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Munich car rampage exploited for right-wing agitation in federal election campaign

On February 13, ten days before the federal election, a car ploughed into the tail end of a Verdi union demonstration in the Bavarian capital Munich. Thirty-eight people were injured, two seriously, including a two-year-old girl who remains in intensive care.



Seidlstraße in Munich, facing the crime scene [Photo by Wikimedia Commons, Strubbi / [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)]

As soon as it came out that the driver was a refugee from Afghanistan, leading politicians had knee-jerk, right-wing reactions and immediately exploited the horrific event for political grandstanding. Since then, they have not ceased to whip up anti-refugee sentiments, call for a “strong state” and demand even more deportations.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) and Interior Minister Nancy Faeser (also SPD) called for the harsh punishment and subsequent deportation of the perpetrator. In rhetoric worthy of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), Scholz blustered:

Anyone who commits crimes in Germany will not only be severely punished and imprisoned but must also expect that they cannot continue their stay in Germany.

Faerer threatened to employ the “full force of the rule of law” and announced further deportation flights to Afghanistan. She boasted that Germany was Europe’s only country that “deports to Afghanistan despite Taliban rule.” Additionally, her government had “massively tightened laws for expelling violent offenders and increasing deportations. Now they must be enforced with all consequences.”

For his part, Friedrich Merz, the lead candidate for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), used the attack to reiterate his ongoing threat that he would ensure “something changes in Germany,” that “law and order are consistently enforced,” and that “security comes first.” His party colleague Markus Söder (Christian Social Union, CSU), Bavaria’s state premier, visited the crime scene alongside state Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann (also CSU) and Munich Mayor Dieter Reiter (SPD). Söder similarly demanded that “something must change in Germany—and quickly.” He praised the police and assured victims he would pray for them.

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Herrmann’s claims were exposed as lies within just 24 hours. He had described the perpetrator as “known to police” and stated: “Based on current information, we know the perpetrator had prior incidents involving narcotics and shoplifting.” A day later, he had to backtrack, admitting that the 24-year-old—who had worked as a store detective—had only testified in court as a witness and had no criminal record.

All the establishment politicians reacted in a similar manner. This included Green Party Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck, who once again promoted his call for a “comprehensive security offensive.”

AfD leader Alice Weidel and Sahra Wagenknecht, leader of the BSW split-off from the Left Party, echoed nearly identical rhetoric against “uncontrolled migration.” Speaking to *Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland*, Wagenknecht called for stricter deportations to Afghanistan, stating that combating such crimes was “only possible if we end uncontrolled migration and consistently deport those who pose a danger to our country and its people.” Weidel ranted on X: “We need a migration turnaround—and we need it now!”

None of these leading politicians even remotely questioned the societal conditions underlying such acts of violence. In reality, a person’s social situation—frustrating work conditions, personal circumstances or experiences with war and violence—is far more decisive than their nationality. This tragic incident primarily exposes the failure of politicians across the spectrum to offer young people meaningful prospects.

Little is known so far about 24-year-old Farhad N., who steered his car into the demonstrating union members on Munich's Seidlstrasse on Thursday. He appears to be a refugee from Afghanistan whose asylum application was rejected years ago but who held residency papers and a work permit because deportations to his homeland were halted after the Taliban regained power. Born around the turn of the millennium, he had never known anything but war in Afghanistan.

In Bavaria, Farhad N. worked as a security guard and store detective for multiple firms. An Instagram post reportedly shows him in one company's uniform, while other images depict him as a bouncer outside a luxury boutique in central Munich (where he witnessed social polarization firsthand).

It remains unclear whether his rampage was the impulsive act of a mentally unstable individual, or a targeted attack driven by anti-communist hatred fuelled by Islamism. According to police, the young man first approached a police car trailing the demonstration, then accelerated past it and deliberately drove into the march.

The district attorney stated Farhad N. admitted to intentionally driving into the crowd and she did not rule out an "Islamist motive." Subsequently, the Public Prosecutor's Office took over the case on Friday evening. As the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reports, this step was justified by the "exceptional significance of the case" and a "possible attack on Germany's free democratic order." However, these justifications remain vague, suggesting no concrete evidence.

It could all be true—or entirely different. According to Bavarian Interior Minister Herrmann's Friday statement, there is no evidence "currently proving he held particularly extremist Islamist views." Herrmann also stated the driver had resided in Munich "legally" and was not subject to deportation.

But instead of probing the deeper causes of such events or clarifying the background to the tragedy, the incident is being exploited to stoke up backwardness in the election campaign, shift politics further to the right and fuel racism and xenophobia.

Verdi [United Services Trade Union] also plays its part in all this. The union, with almost two million members, has never made efforts to openly counter refugee-baiting or integrate refugees into industrial disputes—quite the opposite. The Verdi leadership shares the pro-war policies of the Scholz government and fears above all the development of an independent, broad mobilization within the working class against war, racism and social austerity.

The attack targeted a Verdi march supporting a 24-hour public sector warning strike that day, with strikers marching through the streets with flags and whistles. According to the mayor's statement, several refuse collectors were among the victims.

The atmosphere in Munich is tense. Just days earlier, 300,000 residents had demonstrated against racism and any cooperation with the AfD. Meanwhile, the Munich Security Conference—a full-blown war conference—has begun in the city centre.

In this climate, it is necessary and possible to mobilize workers now against imperialist war, racist agitation and the gutting of public services, while rallying them to the defence of all their immigrant brothers and sisters.

But what is Verdi doing? The union, on the contrary, is using the tragedy as a pretext to cancel all its industrial action. “Out of respect for the incident and those affected,” Verdi immediately halted all rallies and action in Bavaria. On Friday, Verdi rallies in Berlin, Brandenburg, and other states were also cancelled.