

Europe Monitoring

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Germany

Ditib chairman dismissed

The Turkish religious authority Diyanet has dismissed the chairman of the German mosque association Ditib, Kazim Türkmen, from his position as a religious authority in Germany. According to the statement of the religious authority responsible for Turkish Muslims in Germany, it has ended Türkmen's four-year term of office. He returned to his main task in Turkey on August 13, 2022. This is "common practice". It is not yet clear who will succeed him.

Türkmen was elected Ditib chairman in January 2019. He was considered comparatively moderate.



Deniz Saygili

Under his predecessor Nevzat Yasar Asikoglu, Ditib was involved in a serious espionage scandal, among other things. Ditib imams were suspected of having spied on followers of the movement of the Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen on behalf of

Diyanet. The German Public Prosecutor's Office dropped the investigation in December 2017. Diyanet is a state-controlled agency in Ankara that is responsible for all religious issues on behalf of

the Turkish government, not only in Turkey itself but also abroad. Diyanet sends imams to the communities and even writes the Friday sermons for the faithful in the diaspora.

Criticism of Türkmen has recently been raised from circles of the Turkish governing party AKP and its European lobby organization UID. The reason: Ditib's alleged political restraint on the anniversary of the attempted coup in Turkey on July 15, 2016.

In Turkey, the election campaign for the presidential and parliamentary elections next year is picking up speed these days. In mid-August, Diyanet is said to have gathered Turkish provincial muftis for a "crisis meeting". According to a report in the government-critical newspaper Cumhuriyet, Diyanet President Ali Erbas swore the imams to support the ruling AKP party. Critics also rate Ditib as the "long arm" of the Erdogan government.

The German Office for the Protection of the Constitution announced in spring that meetings between AKP officials and representatives of party-affiliated associations in Germany have been increasing since 2021. There is a "considerable mobilization potential".

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will not continue its work. The ministry informed the members in a video conference that it saw no need for further work by the committee, which was planned for a year, and that further institutionalization was not planned.

Several members of the committee sharply criticize the decision of the interior department headed by Nancy Faeser (SPD). The German Ministry of the Interior no longer attaches great importance to the subject of Islamism. The group of experts was set up to take stock of so-called legalistic Islamism, i.e. Islamism currents that act non-violently.

The Ministry of the Interior announced that the scientific perspective was sufficiently limited and that it was therefore appropriate "to continue the exchange of experts in a different form". A regular symposium is planned, in which the members of the expert group should play a decisive role.

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Austria

Vienna Islamist Association wins in court

K.F., the Islamist terrorist who killed four people in Vienna in November 2020, is said to have been a frequent visitor to a mosque in Vienna's Ottakring district. Even before the terrorist attack, the Melit Ibrahim Mosque had repeatedly been accused of Islamist hate speech and was partially under surveillance. The then Minister of the Interior and current Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer and Minister Susanne Raab (both ÖVP) took the attack in Vienna as an opportunity to dissolve the association behind the mosque.

As early as March, a Viennese administrative court overturned the decision that was supposed to ban the alleged "backyard mosque". The verdict is now published.

In its verdict, the administrative court dealt with fundamental questions, not with the content of the sermons or the connections to the terrorist attack in Vienna. The decisive factor was whether the association had exceeded its statutes and illegally operated a house of prayer. And the association has now "descriptively" explained "that there is actually a comprehensive association life, which can also include prayer".

In the course of a "long-standing security dialogue", access to the mosque was also changed, as is explained. In the end, only club members had this. "Therefore, there is no place of worship that allows unrestricted practice of religion in the sense of Islamic doctrine," the court concludes. It is therefore "under no circumstances" possible to speak of a mosque that is open to the public. What is considered an alarm signal by experts is



Nancy Faeser



Photo: Georges Schneider

interpreted by the administrative court in favor of the “mosque”.

France

Legal work begins seven years after the attack in Nice

Last Monday, just over six years after July 14, 2016, the trial against the suspected supporters of the Nice perpetrator began in Paris. It takes place in the specially made courtroom, the “Salle grand procès”, in the Palais de Justice on Paris’ Île de la Cité. At the same time, the procedure will be broadcasted to Nice.

Unlike the trial on the Paris attacks, this time the assassin himself can no longer stand trial. Eight suspected helpers and accomplices, seven men and one woman, between the ages of 27 and 48 are now accused. Three of them face charges of membership in a terrorist organization. The five



Photo: dpa

other suspects are said to have helped the assassin to get weapons, among other things.

First, the court will be busy reading out the names and marital status of

everyone involved in the process. 2,500 survivors, victims and relatives have joined forces in several

victims’ associations. More than 850 people have registered as joint plaintiffs. Many still suffer from post-traumatic disorders or physical disabilities. The French state has already paid the victims 92 million euros in compensation.

One of the defendants, who is said to have played an intermediary role in the arms trade, will not be present at the Paris trial. He is on the run and has been wanted on an arrest warrant for two years. The accused face between five years and life imprisonment.

On the Promenade des Anglais in Nice a new monument was erected to remember the victims of the terror attack. It is erected on the spot where the truck stopped on that dreadful night six years ago. It is a sculpture, half human, half angel, wings spread wide, “Angel of the Bay” it is called. The names of the victims are engraved on the base.

“We’re fighting for all those who left, even though they didn’t have to go. That’s our way of defending them,” said a co-plaintiff and relative of one of the dead in the run-up to the trial on the television channel France 3. Until the beginning of the trial in Paris, more than 800 people and associations have registered as joint plaintiffs. More than 100 lawyers are involved in the trial.

Former President François Hollande will also testify in court. So far, the process is scheduled to last until December 16th. The first statements from the accused are expected in early November.

