German conservative parties plan concentration camps for refugees

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No measure is disreputable enough for the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) parties in Germany when it comes to repelling, intimidating and bullying refugees. “All options are on the table,” CSU state leader Gerda Hasselfeld recently demanded.

The most significant restriction of the right to asylum in 23 years, which includes major cuts to social welfare and the lengthening of internment periods for refugees, has not even been passed by parliament. But the next package of reforms is already being prepared. According to the plans, concentration camps are to be established for refugees at Germany’s borders.

There is significant opposition from the CDU/CSU’s coalition partner, the social democrats (SPD), to these camps, described euphemistically as “transit zones.” However, the Interior Ministry led by Thomas de Maizière (CDU) has already prepared a draft law that is currently being discussed within the responsible ministries.

The Bavarian state government has already applied considerable pressure on the federal government to halt the influx of refugees. State premier Horst Seehofer (CSU) rhetorically declared a “state of emergency” and announced emergency defence measures.

“As an emergency measure, sending refugees back must take place immediately at the borders,” the Bavarian government demanded. If the federal government did not actively intervene here, “the Bavarian Free State [reserved] the right to adopt measures appropriate to the circumstances.” Heribert Prantl described such threats in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* as “ways of thinking of an absolutist state.” Despite this, the CDU and Chancellor Angela Merkel took up the plan as its own.

Refugees will no longer be brought to reception centres, but will be detained directly at the border and selected for sped-up asylum processing. Only those whose asylum application is deemed credible will be allowed to travel into Germany. All others will be refused entry and a normal asylum procedure.

To this end, a juridical fiction will be established that refugees have not entered Germany territory at the border. The “transit zones” will become a legal “no-man’s-land,” where refugees will be interned for the duration of the proceedings. The hearings will be held by personnel trained by the federal police, which is also responsible for guarding the camps.

Refugees accused of providing contradictory information or “lying about their identity,” who cannot provide documentation, or asylum seekers from so-called safe countries of origin who have been accepted by a “safe third state” either within or outside the European Union (EU), will be rejected. These states include Kosovo, Morocco, Algeria, and soon Turkey, which is torn by civil war-like conditions.

These categories can be expanded at will and could be arbitrarily used against virtually any refugee. In addition, the refugees will only have extremely limited opportunities to challenge a rejection in the courts. There will be practically no access to legal aid and lawyers.

To secure a comprehensive review of refugees at the border, the land borders to neighbouring states will have to be permanently guarded. The construction of border fences several metres high along the Hungarian model is the logical consequence, resulting in the total abandonment of the Schengen Agreement, which the German government had in any case suspended to bring in border controls.

Given that currently several thousand refugees are crossing the German border daily, huge prison

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complexes will have to be built to detain them. Massively overcrowded camps with interned refugees will rapidly emerge along the entire German border. Plans for this are already far advanced. “I believe we will reach a result next week,” said Chancellor’s Office minister Peter Altmeier, who was recently made responsible for coordinating the refugee issue.

Altmeier added that the transit zones were not a German invention, but emerged within the framework of EU guidelines. The EU Parliament and Council of Ministers had come to the conclusion that transit zones would “make sense under certain conditions. We are implementing this now.” The head of the Chancellor’s Office explained, “Given the huge number of refugee applications, no option can be excluded which accelerates the asylum process.”

Chancellor Merkel struck a similar tone. Although she has been presented in the media as a “Mother Theresa” for refugees, she fully supports all measures to repel those fleeing war, civil war and societal breakdown. At the meeting of the parliamentary fractions of the CDU/CSU on Tuesday, she spoke out clearly in favour of establishing “transit zones,” because these would help in certain cases with the problem of increased refugee numbers.

In truth, this is nothing more than the creation of concentration camps for refugees. The model for this is not the concentration camps of the Nazi regime, which started by murdering political prisoners and subsequently carried out the extermination of the Jews, but their predecessors, the concentration camps of the Weimar Republic.

To organise the mass rejection and deportation of refugees fleeing from anti-Semitic persecution in Eastern Europe prior to and after World War I, who were described as “Eastern Jews,” the Bavarian government established a camp in Ingolstadt in 1920, which was officially openly described as a “concentration camp.” The Prussian government followed suit in 1921 with concentration camps at Cottbus and Stagard in Pomerania, where Jews designated for deportation were interned.

With the plans for transit zones, and the cutting off of refugees from all legal remedies, the German government is drawing from this authoritarian tradition. This is so apparent that there have even been several skeptical comments in the media. In an ARD comment, Marion von Haaren described the plans as absurd. “If one is honest, this is nothing other than internment camps,” she said.

The plan was also criticised by the SPD, the coalition partner of the CDU/CSU. Justice Minister Heiko Maas told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, “Detaining tens of thousands of refugees on the borders creates more problems than it solves.” These were not “transit zones,” but “detention zones” in “mass camps in no-man’s-land.” The refugee crisis could not be resolved “by barricading Germany.”

The SPD’s differences are above all of a tactical nature. They are afraid of antagonising potential voters who are outraged by the plans and view refugees with sympathy. While the SPD opposes concentration camps for refugees in Germany (at least for the time being), the party supports the construction of such camps on the EU’s external borders. The so-called hot spots and reception centres that are currently being constructed in Italy, Bulgaria and Greece at Germany’s initiative are nothing but concentration camps. In the “hot spots,” the EU border protection agency Frontex is to select refugees and immediately deport rejected asylum seekers.

The six camps planned in Turkey, which will accommodate 2 million people and will be funded by a billion euros from the EU, are also equivalent to internment camps.

With the plan to detain asylum seekers in concentration camps on the German border, the German government is pursuing a barbaric course similar to those of other governments around the world in dealing with the growing number of refugees. They are being forced into illegality, without any perspective for the future.

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