

# Germany: Anti-Semitic attack at Hamburg synagogue

*A German man dressed in military fatigues attacked another man outside a synagogue in the German city of Hamburg, according to police. Germany's foreign minister said anti-Semitic attacks are not isolated incidents.*

DW News (04.10.2020) – <https://bit.ly/3iASrvU> – A man attacked a Jewish citizen outside the Hohe Weide synagogue in Hamburg on Sunday, according to police.

The man swung a foldable shovel, injuring a 26-year-old before the synagogue's security personnel were able to restrain him. He was later taken into custody by Hamburg police. Germany's DPA news agency reported the 29-year-old suspect was carrying a piece of paper with a swastika in his pocket.

The victim, reported to be a Jewish student, suffered serious injuries to the head and was admitted to a local hospital for treatment, according to the daily Süddeutsche Zeitung. His injuries are serious though not life-threatening.

Police said the attacker, a German with Kazakh roots, was accused of causing grievous bodily harm and appeared to be acting alone. A police spokesperson said the motive for the attack was still under investigation and that the suspect was "extremely confused" leaving investigators unable immediately to question him.

Members of the city's Jewish community were at the synagogue celebrating Sukkoth.

***'Why does this keep happening?'***

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas denounced the attack as anti-Semitic and called on people to show more civil courage.

"This is not an isolated incident, this is disgusting anti-Semitism and we must all oppose it!" Maas wrote in a tweet.

"As we mark the one-year anniversary of the Yom Kippur attack in Halle, Germany, which left two dead, I am saddened to learn that once again, this time on the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, a German Jewish community is confronting a violent, antisemitic act of terror," World Jewish Congress President Ronald S. Lauder said in a statement.

"We must ask ourselves, and German local and national authorities must address the question – why does this keep happening? Why is anti-Semitism thriving, and why does anyone believe there is room for such hate?" Lauder added. "Our young people must not learn from those who hate. The German government must take responsibility in strengthening education so that the next generation understands that hatred of any kind is never permissible. The long-term viability of Jewish life in Germany depends on it."

## ***Jewish community shaken***

The German Orthodox Rabbinical Conference (ORD) has described the attack as “another shock to the Jewish community in Germany.”

“It is unbearable to see hatred and violence against Jews erupt again and again on German streets, and this comes during the holiest Jewish holidays and one year after the terrible attack in Halle,” said ORD chairman Avichai Apel on Sunday.

Apel added “Jewish life as a whole must be better protected in this country,” and demanded that German society “take even more decisive action against hate and incitement on the internet, against right-wing extremist agitators, against the Neo Nazi scene and crude conspiracy theorists, and do more for prevention, education and the promotion of civic courage.”

## ***Nearly one year since Halle attack***

The attack in Hamburg came ahead of the one-year anniversary of a deadly Yom Kippur synagogue attack in the eastern German city of Halle. In that attack, a man armed with a gun attempted to break down a door to a synagogue as worshipers gathered for the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. Though he was not able to enter the synagogue, two people were shot dead and others were injured.

Germany has recently seen an increase in anti-Semitic crimes, leading Chancellor Angela Merkel to declare some Jews do not

feel safe in Germany.

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## **Tunisia bans niqab in government offices**

*Tunisia's prime minister has banned the full-face veil in all government buildings due to security concerns. It comes after a deadly double suicide bombing in Tunis in late June.*

Deutsche Welle (05.07.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2JpaqqV> – Prime Minister Youssef Chahed has barred women from wearing the full-face veil – or niqab – after the latest suicide attack in the capital, Tunis, at the end of June left two dead and seven wounded.

Chahed signed a government circular “banning access to public administrations and institutions to anyone with their face covered,” his office said. The decision was made for “security reasons.”

On Tuesday, the mastermind of those bombings blew himself up in a Tunis suburb to evade capture, the Interior Ministry said. But it denies that he was wearing a niqab to disguise himself, which witnesses had claimed.

## ***Police instructed to be vigilant***

As far back as February 2014, police had been instructed to step up supervision of the wearing of the niqab – which covers the whole head apart from the eyes – as part of anti-terrorism measures, to prevent its use as a disguise or to escape justice.

Niqabs and other forms of Islamic dress had been banned in Tunisia under secular presidents Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Habib Bourguiba until a 2011 coup overthrew Ben Ali.

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## **NORTH KOREA/POLAND/NETHERLANDS: Dutch shipbuilder in dock over North Korean's Polish slave claims**

*A North Korean man is suing a Dutch shipbuilder he accuses of profiting from slave labor when he was employed in a Polish shipyard. The first case of its kind, his lawyers hope it will open up more such cases.*

By Jo Harper

Deutsche Welle (14.02.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2X0tW1T> – The first case in the Netherlands of worker exploitation involving a Dutch company for alleged crimes committed outside the country could be nearing an end in the coming weeks, lawyers said, and if successful may open the door to more such cases.

