

## ***Germany: Extremism & Counter-Extremism***

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On December 1, 2020, a 51-year-old man identified as Bernd W. drove an SUV through a pedestrian area in Trier, killing at least five and wounding 15 others. Police stopped the vehicle after about a kilometer and arrested the driver. The driver intentionally drove into the pedestrians, according to police. Authorities do not immediately identify a motive, but they investigate on the assumption the driver was not politically or religiously motivated. Police determine the driver had a blood alcohol level of 1.4 as well as “indications of psychological illness.” Police believe the attacker acted alone. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [BBC News](#) [2], [CNN](#) [3])

On October 4, 2020, a man wearing army fatigues and wielding a shovel attacked and wounded a Jewish man exiting a synagogue in Hamburg, as congregants celebrated the Jewish holiday of Sukkot. Security guards and police officers who were on site were able to quickly subdue the 29-year-old suspect. The suspect was found with a piece of paper with a swastika in his pocket. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas called the incident “vile anti-Semitism.” The attack occurred nearly a year after Stephan Balliet killed two people in a deadly attack on a synagogue in Halle on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. Balliet is currently on trial on 13 offenses, including two counts of murder and multiple accounts of attempted murder, and faces life in prison if found guilty. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [4], [Guardian](#) [5])

On that same day, a 20-year-old Syrian asylum seeker stabbed two German tourists, killing one 55-year-old man and seriously injuring the other 53-year-old man. The two victims were traveling together from North-Rhine Westphalia. German police detained the suspect weeks later on October 20. German prosecutors announced that authorities were treating the knife attack as a possible act of terror. The suspect, identified only as Abdullah Al H.H., reportedly arrived in Germany in 2015 and had subsequently accumulated a criminal record that includes assaulting a police officer, causing bodily injury, attempting to recruit for ISIS, and preparing violent subversive activities. Due to his age at the time, he was tried and sentenced as a juvenile. Abdullah Al H.H. spent three years in detention and was released on September 29, 2020. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [6], [Agence-France Presse](#) [7])

The German government designated Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organization on April 30, 2020. In line with the European Union, Germany had previously designated only Hezbollah’s so-called military wing as a terrorist group, allowing Hezbollah’s political supporters to freely operate in the country. In conjunction with the ban, German police raided multiple mosque associations across the country that were suspected of providing financial and propaganda support to Hezbollah. According to authorities, Germany hosts approximately 1,050 Hezbollah supporters. In July 2020, German authorities alleged 50 members of the Al-Mustafa community center in Bremen were “involved in the financial support” of Hezbollah. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [8], [Jerusalem Post](#) [9])

### **Overview**

Germany has long endured violence from various forms of extremism including ultra-right, far-left, and faith-based. More recently, Islamism has posed a large and growing threat to Germany, and 2016 was marked by a series of Islamist-inspired terrorist attacks. Since September 11, 2001, more German citizens have died in Islamist terror attacks than in the entire history of violence perpetrated by the Red Army Faction, a far-left German terror group that operated in Germany for over thirty years. As early as 2014, the Federal Criminal Police has warned that the largest threat in Germany emanates from Islamist terror attacks perpetrated by fanatic individuals or small groups. According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* or BfV), there are an estimated 25,810 followers of Islamism or Islamist terrorism in Germany as of April 2018. German authorities have identified approximately 760 individuals as “*islamistische Gefährder*,” who are believed to be motivated and capable of executing a terrorist attack. More than half of them reside in Germany, while 153 are currently detained. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [10], [Miko and Froehlich \(Congressional Research Service\)](#) [11], [Deutsche Welle](#) [12], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Focus](#) [14])

Germany has experienced an influx of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa in recent years, with more than 44 percent originating from Syria, Iraq, and Nigeria. As of July 2018, approximately 110,000 asylum seekers have arrived in Germany, representing a decrease of 15 percent compared to the previous year. Germany, at its peak, processed approximately 746,000 asylum applications in 2016. German authorities have warned that asylum seekers are at risk for radicalization by domestic Salafist jihadists of which there are currently an estimated 10,800 within the country. Additionally, ISIS has reportedly used migratory routes to smuggle fighters into Germany and worked to recruit asylum seekers. As of April 2018, about 1,000 foreign fighters are estimated to have left Germany and traveled to fight alongside

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extremist groups abroad. Of those that left, one third has since returned to Germany, and about 150 are believed to have been killed abroad. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge](#) [15], [Bundeskriminalamt](#) [16], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [17], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13])

Germany regularly experiences anti-immigrant and racist-related violence. Far-right propaganda and hate speech offenses as well as assault typically occurs during protests and marches. However, about 20 far-right extremists reportedly attacked six Pakistanis in Cologne in January 2016, leaving two victims hospitalized. According to the German interior minister, right-wing extremists were responsible for more than 90 percent of anti-Semitic crimes and similar percentage of anti-Islamic crimes in 2019. Anti-Semitic attacks surged by 13 percent compared to 2018. Far-right extremists were also credited with committing more than half of all politically motivated crimes, which rose by 14 percent in 2019 from 2018. (Sources: [Zeit Online](#) [18], [Deutsche Welle](#) [19], [NBC News](#) [20])

The number of far-left extremists in Germany has increased by almost 6 percent in 2017 compared to 2016, and a third are believed to be prone to violence. Notably, extremist-leftist protesters and German police violently clashed during the July 2017 G20 Summit in Hamburg. The protesters threw rocks and Molotov cocktails, caused fires, and looted shops. Police responded with water cannons and teargas. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [CNN](#) [21], [Focus](#) [22])

Since the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, Germany has invested in improving its counterterrorism capabilities and legislation. Germany introduced the Joint Counter-Terrorism Center in 2004 as a joint cooperation between 40 internal security agencies, the Joint Internet Center in 2007 to counter cyber threats and monitor Islamist terrorist networks online, and the Center for Information Technology of Security Authorities in 2017 as a research center to combat crime and terrorism on the Internet. Following the 2015 ISIS attacks in Paris, Germany enacted tougher legislation against Islamist extremism, prohibiting to travel outside Germany for terrorist training, putting restrictions on foreign fighters, and expanding existing laws against terrorist financing. In 2017, the German Bundestag adopted the Network Enforcement Law (*Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz* or NetzDG) to compel tech firms to crack down on hate speech, terrorist propaganda, criminal material, and misinformation on their sites and platforms. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [23], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [23], [Bundesministerium des Innern](#) [24], [Foreign Affairs](#) [25], [Guardian](#) [26], [Bundesministerium für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz](#) [27], [Bundeskriminalamt](#) [28], [Deutsche Welle](#) [29], [Der Tagesspiegel](#) [30])

Germany has engaged in various international efforts and military operations to combat extremism and terrorism. As of September 2018, there are 3,300 German soldiers stationed abroad, including more than 1,000 in Afghanistan and Mali, respectively. Up until November 2015, the German government refused to join the U.S.-led airstrike campaign against ISIS, and ruled out sending combat troops to Iraq and Syria. A month after the ISIS attacks in Paris, however, the German Parliament voted to send 1,200 troops, reconnaissance planes, a frigate, and a refueling aircraft to the region. (Sources: [Bundeswehr](#) [31], [U.S. Department of State](#) [32], [Bundesregierung](#) [33], [Bundeswehr](#) [31])

Terrorist attacks have gradually declined as an area of concern among Germans. In September 2018, the insurance group R+V released survey results that showed that 59 percent of Germans are worried about terrorist attacks, representing a decrease from 2016 (73 percent) and 2017 (71 percent). (Sources: [R+V Versicherung](#) [34], [R+V Versicherung](#) [35], [Reuters](#) [36])

### **Radicalization and Foreign Fighters**

#### *Islamism and Islamist Terrorism*

Salafism has gradually expanded its influence in Germany, and Salafists remain the primary source for jihadist recruitment in the country. According to the BfV, the pro-violence jihadist Salafist scene was estimated to include 12,150 individuals in 2019, about 46 percent more than in 2015. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [37])

Banned in Germany, The True Religion (*Die Wahre Religion* or DWR) is a political Islamist Salafi group that advocates for violent jihad. Founded by [Ibrahim Abou Nagie](#) [38], the group is comprised of a network of German Salafist preachers, who initiated the “Lies! Read!” initiative in 2011, in which the Salafists set up booths and handed out Qurans in Muslim-

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majority areas in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. Nagie wrote on his website that he discusses the “one true religion” with those who stop by his booth, according to a 2013 intelligence report, and is believed to command a sizable following. The German government banned DWR in November 2016 after authorities found that 140 of the group’s supporters had gone to fight with ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Currently, members occasionally conduct “street dawa” to proselytize, but the group has turned to less public-facing activities. Thus, the BfV believes that current radicalization efforts take place online and in small circles—less so in mosques and national Salafist organizations. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Deutsche Welle](#) [39], [Gatestone Institute](#) [40], [New York Times](#) [41], [Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Inneres und Sport](#) [42], [Spiegel Online](#) [43], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [44])

The BfV estimates that there are likely 28,020 followers of Islamism or Islamist terrorism in Germany. As of December 2019, the BfV has identified 679 individuals as “*islamistische Gefährder*,” who authorities believe are motivated and capable of carrying out a terrorist attack. Terror attacks and plots in Germany declined overall in 2019, which authorities attributed to increased vigilance in the wake of the 2016 Berlin Christmas market attack. However, the threat of Islamist terrorism remained high due to continued targeting of Germany in jihadist propaganda and as evidenced by thwarted terror plots, including lone wolf attacks. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [37], [Tagesschau](#) [45], [Deutsche Welle](#) [46])

On July 28, 2017, 27-year-old Ahmad Alhaw killed one man and injured six others in a stabbing rampage at a Hamburg supermarket. Bystanders outside the supermarket confronted the attacker and overpowered him until the police arrived. The assailant, a Palestinian who applied for asylum in Germany in 2015, was scheduled to be deported after his application was denied. His asylum application had also been in Norway, Sweden, and Spain. Alhaw was reportedly self-radicalized and was known to have watched ISIS propaganda videos online, but did not declare himself to be a member of ISIS or any other terrorist organization. During police interrogations, he revealed that he planned the attack alone and viewed it as his personal contribution to the global jihad. He pled guilty to murder and assault in a court in Hamburg and was sentenced to life imprisonment on March 1, 2018. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [47], [BBC News](#) [48], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Times of Israel](#) [49])

In 2016, Germany experienced five terrorist attacks, all of which had ties to ISIS. The December 19 attack at the Christmas market in Berlin was the most notorious, where perpetrator Anis Amri plowed a truck into a crowd of people, killing 12 and injuring 48 others. In July 2016, a Syrian refugee carried out a suicide attack near a music festival in Ansbach that injured 12 people. A few days prior, an Afghan refugee armed with an ax went on a stabbing rampage on a train traveling through southern Germany. On April 16, 2016, German nationals, with ties to Islamist extremists, detonated a bomb at a Sikh Temple in Essen, North Rhine-Westphalia, wounding three people. Earlier in the year in February, a 15-year-old German-Moroccan girl identified as Safia S. stabbed a police officer in Hanover. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [50], [Deutsche Welle](#) [51], [U.S. Department of State](#) [32], [Reuters](#) [52], [New York Times](#) [53])

German intelligence has been able to disrupt several terrorist plots and attempted attacks. In June 2018, police arrested a Tunisian man in Cologne who was suspected of planning and preparing a ricin attack. In March 2018, a court in Hamburg pressed charges against a Syrian citizen identified as Yamen A., who was suspected to have planned a bomb attack in Germany. A German-Kazakh was convicted for the “preparation of a serious act of violent subversion” in October 2017, after police forces found precursors for the explosive material TATP and his pledge of allegiance to ISIS leader [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#) [54]. In February 2017, the police arrested a Nigerian and Algerian citizen suspected of preparing a terrorist attack in Germany. Both suspects had previously been in close contact with known militant Salafists. In December 2016, a 12-year-old German-Iraqi boy planted a backpack containing a nail bomb at a Christmas market in Ludwigshafen. The boy was allegedly in contact with other ISIS members via Telegram. Two months prior, police forces in Leipzig arrested Jaber al-Bakr, a Syrian refugee suspected to have links to ISIS, after a two-day manhunt. Police uncovered several hundred grams of TATP and alleged that the suspect had been planning a largescale attack inside the country. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Spiegel Online](#) [55], [Washington Post](#) [56], [Independent](#) [57], [Reuters](#) [58], [Hamburger Abendblatt](#) [59], [New York Times](#) [60], [Spiegel Online](#) [61])

ISIS produces a wide range of German-language propaganda, including videos, pamphlets, blog posts, and magazines. In January 2016, German-speaking jihadists on Twitter released the first issue of the German-language jihadi technology magazine *Kybernetiq*, which instructs jihadists on effective encryption and identity protection practices. The magazine’s third issue released in December 2017, focused on wiretapping, spyware, and technical communication in Syria. Following ISIS’s March 2016 attacks in Brussels, Belgium, the group released a German-language video calling on German Muslims

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to carry out similar domestic attacks. In September 2016, the group released a German-language video in which a German foreign fighter Abu Issa al-Almani called for lone wolf attacks in Germany. Al-Qaeda-affiliated jihadists in Syria have also translated their English-language magazine *Al-Risalah* into German. (Sources: [SITE Intelligence](#) [62], [International Business Times](#) [63], [Heavy](#) [64], [Up.Top4.top.net](#) [65], [Sendmyway.com](#) [66], [Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung](#) [67], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [68], [SITE Intelligence](#) [69])

