BBC NEWS

Berlin offers stalkers a way out

A walk-in advice centre for stalkers has opened in the German capital Berlin - the first of its kind in the country.

Stalking was made a criminal offence in Germany a year ago. More than 1,000 cases were reported in Berlin in 2007.

The centre treats stalking like an addiction

Five psychotherapists and social workers will dispense free advice to help stalkers kick their habit.

"Stalking is like an addiction - the perpetrators keep increasing the dose," said Wolf Ortiz-Mueller, the psychologist in charge of the centre.

The advice centre's website, www.stop-stalking-berlin.de, says the experts will not give legal advice to those who stalk.

The centre co-operates with the police, but people can seek advice there anonymously.

The aim is to explore what motivates stalking, to encourage positive behaviour and to prevent any recurrence of it, Stop-Stalking says.

"Only the stalker can stop stalking. In that sense, Stop-Stalking also considers itself a way to protect victims of stalking," it says.

Under German law, stalkers can be punished with fines or prison sentences of up to 10 years. The heaviest sentences are for cases which result in death.

Quelle: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7364726.stm 25.04.08 / 09:06

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Advice centre to help stalkers kick their habit opens in Berlin

Kate Connolly in Berlin
The Guardian, Thursday 24 April 2008

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A walk-in advice centre for stalkers opened in the German capital yesterday, offering help to those who wish to stop harassing their victims.

The Stop Stalking organisation said the aim of its centre in Berlin was to give support to stalkers for whom there has until now been little help on offer.

"We want to be able to reach stalkers in the first place, and to not only make them aware of the legal consequences for them if they continue to stalk, but to also give them the support they need to stop doing it," said Wolf Ortiz-Müller, a psychologist and the head of the centre, which is financed by legal fines and donations.

A team of psychotherapists, psychologists and social workers would try to help stalkers kick the habit, he said.

"Stalking is like an addiction - the perpetrators repeatedly increase the dose by sending more text messages or phoning in order to raise the feeling of power they feel so the situation can quickly escalate ... Over a series of 15 sessions we will try to redirect his inner focus on to something else, but we can only work with people who are ready to question their own behaviour."

Inspired by similar legislation in Britain and the US, Germany made stalking a criminal offence last year. A conviction for stalking can lead to jail terms of six months to 10 years, if it results in death.

Since the law's introduction the police have been inundated with complaints from victims. Last year there were 1,300 investigations into stalking in Berlin. In 330 of those inquiries it was believed that someone's life was at stake.

In the latest court case, a man is accused of bombarding his ex-girlfriend with text messages and pouring hydrochloric acid over her car's engine and door handles.

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Berlin to Treat Stalkers Like Addicts

German Capital Opens Drop-in Center for Stalking Addicts

By CHRISTEL KUCHARZ
PASSAU, Germany, April 24, 2008

The first ever walk-in advice center for stalkers opened in Berlin yesterday, offering support to those willing to stop harassing their victims.

(ABC News Photo Illustration)

"We believe that by supporting stalkers to kick the habit, we are helping the potential victims at the same time," Wolf Ortiz-Mueller, the head of the center, told reporters at the opening of the center.

"Stalking is an addiction which must be treated before the situation escalates. The perpetrator repeatedly increases the dose in order to raise the feeling of power over the victim, and that situation can quickly get out of control," he said.

Stalking is a criminal offense in Germany and a conviction for stalking can lead to jail terms ranging from six months to three years, and rising to 10 years if it results in death.

Police in Berlin now receive more stalking-related complaints from victims than ever before. Last year alone more than 1,300 cases were reported to police. There are more than 100 court cases pending and investigators suggest that in some of those cases someone's life was in danger.

Prosecutors in Berlin are currently investigating 21-year-old professional soccer player Ashkan Dejagah, who has allegedly bombarded a 20-year-old girl with unwanted text messages after he met her at a disco.

Quelle: http://a.abcnews.com/International/story?id=4717680&page=1 06-05-08 / 11:18