

EUROPE

# Shooter in German Synagogue Attack Confesses

Stephan Ballier admitted anti-Semitic and Right-wing extremist motives in attack that killed two in Halle, Germany



People mourn in front of the entrance to the Jewish synagogue on Thursday in Halle, Germany. PHOTO: JENS SCHLUETER/GETTY IMAGES

*By Sara Germano*

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BERLIN—The German man charged with murder in Wednesday’s botched attack on a synagogue has confessed to the crime and admitted to anti-Semitic and far-right-wing extremist motives, the federal prosecutor’s office said.

Under the German justice system, Stephan Balliet, 27, will still stand trial for the Yom Kippur attack in the eastern city of Halle that left two dead and two injured. It is unclear how confession could affect possible sentencing in what authorities are treating as a terrorist attack.

Security experts have obtained an extensive manifesto they believe was prepared by Mr. Balliet with his objectives, specifically targeting the synagogue in Halle on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur, and describing his desire to kill Jews. The author of the documents also wrote in English of a desire to “increase the moral [sic] of other suppressed Whites by spreading the combat footage.”

The attack itself was live-streamed on the sharing platform Twitch. The sequence, which was reviewed by The Wall Street Journal, shows the suspect uttering anti-Semitic slurs before trying but failing to break into the gated synagogue.

Police said the suspect then shot a woman dead in the street, and killed a man in a nearby kebab restaurant. According to witnesses, he then fled in his car and wounded a man and a woman in an attempt to steal a different vehicle shortly before his arrest.

Wednesday's attack has drawn sharp criticism from Germany's Jewish community, which has continuously condemned the recent rise in anti-Semitic threats and attacks nationwide. Germany's interior ministry reported a 20% surge in anti-Semitic offenses last year.

"With the steep rise in anti-Semitic incidents in Germany, the German government has acknowledged that it is potentially dangerous to be visibly Jewish in some parts of the country," said Moshe Kantor, president of the European Jewish Congress.

On Thursday, German interior minister Horst Seehofer said that an attack such as the one in Halle "should not happen in Germany" and added that the ministry's central challenge is combatting the high level of anti-Semitic and right-wing extremism.

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