As of April 2018, an estimated 1,000 foreign fighters have left Germany and traveled to fight alongside extremist groups in Iraq and Syria since mid-2013. Most of the foreign fighters that left Germany were male and under 30 at the time of departure. An estimated 5 percent were minors and 20 percent were female. Since 2015, the number of new departures has dropped significantly. Of those that left, approximately 150 are believed to have been killed, while roughly a third are believed to have returned to Germany. As ISIS continues to experience military defeat and territorial losses in Iraq and Syria, the BfV expects this number of returnees to increase. (Sources: [Combatting Terrorism Center](#) [70], [U.S. Department of State](#), [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [17])

A 2016 study showed that German foreign fighters have returned for various reasons: 10 percent felt disillusioned and frustrated with their situation, 10 percent felt pressured through family and friends in Germany, and 6 percent returned due to health issues. Authorities believe that about 8 percent of returnees left Syria and Iraq to raise money in Germany and Europe and to further support the jihadist cause. Most returnees, however, refrained from explaining their motivation (50 percent). German authorities collected evidence on more than 80 returnees as of April 2018, who actively participated in or received training for combat. According to an unidentified German investigator, returning jihadists are celebrated as “pop stars” in the German Islamist scene. In the majority of cases, however, German authorities have insufficient evidence in order to prove the returnee’s active engagement in the battlefield. (Sources: [Combatting Terrorism Center](#) [71], [Deutsche Welle](#) [72], Soufan Group, [Zeit Online](#) [73], [Wall Street Journal](#) [74], [Combatting Terrorism Center](#) [75], [Deutsche Welle](#) [76], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [17], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [77], [Egmont Institute](#) [78])

German security authorities also monitor the influx of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. Official figures for the first half of 2018 show that more than 44 percent of asylum applications are submitted by people coming from Syria, Iraq, and Nigeria. Overall, estimates conclude that 1,390,000 refugees have registered in Germany between January 2015 and March 2018. ISIS has reportedly used migratory routes to smuggle fighters into Germany and recruited asylum seekers. Additionally, some refugees have self-radicalized and joined jihadist cells in Germany. (Source: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge](#) [15], [Bundeskriminalamt](#) [16])

Of the approximately 1,000 foreign fighters from Germany, Denis Cuspert’s story is especially infamous. Born in Berlin in 1975 to a German mother and Ghanaian father, Cuspert joined ISIS’s ranks in 2012. Under his *nom de guerre* Abu Talha al-Almani, Cuspert was featured in numerous ISIS videos, recorded and distributed Islamic chants, and served as an important online recruiter for the group. Previously during his youth, Cuspert was involved in gangs and convicted for minor offences. He was also a well-known rapper under the name “Deso Dogg.” Cuspert was also known to have seduced an FBI translator who was assigned to investigate Cuspert. In June 2014, the agent, Daniela Greene, traveled to Syria and married Cuspert. Greene returned within weeks of her departure and was later sentenced to two years’ imprisonment. On January 27, 2015, the U.S. Department of State designated Cuspert as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist under Executive Order 13224. While previous reports of his death proved unfounded, Cuspert was ultimately killed in January 2018, during clashes with anti-ISIS forces in Syria. (Sources: [Newsweek](#) [79], [Deutsche Welle](#) [80], [New York Times](#) [81], [New York Times](#) [82], [U.S. Department of State](#) [83], [United Nations](#) [84], [Guardian](#) [85], [CNN](#) [86], [Telegraph](#) [87])

In September 2017, the trial against the Iraqi-born radical Islamist preacher Abu Walaa (a.k.a. Ahmad Abdulaziz Abdullah A.) began at the Supreme Court of Celle, Germany. Walaa was accused of taking “the leading role as the representative of the so-called Islamic State in Germany” and running a “pan-regional Salafist-jihadist network” linked to the perpetrator of the 2016 Berlin Christmas market attack. As of January 2019, Walaa’s trial is still ongoing. (Sources: [Schaumburger Nachrichten](#) [88], [Spiegel Online](#) [89], [Telegraph](#) [90])

In July 2017, a German court sentenced Sven Lau to five-and-a-half years in prison for funding Islamist militants and recruiting jihadists. He was found guilty of supporting the U.S.-designated terrorist group Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar (JAMWA). The group was previously affiliated with ISIS, but allegedly switched allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2016. Lau was born in Wuppertal in 1982 and converted to Islam as a teenager. He is a leading figure in Germany’s Salafist scene, and

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founded the Sharia Police. Members of the group patrolled the streets to enforce sharia law regarding the consumption of alcohol, gambling, and listening to music. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [91], [Deutsche Welle](#) [92], [Express](#) [93])

Born in Saxony in 1987, Silvio K. was a leading member of the banned Salafist association Millatu Ibrahim and eventually joined ISIS in Syria and Iraq. He appeared in numerous ISIS videos, including one in which he threatens to assassinate German Chancellor Angela Merkel. In July 2014, he appeared in an ISIS video in which he threatened to attack a U.S.-owned nuclear stockpile at the Büchel air base in Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany. Silvio K. was allegedly killed in Syria by fellow jihadists, after he started to distance himself from ISIS. (Sources: [Westen](#) [94], [Deutsche Welle](#) [95], [Focus](#) [96])

In March 2016, a German court sentenced Nils D. to four and a half years' imprisonment for joining ISIS in Syria. However, new evidence from July 2018 suggested that Nils D. had brutally tortured and killed three people while fighting for ISIS, which could be used to extend his sentence. Born in 1991, Nils D. converted to Islam as a teenager and radicalized by listening to online speeches by German Salafist preacher Pierre Vogel. Nils D. traveled to Syria in August 2013 and joined ISIS's special assault team six months later. He returned to Germany in 2014 and agreed to cooperate with German authorities, providing key intelligence on the terrorist group's structure and inner workings. (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [97], [Deutsche Welle](#) [98], [Deutsche Welle](#) [99])

In addition to al-Qaeda and ISIS, German authorities believe there is domestic support for other Islamist groups. In 2017, the BfV estimated that the Muslim Brotherhood had approximately 1,040 supporters, Hezbollah about 950, and Hamas about 320. As of April 2020, German authorities estimated there were approximately 1,050 Hezbollah supporters in the country. In line with the European Union, Germany had previously designated only Hezbollah's so-called military wing as a terrorist group, allowing its political supporters to freely gather and publicly display flags and other propaganda. Under pressure from the United States and Israel, Germany designated Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organization on April 30, 2020. In conjunction with the ban, German police raided multiple mosque associations across the country that they suspected of providing financial and propaganda support to Hezbollah. Germany's Interior Ministry issued a statement that Hezbollah's activities "violate criminal law and the organization opposes the concept of international understanding." In July 2020, German authorities alleged 50 members of the Al-Mustafa Community Center in the German city-state of Bremen were "involved in the financial support" of Hezbollah by sending funds to Lebanese families of deceased Hezbollah fighters. Al-Mustafa was one of the centers German authorities raided in April 2020. Bremen's intelligence service Sparkasse previously identified the center in 2018 for fundraising on behalf of Hezbollah. Germany had previously shut down the Lebanon Orphan Children Project in 2014 for sending money to the families of deceased Hezbollah fighters. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Reuters](#) [8], [Jerusalem Post](#) [9], [Jerusalem Post](#) [100], [Asharq al-Awsat](#) [101])

### ***Far-Right Extremism***

According to statements made in March 2020, Germany's domestic intelligence agency, Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV), was aware of 32,000 far-right extremists in the country—13,000 of whom the BfV considers violent. In 2018, far-right extremists were responsible for 1,212 attacks in Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia. Authorities suspect links between the German chapter of the international neo-Nazi group Combat 18 and the June 2019 murder of German politician Walter Lübcke. In July 2020, German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer called rising far-right extremism Germany's largest concern after a BfV report recorded 22,300 crimes by far-right extremists in 2019, a 10 percent over the previous year. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [102], [The Local](#) [103], [Deutsche Welle](#) [104], [Deutsche Welle](#) [105])

Combat 18 is a neo-Nazi group that seeks to create white-only countries through violence. The group was established in 1992 in the United Kingdom and is now present in at least 18 countries worldwide. The "18" in the name refers to the first and eighth letters of the English alphabet, A and H, for Adolf Hitler. Combat 18 initially drew its membership from white supremacists associated with the Chelsea Headhunters soccer hooligan gang and the British neo-Nazi record label and political organization Blood and Honour (B&H). (Sources: [Independent](#) [106], [Internet Archive](#) [107])

Since 2013, Combat 18 has established cells in seven of Germany's 16 states. In 2006, a Combat 18 cell in Dortmund smuggled firearms from Belgium and planned assaults on immigrants and politicians. Other German Combat 18 members were convicted in 2017 of illegally importing ammunition to Germany after firearms training in the Czech Republic. The German chapter of Combat 18 released a propaganda video in July 2019 that declared it had decided to go public because

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Germany had arrived at a point of no return and citizens needed to arm themselves. Combat 18 promotes “leaderless resistance,” encouraging the creation of independent cells and lone-wolf terrorism under the slogan “whatever it takes!” Germany banned Combat 18 in January 2020 after a series of raids on supporters across the country. (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [108], [Deutsche Welle](#) [104], [Deutsche Welle](#) [109], [Spiegel Online](#) [110], [Guardian](#) [111], *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century: The ‘National Socialist Underground’ and the History of Terror from the Far-Right in Germany*, 217-218)

The vast majority of far-right crimes are propaganda offenses. Far-right extremist propaganda is often disseminated through music events and festivals, but primarily through the Internet. In its annual crime report for 2019, the Germany’s Interior Ministry noted an increase in anti-Semitic crimes in the country with 2,032 reported incidents, representing a 13 percent increase from 2018. Right-wing extremists were responsible for more than 93.4 percent of anti-Semitic crimes and 90.1 percent of anti-Islamic crimes. Far-right extremists were credited with committing more than half of all politically motivated crimes, which rose by 14 percent in 2019 from 2018. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [112], [NBC News](#) [20], [Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat](#) [113])

In 2017, the BfV noted a 34 percent decrease in far-right extremist violence compared to 2016. Assaults on refugee accommodations also decreased, down 72.5 percent, but the overall number of attacks was still higher than in 2014. The decrease in violence correlates with the deterring practices of German courts, which have imposed longer prison sentences for far-right crimes—including those committed by the Freital Group and Oldschool Society. The Freital Group (*Gruppe Freital*, also known as *Bürgerwehr FTL/360*), a far-right, racist, and anti-immigrant terrorist organization in Saxony, seeks to intimidate political opponents and refugees. The group has no clear organizational structure, but maintains an active social media presence, posting far-right extremist content on Facebook and calling for violent attacks against refugees. Members have reportedly met in pubs and gas stations and communicated through encrypted messaging services to plan attacks. Between June and November 2015, the Freital Group conducted several attacks on refugee shelters and political opponents, using explosives and arson. In March 2018, the eight members were sentenced between four and 10 years’ imprisonment for multiple charges, including membership in a terrorist organization, causing an explosion, and attempted murder. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Spiegel Online](#) [114], [taz.de](#) [115], [Zeit online](#) [116], [Spiegel Online](#) [117])

The Oldschool Society (OSS) began as an online network consisting of members who expressed hatred for migrants on social media and mobile messaging applications. Their Facebook profile reached 3,000 likes before it was removed from the platform. In November 2014, the nine OSS members were found to have been plotting attacks on refugee homes and mosques with nail bombs and arson. Police found weapons and explosives during raids on their homes, and arrested the individuals before any attack was executed. In March 2017, four members of the OSS were sentenced to prison terms between 3 and 5 years for creating a terrorist organization. (Source: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Huffington Post](#) [118], [Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk](#) [119], [Deutsche Welle](#) [120], [Zeit Online](#) [121], [Welt](#) [122], [Süddeutsche Zeitung](#) [123])

Germany has continued to experience racist violence and protests. Specifically, the far-right has used criminal offenses committed by Muslim immigrants and refugees in order to fuel racism and xenophobia in Germany. Information can be exaggerated, intentionally miscommunicated, or fabricated and is subsequently spread on social media to promote racist rallies and xenophobic violence. On August 26, 2018, a German carpenter identified as Daniel H. was fatally stabbed in Chemnitz. Police arrested two male suspects believed to have been refugees from Syria and Iraq. While details about the crime were initially unconfirmed, racist and anti-immigrant rumors spread rapidly—in particular through social media—triggering far-right extremists and neo-Nazis to rally in the streets of Chemnitz. Estimates concluded that the far-right scene mobilized around 6,000 protesters, while police were outnumbered with only 600 officers. (Sources: [Zeit Online](#) [18], [Spiegel Online](#) [124], [CNN](#) [125], [Frankfurter Rundschau](#) [126])

The Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* or Pegida) has become a cornerstone of the far-right scene in Germany. Pegida was established as a Facebook group in October 2014, encouraging people in Dresden to join their weekly Monday marches against what they perceive as the growing influence of Islam in Europe. The movement has spread rapidly, drawing a record crowd of 25,000 marchers in Dresden in January 2015. Supporters have created spin-off groups in other German cities. Among Pegida’s followers are neo-Nazis, hooligans, and members of far-right political parties like AfD and NPD. (Sources: [Zeit Online](#) [18], [Deutsche Welle](#) [127], [Spiegel Online](#) [124], [CNN](#) [125], [BBC News](#) [128], [Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung](#) [129])

