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Sammy Baker - 1 year later, no prospect for justice



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On August, 13th, a demonstration to demand Justice for Sammy Baker was held in Amsterdam. This occurred exactly one year after the young German tourist was murdered by 2 policemen in a backyard in Slotervaart.

On holiday in Amsterdam, the young social media influencer experienced a psychosis after having a space cake with his friends. In a confused mental state, he ran away and was nowhere to be found for about 48 hours. Worried, his mother came over from Germany to help find him. His friends and family called the police to help them find Sammy. They eventually localised the young and confused man in a backyard in Nieuw-West where he was crying out for medical help, holding a pocketknife to his own throat. Despite the psycho-ambulance already being on site, the police denied the young man the medical help he needed and was asking for. In fact, they attempted to solve the situation by surrounding Sammy with 8 police officers and set a dog on him. They responded to mental illness with violence and, eventually, murder.

This case portrays an extreme case of ableism and violence that is inherent to the institution of the police.

One year later, it is clear that both the Dutch police and the judicial system want to protect the murderers. The establishment is not interested in telling the whole story. This is evident considering the misinformation campaign undertaken by police officials. Not only did they go to the media to blatantly lie about the size of the knife Sammy was carrying - they insisted he had a 30 cm check knife whereas, in reality, he only had a small carving knife with a 7cm blade - but they also pretended he stabbed a law enforcement officer with it. This was later refuted with a video clearly showing that he was pointing the pocket knife to his own throat. Also, the autopsy of the policeman's vest revealed that Sammy did not stab anyone. Still, such lies were reported throughout Dutch and German media for over 4 months, falsely portraying the young man as a criminal and further diminishing hopes for justice. Finally, Pauuw continues to deny the family the involvement of a psycholance expert in the investigation under the shaky pretext that this person is too critical of police work.

The disinformation campaign was eventually cynically championed by the state prosecutor who denied the victim's family an official investigation into what happened. No justice will be served by the state. This leaves the family with no other option but to file a civil lawsuit against the murderers. The state prosecutor's decision is particularly astonishing considering that the statements given by the officers on scene were proven to be highly conflicting. However, she disregarded such suspicious behaviour and further refused to hear crucial testimonies from civilian eyewitnesses. The judiciary trusts (confusing) police statements over those of civilians. This clearly breaches the division of power a democracy is supposedly built upon.

The march was a powerful demonstration of solidarity, reaching from Dam Square to the site where Sammy Baker was murdered. A couple of hundred people as well as Sammy's family came together to commemorate the young man and stand against police brutality. Unsurprisingly, the police and the municipality broke their promise to not be disproportionately present at this demonstration. Indeed, during the whole march, the demonstrators were filmed by a police van posted in front of the procession, they were also

surrounded by police agents, and even infiltrated by many undercover officers. Being critical of police work appears to solicit repression from the state apparatus. This poses a severe threat to a healthy democratic discourse and uncovers the deepening power asymmetries that exists between the state and the civil society in Western liberal democracies.

Whilst even the head of police, Frank Paauw, eventually alluded to the fact that what happened to Sammy was not clearly self-defense, his vision to improve the situation is to allocate more money to the police and give them access to a broader range of weaponry. However, contrary to what Paauw insinuates, what happened to Sammy was not a result of a lack of resources, as even the appropriate medical help was on scene. Promoting more weapons for a better police is a highly dangerous ideology that, when followed, has proven to further increase the violence the police subjugates civilians to. In order to put an end to such tragedies happening in the future, it is crucial to stand up against such display of violence. It is especially important now more than ever as the institution is allocated more power. Police officers cannot and should not deal with mental illness. Only social and medical help are appropriate responses to mental suffering.

Sources:

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> Paauw saying that a police officer was stabbed in vest + promoting access to a wider range of weapons for the police

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> main article debunking the initial narrative of the police

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rS9TABmRGM

> AT5 video of the demo where you can also see the video of Sammy putting the knife to his own throat.

[www.giessener-allgemeine.de/panorama/amsterdam-influencer-sammy-erschossen-wetzlar-
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> article in German revealing that the 30 cm blade was actually 8cm and that Sammy B. didn't stab the police officer in the vest