

German government adopts drastic measures to deter refugees

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The German government wants to drive away refugees by leaving them to starve and refusing them all medical support. A draft law to this effect has been in discussion between the various ministries since Monday and will be debated in parliament in October.

According to the *Süddeutscher Zeitung*, which has seen the text of the bill, it represents the “harshes restriction of support for refugees in the history of post-war Germany”. So-called “Dublin refugees” would have no right to receive pocket money, accommodations and medical aid, but would merely be provided with a return ticket and some provisions.

The “Dublin refugees” are those who have travelled through other European countries before reaching Germany. Since Germany does not lie on the outer borders of the European Union, this affects almost all those seeking asylum in the country. Under the Dublin Agreement, the country in which a refugee first arrives is responsible for accepting them and their asylum application.

In the last weeks, the Dublin Agreement had collapsed as a result of the high number of refugees fleeing to Europe from Syria. By tightening up the right to asylum, the German government clearly wants to “stabilise the Dublin system again”, according to the *Süddeutscher Zeitung*.

This change in policy is being conducted on the backs of refugees, who are refused the most basic rights. They are to be scared away through hunger and homelessness, and transported back like cattle to countries where unspeakable conditions prevail and where they are confined in virtual concentration camps.

Three weeks ago, Chancellor Angela Merkel, responding to a wave of solidarity from the German population, had promised to let in refugees from war-torn areas in the Middle East, underscoring this with

the words, “We can do it”. Since then, her government has systematically worked to close off Germany’s borders—and the other European countries have followed suit.

The border between Hungary and Serbia, through which numerous refugees had come to Austria and Germany last week, has now been hermetically sealed off by a metres-high barbed wire fence, guarded by a massive police-military force.

Hungarian President Viktor Orbán has received much international criticism for his brutal treatment of refugees. However, by closing the border he is merely doing what the German and other European governments have demanded of him. By tightening up the asylum laws, Germany is adopting Orbán’s own brutal methods.

Following the closure of the Hungarian border, many refugees have sought to travel from Serbia to Austria via Croatia and Slovenia. In the last two days alone, 11,000 refugees have crossed the Serbian-Croatian border.

Since Croatia has offered them virtually no support, dramatic scenes have ensued. On Thursday at the Tovarnik border crossing, thousands of refugees sat for hours without any food or water. When they attempted to continue their journey on foot, they were held back by police.

In the meantime, both Croatia and Slovenia have sealed their borders. On Thursday night, Zagreb closed seven of eight border crossings to Serbia and placed the army on standby. Slovenia halted a train and sent back 150 refugees to Zagreb, saying their papers were not valid. Train links between the two countries were halted temporarily.

In the Mediterranean, EU military operations are entering their second phase. Refugee ships will not only

be observed but captured, the traffickers arrested and the boats sunk. This escalation of military operations is also aimed at sealing off escape routes for refugees.

The European Union is also working at top speed to close the routes for refugees from Turkey via the Greek Aegean islands. At present, some 2 million refugees from Syria are in Turkey. In a 2002 agreement, the Turkish government had pledged to return “illegal” immigrants coming from Greece, but is not currently complying with this agreement.

The EU now wants to ensure that Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan keep hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees by offering financial inducements.

As well as seeking to repel refugees fleeing war in the Middle East and Africa, the tightening of Germany’s asylum laws is also meant to stop the influx of refugees from the poorer Balkan countries and Eastern Europe.

To this end, Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro have been declared “safe countries of origin”. Refugees from these countries will be refused the right to work, preventing them being granted legal residency status, which requires having a job. Moreover, they will now have to remain in a reception camp for six months instead of three, and would only receive benefits in kind, rather than money.



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