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The [National Democratic Party](#) [130] (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* or NPD), founded in 1964, is a far-right political party that has advocated racist, anti-Semitic, and revisionist views. NPD's activities have been motivated by anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiments. For instance, anti-immigrant protests erupted at a refugee center in Heidenau, near Dresden, after a visit from Chancellor Angela Merkel. The protests grew progressively violent as NPD members, joined by several hundred neo-Nazis, threw stones and bottles at the police while yelling, "Heil Hitler!" In January 2019, German media reported that NPD members had formed vigilante patrols in the Bavarian town of Amberg in response to a series of violent attacks by asylum-seekers, aged between 17 and 19 from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iran. The NPD posted pictures to social media of its members patrolling the town in vests labeled "We're creating safe zones." An NPD statement on Facebook declared, "When we say we will create protection zones in Amberg, we mean it." In 2017, groups of vigilantes also attacked foreigners in the city of Chemnitz after a local was allegedly stabbed to death by a migrant. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Berliner Zeitung](#) [131], [Independent](#) [132], [Telegraph](#) [133], [Deutsche Welle](#) [134], [Mittelbayerische Zeitung](#) [135])

According to a 2017 BfV report, the NPD has 4,500 members. Several members of the NPD's Executive Committee are known neo-Nazis, including former party chair and Member of European Parliament Udo Voigt as well as deputy chairman Ronny Zasowk. In January 2017, Germany's Federal Constitutional Court rejected a proposal to ban the NPD. Though the court concluded that the NPD's political objectives are unconstitutional, a ban was not justifiable due to the party's lack of influence in German society. In the federal general elections on September 24, 2017, the NPD received 0.4 percent of the votes and failed to gain any seats in the Bundestag, the German federal parliament. However, the BfV believes that the NPD will likely try to regain its leading role within the "national resistance." (Sources: [Reuters](#) [136], [International Business Times](#) [137], [European Parliament](#) [138], [Christian Science Monitor](#) [139], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Bundeswahlleiter](#) [140])

Nonetheless, the 2017 electoral success of the Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland* or AfD)—a right-wing nationalist political party that was founded in 2013—demonstrates some popular support for far-right positions. With 12.6 percent of the vote, the AfD currently occupies 94 seats of the Bundestag and is therefore third-largest party after the Christian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party. The AfD, whose supporters are primarily located in the formerly communist eastern parts of Germany, attracted attention and gained recognition for its anti-immigration policies. The AfD consists of a moderate and far-right wing, with the latter often holding explicit ethnic and even racist nationalist viewpoints. Party members have also been regularly accused of promoting neo-Nazi ideology and maintaining close contact to known neo-Nazis. However, there is no consensus on how to classify the AfD as a political movement, that is as right-wing populists or neo-Nazis. A 2018 study by Bertelsmann-Stiftung found that the AfD's electoral success resulted from increasing populism in German society. The AfD had not been under surveillance by the BfV, even though some politicians strongly advocated for such measures after the riots in Chemnitz in August 2018, where the AfD "failed to distance itself." In mid-January 2019, the BfV announced that it will start monitoring elements of the AfD, focusing its efforts on Björn Höcke who is a leading politician of the party in Thuringia. However, the BfV will not be allowed to gather intelligence information through surveillance and the use of undercover informants, and remains limited to collecting and analyzing open-source material. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Deutsche Welle](#) [141], [Bundeswahlleiter](#) [140], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Business Insider](#) [142], [Welt](#) [143], [Zeit online](#) [144], [Tagesschau](#) [145], [Bertelsmann Foundation](#) [146])

In mid-January 2019, the BfV announced that it will start monitoring elements of the AfD, focusing its efforts on Björn Höcke who is a leading politician of the party in Thuringia. At the time, however, the BfV was only allowed to collect and analyze open-source material. The agency was allowed to gather information through surveillance or undercover informants. This changed in March 2020, when the BfV described a faction led by Höcke within the AfD as an extremist organization and a threat to Germany's democratic order. The faction, Flügel ("wing"), has about 7,000 members, representing approximately 20 percent of AfD's overall membership. The BfV said it would place Flügel under systematic surveillance, allowing the domestic intelligence agency to recruit informants, keep personal data on file, and monitor phone calls. According to a BfV official, the increased scrutiny comes as the faction is believed to be uniting far-right extremist groups, including neo-Nazis, and coordinating online. On March 20, 2020, AfD's executive committee voted to dissolve Flügel by April 30, 2020, fearing the faction could bring increased scrutiny to the entire party. (Sources: [Deutschlandfunk](#) [147], [Guardian](#) [148], [BBC News](#) [149], [Deutsche Welle](#) [150])

In June 2020, German media reported that prosecutors were investigating a police officer who allegedly leaked information about the 2016 Berlin terror attack to his AfD associates. Authorities alleged that the officer was in a Telegram chat group

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with 11 other AfD members and, shortly after the Christmas market attack, passed on internal police information, including forensic details. One of the recipients of the information was a suspect in a series of politically-motivated attacks on left-wing stores and individuals in Berlin. (Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [151])

On June 23, 2020, Germany's Interior Ministry banned neo-Nazi group Nordadler (Northern Eagle). That same day, German police carried out raids targeting the group in four federal states: North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony, Brandenburg, and Lower Saxony. The group operates primarily online, according to a ministry spokesman, and is believed to have more than 30 members. Nordadler members subscribe to a national socialist ideology and pledge allegiance to Adolf Hitler. The group was reportedly planning to establish a Nazi settlement project in rural areas, including paramilitary training camps for youths. The group also operates under the following names: Völkische Revolution (People's Revolution), Völkische Jugend (People's Youth), Völkische Gemeinschaft (People's Community), and Völkische Renaissance (People's Renaissance). (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [152], [Tagesspiegel](#) [153], [Deutsche Welle](#) [154])

On December 1, 2020, Germany banned the neo-Nazi group Wolfsbrigade 44 and raided the homes of 11 members of the group in Hesse, Mecklenburg West-Pomerania, and North Rhine-Westphalia. During the raids, authorities seized the group's funds and Nazi propaganda, as well as knives, a machete, a crossbow, and bayonets. Founded in 2016, Wolfsbrigade 44 seeks to abolish democracy and reestablish the Nazi regime. The number 44 represents the letters DD, the fourth letter of the alphabet, in reference to Division Dirlwanger, a World War II SS unit led by Nazi officer Oskar Dirlwanger who ordered massacres of Belarusan civilians. (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [155], [Reuters](#) [156])

### ***Selbstverwalter and Reichsbürger***

Members of the Citizens of the Reich (Reichsbürger) and Sovereigns (Selbstverwalter) are ideologically diverse but fundamentally reject the legitimacy and sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany as well as its existing legal system. Structurally, Reichsbürger and Selbstverwalter either remain to themselves or form small groups. There are currently about 19,000 people that identify as Reichsbürger and Selbstverwalter, 950 of whom are also considered right-wing extremists. Most of them are male and between 40 and 60 years old. Typical criminal offenses of Reichsbürger and Selbstverwalter are verbal abuse, coercion, blackmail, resistance to law enforcement, document fraud and illegal possession of firearms. The BfV noted that the Internet plays a central role in the movement's propaganda dissemination, radicalization, and recruitment, and that the Reichsbürger and Selbstverwalter started calling for donations online in 2019. (Source: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [37])

On March 19, 2020, Germany's Interior Minister Horst Seehofer announced a ban on a 120-member faction of the Reichsbürger movement known as the United German Peoples and Tribes (Geeinte deutsche Völker und Stämme) and its subgroup Osnabrücker Landmark. The ban marks the first official federal ban of any groups that comprise the movement. That same day, more than 400 German law enforcement officers carried out raids at the homes of 21 of the group's leaders in 10 states, discovering weapons, propaganda material, and small amounts of narcotics. Seehofer noted that the Reichsbürger movement had engaged in verbal abuse and "massive threats" against government officials and their families. In late November 2020, military authorities began an investigation of eight civilian employees of the German armed forces suspected of belonging to the Reichsbürger movement. (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [157], [New York Times](#) [158], [Reuters](#) [159])

### ***Far-Left Extremism***

Left-wing extremists in Germany seek to overthrow the capitalist system and overcome perceived social injustices. The number of left-wing extremists increased from 32,000 in 2018 to 33,500 in 2019, of which 9,200 are considered violent. Though violent acts decreased by 8.8 percent to 921, overall left-wing extremist crimes increased by 39.5 percent—from 6,449 in 2019 compared to 4,622 in 2018. Violent acts include violence against law enforcement and right-wing extremists, as well as government institutions and symbols. The other criminal offenses were comprised of property damage, including arson, threats, and "other offenses." (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [37], [Deutsche Welle](#) [160])

The increase in leftist-extremist attacks is primarily attributed to the incidents that occurred during the G20 Summit in Hamburg on July 7 and 8, 2017. What was supposedly planned as a peaceful protest by leftist groups, had soon escalated into violent clashes between leftist-extremists and German police forces. In order to disrupt the course of the summit,



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protesters threw rocks and Molotov cocktails, caused fires, and looted shops. Police responded with water cannons and teargas. According to government official records, the G20 protests resulted in 186 arrests and 476 injured police officers, in addition to considerable property damage. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [CNN](#) [21], [Focus](#) [22])

### *Extremism in Germany's Military and Federal Authorities*

Islamists, as well as right- and left-wing extremists, are believed to be serving in Germany's federal authorities and armed forces. The Military Counterintelligence Service (*Militärischer Abschirmdienst* or MAD) has investigated 300 suspected cases of Islamism in Germany's armed forces, identifying 24 Islamists within its own ranks since 2011. Citing a military counterintelligence report from April 2016, approximately 29 soldiers went to Syria and Iraq to fight with ISIS. Dr. Christof Gramm, then head of the MAD, expressed concern that Germany's armed forces can be "misused as a training camp for violence-ready Islamists." (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [161], [Associated Press](#) [162], [Newsweek](#) [163], [Welt](#) [164], [Zeit Online](#) [165])

In November 2016, German authorities arrested a member of the BfV on suspicion of making Islamist statements online, encouraging violence and attacks, and sharing agency material. The individual, a 52-year-old German-Spaniard, had converted to Islam in 2014. He was hired by the BfV to surveil the Islamist scene inside Germany. His trial in Düsseldorf in 2017 revealed that he was not a fanatic supporter. A psychiatric expert confirmed his "theatricality and pomposity." In September 2017, he was sentenced to one year on probation for attempted betrayal of state secrets. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [166], [Newsweek](#) [167], [Focus](#) [168], [Frankfurter Allgemeine](#) [169])

As of August 2020, the MAD was investigating 600 cases of right-wing extremism within its ranks, according to the defense ministry spokesman. Most of the offenses were related to propaganda and racist commentary, resulting in financial penalties or dismissal. However, an army lieutenant identified as Franco A. was arrested in 2017 for planning a "grave act of violence against the state." Franco A. posed as a Syrian refugee and planned a terrorist attack on high-ranking political figures. He intended to frame refugees for the attack in order to fuel anti-immigrant sentiments about refugees in Germany. In December 2018, five police officers in Frankfurt were suspended on suspicion of forming a neo-Nazi cell. They exchanged right-wing extremist and racist messages in a chat group and threatened to kill the daughter of a German-Turkish lawyer. (Sources: [Süddeutsche Zeitung](#) [170], [Deutsche Welle](#) [171], [Deutsche Welle](#) [172], [Deutsche Welle](#) [173], [Deutsche Welle](#) [161], [Guardian](#) [174], [Voice of America](#) [175])

Since Germany abolished its compulsory military service, suspected cases of left-wing extremism within the armed forces notably decreased. (Source: [Tagesspiegel](#) [176])

Authorities warned that these suspected Islamist, far-right, and left-wing extremists were utilizing the army's training in order to prepare for domestic or international attacks. Consequently, the MAD has intensified its security checks on those applying for the military, resulting in several applicants being denied. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [177], [Daily Mail](#) [178], [Deutsche Welle](#) [161])

On May 28, 2020, the German parliament swore in Eva Högl as its overseer of the German military, the Bundeswehr. Högl will head a new defense ministry task force created to probe extremist elements within the Germany military. The move comes two weeks after police raided the home of a soldier in the elite special operations unit, Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK). The soldier had been under investigation since 2017 for suspected ties to the far right and was found to possess a cache of weapons and explosives. On June 30, 2020, the German defense minister announced the disbanding of the KSK's 2nd Company, after a report by the defense ministry's task force found that 20 of its members were linked to right-wing extremism. As a result, some of the 70 soldiers from the disbanded company would be reassigned to one of the KSK's three other combat units. The 2nd Company was officially disbanded on August 1, 2020. In July 2020, the Bundeswehr admitted that it was missing more than 60,000 rounds of ammunition and 137 pounds of explosives, in addition to another 48,000 rounds from the KSK. (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [179], [BBC News](#) [180], [NPR](#) [181], [Deutsche Welle](#) [182], [Voice of America](#) [175])

In June 2020, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition cabinet began the process to amend Germany's Military Act to help expedite the firings of soldiers disciplined for extremism and other severe misconduct. Currently, professional soldiers with more than four years of service can only be removed through lengthy dismissal procedures, and the proposed amendment seeks to raise the threshold to eight years. The Bundestag, Germany's lower house of parliament, must

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approve the decision. The cabinet's plan, supported by Defense Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer, comes after a spate of largely far-right incidents within the Bundeswehr's ranks. (Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [183])

On September 24, 2020, the German government dismissed the head of MAD, Christof Gramm, after a string of scandals highlighted instances of far-right extremism within the military. Though Gramm attempted to introduce internal reforms to address extremism during his five-year tenure at the helm of the military counterintelligence service, cases of far-right extremism in the armed forces increased. (Source: [New York Times](#) [184])

Separate from the MAD's investigations, the BfV released a report in October 2020 that recorded more than 1,400 cases of suspected far-right extremism among the country's soldiers, police officers, and intelligence agents. The report, which covered a period beginning in January 2017 and ending in March 2020, is the first attempt to document far-right infiltration of German security services—as recorded by the state and federal police authorities, the intelligence services, and the armed forces. State authorities documented 319 cases, federal agencies reported 58, and an overwhelming majority were reported by the military with 1,069 suspected cases of extremism. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [185], [Washington Post](#) [186])

