

Hungary expedites deportation of refugees

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The Hungarian government of Viktor Orbán has begun to deport refugees in expedited processing procedures. In order to get around international and European laws, which grant war refugees the right to a regular asylum procedure, it is engaging in dirty legal tricks.

In the middle of September, a new law went into effect that punishes border crossings as serious crimes that can be punished with prison or deportation. Refugees who come into the country will not be viewed as applicants for asylum, but rather as criminals who will be taken to court and deported immediately.

The Hungarian government has posted notices in Arab newspapers that say that refugees are unwelcome in Hungary and will be punished severely. It has secured its 175 kilometre-long border with Serbia with barbed wire and barriers and posted soldiers to keep guard.

The responsible court in Szeged has already deported 276 people after charging them for illegally crossing the border and has banned them from reentering. Because, according to the police, hundreds of “border violators” are picked up every day, the government is planning to quadruple the number of expedited procedures.

To this end, hundreds of additional judges all over the country will be ordered to border areas to judge refugees in a seven-day-a-week, three-shift system like an assembly line. In addition to the court in Szeged, additional courts in southern Hungarian states will be tasked with such expedited procedures.

Spiegel Online published a report on these procedures. According to the report, 25-year-old Mahomed Rahmoni fled from the Taliban in Afghanistan with his parents and siblings in July. On the evening of September 17, he was picked up along with two dozen other people while crossing the border by police with sniffer dogs. His proceeding lasted less

than an hour. After 50 minutes he was sentenced to immediate deportation and banned from reentering the country for two years. The judge rejected an application from his lawyer to suspend the procedure because Hungary’s asylum and refugee legislation contradicts the Geneva Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Hungary’s actions violate the Geneva Convention on refugees in multiple respects. It has declared Serbia a “safe third country,” even although, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Serbia does not have an adequately developed asylum system. Refugees between the ages of 14 and 18 will be treated like adults under the law. The courts will no longer be required to translate indictments and sentences into the native language of the accused, making defence a practical impossibility.

Nevertheless, there has been scarcely any opposition within the legal system to the suspension of normal legal requirements in the case of refugees. “The political pressure is so great,” *Spiegel Online* quoted retired judge and former spokesperson of the Hungarian National Council of Justice, Zsuzsa Sándor. “No one wants to risk one’s career,” she said.

Deportation out of Hungary has terrible consequences for refugees. Most of them try to reach Western Europe from Serbia by traveling through Croatia. The conditions in Croatia are catastrophic and the Croatian government also wants to get rid of refugees as quickly as possible.

Regardless of the illegal methods Orbán is employing against refugees, he has the full support of the European Union. Occasionally he receives superficial reminders from Brussels that he should at least adhere to the letter of the law for the sake of form. At the same time, the EU is putting enormous pressure on him not to allow any more refugees to continue their travels into Austria and Germany.

Orbán has gloated openly about his inhumane treatment of refugees. With undisguised racism, he has accused the refugees of destroying “the values and the strength that we have developed in the last centuries.” He claimed it was not a refugee crisis, but a “mass migration movement,” consisting of economic refugees, asylum seekers and “foreign fighters”. Most resembled “soldiers more than asylum seekers,” he said on public radio.

Orbán is intentionally mobilizing a right-wing, anti-foreigner mob with these statements. Assaults on refugees and their helpers by right-wing gangs close to the extreme right-wing Jobbik party take place with increasing frequency.

The government is using the brutal treatment of refugees and the stirring up of anti-foreigner sentiment to prepare attacks on the Hungarian population. At a recent press conference, Orbán’s right-hand man, Janos Lazar, announced emergency measures in the coming year to combat the decrease in economic growth. To this end, there will be 107 new laws or changes to existing laws. These changes will involve massive layoffs of public sector employees.



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