

# DEG

## German-Eritrean Society



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### **Statement of the German-Eritrean Society (DEG) on the violent attacks on an Eritrean cultural event in Giessen on August 20, 2022**

The German-Eritrean Society (DEG) strongly condemns the violent attacks on an Eritrean concert planned for last Saturday in the Giessen exhibition hall by marauding attackers armed with iron bars, batons, knives and stones.

According to the police report, 26 helpers at the Eritrean event were injured in the attack, and seven police officers also suffered minor injuries. DEG has other information on this, according to which the number of injured is much higher. As a result, a large-scale operation of the Hessian police was activated, the concert was cancelled in the further course after a corresponding police order.

The protagonists and organizers of this attack, which was prepared long in advance and planned down to the last detail, are identical with those who have been trying to prevent the "Eritrea Festival", which also takes place regularly in Giessen, for years. Under the decisive leadership of the local GREEN PARTY politician Dr. Klaus-Dieter Grothe, a demonstration is organised every year against the celebrations, which are described by the organisers stereotype as "propaganda and support for a dictatorship in Eritrea". Unimpressed by this, the Eritrean festival has been celebrated peacefully year after year in Germany since the 1970s with great participation - just as in numerous other countries - interrupted only by the longer Corona period.

It is now obvious that the initiators of the violent excesses on Saturday pursued a two-stage plan from the outset: prohibition of the concert by legal means in the first stage and - if this does not work - forcing the termination of the event with brute force in the second stage.

The violence and storming of the area, announced on social networks, was accepted by the organizers of the demonstration and even celebrated afterwards. In videos published on YouTube, they celebrated the storming together with the perpetrators. In a meanwhile deleted Facebook post of the GREEN PARTY politician Dr. Grothe from Giessen, he had explicitly welcomed the cancellation of the concert, which had been enforced by violence.

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In the run-up to the event, sentiment was made against the concert in the German media by one-sidedly spreading the statements of Dr. Grothe. In an article published by the "taz newspaper" on August 18, 2022, Dr. Grothe claimed that "the concert was intended to recruit young soldiers for the war in Tigray".

In this way, the media heated up the atmosphere by uncritically taking over the unproven claims of Dr. Grothe. This was further inflamed when an urgent application by the demonstration organizers to force the prohibition was rejected by the 8th chamber of the administrative court. This meant that the hoped-for strategy of preventing the concert by legal means had finally failed.

Against better knowledge, the media consistently referred to the "Eritrean Festival", although it had already taken place at the beginning of July and the event was in fact a concert by young Eritrean artists. This is not a coincidence or an oversight; behind it is the calculation to connect the concert event with the annual festival and to suggest the misunderstanding that it is one and the same event. The declared goal is - as in previous years - to shut down the festival in Giessen completely.

Unlike in the past, this time the demonstrators around Dr. Grothe received support from a violent gang that calls itself "Briged Nihamedu" in social networks. According to reports, this is a terrorist cell that operates throughout Europe and recruits young men from the Tigray region in northern Ethiopia. These sympathize with the Eritrean opposition abroad in order to fight members of the Eritrean diaspora in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. In numerous interviews in the social networks, this cell announced its actions. The slogan issued was: first prevent the concert in Germany, then in Switzerland and then in Norway. Their members boast that they are not worried about possible prosecution in Germany and in Europe, as they claim violence is justified for the sake of alleged peace. The organisers also announced in numerous interviews on the "Hessenschau" (a major local TV channel) that they have no problems with this approach as long as their goals are achieved.

This group of approximately 100-150 persons, most of whom are now known to the authorities, is suspected of having applied for and received asylum in Germany or the Netherlands as alleged Eritreans, regardless of their actual origin in Tigray. This was possible because no proof of identity was requested. In the videos made public on their profiles and on YouTube, the proximity to the TPLF and Tigray is clearly visible.

From DEG's point of view, it is essential to investigate the background of this terror cell, to verify the identity of its members, and in this context also to establish whether they are actually people from Eritrea or in reality from Tigray, as part of the investigations by the law enforcement agencies and the State Security Service.

As absolutely necessary as it is to come to terms with the almost pogrom-like violent excesses of August 20 and to hold those responsible criminally accountable, to shed light on the role of Dr. Grothe and - if the accusations prove true - to make him resign, we are convinced that this is not enough to do justice to the deeper causes.

These lie in the uncritical, non-reflective widespread Eritrea-bashing and the demonisation of Eritrea and its government as the "North Korea of Africa" by a large part of the Western leading media and government representatives. The continuous denigration and defamation of Eritrea as a supposed "dictatorship in the Horn of Africa", the unjustified maintenance of sanctions against Eritrea by the USA and the EU without any verifiable reason, and the refusal of a fact-based dialogue with Eritrea and its institutions have only prepared the poisoned ground on which excesses like the one that has now occurred can develop at all.

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DEG therefore appeals to all institutions, political mandate holders and the media to return to a factual dialogue and to a discourse based on provable facts, with the aim and the possibility of a substantive debate on controversial issues affecting Eritrea and the Horn of Africa.

The Management Board of DEG

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