

# In response to exposure of abuses, German interior minister attacks refugees

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The recently published photographs of refugees suffering humiliation and torture at the hands of German security personnel in refugee camps have provoked widespread anger and disgust. They expose the inhumanity of Germany's refugee system, which deliberately uses the abuse and death of people to deter other asylum seekers.

The government of Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) has responded to the universal anger by attacking immigrants, defending anti-immigrant demonstrations and strengthening the powers of the state.

In an interview with the weekly magazine *Die Zeit*, Minister of the Interior Thomas de Maizière (CDU) referred in just one sentence to the abuses. "If it is confirmed that refugees were abused in these institutions, these were inhuman acts," said the minister. Although two security personnel have publicly acknowledged their actions and clear evidence exists in the form of videos and photos, de Maizière presented the torture in German refugee camps as a mere hypothesis and rejected all responsibility.

De Maizière blamed the refugees for the overcrowding in the camps, the lack of basic hygiene and the inhuman conditions in which they live, all of which have been documented for some time. "Unfortunately the willingness on the part of the refugees to cooperate with the asylum process is often lacking. Many refuse to give their names or say where they come from. They have no identification." These issues, of course, largely correspond to the situation and definition of a "refugee," including legitimate fear of all state agencies and officials.

The interior minister coldly denied that the serious trauma suffered by many refugees and the difficulties of flight were relevant. "When someone wants to have

political protection in a country, it is not too much to demand that they give their name and say where they come from," de Maizière declared.

With de Maizière as defence minister between 2011 and 2013, the German army expanded its foreign operations, encouraged wars and assisted in the destabilisation of entire countries. Patriot missiles were stationed on the Syrian border, war conducted in Afghanistan and soldiers deployed in a dozen countries.

As interior minister, de Maizière is now doing everything in his power to halt the flood of refugees produced by these neo-colonial interventions. The barricading of the European Union's (EU) land borders has forced refugees from Africa and the Middle East to try and reach Europe across the Mediterranean. Over three thousand people have died this year alone attempting the passage. Their blood is on the hands of de Maizière and his counterparts across Europe.

If the refugees make it to Germany, the Dublin Regulation, which Germany fought hard to implement, threatens them with immediate deportation to the EU country where they first arrived. If they are not immediately deported, they are sent to one of the "reception centres," where brutal conditions prevail.

Under these conditions, de Maizière accuses the victims of his policy of not cooperating if they have lost their passport while in flight!

This stance is not merely superficially in line with that of far-right anti-immigrant groups. In the interview, de Maizière explicitly defended demonstrations against accommodation for refugees. "It is always easy to preach tolerance when living in an area where there are no refugee camps," the German interior minister said. In a democracy, such demonstrations were "just as legitimate as a demonstration against a bypass or a train station."

Referring to the “anti-immigrant issues” of the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (AFD), he declared, “Determination is shown in action, not by talking.” Instead of stopping immigrants at the German border, one had to intervene “on the route across the Mediterranean.” Only recently, at the initiative of the German interior ministry, the EU decided to end rescuing refugees at sea, thus allowing refugees to drown.

On the question of whether asylum seekers would be deported more quickly in the future, de Maizière answered decisively, “Yes, one has to be clear about that.” Already between 2012 and 2013, the number of deportations from Germany rose by a third from 7,600 to 10,200.

That de Maizière has responded to the exposure of the terrible conditions in refugee camps by reaffirming his commitment to a more restrictive and anti-immigrant asylum policy shows that the atrocities are not isolated lapses. They are the expression of a barbaric system that the German government has deliberately encouraged and continues to intensify.

De Maizière has not only made clear that the government will not diverge from this policy, but will also intimidate anyone who dares to oppose it. That is why he defended the anti-immigrant demonstrations. It proves that human life and the dignity of human beings are worth nothing to the German ruling elite.

The savage treatment of refugees and de Maizière’s reaction must be taken as a serious warning by workers in Germany and throughout Europe. In the face of the deepening capitalist crisis, the ruling elite will not hesitate to use the same brutality against all sections of workers.

The attacks on migrants are already serving as a means for de Maizière to eliminate core fundamental rights. On Thursday’s edition of ZDF’s *Morgenmagazin* programme, he announced that he would restrict the travel of alleged terrorist suspects and in some cases remove their citizenship. Both moves set a dangerous precedent in abandoning basic democratic rights.



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