
GERMANY MULLS NEW SECURITY MEASURES AFTER JULY ATTACKS

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EurActiv

Germany's interior minister will today (11 August) propose security measures aimed at allaying public concerns after two Islamist attacks and a shooting rampage by a mentally unstable teenager.

Thomas de Maiziere declined at a news conference on Wednesday to confirm media reports that the plans included speedier deportation of foreigners believed to pose a security threat.

Germany had until last month been spared the kind of Islamist attacks suffered by neighbouring France and Belgium.

But in late July, the jihadist militant group Islamic State claimed two attacks – on a train near Würzburg and on a music festival in Ansbach – in which asylum-seekers wounded 20 people in total.

In addition, security forces had to respond to an attack in a shopping centre in the city of Munich in which nine people were killed by an 18-year-old German-Iranian who had been in psychiatric treatment and was obsessed with mass killings.

The incidents put the focus back on the government's migration policy, which resulted in more than a million migrants entering Germany last year, most of them fleeing war and conflict in Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq, although the influx has since been stemmed.

De Maiziere said the federal government and Germany's 16 states would discuss plans to equip local police forces better. In addition, the government wanted to raise the number of federal police by 10 percent over three to four years.

We live in difficult times. The terror alert is high. The police are heavily burdened, de Maiziere told reporters in Bremen, adding that further details would be announced at a news conference on Thursday.

Election-driven measures?

The daily Koelner Stadt-Anzeiger newspaper cited coalition sources as saying de Maiziere wanted the package of new measures adopted before the next federal election, due in autumn 2017.

A spokesman for the Interior Ministry declined to comment on a report in the mass-selling Bild newspaper that the proposals would make it easier to deport foreigners who were deemed a threat to security or who had committed crimes.

The influx of mainly Muslim refugees and the Islamist attacks in France and Belgium this year and last have made security fears one of Germans biggest concerns.

The Koelner Stadt-Anzeiger said the new legislation would also facilitate the retention of personal data and accelerate the expulsion of migrants whose asylum applications have been rejected.

It said German doctors might also be permitted in certain cases to break confidentiality and inform authorities if their patients told them about any planned crimes, Bild reported.

The measures build on a nine-point plan announced by Chancellor Angela Merkel after the attacks, the paper said.

Separately, the centre-right interior ministers of Germanys federal states have put forward a list of 27 demands to improve security.

They include hiring an additional 15,000 police by 2020 and greater video surveillance at transport hubs and public places, according to a copy of their draft document seen by Reuters.

The ministers also call for a ban on the full body veil for women and for a law to be revoked that allows for dual nationality for German citizens in some circumstances □ measures that are likely to prove controversial.

The state ministers are due to meet de Maiziere on Aug. 18. The spokesman for the federal Interior Ministry said the document, the Berlin declaration, was still under consultation.

Kaynak/Source: