2019 report by Germany's domestic intelligence service, the Verfassungshutz (Office for Protection of the Constitution).

Criminal acts by extreme right-wingers rose by 52 percent in 2019 to 917 cases in the state of Hesse, where the president of the state government, Walter Lübcke (Christian Democratic Union), was murdered by a fascist on June 2. "ReachOut," a counselling centre based in Berlin for victims of right-wing, racist and anti-Semitic violence, reported 390 attacks in the capital in 2019—an increase of 81 (26 percent) compared to 2018. These are the highest numbers recorded since the project was founded in 2001.

"We are seeing an increasing lack of inhibition and taboos regarding violence against marginalised and discriminated groups. Especially when we see that attacks are increasingly taking place in confined spaces, such as living quarters and other places that are not public," a press release from ReachOut states. This is "so disquieting because victims have felt relatively safe in these places until now." Although perpetrators are "easier to identify" in such cases "compared to offences on the streets or at stations, they feel increasingly confident that their opinions and actions will be tolerated."

Left Party deputy Jelpke feigned concern at the growing right-wing extremist terror and stated: "We clearly have a social climate in Germany in which refugees can expect to be verbally and physically assaulted at all times." The fact is, however, that the Left Party has been instrumental, along with the country's other political parties, in creating this hostile climate and the corresponding explosion of violence

against refugees and immigrants.

Just a few days ago, the red-red-green government in the state of Thuringia, (Left Party–Social Democratic Party–Green Party), carried out a large-scale police operation involving armoured vehicles, water cannon and two squads of riot police directed against a centre for refugees in Suhl. Around 20 asylum seekers, cynically referred to as “disruptors,” were arrested for protesting against the collective detention of 533 asylum seekers.

For many years the Left Party has in practice implemented the racist anti-refugee policy of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in all those regions where it is in power. The Left Party carries out brutal deportations, has built new deportation prisons and senior party members such as Oskar Lafontaine and Sahra Wagenknecht have agitated against refugees in a similar manner to the AfD.

In Thuringia, the Left Party has now gone even further in its collaboration with the far right. The head of the state government, Bodo Ramelow (Left Party), recently voted in favour of AfD deputy Michael Kaufmann for the post of vice president of the Thuringian state parliament. Kaufmann is a close confidant of the fascist Björn Höcke (AfD). In his public speeches Höcke has called the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin a “monument of shame” and demanded a “180-degree shift” in the country’s attitude toward the Holocaust.

The Left Party has responded to the increased number of terrorist attacks from the right by calling for a strong state and thereby strengthening far-right terror structures already existing in the state apparatus.

The right-wing extremist history professor Jörg Baberowski, who declared that “Hitler was not vicious,” has been defended in the past by leading representatives of the Left Party, such as Evrim Sommer, a member of the Bundestag. In 2013, the Left Party went so far as to organise a public meeting for the head of the Office for Protection of the Constitution at that time, Hans-Georg Maassen. Maassen is the living embodiment of fascist influence in German political life.

The growing attacks on refugees and terror of the far-right are a direct product of the policies of all the establishment parties. The far-right perpetrators are emboldened by the anti-refugee policies of the federal

and state governments and the relativisation of Nazi crimes at German universities.

Fascism is despised by the masses. Last month, tens of thousands took to the streets of the city of Hanau following the rampage by a neo-fascist who murdered nine immigrant workers. A growing proportion of the population recognises the established parties and the state apparatus, in particular the domestic intelligence service, as the main source of far-right terrorism.

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