### **Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents**

#### *Berlin Christmas Market Attack 2016*

On December 19, 2016, Tunisian-born [Anis Amri](#) [187] plowed a hijacked truck into a crowd of people at a Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 people and injuring 48 others. The attack took place at 8 p.m. in Breitscheidplatz, a major public square in western Berlin, near the landmark Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. Witnesses say that the driver jumped the sidewalk and careened into the crowd of market-goers at an estimated 40 miles per hour. One of the attack's victims, the truck's registered driver, was found shot and killed in the truck's passenger seat. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [188], [CNN](#) [189], [Guardian](#) [190], [Reuters](#) [191], [Telegraph](#) [192], [New York Times](#) [193], [Spiegel Online](#) [194], [New York Times](#) [195], [Guardian](#) [196], [Spiegel Online](#) [197], [Reuters](#) [191], [Associated Press](#) [198], [Guardian](#) [199])

ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack through its Amaq News Agency, calling the driver a "soldier" of the Islamic State. Police reported that the primary suspect, Anis Amri, was a Tunisian-born asylum seeker who had used false documentation and at least six aliases. Amri had moved to Italy in 2011, arriving in Germany in December 2015. He was allegedly part of a broader Islamist network. On December 23, 2016, after a European-wide manhunt and several raids in Germany, Amri was stopped by police in Milan and killed in a shootout. In July 2018, Germany's Federal Supreme Court issued an arrest warrant for Meher D., the alleged key accomplice and mastermind behind the attack at the Berlin Christmas market. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [188], [CNN](#) [189], [Guardian](#) [190], [Reuters](#) [191], [Telegraph](#) [192], [New York Times](#) [193], [Spiegel Online](#) [194], [New York Times](#) [195], [Guardian](#) [196], [Spiegel Online](#) [197], [CNN](#) [200], [Reuters](#) [191], [Associated Press](#) [198], [Guardian](#) [199], [Reuters](#) [201])

#### *National Socialist Underground*

The National Socialist Underground (*Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund* or NSU) was a far-right and neo-Nazi terrorist organization composed of three members: Beate Zschäpe, Uwe Mundlos, and Uwe Böhnhardt. Together, they killed eight people of Turkish origin, one Greek man, and a German policewoman between 2000 and 2007. The NSU was also responsible for the pipe bomb explosion in Cologne on June 9, 2004, that left 22 people injured and caused considerable property damage. In November 2011, Mundlos and Böhnhardt failed in an attempted bank robbery. They committed suicide before police officers were able to arrest them. Zschäpe turned herself in to authorities. She went on trial in May 2013 for numerous charges and was sentenced to life-long imprisonment on July 11, 2018. She was found guilty for murder, attempted murder, robbery, and membership in a terrorist organization. (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [202], [Deutsche Welle](#) [203], [Spiegel Online](#) [204])

#### *G20 Summit and Protests in Hamburg 2017*

What was initially planned as a peaceful protest by leftist groups during the July 2017 G20 Summit in Hamburg, escalated

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into violent clashes between leftist-extremists and German police forces. In order to obstruct the course of the summit, protesters threw rocks and Molotov cocktails, caused fires, and looted shops. Police forces responded with water cannons and teargas. According to government official records, the G20 protests resulted in 186 arrests and 476 injured police officers, in addition to considerable property damage. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [CNN](#) [21], [Focus](#) [22])

- **December 1, 2020:**A 51-year-old man identified as Bernd W. drives an SUV through a pedestrian area in Trier, killing at least four and wounding 15 others.  
Police stop the vehicle after about a kilometer and arrest the driver. The driver intentionally drove into the pedestrians, according to authorities, though they do not immediately identify a motive. Police believe the attacker acted alone.  
Source: [Telegraph](#) [1]
- **October 4, 2020:**A 20-year-old Syrian man stabs two German tourists who are traveling from another part of the country in Dresden, killing one 55-year-old man and seriously injuring the other 53-year-old man.  
On October 20, German police detain the suspect, an asylum seeker who arrived in the country in 2015. German prosecutors announce that authorities are treating the knife attack as a possible act of terror. The suspect, identified only as Abdullah Al H.H., has a criminal record that includes assaulting a police officer, causing bodily injury, attempting to recruit for ISIS, and preparing violent subversive activities. Due to his age at the time, he was tried and sentenced as a juvenile. Abdullah Al H.H. spent three-years in detention and was released on September 29, 2020.  
Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [6], [Agence-France Presse](#) [7]
- **October 4, 2020:**A man wearing army fatigues uses a shovel to attack and gravely wound a Jewish man exiting a synagogue in Hamburg, as congregants celebrate the Jewish holiday of Sukkot.  
Security guards and police officers subdue the 29-year-old suspect, who is found with a piece of paper with a swastika in his pocket. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas calls the incident “vile anti-Semitism.” Source: [New York Times](#) [4]
- **October 1, 2020:**Polish authorities charge a German national identified only as Jürgen K. with possession of arms and explosives without a permit.  
The suspect, who publicly supported right-wing extremist organizations, is being held in custody as part of an ongoing investigation into “activities of an organized terrorist group” operating in Poland and other countries. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [205]
- **September 16, 2020:**A German police force suspends 29 of its officers who are suspected of sharing extremist content online in at least five chat groups.  
Investigators raid the homes and offices of 14 of the 29 officers, who are accused of sharing neo-Nazi and pro-Hitler propaganda. Source: [New York Times](#) [206]
- **September 13, 2020:**Senegal arrests German national Auerbacher Marius Falk at its international airport.  
He is wanted by Germany and Interpol on terrorism charges. The suspect allegedly fought as a terrorist in Syria and traveled throughout Africa despite being the subject of an international arrest warrant. Source: [North Africa Post](#) [207]
- **August 29, 2020:**Groups gather in Berlin to demonstrate against Germany’s COVID-19 restrictions, which culminates in attempts by some protesters to storm the parliament building.  
At least 2,500 to 3,000 right-wing and Reichsbürger extremists took part in the protests, according to German security officials. Source: [Washington Post](#) [208]
- **August 27, 2020:**Germany extradites a German national, known only as Fadi J., from the Netherlands.  
Fadi is accused of co-founding a far-right group in 2016 called Goyim Party Germany, which distributed pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic material online. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [209]
- **August 18, 2020:**A 30-year-old Iraqi man crashes his car into other vehicles on the A100 highway in Berlin, injuring six people.  
The man later stops on the road and places an ammunition crate on top of his car, claiming the box is filled with explosives. Witnesses report the man shouted “Allahu akbar” as he got out of the car. Police apprehend the man and find only tools inside the crate. Berlin authorities call the incident a deliberate Islamist-motivated attack. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [210]
- **August 3, 2020:**Albania transfers a Tajik man to Germany after arresting him on April 29, 2020 for alleged membership in an ISIS cell that planned to attack U.S. military facilities on German soil.  
German authorities arrest the suspect, identified as Komron B., at Frankfurt airport. Four other Tajik men were detained in Germany in mid-April and their alleged leader was arrested in March 2019. Source: [Associated Press](#) [211]
- **June 10, 2020:**A far-right extremist detonates explosives in front of the house of a 41-year-old anti-fascist activist, sending shrapnel from her mailbox into her home, in the central German city of Goettingen.  
Police follow a trail of blood from the scene to the suspect’s home, where they find and arrest the 26-year-old, whose hand is badly injured from the explosives. Source: [Associated Press](#) [212]
- **June 8, 2020:**German authorities arrest a 21-year-old man who posted threats online, announcing his intention to carry out an attack targeting Muslims in the German city of Celle and seeking to replicate the March 2019 mosque attack in Christchurch, New Zealand.  
The suspect is charged with threatening to commit criminal offenses, disturbing the peace, and financing terrorism through the purchase of weapons. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [213]

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- **May 14, 2020:** German police raid the home of a 45-year-old sergeant major in Germany's elite KSK special forces, who has been under investigation since 2017 for ties to the far-right. Law enforcement find a hidden cache of weapons and explosives. Source: [BBC News](#) [151]
- **April 15, 2020:** German authorities detain five suspected ISIS members in the towns of Heinsberg and Werdhol, western Germany. The suspects, all refugees from Tajikistan, alleged to plan an attack on U.S. military facilities and an unspecified individual. According to reports, the four joined ISIS in January 2019 and were instructed to form a terrorist cell in Germany. Source: [Radio Free Europe](#) [214]
- **March 24, 2020:** The high court in Dresden sentences eight members of a neo-Nazi cell, "Revolution Chemnitz," to prison terms ranging from two to five and a half years. They were found guilty of forming a terrorist organization and for plotting violent attacks against perceived enemies. Source: [Guardian](#) [215]
- **March 21, 2020:** During a hearing at Liverpool Crown Court in the U.K., Fatah Mohammed Abdullah admits to plotting acts of terrorism. Abdullah also enlisted the help of two German residents, Omar Babek and Ahmed Hussein, from April 9, 2018 to December 11, 2018, in an attempt to commit attacks in Germany including driving a car into a crowd, attacking people with a meat cleaver, and causing explosions. Abdullah is scheduled to be sentenced on May 7, 2020. Source: [BBC News](#) [216]
- **February 19, 2020:** Alleged gunman Tobias Rathjen opens fire at two hookah lounges in the town of Hanau in the German state of Hesse, killing at least nine and wounding at least five. Rathjen begins his attack at the Midnight hookah lounge, and then drives to the Arena Bar & Cafe hookah lounge approximately a mile-and-a-half away. At least five of the victims in the hookah lounges are Turkish citizens. Authorities trace the suspect back to his home the following morning where they find him and his 72-year-old mother dead of gunshot wounds. Police also find a confession letter and an online manifesto detailing global conspiracy theories and calling for a global ethnic cleansing of Muslims and Jews. He also wrote that people of certain African, Asian, and Middle Eastern origins in Germany should be "completely annihilated." He further called for the elimination of multiple Arab countries, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Israel, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Days before the attack, Rathjen uploaded a video to YouTube warning Americans they were being controlled by "invisible secret societies." YouTube shuts down Rathjen's account after the attack, which police label an act of domestic terrorism. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [217], [Al Jazeera](#) [218], [Deutsche Welle](#) [219], [BBC News](#) [220], [CNN](#) [221], [Daily Mail](#) [222], [Times of Israel](#) [223], [YouTube](#) [224], [Guardian](#) [225], [Guardian](#) [226]
- **December 4, 2019:** Germany expels two Russian diplomats under the suspicion that the two shot and killed a man in a Berlin park a few months prior. Berlin suspects the murder was ordered by Russia or Russia's Chechen republic. Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, a 40-year-old former Chechen rebel commander, was shot in the head from behind in the Kleiner Tiergarten park in August. A man was quickly arrested but has given little information to police. The suspect—identified as Vadim K.—was detained shortly after the killing when he was allegedly seen dumping a bike, pistol, and a wig into the nearby River Spree. Prosecutors describe Vadim K. as a suspect in the 2013 murder of a Russian businessman in Moscow. The victim in that attack was also approached by a man on a bicycle who shot him in the back of the head. Source: [BBC News](#) [227]
- **November 21, 2019:** A man injures a 65-year-old Turkish woman at a tram stop in Hannover in a suspected xenophobic attack. The suspect, identified as a Czech citizen, is being investigated for intending to cause bodily harm, police spokesman Philipp Hasse said. Germany has witnessed growing xenophobia and anti-migrant hatred in recent years, fueled by the propaganda of neo-Nazi groups and the far-right Islamophobic Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#) [228]
- **November 19, 2019:** German special police forces arrest a Syrian man who was organizing an attack designed to "kill and injure a maximum number of people." The suspect reportedly looked up online how to build bombs and discuss plans for an attack in internet chats, which Berlin's top security official Andreas Geisel told the dpa news agency came from an "allied foreign intelligence service." Source: [The Hill](#) [229]
- **November 13, 2019:** Local police arrest three men in the German city of Offenbach, "on suspicion of the preparation of a serious violent act threatening the state." A 24-year-old German of Macedonian descent and two 22- and 21-year-old Turkish citizens were believed to be supporters of ISIS, according to the public prosecutor's office. The suspects were tracked down by testimonies from witnesses, to whom the accused had made themselves known as ISIS supporters. Source: [Xinhua](#) [230]
- **October 25, 2019:** German authorities confirm that a 2016 shooting in Munich was a "politically motivated crime" that was at least partly motivated by the right-wing extremist views of the perpetrator. The 18-year-old perpetrator killed nine people, mostly from immigrant backgrounds. The 18-year-old shooter, who was of German and Iranian heritage, targeted a restaurant known to be frequented by those of immigrant backgrounds. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [231]
- **October 9, 2019:** On Yom Kippur, a gunman identified as Stephan Balliet, attacks a synagogue in Halle, eastern Germany, while simultaneously livestreaming the attack on Twitch, an Amazon-owned streaming platform.

