

Two types of visitors: Germany applies different standards to dictators and their victims

Ute Reissner
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Hundreds of refugees, many of them from the Middle East, have been camped out in the searing heat in front of the central reception centre in Berlin's Moabit district. The conditions are horrific. Women and children are compelled to sleep in the open air. The miserable sanitary conditions are also a danger to the health of the asylum seekers, many of whom have completed long and grueling journeys.

The sympathy from the city's population has been considerable. Organisations supporting refugees have been flooded with donations, and concerned residents have provided water, fruit and blankets.

By contrast, reports constantly claim that the authorities are "overwhelmed". Mario Czaja (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), Berlin state senator responsible for social affairs, sought to make miserable excuses for the situation by declaring—while on holiday—that his colleagues were inundated. The Berlin Senate (state legislature) is now rushing to get the people off the street and cram them into temporary accommodations, so as to deport as many as possible in a short period of time. It is clear that this is a "problem", a "burden" which they intend to get rid of at the lowest price and as quickly as possible.

Whether or not government institutions are snowed under in such circumstances is entirely dependent on who comes to visit. Within close proximity to the refugee centre, foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier met his Saudi Arabian counterpart Adel al-Jubeir on Monday, doubtless in a comfortable, air conditioned, well lubricated environment.

The spending of tens of thousands of euros on the meeting was of no consequence. Jubeir thus discovered, in contrast to the refugees, that Berlin was a "nice,

large and cosmopolitan city".

The situation in the homeland of the honoured guest was described in a December 2014 report by the non-government organisation Bonn International Centre for Conversion: "The human rights situation in Saudi Arabia is bad, since fundamental human and civil rights are ignored. Women are treated as second class citizens, torture is widespread and the death penalty is often passed and carried out. Hard physical punishments (lashings, amputations) are methods frequently used by the regime. The feudal Saudi Arabian regime, which has guaranteed a high degree of internal stability by means of generous spending on the security sector on the one hand and repression on the other, confronts a serious crisis".

The generous aid Germany is rushing to provide the endangered and hated Saudi dictatorship stands in stark contrast to the alleged "overwhelming" of the state by a few thousand refugees. German firms have been equipping the Saudi regime extensively for decades with the most modern weaponry. As the previously cited report notes, German arms exports to Saudi Arabia reached a high point in 2012 of €1237.29 million.

Three-quarters of the military supplies are made up of equipment used in civil war settings, such as "weaponry for securing borders", "target recognition systems", "targeting weapons" and "guided weapons systems". When such lucrative and politically critical business dealings are involved, the red carpet is rolled out.

At the beginning of June, Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was welcomed in Berlin with full honours. The collaboration with blood-soaked

dictatorships in the Middle East is one means by which the German government pursues its economic interests in the region and draws closer to its desired status of an imperialist great power.

All of the establishment parties share this goal. “German firms can make an important contribution to the modernisation of infrastructure”, commented Social Democrat leader Sigmar Gabriel during a visit to Saudi Arabia in March. One month later, Bavarian state premier Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union, CSU) followed him with a phalanx of industrialists. At issue were potential contracts worth billions of euros for arms manufacturers in Bavaria, where Boxer and Leopard tanks are produced.

On the other hand, the people who arrive in European cities as refugees and asylum seekers are victims of the great power politics pursued by Germany and the other imperialist governments. The inhumane treatment to which they are subjected has absolutely nothing to do with the “overwhelming” of the authorities, but is rooted in politics. It shows the kind of treatment that the victims of the imperialist system can expect throughout the world.

The tent cities and old army barracks being established as mass internment centres for refugees must serve as a warning. In a powerful country like Germany, people are once again being confined to camps and treated like dirt. Refugees are not the only ones threatened with this treatment, but everyone for whom the capitalist system has no place and offers no future.



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