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German far-right crimes rise

Germany recorded over 22,000 right-wing extremist crimes last year, according to preliminary interior ministry statistics. And twice as many weapons permits were issued than the previous year.

DW (07.04.2020) - <https://bit.ly/2URdRwc> - Germany last year recorded 41,175 politically-motivated crimes, with more than half of them (22,337) attributed to right-wing extremists. This is according to the federal interior ministry in preliminary data requested by Irene Mihalic, a police officer and criminologist who is now the Green party's interior affairs expert.

Mihalic found that the figures also show that the count of officially notified weapons permits held by far-right extremists had doubled since 2018, reaching 892.

"This development marks a dangerous weapons buildup within the [far-right] scene," said Mihalic, while calling for a "resolute disarming" of such individuals.

Crimes committed by neo-Nazis amounted to an "enormous threat," she told the Funke Media Group, a newspaper and online chain based in Essen incorporating several local publications.

Mihalic's remarks follow the [murder last June of regional politician Walter Lübcke](#) in Kassel, a gunman's [attack on the synagogue in Halle](#) last September and February's [far-right shootings at hookah cafes in Hanau](#).

A documentary broadcast on Monday by German public broadcaster ZDF estimated that only 8% of 2,558 attacks on asylum-seekers' hostels between 2015 and 2018 resulted in perpetrators actually being convicted, fined or jailed.

The 22,337 extreme right-wing cases from 2019 made public Tuesday — pending final figures due in May — represented almost a 10% rise on 2018, when 20,431 crimes were recorded.

Police specialists who document politically-motivated crimes, classed the bulk of the 2019 extreme-right cases as "propaganda" and "hate-speech" incitement crimes.

More seriously, 986 involved attempted or perpetrated violence, including bodily injury and widely reported fatal incidents.

In all, 609 of the crimes were directed at political office-holders, 95 against media representatives, and 92 against minors (children and teenagers), said the ministry

"These are shocking numbers," said Mihalic, "which, in comparison with other areas of crime, underscore once more the extent of the extreme right danger."

Stephan Thomae, deputy chairman of the opposition pro-business liberal Free Democrat (FDP) parliamentary group, described the trend as a "big danger for our democracy."

In recent months, Chancellor Angela Merkel's government had focused on the problem, but "measures decided so far are simply inadequate," Thomae said.

"The increased number of propaganda offences, cases of civil incitement and anti-Semitic crimes is alarming," Thomae added, calling for a reorganization of policing structures in Germany and more resources for courts.

The ministry statistics delivered to Mihalic also listed 9,849 crimes as leftist extremist and 427 crimes as religiously-motivated, mainly by extremist Islamists.

The federal government also highlighted a rise in anti-Semitic crimes directed at persons of Jewish belief or their facilities. In 2018, 1,799 such cases were counted, there were 2,032 in 2019's provisional tally.

871 attacks reported against Muslims in Germany in 2019

Daily Sabah (29.03.2020) - <https://bit.ly/3atZqUo> - Some 871 attacks targeted the Muslim community in Germany last year, according to a report by a German daily Sunday. Two Muslims were killed, while 33 others were injured in these attacks, Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung daily reported, citing the government's response to a question submitted by the Left Party (Die Linke).

According to Left Party's spokesperson Ulla Jelpke, the number may be higher by up to 90 more cases when the final number has been released, based on her "experience." "The hatred of Muslims continues to be displayed in violent attacks, threats and insults," Jelpke told the daily, adding that it is still too early to have a clear picture on the total number of cases.

"Unfortunately, we have to expect that there are more similar ticking time bombs," she underlined.

Germany has been recording Islamophobic crimes separately since 2017. The total number of cases in 2019 has not been officially announced. In 2018 there were 910, including 48 attacks on mosques alone, a little lower than 2017 with 1,095 crimes. More than 90% of these were attributed to politically motivated crimes by the far-right. Considering that the overall number of crimes has decreased, the assaults have increased, Die Tageszeitung stressed. In 2017 authorities reported 56 Islamophobic assaults with a total of 38 injuries. In 2018, there were 74 offenses with a total of 52 injuries – including two attempted murders.

Every other day throughout the course of 2019, a mosque, a Muslim institution or a religious representative in Germany was targeted in anti-Muslim attacks, another inquiry by the Left Party showed recently.

The figure was collated by the German Interior Ministry under the scope of the new "Attack Catalogue," listing anti-Muslim attacks on cultural associations, cemeteries,

mosques, religious institutions, representatives, symbols and other places of worship since January 2019. The catalog only contains a portion of all the crimes against Islam but has a broader scope than only listing the attacks on mosques.

The latest violent anti-Muslim attacks took place in the town Hanau on Feb. 19. Tobias Rathjen, a terrorist harboring racist views, gunned down nine people of immigrant backgrounds, including five Turkish nationals, before killing himself. The Hanau attack ignited the debate over the seriousness of far-right terror threats often ignored by authorities. It was one of the worst acts of terrorism with racist motives in recent memory.

In a speech following the attack, German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer acknowledged the act as a "terrorist attack." He noted that it was the "third right-wing terrorist attack in just a few months." "Danger from right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism, and racism is very high in Germany," Seehofer said. He also dismissed references to the assailant's psychological state as being responsible for the killings. "The racist motivation for this crime is in my view incontestable and cannot be relativized by anything."

Germany is home to 81 million people and is home to the second-largest Muslim population in Western Europe after France. Of the country's nearly 4.7 million Muslims, at least 3 million are of Turkish origin.

Racist attacks targeting Muslims or immigrants increasingly make the headlines as white supremacists become more efficient in an age where their ideals, or at least parts of them, are going mainstream. Not a single, large terrorist group harboring a racist agenda against Muslims and immigrants exist, but copycat attacks apparently inspire more to take up arms.

The tolerant political climate under the pretext of freedom of speech helped far-right sympathizers with violent tendencies expand their support.

Facing growing far-right extremism, Germany has been shaken by more than 100 bomb and death threats sent to lawyers, politicians and institutions last year, apparently, by German neo-Nazi groups, local media reported, revealing the threat of a growing neo-Nazi presence in the country.

The extremist group is known as "Reichsbürger" is considered a terrorist organization in Germany where its members procure arms and ammunition. Reichsbürger members do not recognize the modern German state as legitimate, citing technicalities about the fall of the Nazi Third Reich in May 1945. The Reichsbürgers have no leadership or "cells," but are loosely associated with each other only by their common ideas that aren't even concrete.

In October, Chancellor Angela Merkel's government outlawed the sale of guns to members of extremist groups monitored by security agencies and obliged online platforms to inform police about hate content. Those measures followed the killing of a pro-immigration German politician in June and an attack four months later on a synagogue and a kebab shop in Halle by an anti-Semitic gunman, who livestreamed his actions.

Figures show a 320% rise in racist terrorism in the West in the past five years. Under the pretext of "Islamization" of the countries they live in, racist terrorists went from attacks on mosques to mass killings. Anders Behring Breivik of Norway who slaughtered 77 people in July 2011 is viewed as an inspiration for more attacks to follow. Four years later, Anton Lundin Pettersson, harboring similar views with Breivik, killed four students

with immigrant backgrounds in Sweden. In 2016, 10 people were killed in Germany's Munich in another racist act of terrorism.