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Unable to get inside the synagogue—despite shooting at the heavily locked door and placing an explosive on a door jam—he shoots dead a passerby. Balliet then proceeds to a nearby kebab shop where he kills one wounds another. Balliet then steals a taxi at a nearby mechanic, wounding one more. He is arrested 10 miles south of Halle after crashing the taxi. The International Centre for the Study of Radicalization at King's College London later uncovers three documents, including a manifesto describing the motivation and homemade weaponry for the attack, posted on the site Kohlchan. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [232], [New York Times](#) [233], [New York Times](#) [234], [Guardian](#) [235]

- **September 30, 2019:**Eight alleged neo-Nazis go on trial in Dresden and are accused of plotting terror attacks. Federal prosecutors say the so-called "Revolution Chemnitz" group planned to target immigrants, political opponents, and the economic establishment. They are said to be members of the neo-Nazi scene in Chemnitz, a city where far-right protests were held last year after a German man was fatally stabbed. The group allegedly planned a deadly attack in Berlin on October 3, 2018. Most of the men, aged between 21 and 32, were arrested on October 1, 2018. Prosecutors say the group's plans for obtaining firearms had been intercepted in an Internet chatroom. Source: [BBC News](#) [236]
- **September 4, 2019:**Nils D., a German national, stands trial in Düsseldorf, where he is accused of torturing prisoners as a member of ISIS in the town of Manbij in Syria. Three victims died as a result of the torture. In addition, the prosecution claims that he was a part of a group of ISIS fighters who worked inside a prison in Syria in 2014. The prison specifically contained defectors and deserters from ISIS. The defendant, who hails from the western German town of Dinslaken, was also a member of the "Lohberger Brigade," which supports ISIS in Syria, in his hometown. This is the second time that the 29-year-old stands trial for terror-related offenses. His earlier trial and conviction was on the lesser charge of membership of a terrorist organization, for which he received a four and a half years in prison. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [237]
- **August 23, 2019:**A 33-year-old Syrian man is charged in the western Germany city of Koblenz with committing war crimes. Authorities say they they have concrete evidence that the man fought with ISIS for two years. Syrian refugees who knew the man reported his alleged actions to authorities in Koblenz. After receiving a warrant to search his electronic devices, police found an image of the accused posing with a decapitated head. If convicted, the suspect, who is already in prison for other lesser offenses, faces between one to ten years in prison. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [238]
- **August 22, 2019:**A German court sentences Alaa Sheikhi, a Syrian man, to nine and a half years in prison over the fatal stabbing of a man in Chemnitz last year. Sheikhi was found guilty of "joint manslaughter and serious physical injury" over the death of Daniel Hillig, a 35-year-old carpenter. A second suspect, an Iraqi, is thought to have fled Germany after the attack. The case led to violent protests in Chemnitz, where far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) has strong support. Source: [BBC News](#) [239]
- **July 5, 2019:**A former Afghan military officer stands trial in Munich. The defendant is accused of torturing captured fighters in late 2013 and early 2014. He allegedly mocked, defiled and desecrated the corpse of an enemy commander in front of civilians. The defendant was arrested on October 25, 2018 in the southern German district of Ebersberg, near Munich. Although the defendant is not a German citizen, the International Criminal Code has been incorporated into the German legal system which enables the German judiciary to lead prosecutions of certain crimes that violate international law, even if they were not committed on German soil. German authorities have increasingly turned to the International Criminal Code since 2015, when significant numbers of refugees began arriving in the country. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [240], [Radio Free Europe](#) [241]
- **June 2, 2019:**Kassel regional council president Walter Lübcke from the state of Hesse is found lying on his terrace at his home in Isthra. He is declared dead two hours later. An autopsy report reveals Lübcke died from a gunshot at close range. Police rule out suicide. Kassel was a member of the Christian Democrat party and held pro-immigration positions. On June 16, police arrest a suspect with far-right ties who had issued death threats over YouTube. Authorities suspect a far-right extremist motive in the killing, but police note the suspect does not belong to any specific extremist groups. Authorities later link the suspect to members of the neo-Nazi group Combat 18. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [242], [Deutsche Welle](#) [243], [Deutsche Welle](#) [104], [CNN](#) [244]
- **January 10, 2019:**The German Foreign Ministry confirms that two German-Egyptian nationals—26-year-old Mahmoud Abdel Aziz and 18-year-old Isa El Sabbagh—were held by Egyptian authorities in Cairo on the suspicion of joining ISIS. Their families in Germany claim that the two men traveled to Egypt in late-December to visit family. By early-January, both men were brought back to Germany. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [245], [Süddeutsche Zeitung](#) [246], [Zeit Online](#) [247]
- **January 9, 2019:**Kurdish fighters in Syria capture eight foreign jihadists, including German national Lucas Glass, a.k.a. Abu Ibrahim al-Almani. Source: [Daily Mail](#) [248]
- **January 8, 2019:**Frank Magnitz, a far-right AfD politician in Bremen, is beaten and seriously injured on head and face by three masked assailants. Police describe the attack as politically motivated. Source: [Guardian](#) [249]
- **January 1, 2019:**A 50-year-old German man—identified as Andreas N.—rams his car into two groups of New Year's revelers shortly after midnight in the city of Bottrop and then again in Essen, wounding eight people, including a 4-year-old boy. Seven of the victims are from Syria and Afghanistan. The eighth victim is identified as a German-Turk from Essen. Police charge the driver with multiple counts of attempted murder and suspect him of carrying out a hate crime after

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he tells police he wanted to kill foreigners. According to police reports, Andreas N. has no ties to far-right extremist groups, but allegedly suffers from schizophrenia. Sources: [Telegraph](#) [133], [Reuters](#) [250], [Reuters](#) [251], [Spiegel Online](#) [252]

- **January 1, 2019:**The Nuremberg branch of the far-right National Democratic Party (NPD) posts pictures on its Facebook page of people walking through the streets of Amberg and wearing vests with the words “We’re creating safe zones.”  
The formation of these so-called patrols follows a series of violent attacks by asylum-seekers. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [134], [Mittelbayerische Zeitung](#) [135]
- **December 29, 2018:**Police arrest four asylum-seekers—aged between 17 and 19 from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iran—for assaulting a dozen passers-by in the city center of Amberg, Bavaria.  
Germany’s Interior Minister Horst Seehofer subsequently announces to tighten the legal basis for deportation and repatriation of refugees. Sources: [Stern](#) [253], [Deutsche Welle](#) [134]
- **December 18, 2018:**German police raid As-Sahaba mosque in Berlin whose imam—45-year-old Ahmad A. (a.k.a. Abul Baraa)—is suspected of transferring funds to an ISIS fighter in Syria.  
Ahmad A. is a known hate preacher and a “star in Germany’s Islamist scene.” Sources: [Reuters](#) [254], [Focus](#) [255]
- **December 17, 2018:**Five police officers in Frankfurt are suspended on suspicion of forming a neo-Nazi cell, exchanging far-right and racist messages in a chat group, and threatening to kill the daughter of a German-Turkish lawyer.  
The note to the lawyer’s home was signed “NSU 2.0,” referring to the National Socialist Underground (NSU) terror group that was responsible for the murder of 10, including nine of immigrant backgrounds, between 2000 and 2007. Source: [Guardian](#) [174]
- **December 4, 2018:**A German left-wing activist group called Center for Political Beauty (ZPS) launches a website for people to denounce neo-Nazis in response to the far-right protests in Chemnitz in August.  
On December 5, ZPS reveals that its campaign was a so-called “honeypot trap” meant to lure far-right sympathizers into unwittingly revealing their identities through the site’s search function. The incident has caused a huge controversy in German society. Sources: [SOKO Chemnitz](#) [256], [Deutsche Welle](#) [257]
- **October 15, 2018:**A 55-year-old Syrian refugee identified as Mohammad A.R. causes a fire at a McDonald’s restaurant at Cologne’s main train station injuring two people, before he takes another person hostage at a nearby pharmacy.  
Police shoot the suspect and critically injure him. According to prosecutors, Mohammad A.R. claimed to be a member of ISIS and demanded the release of a woman whose husband involved in terrorist activities. Sources: [Reuters](#) [258], [Tagesschau](#) [259], [Washington Post](#) [260]
- **October 1, 2018:**Police arrest six neo-Nazis in Bavaria and Saxony for creating a terrorist organization.  
The group known as Revolution Chemnitz, allegedly planned to attack foreigners and political dissidents on October 3, Germany’s unification day. Source: [Tagesschau](#) [261]
- **September 1, 2018:**Jawed S. stabs and seriously injures two U.S. tourists at central station in Amsterdam.  
He tries to escape, but the police stop and arrest him. The 19-year-old Afghan has a residence permit in Germany. He is later charged with attempted murder with a terrorist motive. Sources: [Stern](#) [262], [NL Times](#) [263]
- **August 26, 2018:**Police arrest two men, allegedly refugees from Syria and Iraq, suspected of fatally stabbing a German man in Chemnitz.  
Rumors spread rapidly on social media, fueling racist and anti-immigrant sentiments and triggering far-right extremists and neo-Nazis to rally in the streets of Chemnitz. In January 2019, Syrian national Alaa S. is charged with second-degree murder, while the suspected accomplice Farhad R. is still wanted by an international arrest warrant. Sources: [Zeit Online](#) [18], [Spiegel Online](#) [124], [CNN](#) [125], [Spiegel Online](#) [264]
- **August 22, 2018:**Police arrests Magomed-Ali C., a Chechen man, suspected of planning an Islamist-inspired bomb attack in Germany.  
Sources: [Berliner Morgenpost](#) [265], [Reuters](#) [266]
- **June 20, 2018:**Police arrest Tunisian-born Sief Allah H. and his wife in Cologne for suspicion of planning and preparing an Islamist-inspired terrorist attack with a biological weapon.  
Police seize 3,150 castor beans and 84.3 milligram of ricin. Sief Allah H. has allegedly pledged allegiance to ISIS and unsuccessfully attempted to travel to Syria in September 2017. Sources: [Spiegel Online](#) [61], [Reuters](#) [267], [Zeit Online](#) [268]
- **March 7, 2018:**Eight members of the far-right organization Gruppe Freital are sentenced to several years’ imprisonment for forming a terrorist group, attacking refugee housings with explosive devices, and attempting murder.  
Sources: [Zeit Online](#) [269], [BBC News](#) [270]
- **December 27, 2017:**An Afghan refugee stabs his 15-year-old ex-girlfriend out of vengeance and is later sentenced to eight-and-a-half years’ imprisonment.  
Right-wing extremists exploit the incident on social media to fuel xenophobic sentiments, instigate violence against refugees, and denounce Germany’s migration policy. Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Mannheimer Morgen](#) [271], [Bild](#) [272], [Südwestrundfunk](#) [273]
- **December 11, 2017:**Demonstrations against the U.S. acknowledgment of Jerusalem as the new capital of Israel escalate into anti-Semitic riots and “open hatred towards Jews.”  
Pro-Palestine groups, Hamas sympathizers, and followers of the Millî Görüş movement use the demonstrations to

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- promote anti-Semitic propaganda. Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Spiegel Online](#) [274]
- **October 31, 2017:**Police in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern arrest Yamen A., a 19-year-old Syrian refugee, for planning a terrorist attack in Germany to “kill as many people as possible.”  
Yamen A. has been in contact with Islamists on social media and chats and has researched construction manuals for improvised explosive devices, even procuring some of the chemical and explosive materials. Yamen A. is sentenced to six-and-a-half years in prison in November 2018. Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Welt](#) [275], [Deutsche Welle](#) [276], [Spiegel Online](#) [277], [Welt](#) [278]
  - **August 25, 2017:**The Ministry of Interior bans the organization responsible for the linksunten.indymedia.org and takes down the website.  
The platform has been a popular channel for leftist-extremists to disseminate propaganda and encourage violence. Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [de.indymedia.org](#) [279]
  - **July 28, 2017:**Palestinian-born Ahmad Alhaw kills one man and injures six others in a stabbing rampage at a Hamburg supermarket.  
On March 1, 2018, he pleads guilty to murder and assault in a court in Hamburg and is sentenced to life imprisonment. Sources: [Reuters](#) [47], [BBC News](#) [48], [Times of Israel](#) [49]
  - **July 7, 2017 - July 8, 2017:**A left-wing demonstration against the G20 Summit in Hamburg escalates into violent clashes between leftist-extremists and German police forces.  
Protestors throw rocks and Molotov cocktails, set fires, and loot shops. Police forces respond with water cannons and teargas. According to official records, the protests result in 186 arrests, 476 injured police officers, and considerable property damage. Sources: [CNN](#) [21], [Focus](#) [22]
  - **June 19, 2017:**Leftist-extremists execute a total of 14 coordinated arson attacks against Deutsche Bahn, Germany’s biggest railroad company.  
The incendiary devices are placed at train tracks in major cities, including Berlin, Cologne, and Leipzig. The attacks result in massive disruption of the railway service. Members of the left-extremist scene claim responsibility through their website linksunten.indymedia.org. Source: [Zeit Online](#) [280]
  - **May 31, 2017:**A massive explosion in the diplomatic area of Kabul, Afghanistan, close to the German Embassy, kills 90 people and injures 460 others.  
German embassy employees are among the wounded, and the embassy is severely damaged. The Haqqani network is suspected to be responsible for the attack. Sources: [Guardian](#) [281], [Spiegel Online](#) [282], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13]
  - **December 19, 2016:**Tunisian national Anis Amri plows a truck into a crowd of people at a Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 people and injuring 48 others.  
ISIS claims responsibility for the attack. After a European-wide manhunt and several raids in Germany, Amri is stopped a few days later by the Italian police in Milan and killed in a shootout. Sources: [Reuters](#) [188], [CNN](#) [189], [Guardian](#) [190], [Reuters](#) [191], [Spiegel Online](#) [197], [CNN](#) [200]
  - **December 5, 2016:**A 12-year-old German-Iraqi boy allegedly leaves a backpack containing a nail bomb outside of the city hall building in Ludwigshafen, Germany.  
A passerby alerts authorities, and the explosive is safely detonated. The same boy had allegedly attempted to detonate a nail bomb at a Christmas marketplace on November 26. Investigators believe the boy was in contact with a member of ISIS via the encrypted messaging app Telegram. Source: [Washington Post](#) [56]
  - **November 15, 2016:**The German government bans the domestic Salafist group “True Religion.”  
According to authorities, 140 of the group’s supporters had gone to fight with ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Sources: [New York Times](#) [41], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [44]
  - **November 9, 2016:**German police arrest five members of a suspected ISIS recruitment network.  
Authorities reportedly capture the network’s leader—identified as Iraqi-born radical Islamist preacher Abu Walaa (a.k.a. Ahmad Abdulaziz Abdullah A.)—who had long propagandized for ISIS on YouTube. Sources: [Financial Times](#) [283], [BBC News](#) [284], [Schaumburger Nachrichten](#) [88], [Spiegel Online](#) [89], [Telegraph](#) [90]
  - **October 30, 2016:**ISIS claims responsibility for an October 16 stabbing attack at a lake in Hamburg that killed one teenage boy.  
Sources: [Reuters](#) [285], [Daily Mail](#) [286]
  - **October 19, 2016:**In Georgensgmünd, Bavaria, a member of the Reichsbürger fires 11 shots at police officers who are in the process of seizing his illegal firearms.  
Four police officers are wounded, one dies of his injuries later in the hospital. The perpetrator, Wolfgang P., is sentenced to life imprisonment for murder, attempted murder, and grievous bodily harm. Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Zeit Online](#) [287]
  - **October 10, 2016:**German police in the city of Leipzig arrest a 22-year-old Syrian refugee with suspected links to ISIS, Jaber al-Bakr, after a two-day manhunt.  
Authorities reportedly uncover several hundred grams of the explosive substance TATP at an apartment that al-Bakr had stayed in. Police say it is likely that al-Bakr had prepared an explosive device and intended to carry out a large-scale attack on a Berlin airport. Two days later, al-Bakr commits suicide in his prison cell. Sources: [BBC News](#) [288], [Wall Street Journal](#) [289], [BCC News](#) [290], [The Atlantic](#) [291]
  - **October 6, 2016:**A German court convicts four men for lending material support to Ahrar al-Sham, a Syrian militant

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group.

