

Statement on racist police violence on 6.6.2020

During the Berlin protests last Saturday on the occasion of the murder of George Floyd by white policemen in the USA, the German police impressively reminded us that racist police violence is part of everyday life in this country, too.

The many anti-racist demonstrations last Saturday were aimed at drawing attention to racism in Germany as well.

For many years activists and organizations have been fighting against the racism of the German state in all its institutions. Especially racist police violence is a central issue again and again. With campaigns like Ban!Racial Profiling, Justizwatch, Death in Custody they have been fighting against it for years.

On last Saturday we witnessed the arbitrary arrest of many demonstrators. In numerous videos distributed via social media we had to see that young Black people were arrested by the police not only for no apparent reason, but also in the most brutal way.

It is cynical when white police officers kneel in the neck of Black people again at a demonstration on the occasion of a racist murder. It is also grotesque and reveals the hypocritical character of the debate that news of racist police violence from the USA reaches us and is even reported in the well-known German media, but the racist violence of German police officers is not discussed or even denied.

Much of the current coverage of last Saturday's event is dedicated to and promotes a discourse of victim-offender conversion. Often the police presentation was reproduced without comment. Statements such as 'The participants would have provoked with their signs', by the spokesperson of the Berlin Police Union, make the disproportionate nature of the police measures clear. This turns the often very young people affected by police harassment and assaults, of whom a disproportionate number are black or of color, into perpetrators. A narrative is created in which the mere participation in the demonstrations provides a reason for police assaults.

Since many of us have been there ourselves and have been collecting and analysing reports and video material on the individual cases up to the present moment, there is no doubt for us that these police excesses of violence, harassment and threats against young demonstrators are shaped by a racist climate. In the same way we would also assess the media reporting, which, although there are isolated reports of police violence, largely conceals the positioning of those affected and the racist motivation of the attacks.

According to media reports, there is talk of 93 arrests; for at least two Black participants the demonstration even ended in hospital after police assaults. Some of the detainees - some of them minors - were not released until long after midnight.

If three young women with signs expressing their displeasure about police violence, on their way home, are reason enough for two of them to find themselves in a situation where they are arrested roughly and without legal basis - we could speak of police arbitrariness. But if we know that the third friend was not even noticed by the police, whether she was wearing the same sign as her two arrested friends, and the only difference was that she is white and her two friends are black, we can no longer speak here of pure police arbitrariness, but quite clearly of racist police violence.

A minor Person of Color was spat on and racially insulted by the police, among other things, then taken away and left in the rain with his hands on his back for an hour, he was interrogated tied up and then set outside again completely soaked.

These and other pictures and reports testify that Black people and People of Color were suddenly attacked and criminalized after the registered rallies on their way home, while staying with friends or while trying to buy something to eat at Alexanderplatz.

The unwillingness of the police officers to hold back and intervene with obviously inappropriate behaviour of their colleagues is frightening. A video clearly shows how colleagues come up and hit a black man already fixed on the floor. As a consequence even more participants are arrested. They are accused of attempted liberation of prisoners as well as resistance against the police, although they are only protecting themselves from the attacked demonstrators in a state of affect.

We understand the Berlin police's action as a systematic deterrent strategy. Of course it is traumatizing to experience violence for no reason or to be deprived of one's freedom. It seems they want to scare young people away from standing up for their own rights and a just society. Breaking their protest. This shows that AllBlackLivesMatter is still very far from German reality.

We can only hope that those who were the targets and witnesses of this racist violence will not let this stop them, but will feel encouraged and confirmed to continue to denounce unsustainable conditions.

It is not only annoying, but systematic that the media subsequently speak of violence against the police, who took action against young people (some of them minors) in full combat gear, but not of the violence that the young people experienced. And almost without exception the media is shying away from naming what the pictures show us: Racist police violence!

The events of the weekend are, among other things, a test for the state anti-discrimination law recently passed by the Berlin Senate, on the basis of which discriminatory (e.g. racist) actions by the police would also have to be punished.

Whether the decision of the LADG on June 4 (although it has not yet legally come into force) is referred to politically will show whether the LADG is more than just a symbolic policy.

Should this action by the police remain without consequences, we must consider what the consequences would have been if such action had taken place during the (very white) Friday for Futures demonstrations. Young people are protesting for their rights, for their future, for our future - whether it is climate justice or anti-racism.

So where is your outcry about racist police violence against these young people?

#BlackLivesMatter

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