



THEME 2: Intercultural dialogue

Collection of materials

Tf 203 Honour killing

The following article appeared on 23.2.2005 in the “Badische Zeitung”, a German regional newspaper (Author: DIETER STÄCKER)

Tf 203/1 Three Shots in the Name of Honour

The young Kurdish woman Hatun Sürücü was shot dead at a bus-stop in Berlin-Tempelhof because her brothers did not like her western way of life.

"On the ground there are yellow and red roses, on the wall there hangs a letter.. „You had so much before you, we will miss you greatly“, a young woman writes to her friend. On a second piece of paper hidden among the flowers is written: „We hope you are now in a better world“. The mourning is for Hatun Sürücü. On 7th. February the 23-year-old Kurd had been shot dead with three shots in the head at a bus-stop in the Tempelhof district of Berlin. Three of her brothers meanwhile are in detention pending investigation. They are suspected of having murdered their sister to save the alleged wounded family honour.

This case would not have aroused further notice. In the past eight years in Berlin alone 45 women have been strangled, knifed, drowned, shot in the name of honour – like Hatun Sürücü, who had to die because she had left her husband and her family because she wanted at last to live according to her own rules and because she consistently refused to wear a headscarf in day-to-day life. The city was briefly shocked, but then soon went back to normal life – the very normal reaction to very normal crime cases. But this time the case developed differently, after several pupils at the Thomas-Morus- Hauptschule (school) in Neukölln had approved of the murder. Quotes like „It was her own fault“ and „The whore was going around like a German woman“ did the rounds.

The headmaster, Volker Steffens, took the initiative and in an open letter to pupils, parents and teachers warned of the consequences:” We will not tolerate any agitation against freedom. Those who have come here must demonstrate the will to become integrated.” The school authorities and the senator responsible, Klaus Böger (SPD), do not want to sweep the thorny subject under the carpet any longer, but to discuss openly with pupils and parents co-existence between different nationalities, religious groups and cultures.

Pupils celebrate the deed as being just:” She is herself to blame”

„Remarks of this kind by pupils are not new”, reports the headmistress of a primary school in Kreuzberg which has a large number of pupils of Turkish descent. A colleague adds:” Particularly with boys the proportion of those who think that women like Hatun Sürücü should at least be punished is frighteningly high”.

Hatun Sürücü like tens of thousands of Turks and Kurds grew up in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg – together with five brothers and three sisters. When she was sixteen, she was sent back to their country of origin by her strictly conservative family and married to a cousin there. The young woman evidently agreed to the arranged marriage. “I loved my husband, otherwise I wouldn’t have gone back to Turkey”, she said a few years ago in an interview with the “Berliner Tagesspiegel” (a Berlin daily newspaper). The birth of her son was also welcomed by the young woman:”It was a wanted child”.

Only when there were serious problems with her husband and his strictly religious family did Hatun Sürücü divorce him and return to Berlin on her German passport. There she first moved into a home run by the Evangelisches Jugend- und Fürsorgewerk (a protestant youth and care organization), finished school and started training as an electrician, which she successfully concluded with the practical part a few weeks ago. She had been living alone with her now five-year-old son for some years.

"She was a friendly girl who enjoyed life, liked going out and had a lot of friends", said one of her neighbours. "She spoke perfect German", added another appreciatively. But the young woman's way of life was a crime deserving death in the eyes of her conservative Muslim family - the Berlin police surmises at any rate that the honour killing was decided on in a family council and was planned and executed by three brothers (aged 18, 24, and 25) of the victim. After it one of the brothers enticed his sister by telephone to the vicinity of the bus-stop and another brother aimed several shots at his sister at very close range. The young woman was hit in the head and upper part of the body and died at the scene of the crime.

The police at first suspected the victim's former husband of the crime, but soon concentrated on the three brothers, who meanwhile were taken into custody. Although all three deny the charges, the police are fairly sure of their facts – after all, the family's chosen gunman, the 18-year-old brother, is supposed to have spoken to a witness about the deed and its background.

The 150 people who took part in the memorial wake and met on Tuesday in an icy cold wind near the scene of the crime also refuse to consign the matter simply to the records. "This death must not be ignored", was the demand made by Marie-Luise Beck, the Federal government's delegate for foreigners. Berlin's former delegate for foreigners, Barbara John, also took up the cause and appealed for honour killings in the future not to be considered any longer as manslaughter on cultural grounds, but to be punishable as murder. "Cultural allowances," said Frau John, "can no longer be made".

Tf 203/2 Three brothers charged with the murder of their sister

The death of the Turkish woman kindled a debate on the integration of foreigners in Germany / new law initiatives

From : "Badische Zeitung" dated 9.07.2005 (Author: KATJA BAUER)

"BERLIN. The so-called honour killing of the Turkish woman in Berlin has rekindled the debate on integration throughout the republic. Yesterday the state prosecutor accused the victim's three brothers

Like Hatun Sürücü her brothers, too, had grown up in Germany. According to the prosecution the brothers were ashamed of their sister and were afraid that she would not bring up her son in conformity with Islam.

The crime rekindled the discussion on the failure of integration policy in Germany. Particular horror was caused by events at a school in Neukölln, where pupils justified the murder. They declared that the woman had deserved death because she was living like a German woman. After that the introduction of a compulsory subject, values studies, in Berlin schools was discussed – such a subject has not existed up to now, but its introduction has been approved in the meantime. The case also gave rise to a law initiative by Berlin in the Federal Council to make forced marriages a punishable offence in the statute book. The Sürücü case was presumably the sixth so-called honour killing in Berlin since October, 2004."

Translated from the original German by: Gillian Johnson