

Hot off the Press 43!

Members recommend.....

Article about learning German in the UK and why it's beneficial

https://www.theguardian.com/education/article/2024/aug/17/it-enriches-your-mind-in-every-way-the-fight-to-keep-the-uk-learning-german?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other

Article on modern art

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/article/2024/aug/29/austrian-town-gets-its-lederhosen-in-a-twist-over-modern-art>

BBC Radio 3, Mon 19th, broadcast J S Bach St John Passion, sung in German.

<https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bbc.co.uk%2Fsounds%2Fplay%2Flive%3Abbc%2Fradio%2Fthree%3Fpartner%3Duk.co.bbc%26origin%3Dshare-mobile&data=05%7C02%7C%7C16e4f149af0a409d90dd08dcc092123f%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638596980804009564%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=rV%2FvUlqZ26eTWqR%2FfYAsteDnBiFNhRvGhFS%2BaO77DdA%3D&reserved=0>

Berlin News

Germany is reeling from a knife attack that left three people dead and eight injured last Friday in the western city of Solingen.

A 26-year-old Syrian man is being held on suspicion of murder and membership of the so-called Islamic State (IS) group. IS claimed responsibility for Friday's attack, saying it was in "revenge for Muslims in Palestine and elsewhere."

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The suspect came to Germany in 2022 as a refugee via Bulgaria. Authorities should have sent him back to file his asylum application there but failed to do so.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz expressed compassion on a visit to Solingen on Monday. He spoke to journalists and rescue workers, but no victims or the wider public. Scholz, well-known for unemotional speech, said he was "wütend und zornig" (angry and furious).

Scholz again pledged to crack down on irregular immigration, which increased significantly in 2023. Federal police reported a 33% increase in illegal border crossings, with most immigrants coming from Syria, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

The leaders of Germany's conservative opposition of Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) were quick to demand a turnaround in Germany's immigration policies.

"*Es reicht!*" (enough is enough) said CDU chairman Friedrich Merz. His conservative partner and rival, Bavaria's Premier Markus Söder, called for more powers for the police and faster deportations and lashed out at the Greens.

Again, there are calls to deport immigrants who have been denied asylum, even if they come from countries like Afghanistan or Syria. Following the Geneva Refugee Convention, Germany does not deport to countries deemed unsafe, but there is a debate about whether this applies to all regions in Syria or Afghanistan. A prerequisite for the resumption of deportations would be the establishment of relations with the leaders of those countries.

Islamist terror was last in the headlines in 2016, when Tunisian national Anis Amri, a rejected asylum-seeker who had been under observation by German security authorities for years for Islamist links, drove a truck into a crowd at Berlin's Breitscheidplatz Christmas market.

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Since then, there have been numerous knife attacks attributed to suspects with and without immigrant backgrounds.

[Germany wants to introduce tougher laws to combat rising knife crime and restrict public knife carrying, but critics say the plans are impractical.](#)

GERMAN KEY ELECTIONS

Opinion polls indicate that the events in Solingen have further inflamed anti-immigration sentiment and boosted support for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) ahead of Sunday's elections in the eastern states of Thuringia and Saxony, where the party already enjoys considerable popularity.

[Video: Why are the state elections so important?](#)

While all other parties have vowed they would not be teaming up with the AfD to form a coalition government, a 33% share of the vote would suffice to give the party power to block democratic procedures, like blocking the appointment of judges to the state constitutional court. In this way, the AfD could damage democracy without even being in government.

On the federal level, the election outcome will have serious consequences.



[German government's future is in danger](#)

[Chancellor Scholz's center-left Social Democratic Party is hovering around 5% in opinion polls in both Saxony and Thuringia. That is the hurdle for representation](#)

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in the state parliaments. If the SPD fails to clear it, Scholz could face serious questions before the national election in the fall of 2025.

Refusal to team up with the AfD combined with the expected poor showing of the center-left parties SPD, Greens and FDP may well leave the Christian Democrats with only the new Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) to form state governments.

While some of its positions overlap with the far right, polls in eastern Germany show that the BSW is drawing voters from other political parties, too.



 Is the BSW reshaping German politics?

Following the Solingen attack, Sahra Wagenknecht said: "If you allow uncontrolled migration, you get uncontrolled violence." Her BSW is a populist party that blends left-leaning economic policies with conservative migration and pro-Russian foreign policy initiatives.