

Berlin senate speeds up deportations of refugees

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On March 11 the Berlin senator for health and social issues, Mario Czaja (Christian Democratic Union/CDU), announced the introduction of the so-called refugee passport in Berlin. The passport is part of the implementation of the Asylum Package II. The passport serves above all to sort asylum seekers according to their national origin, religion and work qualifications, and thereby accelerate the deportations of all those who fail to make the mark.

The Berlin senate is taking the lead role in implementing the decision of the German government last December to introduce a single form of entry document for the entire country by the end of May. The Federal Assembly approved the plan at the end of January.

The German government wants to use the passport to sort refugees and speed up the asylum procedure and prevent “abuse” through repeated registration. New arrivals will receive the passport and it will also be issued to all refugees who have already been staying in Germany for a longer period of time because of their asylum status and will be allowed to remain for a limited time.

Fingerprints, names, personal information, religious faith, national origin, data on health exams, school education and professional training or other qualifications, as well as the German address of asylum seekers, will be stored centrally and be accessible to all government authorities, supposedly “with the exception of the office for the protection of the constitution.”

In future, it will be impossible to apply for asylum or social assistance without a refugee passport. The residence requirement that was tightened up in Asylum Package II can also be checked in this way.

The Berlin senate has expanded the registration center on Kruppstraße, the former location of a jail, to facilitate the new registration system. The accelerated process will be carried out here instead of the Regional Office for Health and Social Affairs (Lageso) or the branch office on

the Bundesallee. The new registration system known as Ankuna was installed and tested here for a month.

Czaja boasted that the center could register 700 asylum seekers within 24 hours. He told media representatives that the aim is efficiency, oversight and security. A state attorney as well as police and soldiers have been deployed to this end. He said that everything would be explained to the refugees so that they would not be “fearful” of incarceration in former prison cells.

The senator described the planned procedure as follows: after a photo is taken, a meal ticket and a routing slip with the name of the asylum seeker will be issued, including information such as country of origin, language and birthdate, and Ankuna devices would take fingerprints. Then the police will take over and make a nationwide security check. They are empowered to carry out a strip search if the refugees refuse to give up passport documents they brought with them. On the second day, according to Czaja, refugees will then receive services, the electronic health card and their refugee passport.

The haste with which the Berlin government has introduced the refugee passport after only a one-month test phase contrasts sharply with the bureaucratic indifference of the social services senate and its Lageso authorities toward the basic needs of refugees and their right to humane living conditions and adequate nourishment.

Refugees still have to wait six weeks before they receive an appointment at the services location of the Lageso, Christinane Beckmann, spokesperson for the support initiative Moabit Helps, told the WSWs last week.

Beckmann reported that about 200 people come to them every day to line up for hygiene products, clothing and various urgent necessities. “When one receives an advance of only €100...and needs two BVG [Berlin Transport Services] monthly tickets costing €36 each

during a five or six week waiting period, then there is not much left over,” she said. “The people cannot afford the most urgent necessities and they lack basics in their lodgings.”

Meanwhile, despair is spreading among refugees in Berlin. In particular, the closing of the Balkan route and the restriction or elimination of family reunions has worsened the situation.

In the past, it was mostly men who ventured on the dangerous journey to Europe over land or sea routes in the hope that they could securely bring their wives and children after them as soon as they had found work and suitable lodgings. According to Beckmann the situation is changing, with thousands of women and children no longer waiting. Many have made the journey themselves and are now stuck in Greece with their few belongings.

However, Beckmann reported that for families who manage to reach Germany anyway, there is in Berlin “no possibility of adequate lodgings and absolutely none at all for women who are traveling alone or women who are traveling alone with children. Fathers who are traveling alone with children should also not be forgotten.” However, she still hopes that people will at least be “taken out of the gymnasiums.”

Since Asylum Package II was passed, sick, injured and traumatized asylum seekers can also be deported. Only life threatening illnesses are considered to represent an “obstacle to deportation.” However, refugees only have a week to prove they fall in this category.

“The majority of those that are here are traumatized,” Beckmann said. “One does not pick up on it in the first minute. We see the same thing in the refugees that are helping us here: it takes weeks, sometimes months, before someone talks about what he has experienced. You cannot go through what they have gone through without being traumatized. The majority of refugees that we meet come from war areas. Even if it is not a war area and someone comes from Afghanistan or Pakistan and a bomb has exploded in the city, then the conflagration is not so big, but the suffering is no less.”

Berlin CDU Interior Senator Henkel tightened the restrictions on hardship cases at the end of October 2015. The new regulation says that people no longer have the right to make a hardship application if they have already been issued a deportation date.

As a consequence of this policy, Denica, an eight-year-old from Bosnia with a heart condition, was transported from a refugee home in Berlin-Weißensee along with her father early in the morning in the middle of January. Her

mother and her brother, who also has a heart condition, who were temporarily allowed to remain, decided to travel back to Bosnia as a consequence. The chance of survival of the children is extremely uncertain, according Gabi Mohr of the organization “Against Child Poverty.”

Another case concerns a disabled Bosnian woman and her children, who were deported directly from Lageso on February 15, where they had an appointment to clarify her hardship ruling. The despairing father remained behind.

On the same day, a total of 58 people were deported from the Berlin-Schönefeld airport. According to the senate internal administration there were already 207 deportations in January 2016, more than three times as many as the monthly average the previous year, in which a total of 806 asylum seekers were sent back during the entire year.

Syrians are also being deported ever since the Dublin agreement came back in force. Beckmann described the case of an 18-year-old: “He was, I believe, 17 years old when he came here with his family. The rest of the family had a residence permit. But he was deported to Hungary, because he gave his fingerprints in Hungary in August of last year. Absolutely inhumane!”

A disabled young man from Libya, paraplegic since the NATO allies bombarded the country in 2011 and a bomb exploded directly behind his back, is waiting in Lageso for his mother. She managed to escape the “Libyan hell of militias and mafia gangs,” he told the WSWs.

Such family reunions will be nearly impossible in the future and even disabled and sick people can be deported if they come from a “safe country of origin” or were first registered in one.



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