

Germany: Deportations increase as asylum applications plummet

Elisabeth Zimmermann
31 May 2006

Policies of the former Social Democratic Party-Green Party government and the current Grand Coalition have resulted in an unprecedented decline in the numbers of asylum-seekers in Germany. In 1998, some 98,644 refugees applied for asylum. By 2005, it was a mere 28,914.

The SPD-Green government continued restricting the right to asylum—a course already resolved upon by the preceding Christian Democratic government of Helmut Kohl with the support of the SPD—until it was virtually unrecognizable. In step with the European Union (EU), the Social Democrats and Greens implemented ruthless immigration policies, designed to ward off and stigmatize immigrants and refugees. The current government is continuing this course.

As a consequence, the number of asylum-seekers fell to 2,140 in March and was reduced again by a third to 1,500 in April. And only 1.1 percent of those applying—most of them from Serbia and Montenegro, Turkey and Iraq—were granted asylum.

Tens of thousands of people whose asylum applications have failed or whose temporary visas have expired are expelled from Germany every year. More recently, this has increasingly involved people who have been living in Germany for many years and whose children were born and raised there. Of the 200,000 people who have only the insecure status conferred by a temporary visa, 120,000 have been living in Germany for more than five years.

For years, the Pro Asyl refugee organisation and other support groups have called for the interior ministers of the various state legislatures to grant the right to permanent residence to long-standing holders of temporary visas. The ministers once again denied refugees this right at the recent interior ministers' conference in Garmisch-Partenkirchen at the beginning

of May. Instead, it has been made even harder to gain German citizenship.

In recent months, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees revoked the asylum status of refugees from Iraq. Interior ministers are examining whether it is possible to begin deportations to Iraq—despite the fact that violence is claiming the lives and limbs of thousands of civilians in Iraq each month. According to Pro Asyl, the actions of the German authorities are unique in Europe and violate the international law covering refugees.

Deportations to Afghanistan have been taking place for a long time. Some German states even extradite Afghan women, even though the political and economic situation in the country, torn apart by war and civil war, has deteriorated in recent months.

The recently elected Afghan foreign minister, Rangin Dadfar Spanta, appealed to Germany in a newspaper interview to stop deporting Afghan refugees and exacerbating the situation. "I make my appeal along the following lines: Allow these people to integrate into Germany as their second homeland. Whoever wants to return voluntarily is very welcome to do so, but the others should not be deported," he told the *Frankfurter Rundschau*.

However, Germany's Aliens Office pays little attention to humanitarian appeals, medical reports or international law. How well refugees and their children are integrated into German society is equally irrelevant. The following examples are just a few of the cases of deportation or threatened deportation of whole families that have been resident in Germany for more than 10 years.

On September 24, 2005, 15-year-old Vietnamese immigrant Khan Duy Trieu together with his parents and small brother had to leave Germany to avoid a

threatened deportation. Khan had lived in Straubing for 13 years and came second in a mathematics competition held in Bavaria last year.

According to the official reason for deportation, “There exist no grounds for allowing the former Vietnamese refugee to continue residence in Germany.” Several television programmes have documented this case of a family that was well-integrated into the German community. The mother and father both had jobs and Khan was one of the best pupils in his school year. The family now has to struggle to survive in a small rented flat belonging to the boy’s grandparents in Hanoi.

This story is not an isolated experience, as was confirmed by Franz Xaver Augustin, head of the Goethe Institute in Hanoi. The exact figures concerning the extradition of Vietnamese immigrants from Germany have not been published for three years. In 1995, a so-called “repatriation agreement” was signed between Germany and Vietnam. Between 1995 and 2002, some 10,149 Vietnamese left Germany.

On May 4 this year, the German television programme *Kontraste* reported another case of arbitrary actions by the state authorities, in what is in no sense an atypical case.

Twenty-two-year-old Afghan Quais Kamran had lived with his parents and siblings in Friedberg in the state of Hesse for 16 years. He and his family came to the attention of the Aliens Office when he applied for a training position in the police force.

Quais had fulfilled all the requirements for his chosen occupation: He had to have lived at least five years in the Federal Republic of Germany and had to be proficient in both his native language and German. He lacked only one requirement: a permanent residency permit.

Quais Kamran went to the Aliens Office in Friedberg to apply for a residency permit but was refused, as he had no proper job and was in receipt of welfare benefits. Quais Kamran found himself—like many thousands of other victims—in a classic Catch 22 situation created by Germany’s reactionary Aliens Laws: without a residency permit, no apprenticeship or job, but no residency permit is granted without the person having a job. But that was not the end of the matter—he and his whole family were now to be deported to Afghanistan.

Although his schoolmates and teachers have stood up for him by organising a petition, and although his school principal has made a personal appeal on his behalf to the Aliens Office, the interior minister and the Hesse state parliament, there has been no sign that the authorities or politicians are prepared to show any leeway towards the family.

Quais Kamran now blames himself for the threatened deportation, believing that the Aliens Office only became interested in his family when he applied for the residency permit.

Another tragic case is that of the mentally ill Moroccan Hassan R., who was taken from the psychiatric ward of a state-run nursing home in northern Hesse and deported. Two weeks later, relatives of the disabled man had lost all trace of him. The father of 35-year-old Hassan, who lives in Rödermark, flew out to Casablanca to search for his son, so far without success. Hassan R. has suffered from schizophrenia, hallucinations and epileptic fits for 10 years. His chances of survival without professional support and medication are slim.

On May 11, a television programme “Institutionalised Cruelty” took up the case of a Tamil family with a severely mentally handicapped child, living in Meschede in Sauerland. In August last year, the family was deported back to Sri Lanka under cover of darkness, although they had been living in Germany for over 10 years. An elderly neighbour of the family, having witnessed the deportation, commented on the measures taken by the authorities and the police, saying: “Are we back in the Hitler era again?”



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