

# CAGE briefing - Germany

September / October 2023

## Crackdown on Palestine solidarity also fuels debate about Muslim immigration to Germany

- The Hamas operation of 7 October, as well as Israel's attack on the Gaza Strip, have not only lead to a massive crack-down on pro-Palestinian voices, but also fueled a debate about Muslims and (Muslim) immigration in Germany, which is increasingly viewed as problematic and the reason for many social problems.
- The head of Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Thomas Haldenwang, named Antisemitism as part of the DNA of 'Islamist' structures and calls for further bans on (Muslim) associations after the ban on Hamas and Samidoun, a network for the support of Palestinian prisoners that has organised pro-Palestine demonstrations in the past. Samidoun was banned after they shared pictures on social media of children allegedly celebrating Hamas' 7 October operation with sweets.
- The mayor of the Berlin district of Neukölln stated with regard to cooperation with mosque associations that: "Anti-Semitism in the Arab population has grown with the mosque associations and the activities of many imams who preach hatred against Israel".

In this way, he reproduces a narrative that is not new but has been taken up increasingly in politics and media with the current phase of the Gaza war, and according to which the anti-Semitism problem in Germany is an imported one, borne by Muslim groups. Criticism of the state of Israel is thereby also widely understood as anti-Semitic.

- Friedrich März, head of the CDU (the centre-right Christian Social Union, the second largest party in Germany) has demanded that commitment to Israel must become a prerequisite for citizenship.

In addition, Muslim associations should only be part of the official discourse with state organisations if they recognise Israel's 'right to exist'. Israel's 'right to exist' and its 'right to

defend itself' are German reasons of state.

Already last year, Friedrich März warned against the immigration of too many Muslims to Germany.

- Under the guise of public security and order, numerous pro-Palestinian demonstrations have been banned, and there have also been expulsions of known activists and pressure on cultural institutions. Earlier in the year, a rally to mark the 75th anniversary of the Nakba was banned.

Demonstrators at authorised rallies have reported racial profiling and an increase in arrests of Arab-looking men.

## Study indexes rising ideological influence of far-right, as hard right parties gain electoral strength

- The recently published "[Mitte-Studie 2022/2023](#)" of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, affiliated with the ruling SPD, shows that 8% of Germans share a right-wing extremist world view. This is an almost fivefold increase compared to the previous year recorded.
- Such a trend can also be seen in the results of the state elections in Hesse and Bavaria in October 2023 - while the conservative CSU (Christian Social Union) in Bavaria and its sister party CDU in Hesse became the strongest force, the radical right-wing AfD (Alternative for Germany) made strong gains in both states, reaching 14.6% (Bavaria, +4.4%) and 18.4% (Hesse, +5.3%).

While the AfD thus became the second strongest force in Hesse, in Bavaria it was just behind the conservative Free Voters (15.8%/+4.2%).

- The AfD maintains a right-wing nationalist, partly anti-democratic course and presents itself with Islamophobic and xenophobic propaganda.

In 2016 the party issued a paper as part of their policy program stating that Islam is not a part of Germany.

There are close links with the party to known neo Nazis and Islamophobic organisations, and sections of the AfD are being monitored by the Office for the Protection of the

Constitution.

- The newly elected AfD MP Daniel Halembe was arrested on 30 October for the use of signs of anti-constitutional organisations and incitement of the people, but was released under conditions after one day.