

# Left Party prepares mass deportations in German state of Thuringia

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The response of the German Left Party to the ongoing refugee crisis has revealed its true nature as an instrument of austerity and political reaction.

While large sections of Germany's population have responded with solidarity for the plight of refugees, despite the negative propaganda from politicians and the media, the Left Party's reaction has been one of increasing hostility. It supports the inhumane refugee policies of the federal government and implements them with brutal severity wherever it is in power.

This is most evident in the state of Thuringia, where Bodo Ramelow has been the Left Party state premier since the end of last year. Ramelow's state government, a coalition of the Left Party, Social Democratic Party and Green Party, acts so aggressively against refugees that even the pro-Left Party *Junge Welt* newspaper talks of it being in "deportation mode" and of making "deportation profitable."

The state government controlled by the Left Party has announced it will deport thousands of refugees by the end of the year and create a hub for mass deportations from the entire country. According to media reports, the state government is holding intensive discussions about these plans with the Federal Police and the operators of airports in Erfurt and Altenburg-Nobitz.

Representatives of the coalition make no secret about their plans. On Tuesday, the *Thüringer Allgemeine* quoted the State Minister for Migration, Justice and Consumer Protection in Ramelow's cabinet, Dieter Lauinger (Green), as saying, "of course, these airports come into question due to their under utilization. If the Federal Police decide on this, we will not oppose it, anyway."

Other representatives of the governing parties in Thuringia could hardly contain their excitement about establishing a centre for mass deportations on their

doorstep. For example, Nobitz Mayor Hendrik Läbe (SPD), speaking to the *Ostthüringer* newspaper, pointed to a whole range of "benefits" that favoured the Altenburg-Nobitz airfield. The airfield lay "at the heart" between Thuringia, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt and was equipped for all-weather operations. In addition, military aircraft can take off and land around the clock.

Similar statements have come from the Altenburg District Administration, in which the Nobitz municipality is situated. Some have claimed an advantage in that deportation traffic from Altenburg-Nobitz would not be hindered by scheduled flights. Currently, only private aircraft fly from there, a spokeswoman for the authority stressed. The company owning the airport, in which the largest shareholder is Altenburg County under district chief Michaele Sojka (Left Party), sees the creation of a deportation centre as an opportunity to tap into additional sources of revenue.

Regardless of this, the state government is already preparing mass deportations. Ramelow told the *Thüringer Allgemeine*, without mincing words, of a "four-figure number" by the end of the year. The number of repatriations will continue to rise. "This must be made clear to people who have no prospect of remaining," threatened Ramelow, who added, "There will be no blanket ban on deportations. I stand by this."

Last year, shortly after taking office, the first "Left Party" state premier issued a so-called halt to winter deportations for rejected asylum seekers from 15 countries with harsh winters. Even then, it was not much more than campaign rhetoric to cover up the reactionary agenda of the Left Party with some humanitarian phrases. Overall, only some 150 asylum-seekers benefited from the decision.

After Ramelow and the Left Party lined up behind the

war drive of the federal government last year, they now turn out to be an essentially right-wing political force when it comes to the refugee issue.

A prime example is the series of interviews given by Gregor Gysi to various media outlets in October before giving up his post as parliamentary leader of the Left Party. For example, in an interview with broadcaster Deutschlandfunk, he accused the Bavarian state premier Horst Seehofer of making the far-right Alternative for Germany party “socially acceptable”. But then he only went on to implement policies it calls for.

Among other things, Gysi advocated that deportations be organised “faster” and “unbureaucratically”, pointing to Ramelow’s policy in Thuringia. “If we manage to do that, for example, that the decision is made quickly [whether an asylum seeker is allowed to stay or not], then there is greater legal certainty, then there are also deportations. They are also happening in Thuringia, where the state premier is from the Left Party because he is bound by federal law. One can organise these things a lot faster and less bureaucratically than currently happens. And that helps!”

Then Gysi attacked the federal government’s foreign policy from the right, and under the guise of “fighting for the cause of refugees”, blatantly called for a much wider intervention by German imperialism in the Middle East. “I would say ... What have we done in Syria? We’ve just been watching. ... We now have to work seriously to eliminate the causes of flight. Otherwise it will be unmanageable.”



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