

# Hungarian government takes action against refugees

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The government of Prime Minister Victor Orban is taking drastic action against refugees in Hungary. In doing so, the government enjoys the support of the European Union and is working hand in hand with ultra-right forces in the country.

Hungary has begun the construction of a fence along its border with Serbia aimed at restricting the flow of refugees into the country. The first 150-meter long section was built near the town of Mórahalom, around 180 kilometers south of Budapest, according to the interior and defense ministries. Construction is to be completed by the end of November. The fence will be 175 kilometers long and 4 meters tall. The construction sites are protected in large part by military forces.

The cost amounts to roughly 6.5 billion Forint (21 million euros). That is approximately ten times as much as Hungary's current annual expenditures for asylum procedures, refugee housing and border security. Just 2,700 refugees are actually awaiting the outcome of asylum investigations in Hungary. Each year less than 500 are admitted.

According to government figures, currently around 1,000 people cross the Serbian border into Hungary each day. Since the beginning of the year, a total of 80,000 refugees have managed to enter the country this way. Most originate from Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Kosovo. They are fleeing from the catastrophic conditions created by the war policies of the United States and European powers.

Human rights organizations criticize the planned fence as part of a "propaganda campaign of the government against immigrants." But hardly any other European government has spoken out against the plans. On the contrary, Hungary's interior minister Sándor Pintér has confirmed that Hungary's rigid policies are entirely in line with those of the European Union. He

stressed that no protest had been issued from Brussels against the fence.

The inhumane treatment of refugees is not limited to Hungary. Other EU members proceed with similar ruthlessness. In an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* last week, German interior minister Thomas de Maizière said it was "absolutely understandable" if people in Germany have "critical questions" about asylum seekers from Kosovo and Albania. That 40 percent of asylum applicants should come from these Balkan states is "a disgrace for Europe and unacceptable," he said.

The Orban government not only wants to refuse refugees at the border, it also wants to expel them from the cities. A spokesperson for the interior ministry announced that in the future they no longer wanted to have refugees in populated areas. As Orban's chief of staff János Lázár explained, tent camps should be provided as temporary shelters for them instead. In this way, the local population would "not be disturbed by the crowds of refugees." One such camp is to be built on the Serbian border.

Orban ranted that asylum seekers are all "economic refugees." They are "foreign" and would like "to destroy Christian Europe." Refugees are to be criminalized. It will soon be allowed to lock them up longer than 48 hours.

Orban's government collaborates closely with fascistic forces. At the beginning of July, neo-Nazis with connections to the ultra-nationalist Jobbik party launched a provocation against refugees and their Hungarian aides at a train station in the border town of Szeged. The police did not intervene to stop them.

The right-wing extremist demonstration against "overrunning hordes from Africa" at the East Train Station was accompanied by the announcement of

police measures against refugees. The former Jobbik representative György Gyula Zagyva announced at the demonstration “an array of actions on the border and in refugee camps.” The neo-fascist Jobbik has numerous members in police and intelligence agency circles.

With the building of the border fence and the intensification of the attacks on refugees, the government has adopted the policies of the ultra right. Laszlo Toroczkai, mayor of Asotthalom, a town near Szeged, ordered the building of the border fence a year ago. “I am happy that the government has taken up my idea,” he now says.

Toroczkai had founded the right wing extremist group “64 Burgkomitate” in 2001. This fascistic group advocates the restoration of the pre-World War I borders of Greater Hungary. Toroczkai himself took part in attacks by right wing bands on a Hungarian television station in 2006 and was prohibited from entering three neighboring countries because of his provocative behavior. In 2013, he was elected mayor of a small community near Szeged. He openly advocates threatening and expelling refugees.

In Asotthalom as in other areas of Hungary, fascist militias and the regular police collaborate closely. About 20 militias have been partially armed and sent out in pursuit of refugees. Toroczkai proudly told the press that a vigilante group “surrounded” a group of about 100 refugees spending the night in a park in front of the mayor’s office and watched them “until the police took them away. The collaboration works well.”

The *Schweizer Tagesanzeiger* reported how the police deal with refugees in Hungary. They bring refugees “into the former prison Nagyfa near Szeged, where they are investigated and registered and receive a provisional identification document.” Then they are released at the Szeged Train Station and have to find their own way to one of the three refugee camps. “Whoever does not succeed at this within two days loses his residence permit. Not all of them travel further into Western Europe. Many are stranded in public squares in front of train stations or under bridges in cities like Szeged or Budapest. This also includes families with small children,” said the newspaper report.

Last week, an immigrant died while fleeing from the police. According to eyewitnesses, the man was staying at a gas station with other refugees. When a police car

stopped to take him into custody, he fled onto the highway where he was hit by a truck. His family, including his children, were witness to this scene.



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