

Germany cracks down on Muslim groups accused of recruiting terrorists

by [Amanda Hoover](#) in the [December 21, 2016](#) issue

([The Christian Science Monitor](#)) German police raided nearly 200 mosques, apartments, and offices connected to a Muslim group in mid-November after receiving information suggesting its members were recruiting people for the self-described Islamic State.

The sweep was part of a larger effort by Germany over the last few months to crack down on radicals as concerns of homegrown terrorism in the nation and in nearby European countries grows. Police targeted members of the group True Religion across 60 cities in the raids but did not make any arrests or locate the group's leader, who they believe lives in Bonn. Officials announced that the group would be banned from further operations in Germany.

"We are taking decisive and comprehensive action against all efforts directed against our freedom and our fundamental values," German interior minister Thomas de Maizière said.

True Religion is widely visible and known for running information tables and distributing free copies of the Qur'an. Despite its appearance as a legitimate religious organization, officials say the group has recruited some 140 young people to fight in Syria and focuses its attention on Muslim teenagers, glorifying terrorism and a struggle against the German constitution in meetings and video messages.

The ban is the second largest on an Islamic group in Germany's history, following a 2001 decision to bar a group known as the *Kalifatsstaat* ("caliphate state") on grounds that their activity threatened the nation's democracy. Leaders stressed that the ban was not meant as an attack on Muslims or religious freedom, but as a strong, united stance against radicalization.

“Today’s ban does not target the promotion, practice, or propagation of the Islamic faith in general,” de Maizière said. “Muslim life has a permanent and secure place in Germany and in our society.”

True Religion said that its purpose is to share the message of the Qur’an. The group wrote on Twitter following the raids: “The Qur’an was banned in Germany. We provided Allah’s message to everyone. Allahu akbar.”

The ban follows the arrests of five men who authorities say aided ISIS by recruiting new members. They face accusations of providing financial and logistical assistance to potential fighters.

Officials believe that more than 800 people in Germany have been recruited by ISIS in recent years and that up to a third of those may have returned to the nation since.

“We don’t want terrorism in Germany,” de Maizière said. “And we don’t want to export terrorism.”

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