Barbara van Straaten, the lawyer representing a North Korean worker, said Dutch law criminalizes the act of profiting from exploitation. The name of the Dutch shipping company sued by the worker couldn't be disclosed for safety reasons, she added. Under the country's anti-trafficking law, offenders can be jailed for up to 18 years and face fines of €83,000 (\$95,000).

The plaintiff claims he was sent to Poland by the Pyongyang regime and forced to work 12-hour days for low wages in awful conditions. The lawyer did not say when this happened. Van Straaten's Amsterdam-based law firm, Prakken d'Oliveira, said the North Korean worked for the Polish company Crist. Crist received financial assistance from the European Regional Development Fund, a loan of €37 million in 2009.

### ***Not a great precedent***

The company first came under the spotlight in 2014, when a North Korean worker hired through a temporary Polish work agency called Armex died in an incident at the Crist shipyard.

The welder died when his clothes caught fire and was burned alive. Polish labor standards officials concluded he had been wearing flammable clothing provided by Armex, but were unable to prosecute as the man's documentation described him as self-employed and therefore outside Polish jurisdiction.

"We are not confident the Polish authorities would take this case as seriously as the Dutch one," van Straaten told DW. She said Polish labor authorities had failed in a previous case to prosecute a company where a North Korean worker had died in an accident at work, referring to the 2014 incident.

In 2007, Polish businesswoman Cecylia Kowalska set up Armex in Gdansk supplying electrical and welding services to local shipping and construction industries, and told reporters in November that when asked if she could manage 10 North Korean welders, her company took on the job.

She later began supplying North Korean welders to two other shipyards, run by Crist and Nauta, both companies that make war vessels for NATO members. A Polish labor inspection in February 2016 found 19 North Koreans working in a shipyard owned by Nauta, located next to the Crist shipyard.

Poland's online court register shows that Armex went into liquidation last year.

***Crist denies culpability***

Crist spokesman Tomasz Wrzask told DW he was not aware of the case or if Crist was involved. He told reporters in November that the shipyard previously worked with Armex, but ended collaboration in the summer of 2016.

“Armex had all the necessary permissions to operate in the EU and Poland and was under the supervision of Poland’s National Labor Inspectorate. We had no reason for suspicion,” Wrzask said then, adding it was an “outrage” that Crist’s name had been made public while the Dutch shipbuilder was not identified.

Van Straaten noted that North Korea was not party to the dispute which was directed at the Dutch shipbuilder. “This opens the possibility to hold those companies accountable which are not direct perpetrators in the labor exploitation, but which nonetheless knowingly profit from this exploitation, gaining high profits in the West at the expense of workers from developing countries,” she said.

The law firm now hopes that the Dutch authorities have requested a European Investigation Order. An admission of guilt and a fine are among the outcomes the North Korean hopes for from this case, his lawyer said.

### ***Damning evidence***

Crist’s involvement with North Korean laborers as well as conditions faced by North Korean laborers in Poland and Europe were detailed in a report published by the Leiden Asia Centre



by Remco Breuker and Imke van Gardingen. Law firm Prakken d'Oliveira cited the research conducted in the "Slaves to the System" report as central to the case.

A Global Slavery Index published in July estimated that 40.3 million people globally were subjected to modern slavery in 2016. North Korea's Kaesong industrial complex is frequently criticized for keeping workers under slave-like conditions

The researchers identified three North Korean firms as providing laborers that were assigned by two Polish companies, Alson and Armex, to pass on to firms that needed cheap labor.

An earlier report by the Leiden Asia Centre found that as many as 800 forced laborers are in Poland working in the shipbuilding and construction sectors.

The 2016 report titled "North Korean Forced Labor in the EU, the Polish Case," showed that Armex had hired workers supplied by a North Korean company called Korea Rungrado Trading Corporation, which was run by a committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea. The company was sanctioned by the US in 2016 and accused of funding the department that oversees the country's nuclear weapons program.

### ***A global problem***

The Walk Free Foundation said that one in 10 people lived under such conditions in North Korea, the highest

concentration in the world.

Tens of thousands of workers worldwide send foreign currency back to Pyongyang, which is used to offset the economic impact of UN sanctions that were imposed over North Korea's nuclear weapons program. The UN estimates that North Korea earns as much as \$2 billion a year from the workers it sends overseas.

Many North Koreans work in Polish shipyards, construction sites and farms, sending up to 90 percent of their salaries back to Pyongyang, according to the European Alliance for Human Rights in North Korea (EAHRNK).

#### **HRWF Comment**

See our statements on this issue at the OSCE/ODIHR Human Rights Implementation Meeting in Warsaw in 2018, 2017 and 2016:

- <https://www.osce.org/odihr/396293?download=true>

- <https://www.osce.org/odihr/342706>

- <https://www.osce.org/odihr/266761?download=true>

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