

# German conservative parties call for harsh border controls

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The leaderships of the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), agreed Sunday to a comprehensive programme to deter, detain and expel refugees. The parties adopted a six-page document falsely entitled, “Helping people in emergencies, regulating and directing immigration and securing integration,” which robs refugees of elementary democratic rights.

There is no reference in the document to providing emergency assistance to those seeking protection. Instead, the CDU/CSU intend to “regulate and direct immigration, as well as tackling the causes of refugee flight so as to reduce the number of refugees.”

The first point identifies the establishment of transit zones “as the most urgent measure to improve control of our borders.” This refers to internment camps close to the border which can incarcerate refugees from so-called “safe countries of origin,” rejected asylum seekers who appeal the decision or are barred from re-entry, as well as refugees without papers who are accused of “falsifying their identity.”

These refugees will be denied legal due process. Instead, their asylum applications will be dealt with in accelerated proceedings so that the refugees can be deported as soon as possible. “Safe countries of origin” include Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Turkey and Afghanistan are to be added in the near future.

To ensure that refugees end up in these camps, the CDU/CSU have concocted a perfidious plan. Asylum seekers falling into the category for the sped-up asylum procedure but not in the transit zones will have all social assistance cut, apart from the absolute minimum for survival. Their applications will not be processed at other locations. The refugees will thus be left with the

choice between the frying pan and the fire: an internment camp and almost certain deportation or going underground into illegality with virtually no means of survival.

To detain asylum seekers, the “transit zones” will be surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by police. Despite this, the CDU/CSU are insisting that they are not “detention centres.” They cynically make reference to a ruling by Germany’s Constitutional Court on asylum procedures at airports. Unlike the European Court of Justice, the Constitutional Court does not consider the detention of refugees on the grounds of airports to be internment, because these people have the option of choosing to return to their country of origin. The CDU/CSU now asserts with inhumane cynicism that refugees are free to leave the transit zones at any time, “however only to return home.”

The plan detailed in point four to suspend “family reunification for applicants with subsidiary protection for two years” is no less repugnant. “Those requiring subsidiary protection” refer to refugees who although not meeting the high standards for political asylum or the Geneva Refugee Convention, are granted the right to reside because deporting them would expose them to torture, the death penalty or other serious threats to life.

Family reunification is not a privilege to be granted, but rather firmly established as a basic right in article 6 of Germany’s Basic Law and in the European Convention on Human Rights. The planned suspension of family reunification will first of all impact refugee families from Afghanistan and Iraq. As a result, families will have to undertake the long and life-threatening journey with babies, small children, the elderly and the infirm to receive protection.

The CDU/CSU are also planning in the future to grant refugees from Syria only “subsidiary protection,”

justified on the basis that they travelled through the allegedly “safe” country of Turkey. They would then be denied the right to reunite their families. Given the dozens of children who have drowned off the Greek islands in the past few weeks alone, the CDU/CSU are playing with the lives of minors.

The next point calls for the “recognition of the provision of language and integration courses in the future as part of the sociocultural minimum for survival.” The grant previously provided by the federal agency for immigration and refugees to attend language and integration courses will thus be eliminated.

Although it states in another section of the document, “we fully promote the rapid learning of the German language and integration into the labour market,” this is quickly exposed as hollow rhetoric. This is particularly the case since the availability of language courses for refugees with a “good prospect of staying” only applies to those from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Eritrea. Refugees from countries like Afghanistan or Somalia continue to be systematically denied the opportunity to learn German.

The second part of the paper lists measures on the European and international level. Here also the sealing off of the European union is identified as an urgent goal to “reduce the number of refugees.” “The protection of the EU’s external borders,” which is currently not being achieved, is to be re-established. This is a less than subtle demand that the Italian and Greek governments further strengthen the walls of “fortress Europe” and turn back refugee boats. “The illegal smuggling and immigration,” according to the paper, has to be ended.

Since there is no legal avenue for refugees to enter the EU, this amounts to the ruthless sealing off of all refugee routes. This includes the rapid identification, registration and screening of refugees in “hot spots” close to the EU’s external borders. Asylum seekers are to be detained there as in Germany’s transit zones until they are deported or distributed to other EU member countries

The Union parties also advocate the calling of a conference between the EU and Turkey on the refugee crisis. Turkey is to be made to act as the supreme guardian of Europe’s borders in exchange for financial assistance, the prospect of the relaxation of visa regulations and continuation of talks for EU

membership. By means of a repatriation agreement, refugees will be deported from the EU to Turkey, even though the government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan tramples human rights underfoot.

The CDU and CSU also intend to conclude an additional repatriation agreement with Bangladesh, as well as for a more effective implementation of an existing agreement with Pakistan to accelerate the deportation process from Germany.

The report also intends to extend the country’s military intervention in Afghanistan, although the 14-year-old war led by the US and its European allies has produced devastation forcing hundreds of thousands to flee. In cooperation with the US army, the German army is to work to “create domestic refuge alternatives” so that asylum seekers can be rejected and deported back into chaotic conditions.

The country report on Afghanistan by the federal agency for immigration and refugees, which is the basis for asylum decisions, is to be “reviewed and adjusted.” In other words, it is to be arbitrarily manipulated so as to conjure up “domestic refuge alternatives” by bureaucratic fiat. At the same time, a repatriation agreement with the Afghan government on the European level will be concluded.

Similar procedures are to be adopted with refugees originating from African countries. At the upcoming EU-Africa summit in Valetta in mid-November, the German government intends to impose the “more-for-more principle.” The level of development aid would thus be made conditional on the willingness of each government to cooperate in preventing refugees from emigrating or traveling on to Europe, and accepting repatriation agreements.

The dictatorial regimes in Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan are explicitly named as partners, even though they are responsible for severe violations of human rights. These governments are to receive financial assistance if they “combat commercial smugglers,” with arms if necessary.



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