

Large numbers of refugees brutally deported from Germany

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4 January 2016

Since the tightening of restrictions on the right to asylum decided by the majority of the German parliament in October, many more refugees have been deported. At the end of November, the number of people forcibly deported from Germany was already nearly twice as high as in the entire previous year.

However, there has not just been a quantitative increase in deportations. The brutality and inhumanity of the deportations have also reached a new level. Not only refugees who arrived recently have been deported, but also people who have already lived in Germany for a long time, some of them ill.

The state of Bavaria, whose government is headed by the Christian Social Union (CSU), has treated the refugees especially cruelly. The number of deportations from Bavaria in the first 11 months of the year has quadrupled compared to the previous year.

The first deportation camps for refugees from the Balkans were also set up in Bavaria. The camps, officially dubbed “Arrival and Return Institutions” (ARE), are the practical implementation of the transit zones that the CSU demanded for months, but was unable to implement. The only difference consists in the fact that they do not lie directly on the border as the CSU had originally demanded.

Refugees from countries in the West Balkans were gathered in the deportation camps after these countries were recently declared “safe countries of origin” in order to deport them as quickly as possible. Refugees from these countries are no longer recognised as having a right to asylum in Germany.

Part of the purpose of the camps is to serve as deterrence. When the first camp was opened at the beginning of September on the grounds of the former armed forces barracks in Manching, near Ingolstadt, Bavarian Social Minister Emilia Müller (CSU) said: “I am certain that it will soon be said in Kosovo, in Albania,

in Montenegro, in Serbia, in all the countries of the West Balkans, that the journey to Germany as an asylum seeker is definitely not worth it.”

The concerns of the Bavarian Refugee Council were simply brushed aside. It called the centre a “special camp with a deportation airport” and warned that there were also asylum seekers from the Balkans who had a right to protection against persecution—above all, Sinti and Roma who were persistently discriminated against.

Since then, several reports have appeared revealing the inhumane conditions in deportation camps.

A report in *Die Zeit* on December 23 discusses the “institutions of arrival and sending back” in the Bavarian city of Bamberg. At the time of the report, 854 people were to be deported. According to the plans of the Bavarian state government, this number will rise to 4,500 by the end of March.

Many of the people in the camp had already lived in Germany for a long time. “Most of the people one talks to here can speak German. Their children went to normal schools till a short time ago, had friends and ideas about their future in Germany,” *Die Zeit* reports. Now their children are not allowed to attend normal schools. At the moment, two teachers are in charge of 160 children of all ages.

The refugees in the deportation institutions in Bamberg are largely cut off from the outside world. The initial registration station for newly arrived refugees and the Immigration Authority are located directly inside the institution.

Peter Immeler, who leads the Bamberg branch office of the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees, justified the new strategy in Bavaria to *Die Zeit*, saying that “the priority was enforcement.” He and his team only needed five to 10 days to come to an asylum decision. And this serves, he said, as an example for the creation of further deportation centres in other states.

Under the title “Refugees without the prospect of residency—out, and quickly”, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published an article on December 14 about the ARE Bamberg camp.

The report covered, among other things, the fate of a six-person family from Kosovo. A son of the family, Muhamet, suffers from epileptic seizures. He can get medications and good medical care in Germany, but in Kosovo this is not possible. His mother said, “If we have to go back to Kosovo, then Muhamet does not have a chance.” She fears for his life if he does not receive the necessary medical care.

Fourteen-year-old Muhamet has other medical issues on top of his epilepsy. He is also mentally and physically handicapped and is blind and can barely hear. On the flight to Germany a year and a half ago, his father held him on his arm the entire time. While there is no cure for his condition, he is no longer in pain thanks to the medications and therapy he received in Germany.

But none of that counts for anything in the eyes of the authorities, who have decided to deport him and his entire family. Muhamet is no exception, as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* demonstrated by means of a number of other tragic cases, including that of a wife and mother who is very sick with cancer.

In addition to children and the sick, many others from the Balkan states were also brought to ARE Bamberg. Some of them have lived and worked in Germany for many years, speak German and have children. Some were born in Germany, go to school and are integrated. However, they are being deported as recklessly and quickly as possible.

According to the account in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* at the beginning of December, almost 800 refugees from the Balkans living in Frankonia, Oberpfalz and Lower Bavaria received almost the exact same order in their mailboxes: “Pack your suitcases immediately, off to Bamberg”. Anyone not willing to go was threatened by the authorities with police violence and “enforcement by means of immediate compulsion”.

Bavaria is not the only state that is proceeding with rigid and reckless deportations. The government of North Rhine-Westphalia, a coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Greens, bragged that it had deported more refugees by the end of November (3,845) than Bavaria.

There is a bizarre dispute between the opposition inside the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the government over whether or not deportations should be

announced in advance. Minister President Hannelore Kraft (SPD) had promised at the end of October that no family in North Rhine-Westphalia would be woken in the middle of the night and deported without warning. Opposition leader Armin Laschet therefore accused her of circumventing the further restrictions placed on the right to asylum by the federal parliament.

According to the new rules, those who are being forced to leave and who do not “freely” depart within seven to 30 days will be deported without warning. This was justified with the claim that otherwise they would go into hiding or pretend to be sick.

Kraft’s promise was, however, worthless. Recently, a family from Albania living in Ibbenbüren were woken up at three in the morning and brought to Düsseldorf on a special flight.

Since then, a competition has broken out between states over which one deports the most asylum seekers and refugees. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported this on December 21 in an article headlined “The great wave of deportations is ahead”.

The Left Party is also participating in the competition. The only state premier in its ranks, Bodo Ramelow in Thuringia, complained about the figures of the federal Interior Ministry, which showed that Thuringia was the only state that had deported fewer refugees in 2015 than in the previous year.

Ramelow would not allow this “disgrace” to stand. He claimed that by the end of November Thuringia had deported 242 people, not 152. By December 21, it had deported 460 people. “That is clearly more than in the entire year of 2014”, said Oliver Will, spokesperson of the Thuringia Ministry for Migration, Justice and Consumer Protection.

Saxony also complained about the Interior Ministry’s statistics. The state claimed that by the end of November, 1,497 people had been deported, not the 692 people reported by the Interior Ministry. In November alone, 745 people had been deported, Saxony claimed.

If these numbers from the states are accurate, then in this year alone 20,000 people have already been deported from Germany, the majority since restrictions were placed on the right to asylum in October.



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