

# Wetzlarer Neue Zeitung

## Sammy Baker case: Will police officers be charged?

On Monday Amsterdam prosecutor's office wants to announce the decision on consequences in the case of the killed Wetzlar fitness influencer. His parents raise new accusations.

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*Sammy with mother Justine, taken in Wetzlar, Germany, a few weeks before the fitness influencer's death. Photo: Armin Krieger*

WETZLAR - News in the case of Wetzlar fitness influencer Sammy Baker, who was shot dead in Amsterdam on Aug. 13, 2020: the public prosecutor's office in Amsterdam plans to announce on Monday, May 17, whether charges will be brought against two police officers who allegedly killed the 23-year-old in a backyard in the Nieuw-West district with three shots fired at point-blank range. Sammy's parents, meanwhile, have **filed a complaint against Amsterdam police chief Frank Paauw.**

For months, the fitness influencer's parents have been waiting for the prosecutor's office to make a decision on whether or not to press charges. On Monday, it now plans to announce its decision. The final report of the "Rijksrecherche" was already available since December. The "Rijksrecherche" - an investigation department of the public prosecutor's office - had investigated whether the intervention of the police officers was proportionate or whether Sammy's parents are right, for whom it is clear that their son was a victim of police violence.

The case is causing a great deal of discussion in the Netherlands: Newspapers and TV stations report almost daily. The well-known Dutch investigative journalist and **crime reporter Peter R. de Vries** has also joined in. Last weekend he said on "RTL Boulevard" that he had watched the video 20 times - what happened in the courtyard is captured in a cell phone video - and saw **no reason why Sammy had to be shot**. He asked himself whether **the dog handler had acted on his own when he knocked Sammy down from behind**.

## **Mother: "The Public is finally being shaken up"**

"We as a family are pleased that the public is finally shaken up," says Sammy's mother Justine. Especially **in the Netherlands, the police's actions against Sammy** on August 13, 2020 **are being criticized** in the strongest possible terms. The case is also **making waves in the German media**: According to several reports on **RTL and Hessischer Rundfunk**, the family received numerous reactions from people confirming them to keep fighting, even in case the decision of the public prosecutor's office on May 17 does not lead to charges against the police officers. Meanwhile, the parents of the killed 23-year-old accuse Amsterdam **police chief Frank Paauw** of influencing public opinion with "**statements of lies**" while the investigation of the "Rijksrecherche" was still ongoing. The police chief has thus **damaged "the reputation and honor" of Sammy Baker**, the parents say. They demand that Paauw retract his statement.

Specifically contradictory is Paauw's statement that Sammy Baker allegedly stabbed an officer in his vest with a knife during a police operation on Aug. 13. That remark may have influenced the investigation, Richard Korver, Dutch lawyer for Sammy Baker's family, told Dutch newspaper de Volkskrant. Police officers would now not dare to say to the National Investigation Agency that it had been otherwise, Korver is quoted as saying in the newspaper. And further: it would suit Paauw well "if he apologizes for it".

**The statement made by Paauw immediately after the incident, that the knife had hit one of the policemen in the protective vest, was later refuted by the investigations of the "Rijksrecherche"**. According to their report, **no damage could be found on any of the vests. The vests had been examined twice, lawyer Korver reported from the investigation file**. Several police officers involved had stated in their interrogations that it had been a "serious threat situation. Most recently, it had become known that, contrary to initial police statements, it was **not a 30-centimeter knife, but a small carving knife with a seven-centimeter blade**, which the Wetzlar Influencer had carried in the backyard of the district Nieuw-West.

In addition, Sammy's parents state that evidence exists that a **psychiatric ambulance - called "Psycholance" - had been on the scene during the incident.**

**The police did not allow the specialists in addressing confused people to see Sammy.** While the Amsterdam ambulance service was not allowed to comment on the operation for data protection reasons, according to "de Volkskrant," the chairman of the Dutch Association for Psycholance sharply criticized the police action in the newspaper "Het Parool." He is quoted by "Het Parool" as saying **that the officers did not act in a de-escalating manner, but rather shouted instructions at each other in an aggressive tone, and that the weapons they drew caused the situation to escalate.**

**"For me as a mother, it's especially hard to take, knowing that my son asked for a doctor, psycholancers were even on the scene, and the police didn't let him see Sammy,"** says mother Justine. **"That to me is failure to offer aid or assistance and a gross violation. Furthermore, knocking Sammy down, who was afraid anyway, and to immediately shoot him by two gunmen is a grave disregard for human rights. Is something like this allowed to happen in an EU country?"** she asks.

## **Harsh criticism of Dutch police**

"When we reported Sammy missing the night before, we turned to the police because we thought they would help us, as they did on August 13. But they treated him like a criminal, when all he did was endanger himself."

**This is as much a "police scandal" as the fact that the "Rijksrecherche" did not undertake any witness interviews with local residents,** said mother Justine. "Residents have contacted our lawyer and us and said they are traumatized by this act."

What happened in the courtyard is documented in a cell phone video taken by a journalist who lives there: The obviously confused Sammy Baker, dressed in boxers and a shirt, is apparently holding a knife to his neck, and several police officers pull out their service weapons as the 23-year-old slowly walks across the lawn toward and past them. He ignores the shouts of the officers. In the video, Sammy can be heard repeatedly asking for a doctor. The police officers refuse this as well as the request of the friend, who offers at the fence in front of the yard, he or mother Justine could talk to Sammy. When the seizure with a police dog fails, the dog handler attacks Sammy from behind and knocks him down. A scuffle ensues on the ground, which is largely hidden behind bushes in the cell phone video.

**Four shots are fired, three shots are heard, killing Sammy at point blank range. He succumbs to his injuries on the spot.**