

What happened the night Laye Condé got killed

It is the night from the 26th to the 27th of December, 2004, in Bremen, around midnight. Laye-Alama Condé, who is originally from Sierra Leone, is at the so called Sielwallkreuzung. Two policemen in plain clothes observe the 35-year-old hastily swallowing something – possibly little white pellets.

12:10am

The two policemen arrest Laye Condé, because they suspect that he has illegal drugs on him. They take him to the police station in Bremen Vahr. In order to secure the suspected drugs as evidence against him an emetic, a substance used to induce vomiting, is supposed to be given to him. The German Federal Court of Justice later held: Condé hardly understood any German, and also in English the communication only happened at a very basic level with the help of sign language. This is why Condé was not informed of his legal rights. Laye Condé was also, not told about the health risks involved. This would have been the task of the medical examiner from the unit for the securing of evidence, who was medically responsible for this procedure – in bureaucratic German called “forced ex-corporation”. Laye Condé refused to take the vomit-inducing syrup voluntarily.

One hour later, around 1:10am

The emetic is now supposed to be given to Laye Condé forcibly. The two policemen cuff his hands behind his back. They fix his feet with cable ties and place him on an examining chair. Laye Condé fights against the stomach tube. He does not want the 70 cm long tube to be inserted into his nose and tries with head movements to prevent this. One of the policemen holds his head against the back of the chair. The medical examiner first administers the emetic and then water through the tube.

Around 1:30am. The first vomiting begins.

Laye Condé clenches his teeth together. He tries to swallow the vomit again and let only the water come out again. The police already have a name for this behaviour: they call it “filtering”. Only after repeated vomiting with clenched teeth a hazelnut-sized pellet of cocaine comes out, possibly through a gap between his teeth. This alone would have been sufficient for the police and judiciary to convict Laye Condé for drug possession and drug trafficking. The Federal Court of Justice in his first judgment came to the same conclusion. It held: The accused physician continued to medicate after the retrieval of the first cocaine pellet, even though, the criminal offense of illicit drug trafficking had been established, according to Paragraph 29 Section 1 No.

1 of the German Narcotics Act (BTMG) – particularly as the policemen had known about the number of swallowing movements by the suspect C. The medical examiner, however, continues the torture with the emetic. *Twenty minutes later, around 1.50am.*

Laye Condé collapses. He appears apathetic. White foam comes out of his mouth and nose. The pulse oximeter displays no result anymore. The medical examiner, however, is initially not alarmed by this. He assumes the device is broken and changes the finger sensor.

Four minutes later, 1.54am

When the pulse oximeter still does not display any results, the physician calls an emergency doctor for assistance. To do so, he leaves the room. His behaviour was later called “headless” by the Federal Court.

Quote: “Instead of instructing one of the attending police officers with phones on them to make this call and without performing first-aid measures himself, he left the room.”

The courts will later try to establish if the medical examiner called emergency assistance because he had acute concern about Laye Condé’s condition, or simply to obtain an intact oximeter.

Shortly after 2am:

The emergency doctor and two paramedics arrive. Laye Condé breathes heavily and is unresponsive. The paramedics inform the emergency doctor that Condé’s pupils are pin sized and do not react to light. When the oxygen saturation is measured shortly after with a different device, more stable results are displayed – the same for blood pressure and pulse. A witness later states that the doctor from the unit for the securing of evidence had said at that moment that in his experience black Africans often played dead in situations like this. The medical examiner asks the emergency doctor to stay and asks if he could repeat the process of injecting water. The emergency doctor does not object. He writes his report without reacting to the ongoing.

10 more minutes pass, now it is 10 minutes past 2am

The medical examiner forces more water into Laye Condé’s stomach without any further examination. Condé throws up again. Another white cocaine pellet comes out. After repeated water injection and vomiting, a third pellet is finally expelled. Reporters from the magazine Stern and the newspaper Frankfurter Rundschau have calculated that the physician must have infused several litres of water through the tube. During the procedure the stomach tube slipped out

and had to be reinserted. During the further course of the forced administration, Condé again becomes very weak and lethargic and, his vomiting reflex significantly decreases. Therefore the doctor begins to irritate Layé Condé's throat to cause more vomiting. For this, he uses the end of forceps and a wooden spatula. The first ruling of the Federal Court of the 29th of April 2010 states:

After further vomiting that was provoked through this, a forth white pellet was retrieved after opening his clenched jaws.

By now, the procedure has taken well over an hour. Layé Condé is slumped and hardly breathing. The emergency doctor, a police officer and a paramedic notice this at about the same time. The emergency doctor tries to give him artificial respiration, which is difficult-because there is water in throat that has to be suctioned first.

2.36am

Layé Condé is slumped in the chair and barely breathing. The monitor measures three breaths per minute. His heart beats 33 times per minute. His pupils are unresponsive. He is unconscious.

2.40am

Only now the emergency doctor is able to intubate Layé Condé and ventilate him, according to the Bremen District Court report. At what point exactly, Condé fell into a coma, is hard to reconstruct. The Federal Court states:

The blood-oxygen level had not been measured continuously. Also, the display had malfunctioned because of a broken finger sensor. The acoustic alarm of the device had been turned off for unknown reasons. A few minutes later, Condé fell into a coma, from where he could not be saved.

3.12am

Layé Condé is transported to hospital unconscious. A few minutes later he arrives at St. Joseph-Stift hospital and is taken to the intensive care unit. X-ray imaging is used to diagnose pulmonary oedema (colloquially referred to as „water lung“). One day later serious brain damage becomes apparent. On the 7th of January 2005 Layé Condé dies from the consequences of the emetic administration.