The men have supplied military clothes worth 133,000 euros and five ambulances to Ahrar al-Sham between 2013 and 2014. The men receive prison sentences between 21 and 42 months, partially on probation. Source: [Stuttgarter Zeitung](#) [292]

- **September 13, 2016:** German authorities arrest three suspected ISIS operatives in the northern states of Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony.  
The men are Syrian nationals aged between 17 and 26. Authorities believe that the men entered Germany in November 2015 by traveling through Turkey and Syria on fake passports provided by ISIS. Prosecutors allege that the men arrived with the intention to “[carry] out a previously determined order [from ISIS] or to await further instructions.” Sources: [BBC News](#) [293], [CNN](#) [294], [TIME](#) [295]
- **August 25, 2016:** Adrian Ursache and 13 supporters, all members of the Reichsbürger movement, attack law enforcement authorities.  
Ursache and two police officers are injured in a gunfight. In October 2017, Ursache is charged for attempted murder, grievous bodily harm, resistance against enforcement officers, and illegal possession of firearms. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [296], [Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk](#) [297], [Mitteldeutsche Zeitung](#) [298]
- **August 9, 2016:** German police arrest a 24-year old Syrian refugee and ISIS-member in Mutterstadt, Rhineland Palatinate state.  
The man is suspected of threatening to attack the Bundesliga football games due to begin later in August. Sources: [Newsweek](#) [299], [Frankfurter Allgemeine](#) [300]
- **July 24, 2016:** An ISIS-inspired 27-year-old Syrian refugee carries out a suicide attack, injuring 12 people, outside of a music festival in Ansbach, Germany.  
The suspect had been denied asylum in 2015 and was to be deported to Bulgaria, according to German authorities. Investigators find a video on the perpetrator’s phone in which he pledges allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and describes the bombing as “revenge” against Germany. ISIS’s Amaq news agency claims responsibility for the attack on its Telegram channel. Sources: [New York Times](#) [53], [BBC News](#) [301], [BBC News](#) [302], [Guardian](#) [303], [International Business Times](#) [304]
- **July 22, 2016:** Iranian shooter Ali David Sonboly embarks on a shooting rampage outside of a shopping center in Munich, killing nine people and injuring 35 others.  
German authorities halt Munich’s public transportation, deploy special forces and federal police units, and draft Austrian police to reinforce the city’s security. Sonboly commits suicide. Authorities rule out ties to terrorism, but claim Sonboly was “obsessed” with mass shootings. Searches of Sonboly’s personal computer reveal photos of Anders Breivik—the far-right extremist who killed 77 in Norway in 2011. Sources: [BBC News](#) [305], [Telegraph](#) [306], [New York Times](#) [307], [Guardian](#) [308], [BBC News](#) [48]
- **July 18, 2016:** A 17-year-old Afghan refugee armed with an ax and knife goes on a stabbing rampage on a train running through southern Germany.  
The attacker injures four family members from Hong Kong before he is shot dead by police. The next morning, ISIS claims responsibility for the attack on its online Amaq news agency. Authorities find a hand-painted ISIS flag in the perpetrator’s room in Ochsenfurt, where he had been living with a foster family. Sources: [BBC News](#) [309], [Telegraph](#) [310], [Reuters](#) [52]
- **May 10, 2016:** An unidentified 27-year-old man reportedly shouts “Allahu Akhbar” before stabbing commuters on an early morning train in Munich.  
Other witnesses hear him yell “Infidel, you must die.” The attack kills one and wounds three others. German police do not ascribe a motive to the attack, instead revealing the assailant had mental health problems. Sources: [Sky News](#) [311], [Telegraph](#) [312]
- **April 16, 2016:** Three German-born teenagers—later discovered to have links with Islamist extremists—bomb a wedding at a Sikh Temple in Essen, North Rhine-Westphalia, wounding three people.  
In March 2017, they are sentenced to juvenile detention for up to 7 years. Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [32], [Deutsche Welle](#) [313]
- **April 13, 2016:** German authorities in the southern city of Ulm arrest three men suspected of funneling money to ISIS. The men—two Turkish citizens and one German national—had already been banned from leaving Germany. Source: [Associated Press](#) [314]
- **February 26, 2016:** A 15-year-old German-Moroccan girl identified as Safia S. stabs a police officer in Hanover with a kitchen knife, inflicting life-threatening wounds.  
Authorities believe that ISIS operatives may have ordered Safia to carry out the attack. She is sentenced to 6 years of imprisonment for attempted murder, grievous bodily harm, and support for a foreign terrorist organization. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [51], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13], [Deutsche Welle](#) [315]
- **January 13, 2016:** Federal prosecutors in Germany charge four neo-Nazis for forming a terrorist group to attack refugees.  
The suspects, calling themselves the “Oldschool Society,” are accused of planning to bomb refugee shelters. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [316]
- **January 12, 2016:** A suspected ISIS militant detonates a suicide bomb in Istanbul’s Sultanahmet Square, an area popular with tourists.



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The attack kills ten people, all of them German nationals, and hospitalizes another nine Germans. Sources: [Guardian](#) [317], [CNN](#) [318]

- **January 10, 2016:** German police in Cologne receive reports that groups are attacking foreigners at the city center. About 20 people attack six Pakistanis, leaving two victims hospitalized. Shortly afterwards, a group of five people assault a Syrian national. Police are unable to confirm if the incidents were linked. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [19]
- **December 31, 2015:** In Cologne, hundreds of sexual assaults, robberies, and at least one rape occur outside of the main train station.  
These mass attacks on women took place during the city's New Year's Eve celebrations. Witnesses believe that the suspects are mainly of Arab and North African descent. German Justice Minister Heiko Maas states that the attacks appear to have been orchestrated. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [319], [CNN](#) [320], [Washington Post](#) [321]
- **December 31, 2015:** Bavarian authorities close down two Munich train stations amidst concrete bomb threats. According to German officials, five to seven terrorists with links to ISIS were planning suicide attacks on New Year's Eve. Police officers are dispatched to patrol the city. Munich remains on high alert until the threat alert is lifted in the afternoon of January 1, 2016. Sources: [Politico Europe](#) [322], [New York Times](#) [323]
- **December 6, 2015:** Lufthansa personnel subdue a Jordanian man after he tampers with a cabin door on a flight from Frankfurt to Belgrade, Serbia.  
The man reportedly said that he wished to join Allah by killing himself and all the passengers onboard. Serbian authorities arrest the man upon landing. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#) [324]
- **November 18, 2015:** Turkish police arrest eight suspected ISIS militants whom authorities accuse of posing as refugees at Istanbul's main airport.  
The individuals were carrying a hand-drawn map of the route from Syria to Germany via Greece, Serbia, and Hungary. Source: [Associated Press](#) [325]
- **November 17, 2015:** German authorities cancel a soccer game between the German and Dutch national teams two hours before it begins at a stadium in Hannover.  
The decision comes after police receive "concrete intelligence" that someone had serious plans for explosions. Chancellor Angela Merkel was due to attend the match with several of her top officials, but did not arrive by the time of the evacuation of the stadium and surrounding area. No explosives are found. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [326], [Deutsche Welle](#) [327]
- **November 5, 2015:** Bavarian state police arrest a 51-year-old man near the German-Austrian border in a vehicle containing concealed firearms, explosives, and hand grenades.  
On November 14, the Minister President of Bavaria Horst Seehofer questions the man's possible links to the ISIS Paris attacks that killed 130 the day prior. A local radio station reports that documents in the car revealed the man is from Montenegro and was attempting to travel to Paris. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [328], [Bayrischer Rundfunk](#) [329]
- **September 17, 2015:** Berlin police shoot dead an Islamist assailant after he stabs a German policewoman.  
The 41-year-old Iraqi perpetrator had spent time in German prison from 2008 to 2013 for membership in a terrorist organization and for planning an attack in Germany on former Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi. The man had removed his parole-mandated electronic ankle monitor that morning. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#) [330], [Deutsche Welle](#) [331]
- **February 15, 2015:** An annual festival in the northern German city of Braunschweig is canceled after "reliable state security forces" alert the police of a possible Islamist attack.  
Sources: [BBC News](#) [332], [Haaretz](#) [333]
- **January 16, 2015:** More than 200 German police officers raid suspected Islamist "hotspots" in and around Berlin, arresting two men suspected of financing and recruiting for ISIS.  
The two men are identified as Emin F. and Ismet D. and are 43 years-old and 41 years-old, respectively. The men are suspected of leading and belonging to an "Islamist extremist group made up of Turkish and Russia nationals from (the Caucasus regions of) Chechnya and Dagestan." In July 2017, both men are sentenced to 6 years imprisonment. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [334], [Bild](#) [335]
- **January 15, 2015:** German police arrest a German-Tunisian jihadist known as Ayoub B. for membership in a terrorist organization.  
He previously joined ISIS and received combat training in Syria between May and August 2014. Police suspect him of planning "serious subversive violence" on German soil, but investigations do not confirm this suspicion. German newspaper Bild reports that Ayoub B. is allegedly part of a 50-member ISIS-linked jihadist cell in the northern city of Wolfsburg, Germany. In December 2015, Ayoub B. is sentenced to four years and three months imprisonment. Sources: [Telegraph](#) [336], [Spiegel Online](#) [337], [Spiegel Online](#) [338]
- **January 11, 2015:** The Berlin office of German newspaper *Hamburger Morgenpost*, which had reprinted the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons after the deadly attack in France, is the target of an arson attack.  
In July 2017, four men in their early twenties are sentenced to one and two years of imprisonment. According to the verdict, "They are not terrorists and have since then distanced themselves authentically and credibly from the deeds." Sources: [Reuters](#) [339], [The Local](#) [340], [Hamburger Morgenpost](#) [341], [Hamburger Morgenpost](#) [342]
- **January 2015:** Foreign intelligence services alert German authorities that "known international jihadists" are planning attacks against rallies led by Germany's far-right Pegida movement, which aims to prevent what it perceives to be the "Islamification" of Europe.

