

Germany doubles number of deportations

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According to official figures from Germany's interior ministry, 18,363 people were forcibly deported in the first eleven months of this year. This is almost double the rate from last year, when 10,884 were deported. In 2012, the figure was just 7,651.

If one takes into account those who have "voluntarily" left following pressure from the authorities, research from the media organisation Integration indicates that 35,000 refugees were compelled to leave Germany this year. In addition, there is a further unknown number of refugees who have moved or returned home at their own initiative.

The deportations not only affected refugees who had come to Germany and had their asylum applications rejected. Even people who have lived in the country for years, or were born there, have been deported to countries recently classified as "safe countries of origin."

The inhumane consequences of the restriction of the right to asylum adopted by Germany's parliament in an emergency sitting in October are now plain to see. According to the change, the Balkan states of Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia were recognised as "safe countries of origin", meaning that even people who had lived in Germany for decades and assumed that their toleration amounted to a right to reside could be sent back.

If interior minister Thomas de Maizière has his way then Turkey, Afghanistan and Syria (if a no-fly zone is established) could also soon be declared "safe countries of origin". There would then be no hurdles to prevent mass deportations of tens of thousands.

Since those obliged to leave are no longer informed of the timetable for deportation, in order to prevent them from going underground, countless numbers of people wait night after night for the knock on their door from the police, ready to snatch them from their beds without warning and bring them to the nearest airport. They are then transported into a country that younger family members have never seen, whose language they can hardly speak and which offers them neither work nor a humane standard of living. Babies, school-age children,

the elderly and infirm have been affected.

One can only imagine what these people are living through. Such conditions are familiar only under police-state dictatorships. According to figures from the police officers' trade union, 190,000 people required to leave the country currently live in Germany. This number could quickly rise, since hundreds of thousands of refugees who have arrived this year are yet to be registered, let alone granted asylum status.

The deportations are taking place, literally and in reality, under the cover of darkness. Press representatives are barred from having contact with any of those affected. Press reports have appeared in recent days detailing conditions at Frankfurt airport, where "deportees," as they are referred to in the inhumane language of the authorities, are handed over to the federal police and flown out of the country. But journalists could only base themselves on statements by anonymous officials and members of support organisations. "It is impossible to interview those affected. In Hesse, journalists are not currently allowed to accompany those deported," a DPA report states.

The report then cites Robert Seither from Caritas, which is allowed to accompany those affected to the planes. "The people arrive here shocked." Many have been woken up in the middle of the night and were only given a maximum of an hour to pack their things. They are outraged, incensed or resigned.

One of the few cases covered by the media was that of the Berlin rapper Prince-H. The Roma man, whose real name is Hikmet Prizreni, fled from Kosovo at age 7 with his parents in 1988. He grew up in Essen and has been detained awaiting deportation since October. Other rappers, such as Sido, have spoken up in his defence.

The new asylum law also plans the establishment of detention centres, where refugees can be held until the conclusion of their asylum application and then immediately be deported.

Television channel ZDF's Heute Journal programme reported Monday on the arrival and deportation centre in

Bamberg, Bavaria. 850 refugees from western Balkan countries are currently being accommodated on the grounds of a barracks, all of whom are due to be deported in the near future. In total, up to 4,500 people can be accommodated there.

Heute Journal introduced the Gashi family from Kosovo, who had arrived in Bamberg recently. Prior to this they lived for a year in their own apartment near Schweinfurt, where they were well-integrated and the children went to school. The father, Bajram Gashi, explained in fluent German that they had learned in a letter from the government of Lower Franconia at 4 p.m. that they had to move to Bamberg. If they were not in Bamberg by 12 p.m. the next day, they would be collected by the police. “We only had a few hours time,” said Bajram.

The Gashi family is not a unique case. Around 400 refugee families had to move to Bamberg overnight in recent days. They had no time to pack, nor to say goodbye to friends, neighbours and school friends.

The increasing number and ruthlessness of the deportations is undoubtedly connected with the new asylum law passed by parliament with the support of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union and Social Democrats in October. This is shown alone by the increase in numbers. Whereas by the end of April 4,508 people were deported nationwide, at the end of June it was 8,178, 11,522 by the end of August and 18,363 by the end of November.

However, the carrying out of the deportations is in practice the responsibility of state governments rather than the federal government. In this respect, Bavaria leads with 3,643 deportations. The number of deportations from Bavaria has trebled since last year. The same applies to Baden-Württemberg and Hesse.

This is particularly significant since the Greens, who like to portray themselves as friends of refugees, govern in both states. In Baden-Württemberg the party holds the state premiership in the person of Winfried Kretschmann. In Hesse they govern in a coalition with the CDU. Hesse is seen as a trial run for a CDU/Green coalition at the national level.

Kretschmann recently visited an emergency asylum centre established with support from the German army and hailed it as a model to bring back “structure and order” for dealing with refugees.

The Left Party is also deporting refugees. In Thuringia, where the Left Party’s Bodo Ramelow is premier, the number of deportations has declined slightly in

comparison to last year. But here, refugees are also often accommodated under inhumane conditions. The Left Party put forward the proposal to separate refugees in their accommodation along ethnic lines and seal off the camps with high fences.

The Left Party/SPD/Green coalition in Thuringia is persecuting refugees so aggressively that even the Left Party-aligned *Junge Welt* described it as “operating in deportation mode” and “deporting cost-effectively.”

Refugees who are not deported confront bullying from the authorities. One example of this is the great lengths they have to go to in order to obtain the right to reunite with their families. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* recently reported about Adnan Ghnema, a 31-year-old Syrian refugee from Aleppo, who travelled to Europe on a smuggler’s boat and lived with his brother in the district of Munich. For months, he sought to bring his family out of the war zone to Germany. Ultimately in August, he learned from Facebook that his pregnant wife Yasmin had been killed in a bombing.

Even after the death of his wife, it took months before he could bring his two small children to Germany. To fulfil the preconditions, the German authorities demanded the birth certificates of the two children, ages 3 and 5, even though one of the children was born as the family fled, as well as a death certificate for his wife, who was killed in a rain of bombs. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* quoted Ghnema as saying, “Sometimes I think that the German authorities still haven’t realised that war is raging in Syria.”

While the German government is stepping up its military interventions in Syria, Afghanistan and Mali, with the full support of all parties in parliament, thereby turning more people into refugees, the number of deportations from Germany is being systematically increased and ruthlessly implemented. These developments are two sides of the same coin.



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