

# DEG

German-Eritrean Society



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## International campaign of violence against Eritrea festivals

First Giessen (Germany), then Stockholm (Sweden), now Seattle (USA) and Toronto (Canada): with a trail of destruction, violent groups led by the terrorist cell "Brigade N'Hamedu" from Tigray (northern Ethiopia) are trying to force a worldwide shutdown of the Eritrea festivals that take place every summer. The latter have a long tradition and provide a cultural framework for peaceful and cheerful gatherings of Eritreans living abroad, who are scattered across the globe in the diaspora due to Eritrea's 30-year war of independence. The Eritrean festivals are celebrations with cultural, musical and culinary contributions that are used by young and old Eritreans alike to meet relatives, friends and acquaintances.

The brutality of the planned and organized attackers is both shocking and unprecedented. Regardless of the family character of the festivals, they did not shy away from setting cars, tents and structures on fire. Numerous festival participants were injured, some seriously. But it is also incomprehensible that despite the mobilization and announcements in the social networks, which even contained calls to kill, the respective state forces of law and order often remained passive and only gradually intervened hesitantly when a large part of the human and material damage had already occurred. How can it be that an unleashed mob ready to go to extremes, which had made no secret of its intentions on the social media platforms, was not stopped beforehand by the state?

Even if it is still too early for reliable answers, and the concrete processes have to be examined in detail, one fact is already certain: a campaign of violence on the scale experienced now, extending over several countries and continents, cannot be carried out "spontaneously", but requires the availability of considerable financial resources, the planned provision of (in) travel opportunities, transport capacities and accommodation. In other words, such a campaign implies not only extreme criminal energy, but also a high degree of planning, organization and coordination. So who are the masterminds, the financiers, the desk jockeys behind the "Brigade N'Hamedu" thugs, and what is their real or long-term goal?

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To silence the worldwide Eritrean diaspora or to intimidate and unsettle it to such an extent that no one is willing to acknowledge their homeland Eritrea, its government and the significance of the country at the Horn of Africa? To cut off all support from "outside" - moral, humanitarian, material, idealistic - as far as possible? To comprehensively isolate a country that is still often - according to our experience and our firm conviction unjustly - branded as the "North Korea of Africa"? That this cannot work is already shown by the fact that all the above-mentioned festivals still took place successfully on the days after the attacks with thousands of participants, in some cases significantly more than expected.

But the civilizational rupture, the monstrosity of the attacks remains, and at the same time raises the question of how long the public in the civilized countries of the West will continue to accept that the media demonization and stigmatization of Eritrea contributes to preparing the ground for excesses of violence - intentionally or unintentionally. Because what we have now experienced in Giessen, Stockholm, Seattle and Toronto can happen again tomorrow in other places. If peaceful coexistence and the idea of international understanding, which is also our highest statutory goal, are to have any real meaning, it is high time to learn from the terrible events and to set a rethinking process in motion.

Board of the German-Eritrean Society (DEG)

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