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Source: [BBC News](#) [343]

- **March 2013:** Security forces prevent an assassination attempt on the head of the far-right anti-Muslim political party, Pro-NRW, by Islamists.  
In March 2014, Germany's federal prosecutor charged Marco Gäbel with planning the assassination, along with three Islamist accomplices. Sources: [Reuters](#) [344], [Spiegel](#) [345] *Online*
- **December 10, 2012:** German police disable an explosive device at Bonn's central station that had been placed there by suspected Islamist extremists.  
The bomb had not detonated due to its faulty construction. In March 2014, Germany's federal prosecutor charged Marco Gäbel—the same man who planned the assassination of Pro-NRW's leader—with planting the bomb at the Bonn station. According to the prosecutor, he intended to kill as many people as possible. In April 2017, Gäbel is sentenced to life imprisonment for both crimes. Three codefendants are sentenced to 12, and 9 ½ years in prison. Sources: [Reuters](#) [344], [Spiegel Online](#) [346], [RP Online](#) [347]
- **April 2011:** Police arrest four members of an al-Qaeda cell in Düsseldorf for planning a terror attack in Germany. The four men were subsequently convicted in November 2014 for supporting al-Qaeda and planning a potentially lethal attack on German soil. One of its members is said to have been Osama bin Laden's bodyguard. All men receive jail sentences of up to nine years. Sources: [Deutsche-Welle](#) [348], [Reuters](#) [349], [Deutsche Welle](#) [350]
- **March 2, 2011:** A 22-year-old Kosovar Albanian immigrant with an Islamist background shoots at American soldiers at the Frankfurt Airport.  
Two soldiers die and two others are seriously injured. German authorities had not been aware of Arid Uka's apparent radicalization. He is later sentenced to lifelong imprisonment. This is the first deadly Islamist-related attack on German soil. Sources: [Spiegel Online](#) [351], [Zeit Online](#) [352], [BBC News](#) [353], [BBC News](#) [354]
- **September 2010:** Authorities thwart the planning of simultaneous terror attacks on the United Kingdom, France, and Germany by targeting militants based in Pakistan.  
Source: [Guardian](#) [355]
- **September 2007:** German police arrest three Islamist militants planning to attack American targets in Germany, in what constitutes the largest German police investigation in the last 30 years.  
The three perpetrators, two German converts to Islam and one Turk, received terrorist training in Pakistan and had returned to Germany to form a domestic cell of the "Islamic Jihad Union," an al-Qaeda affiliated group in Uzbekistan. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [348], [Reuters](#) [356]
- **November 2006:** German security authorities foil a bomb attack by Islamist terrorists on an Israeli airliner.  
Source: [New York Times](#) [357]
- **July 31, 2006:** Two Lebanese students plan to detonate suitcase bombs on two regional trains traveling out of Cologne. The bombs fail to detonate due to faulty construction. One perpetrator is sentenced to 12 years in prison in Beirut, while the other is given a life sentence in Germany. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [348], [New York Times](#) [358]
- **December 3, 2004:** German police arrest three Iraqi supporters of the Islamist terrorist group Ansar al-Islam. The supporters had been planning an attack on former Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi during his visit to Berlin.  
Source: [New York Times](#) [359]
- **June 9, 2004:** The German neo-Nazi group National Socialist Underground (NSU) detonates a nail bomb at a central venue of the Turkish community in Cologne, wounding 22.  
Source: [Spiegel](#) [360]
- **March 2003:** Police in Berlin arrest a Tunisian terrorism suspect affiliated with al-Qaeda in Berlin who was planning an attack in Germany during the Iraq War.  
Source: [Die Welt](#) [361]
- **April 2002:** German police arrest members of the al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist group al-Tawhid. The members were planning attacks on the Jewish community center in Berlin and Jewish Restaurants in Düsseldorf.  
Source: [Guardian](#) [362]
- **April 11, 2002:** A bomb targeting tourists at a Tunisian synagogue kills 14 Germans on the resort island of Djerba, Tunisia.  
Al-Qaeda takes responsibility. Source: [Guardian](#) [363]
- **September 11, 2001:** Eleven Germans are killed in the attacks on World Trade Center and the Pentagon. An al-Qaeda cell in Hamburg was instrumental in planning and executing the attack. Sources: [Bild](#) [364], [NPR](#) [365]
- **July 27, 2000:** Ten people are injured in a bomb attack on Soviet immigrants, most of them Jewish, in Düsseldorf.  
Source: [Spiegel](#) [366]
- **September 17, 1992:** Iranian-Kurdish opposition leaders are assassinated at a restaurant in Berlin at the behest of the Iranian regime.  
Source: [UNHCR](#) [367]
- **November 30, 1989:** The Red Army Faction assassinates German banker Alfred Herrhausen.  
Source: [New York Times](#) [368]
- **June 19, 1985:** A bomb attack at the Frankfurt airport kills three people and wounds 42.  
A group calling itself the Arab Revolutionary Organization takes responsibility, asserting that it had planted the bomb because West German intelligence agents were recruiting Arabs to assassinate Arab Revolutionary members in Lebanon. Sources: [New York Times](#) [369], [Los Angeles Times](#) [370]

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- **September 27, 1980:**A member of the neo-Nazi Military Sport Group Hoffmann (*Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann*) detonates a bomb at the Oktoberfest in Munich, killing 13 and injuring more than 200. Source: [Spiegel](#) [371]
- **September 1977 - October 1977:**During the “German Autumn”—a set of terrorist attacks in West Germany—the Red Army Faction murders an industrialist, a banker, and the West German attorney general. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacks a Lufthansa plane, increasing pressure on the German government to release Red Army Faction leaders. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [372]
- **September 5, 1972 - September 6, 1972:**Palestinian group Black September kidnaps Israeli Olympic team members during the Summer Olympics in Munich, West Germany. The Israeli hostages are eventually murdered. According to later reports, German neo-Nazis aided the Palestinian terrorists with logistical assistance. Sources: [Independent](#) [373], [Spiegel Online](#) [374]

### **Domestic Counter-Extremism**

#### *Post-1972 Munich Massacre at the Olympic Games*

Since the Munich Massacre at the 1972 Olympic Games, counterterrorism has been among the most important security concerns for Germany. Before the attack, Germany had previously focused on threats posed by internal far-right and far-left extremist and terrorist groups, especially the Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion* or RAF). In response to the Munich Massacre, the German government founded the GSG9 (*Grenzschutzgruppe 9*), Germany’s first federal anti-terrorism police unit. Germany also shifted from viewing terrorism as a solely internal and domestic phenomenon to one with a broader focus. (Sources: [Encyclopedia](#) [375], [Wissenschaftliche Dienste des Deutschen Bundestages](#) [376])

#### *Post-September 11, 2001 Attacks on the United States*

Germany adopted two major anti-terrorism packages in response to the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. The first, enacted in November 2001, revoked the immunity of religious groups and charities from investigation or surveillance, enabled prosecution of extremists living inside Germany who belonged to foreign terrorist organizations, and strengthened air and land border control, among other things. The second focused on increased cooperation and communication between intelligence and law enforcement agencies at the federal and state levels. Approximately \$1.8 billion was made immediately available to put towards counterterrorism measures. In the following two years, the budget increased by about \$580 million. (Source: [Miko and Froehlich \(Congressional Research Service\)](#) [11])

#### *Post-November 2015 Paris Attacks and Charlie Hebdo*

Following the November 13, 2015, Paris attacks, German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière expressed that the danger from international terrorism in Germany “was high, it is high, and it will remain high for the foreseeable future.” By December of that year, officials announced the expansion of the German Evidence and Arrest Units (*Beweissicherungs- und Festnahmeeinheiten* or BFE). These specialized units are made up of the German state police forces and the German Federal Police (*Bundespolizei*). The 250 additional officers, referred to as the BFE+, are part of a special, well-armed unit meant to combat terrorists. The BFE+ is responsible for day-to-day counterterrorism responses such as large-scale, sustained manhunts. (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [377], [Deutsche Welle](#) [378])

Following the January 7, 2015, *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris, German authorities moved to enact tougher legislation against Islamist extremism. On January 15, Chancellor Angela Merkel revealed a nine-point plan to the German parliament designed to prevent similar attacks on German soil. For instance, Merkel called for enhanced measures against hate preachers and the introduction of data retention to track potential terrorist activities online. In June that year, the German Cabinet passed new counterterrorism legislation in line with Merkel’s plan. The new law made it illegal to travel outside of Germany with the intent to receive terrorist training. It also put restrictions on national identity cards and passports of foreign fighters. Authorities may revoke the identity cards of individuals suspected of constituting a threat, and replace their cards with ones that indicate “not valid for travel outside of Germany.” Critics believe that the legislation is unconstitutional because it criminalizes the intention of a crime ahead of an actual criminal act or attempt. (Sources: [N24](#) [379], [Telegraph](#) [380], [Library of Congress](#) [381], [Bundesgesetzblatt](#) [382])

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In July 2016, Germany adopted additional legislation designed to combat the threats from extremism and terrorism. The law known as Improving Information Exchange to Combat International Terrorism allows Germany's Federal Police to operate undercover agents for the purposes of protecting public safety, expands data exchanges with foreign intelligence services, and allows for advanced monitoring activities of prepaid cellphones by the BfV. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [32])

### *Post-October 2019 Yom Kippur Shooting*

On December 1, 2019, Germany tightened its laws against anti-Semitic hate crimes following a number of incidents that have left Jewish citizens feeling unsafe. The move comes one month after a failed attack on a synagogue by a far-right gunman who later killed two bystanders. Justice Minister Christine Lambrecht told parliament that anti-Semitism would be made an aggravating factor for hate crimes in the criminal code. (Source: [Daily Mail](#) [383])

### *The Far Right*

Germany has banned a handful of far-right extremist groups. In 2000, Germany banned Blood & Honor, an international neo-Nazi network. In September 2019, the interior ministers of Lower Saxony, Thuringia, and Hesse called on the government to outlaw the German chapter of the far-right group Combat 18, which was linked to the June 2019 murder of German politician Walter Lübcke. Germany outlawed Combat 18 in January 2020. In November 2019, the German state of Bremen banned neo-Nazi group Phalanx 18. In June 2020, Germany's Interior Ministry banned neo-Nazi group Nordadler (Northern Eagles), which the ministry noted operates mainly online. (Sources: [The Local](#) [384], [Deutsche Welle](#) [104], [Xinhua](#) [385], [United Press International](#) [386], [Deutsche Welle](#) [152])

In March 2020, Germany's domestic intelligence agency (BfV) labeled a faction within the AfD as an extremist organization and a threat to Germany's democratic order. The BfV said it would place Flügel (Wing) under systematic surveillance. On March 20, 2020, AfD's executive committee voted to dissolve Flügel by April 30, 2020, fearing the faction could bring increased scrutiny to the entire party. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [149], [Deutsche Welle](#) [150])

### *Terrorist Propaganda Online*

In September 2014, Germany's interior minister imposed a ban on ISIS to counter the group's financial infrastructure and communication abilities—both in public demonstrations and on the Internet. The ban seeks to undermine the group's overall media campaign, which spreads jihadist propaganda to potential terrorist recruits around the world. (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [387], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [13])

Germany has worked to censure both jihadist propaganda and racist rhetoric disseminated by far-right Germans. In September 2015, German authorities formed a task force that included government agencies, technology companies, industry associations, and activists to help tackle online hate speech. Facebook announced it would work with the German Justice Ministry to combat xenophobic and racist messages on the social network and strengthen its content screening process according to German laws on hate speech and incitement to violence. On December 15, 2015, Google, Facebook, Twitter, and the German Ministry of Justice issued a joint statement promising that social media companies would make it easier for users and anti-racism groups to report offensive online content. The companies agreed to allow German domestic law to take precedent over their corporate policies to review posts. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [388], [BBC News](#) [389], [Washington Post](#) [390])

In September 2017, the Bundestag adopted a new legislation cracking down on hate speech, criminal material, and misinformation on social media platforms. The Network Enforcement Law (*Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz* or NetzDG) entered into force on October 1, 2017, and requires social media companies, in particular Google, Facebook, and Twitter, to remove illegal content and hate speech from their platforms within 24 hours of receiving a notification. The law enables Germany to fine social media companies up to 50 million euros in cases of systematic non-compliance. The NetzDG also mandates that social media companies publish detailed reports on the amount of complaints and the company's countermeasures. (Sources: [Foreign Affairs](#) [25], [Guardian](#) [26], [Bundesministerium für Justiz und Verbraucherschutz](#) [27])

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The NetzDG requires social media companies with more than 2 million users to remove extremist content within 24 hours of notification or face fines of up to 50 million euro. In February 2020, the German cabinet approved a bill requiring social media companies to report to police instances of far-right propaganda, graphic portrayals of violence, murder or rape threats, and posts indicating that someone is preparing a terrorist attack or distributing child sexual abuse images. The bill also expands the definition of criminal hate speech to include threats of rape or property damage and expressions of approval for serious crimes. The bill still requires parliamentary approval, but critics claim it censors the Internet. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [391], [Indian Express](#) [392], [Associated Press](#) [393])

In the wake of a series of Islamist-inspired attacks in 2016, the German government has also urged the European Union to draft new legislation that would make it easier to uncover encrypted messages during terror investigations, for example by creating “back doors” for national security officials. German authorities have struggled to intercept terrorists’ encrypted messages on apps such as Telegram and WhatsApp. In August 2016, Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière warned that “some terrorists and criminals are ahead of us on the technology front. That’s not right.” In October 2017, EU Commissioner for the Security Union Julian King announced a new plan that included legal, financial, and technical measures to help unencrypt messages, but opposed the call for so-called “back doors.” (Sources: [EU Observer](#) [394], [Politico](#) [395], [Wall Street Journal](#) [396])

In February 2017, the BKA introduced its new analysis tool, RADAR-iTE, meant to provide a more accurate risk assessment of *Gefährder*—individuals authorities have determined capable of committing politically-motivated crimes. The analysis is based on multiple aspects of a suspect’s social background and “observable behavior,” instead of ideology or religious habits. (Sources: [Bundeskriminalamt](#) [397], [Bundeskriminalamt](#) [28], [Deutsche Welle](#) [398])

Since August 2017, Germany has been testing its facial recognition software, which could allow authorities to identify criminal and terrorist suspects through video surveillance and database comparison. According to Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière, the system works well and shows positive identifications in 70 percent of the cases. False identification occurs in less than 1 percent. (Sources: [Newsweek](#) [399], [Deutsche Welle](#) [29], [Der Tagesspiegel](#) [30])

### ***Intelligence and Security Infrastructure***

The German government established the Joint Counter-Terrorism Center (*Gemeinsames Terrorismusabwehrzentrum* or GTAZ) in 2004, to combat the threat posed by Islamist terrorism. The GTAZ consists of 40 internal security agencies, providing a platform for cooperation and communication. It identifies potential Islamist terrorists and spearheads de-radicalization efforts, among other tenets. The Joint Internet Center (*Gemeinsames Internetzentrum* or GIZ), created in 2007, works to counter cyber threats and monitor Islamist terrorist networks. Additionally, the Joint Counter-Extremism and Terrorism Center (*Gemeinsames Extremismus- und Terrorismusabwehrzentrum* or GETZ) was established in November 2012 in order to provide a comprehensive cooperation platform to counter far-right and far-left extremism and terrorism. (Sources: [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [400], [Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz](#) [23])

As part of Germany’s cyber security strategy, the Ministry of Interior launched the Center for Information Technology of Security Authorities (*Zentrale Stelle für Informationstechnik im Sicherheitsbereich* or ZITiS) in January 2017. ZITiS researches and develops new methods, products, and strategies to combat crime and terrorism on the Internet. (Sources: [Bundesministerium des Innern](#) [401], [ZITiS](#) [402], [Bundesministerium des Innern](#) [24])

Germany’s foreign intelligence agency (*Bundesnachrichtendienst* or BND) is responsible for surveilling and monitoring extremist activities outside of Germany. The agency relies on signal intelligence, open sources intelligence, human intelligence, and imagery intelligence. (Source: [Bundesnachrichtendienst](#) [403])

With regards to border controls, Germany is party to the Schengen Agreement implemented in 1995. The agreement created an internally borderless entity of several European nations under a common visa policy. Germany is therefore reliant on Schengen Area states with external borders adjacent to non-Schengen countries. The German Federal Police (*Bundespolizei*) is tasked with protecting German borders against illegal migrants who have evaded Schengen border controls. The Federal Police is also responsible for policing Germany’s 700km coastline along the Baltic and North Sea. (Sources: [Council of Europe](#) [404], [Bundespolizei](#) [405])

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### *Tackling Extremism in Germany's Military*

On May 28, 2020, the German parliament swore in Eva Högl as its overseer of the German military, the Bundeswehr. Högl will head a new defense ministry task force created to probe extremist elements within the Germany military. The move comes two weeks after police raided the home of a soldier in the elite special operations unit, Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK). The soldier had been under investigation since 2017 for suspected ties to the far right and was found to possess a cache of weapons and explosives. On August 1, 2020, Germany's defense minister officially disbanded the 2nd Company, one of the KSK's combat units, after an investigation found that several of its members were linked to right-wing extremism. (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [179], [BBC News](#) [180], [Voice of America](#) [175])

In June 2020, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition cabinet began the process to amend Germany's Military Act to help expedite the firings of soldiers disciplined for extremism and other severe misconduct. Currently, professional soldiers with more than four years of service can only be removed through lengthy dismissal procedures, and the proposed amendment seeks to raise the threshold to eight years. The Bundestag, Germany's lower house of parliament, must approve the decision. The cabinet's plan, supported by Defense Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer, comes after a spate of largely far-right incidents within the Bundeswehr's ranks. (Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [183])

### *Recruitment and Radicalization*

German authorities have launched several community-based programs in partnership with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to help prevent homegrown radicalization. In 2012, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees set up a counseling center on radicalization (*Beratungsstelle Radikalisierung*), which is available to anyone concerned about the radicalization of a relative or friend. Several states in Germany have established support centers, such as the Information and Competence Center against Extremism in Hesse (*Hessisches Informations- und Kompetenzzentrum gegen Extremismus* or HKE), to efficiently coordinate preventive and early intervention efforts. (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [406], [Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung](#) [407], [Landesverfassungsschutz](#) [408], [HKE](#) [409])

The government funded-NGO, EXIT-Deutschland, was founded in 2000 to facilitate the de-radicalization process of right-wing extremists. Since its inception, the program has helped approximately 500 individuals escape from right-wing ideology, with a 3 percent rate of recidivism. Most recently, the organization promoted and received funding from Donate the Hate, an initiative that makes a one euro donation for every hateful comment identified on social media to support refugee projects and campaigns against right-wing extremism. (Sources: [EXIT-Deutschland](#) [410], [European Commission](#) [411], [UK Fundraising](#) [412])

Additionally, the government-funded group Hayat (meaning "life" in Turkish and Arabic) launched a counseling hotline for individuals involved in radical Salafist groups or on the path toward radicalization. The hotline is also available to families and acquaintances of potentially radicalized individuals. The counseling services connect individuals to the necessary authorities, including imams, school teachers, police, or others. Hayat has helped to prevent the radicalization of "dozens" of young Muslims. In 12 cases, "those concerned were successfully discouraged from participating - or having any further involvement - in the Syrian conflict," according to an August 2014 BBC News report. (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [413], [BBC News](#) [414], [Hayat](#) [415])

In January 2019, the Turkish Community in Germany (*Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland*, or *Almanya Türk Toplumu*) launched a new project called "emel," an online counseling service for primarily Turkish- and Arabic-speaking parents who are concerned that their children may be leaning toward religious extremism. Emel aims to offer "culture- and religion-sensitive counseling services" while communicating anonymously either via email or live chat. The project is funded by the European Union and the German government through the end of 2019. (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [416], [Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland](#) [417], [Zeit Online](#) [418])

On November 15, 2019, the German domestic intelligence agency, Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV), revealed that the YPG/PKK had recruited nearly 270 foreign fighters from Germany who took part in battles and terror attacks in Syria and Iraq. Three German citizens, Jakob Riemer, Sarah Handelman, and Michael Panser, who were known to German authorities as left-wing extremists, were among those killed. The PKK has been banned in Germany since 1993, but it remains active, with nearly 14,500 followers among the country's Kurdish immigrant population. (Source: [Anadolu Agency](#) [419])

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### **International Counter-Extremism**

#### *ISIS*

In August 2014, the German government began to ship weaponry and military equipment to Kurdish forces fighting ISIS in northern Iraq. According to Chancellor Merkel, “It is our humanitarian responsibility and in the interests of our security to help those suffering and to stop [ISIS].” Between April and May 2015, the German government increased its aid to the Kurdish Peshmerga fighting ISIS in northern Iraq. The aid included anti-tank guided missile launchers, ammunition, mine-resistance vehicles, combat gear, and medical supplies. Since February 2015, German military personnel has trained more than 4,700 Peshmerga soldiers. (Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [420], [Spiegel](#) [421] Online, [AICGS](#) [422], [Wall Street Journal](#) [423])

Up until November 2015, the government refused to join the U.S.-led airstrike campaign against ISIS, and ruled out sending combat troops to the region. Following the November 13 ISIS attacks in Paris, however, members of German Parliament urged Chancellor Merkel to strongly consider military intervention in Syria—especially as part of a wider coalition. On December 4, 2015, the German Parliament voted to send 1,200 troops, reconnaissance planes, a frigate, and a refueling aircraft to the region to aid in the U.S.-backed coalition against ISIS. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [423], [Independent](#) [424], [New York Times](#) [425], [Bundeswehr](#) [426])

In January 2016, Germany opened a military training camp in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan. German commander Col. Bernd Prill said that the cooperation between German and Kurdish forces was necessary to defeat the “common enemy” ISIS. (Source: [K24](#) [427])

In November 2016, the German Parliament approved the expansion of its earlier mandate allowing the German armed forces to join NATO-led reconnaissance missions in Syria. As of September 2018, there are 405 soldiers stationed in Iraq and Syria to combat ISIS. (Sources: [Bundesregierung](#) [33], [Bundeswehr](#) [31])

On November 28, 2019, German authorities announced that they were currently investigating 116 returnees to Germany from areas previously controlled by ISIS. The return of suspected ISIS supporters to Germany has been pre-occupying German security officials for weeks as Turkey recently announced plans to send imprisoned ISIS supporters back to their home countries. Authorities knew of a total of 122 people who had “at least temporarily” resided in areas of ISIS terrorists, the German Interior Ministry said in response to a formal inquiry by opposition lawmaker Stefan Ruppert. Some 95 Germans suspected of supporting ISIS are believed to be in custody in Turkey, Syria, or Iraq. German police have launched investigations into 33 of them with arrest warrants out in relation to 26 cases, according to the DPA news agency. (Source: [Anadolu Agency](#) [428])

#### *Foreign Military Engagements*

As of September 2018, there were 3,300 German soldiers stationed abroad, including more than 1,000 in Afghanistan and Mali, respectively. Other soldiers are placed throughout the Middle East and Africa, including in Sudan, Lebanon, Somalia, and Iraq. (Source: [Bundeswehr](#) [31])

#### *Afghanistan*

The Bundeswehr joined the NATO-led mission Resolute Support following the end of the International Security Assistance Force’s (ISAF) mandate in 2014. The Bundeswehr has helped provide training and assistance to Afghan Security forces. (Source: [Bundeswehr](#) [429])

Germany began its operation in Afghanistan in 2001 as part of the ISAF in support of the United States’ Operation Enduring Freedom. More than 5,000 German troops at a single time have led and participated in a number of operations to counter Taliban forces. Germany’s Defense Ministry said that the Bundeswehr would continue the NATO mission through the end of 2016. The German cabinet has decided to increase the troop limit in Afghanistan from 850 up to 980. As of September 2018, there are 1,124 German troops involved in Resolute Support. (Sources: [Bundeswehr](#) [31], [Deutsche Welle](#) [430])

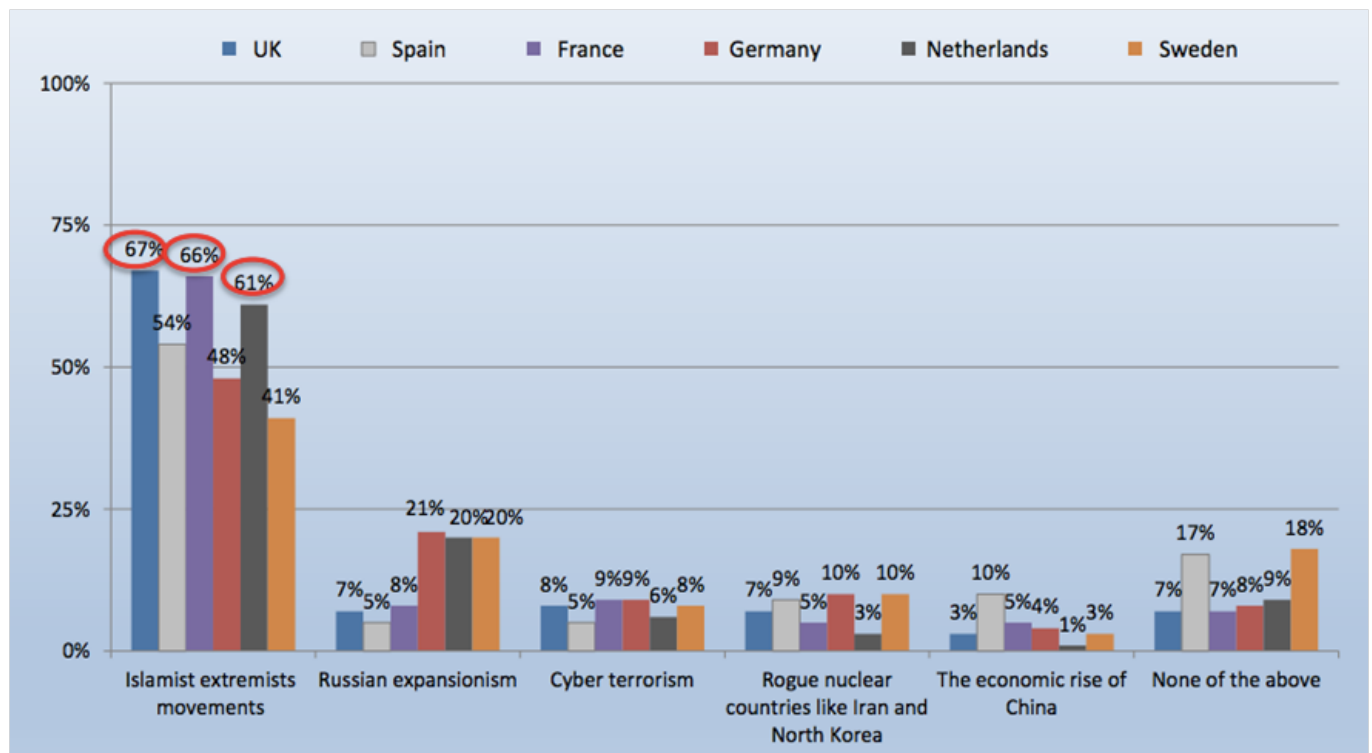
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### **Public Opinion**

Germans are gradually becoming less concerned about terrorist attacks. In September 2018, the insurance group R+V released survey results that showed that 59 percent of Germans are worried about terrorist attacks, representing a decrease from 2016 (73 percent) and 2017 (71 percent). About 63 percent of those surveyed expressed fear that “federal authorities risked being overwhelmed by refugees,” and are “afraid of increasing tensions with foreigners.” (Sources: [R+V Versicherung](#) [34], [R+V Versicherung](#) [35], [Reuters](#) [36])

According to a 2018 study conducted by the research institute Kantar Emnid, the majority of Germans opposed military intervention in Syria. Only 10 percent supported the deployment of German military forces against ISIS. In comparison, a December 2015 poll found that a majority of the German public—58 percent—supported military deployment against ISIS, while 37 percent opposed. A larger majority (63 percent) feared that the chance of a terror attack on German soil would rise due to German military involvement against ISIS. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [431], [Reuters](#) [432])

The Counter Extremism Project’s (CEP) polling in 2014 found that Germany, relative to the U.S. and other European countries, sees Islamist-based extremism as one of its greatest threats. Indeed, 48 percent of Germans saw Islamist extremist movements as the greatest threat to Germany’s national security in 2014, as depicted below:



Almost 80 percent of respondents believed that Islamic extremism would present a threat to Germany’s national security over the next ten years. CEP also found that more than 40 percent of respondents in Germany believed the government was not spending enough to combat extremism.

When responding to the question of which policies they considered to be most effective in dealing with countries that permit extremism, German respondents answered as follows:

- Imposing tough economic sanctions against that country, 9 percent
- Engaging in aggressive diplomacy with the country to resolve the issue, 6 percent
- Taking military action in the country to root out the Islamic extremists, 20 percent
- Providing direct economic aid to the government to stabilize their economies, 7 percent
- Supporting opposition or moderate forces with money and other tools, 7 percent
- Ignore them, 32 percent



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- Supporting opposition or moderate forces with arms, 13 percent

A plurality of German respondents (47 percent) believed that fighting Islamist extremism should be a top priority.

