

Syriza and European Union begin mass deportations from Greece

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Monday saw the first mass deportations of refugees from Greece to Turkey, beginning the implementation of the so-called EU-Turkey deal. At the beginning of March, the 28 European Union heads of government concluded a dirty pact with Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu to put an end to the influx of refugees into Europe once and for all.

Now the ugly content of this deal has become visible. According to press reports, in the morning grey, police units collected 120 refugees from their beds in an internment camp on Lesbos, taking them to two small ferries, which then brought them to the Turkish port city of Dikili. The boats were “accompanied” by German, French, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian officers from the European border force Frontex.

The Greek news agency ANA-MPA reported the presence of a massive number of security officers; one officer accompanied every refugee being deported. The spokesman for the Crisis Staff, Giorgos Kyritsis, said on Greek television that those being deported were only men. Apart from Syrians returning “voluntarily”, the rest were mainly from Pakistan.

There were virtually no pictures of the terrible scenes. The deportation began three hours earlier than planned. Journalists reporting from outside the barbed wire and CCTV securing the camp said they were constantly forced away by the security guards. In total, 250 refugees from Lesbos and a further 250 from the Greek island of Chios were deported on Monday.

According to media reports, hours before the measures began there were struggles between the police and local population protesting against the deportations.

The mass deportations expose the lie of the so-called “welcoming culture” ascribed to Chancellor Angela Merkel, above all by her political supporters in the Greens and the Left Party. Now it is clear what Merkel

really meant when she criticised the unilateral sealing off of borders inside Europe and called for a “European solution.” In her last government statement on March 16, she announced a target of “reducing the number of refugees not just for some but for us all, both in a sustained and lasting way.”

Above all, this “European solution” exposes the reactionary character of the pseudo-left party Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left), which is playing a key role implementing Merkel’s policies. Contrary to all its election promises, it is not only pushing through the most wide-ranging austerity measures so far in Greece, but is acting as the jailer for European capitalism. It first imprisoned tens of thousands in “Hot Spots”, i.e., concentration camps erected by the Greek military, and is now deporting them to Turkey, hand in hand with Frontex units.

In a cloak-and-dagger operation, the Syriza government created the “legal” basis for this on Friday night in the Greek parliament. Only two Syriza parliamentary deputies voted against the legislation that allows the deportation to Turkey of all refugees who have arrived on the Greek islands since March 20. According to the official figures, this already amounts to more than 5,000 people.

In Turkey, those being deported face torture, mistreatment and even death. According to reports by Amnesty International, Turkey has already forced thousands of refugees to return to Syria in the past weeks, where a bloody war for regime change exists. “Men, women and children are being deported to Syria in groups up to 100,” the organisation’s Turkey expert Marie Lucas said.

Such deportations have been happening “almost daily” since mid-January. The deportation of women and children is also documented. In one case, Ankara

sent back three small children to Syria without their parents, in another case a heavily pregnant woman was deported. Such deportations from the EU-funded deportation camp in Erzurum in the east of Turkey take place without any legal due process or asylum procedures.

Politicians and the media have been aware of these conditions for some time. At the beginning of February, in an article headlined “Refugee deal with Turkey—‘Europe’s Bouncer’,” *Spiegel Online* reported, “On the border near the town of Antakya, soldiers are patrolling on a January afternoon. Tanks roll between the checkpoints. In the distance can be heard the impact of the bombs from the Syria war. The refugees use secret paths through the forests and over hills.” According to the news magazine, many Syrians had independently reported illegal deportations. They were “arrested by Turkish security forces, sometimes mistreated and then deported to Syria.”

However, this has not prevented the *Spiegel* editors from celebrating the policy of deportations now begun. While the deportations on Lesbos and Chios were in full swing, a certain Sebastian Fischer wrote: “This Monday, when the first few hundred refugees are escorted back to Turkey from the Greek island of Lesbos by a few hundred European Frontex officers, then this is above all a signal. It is the right signal.”

And further: “Those who come illegally across the sea have little chance in future of remaining in Europe. Critics might condemn this as building a European fortress, but one thing is clear: In the long run, no state, no community of states can accept uncontrolled migration.” If needs be, this must be done “with an authoritarian ruler like the Turkish President Erdogan. Realpolitik? Of course.”

Fischer’s goal corresponds with that of the German government: the creation of a European police state under German leadership. He writes: “With the Turkey deal, Angela Merkel has pursued an active policy in the refugee crisis for the first time since opening up the borders in September. The closure of the Balkan route, from which Germany has profited, was not her idea. On the other hand, she has now committed the other 28 EU states to joint action with Turkey.” With this, “they bear the main responsibility for this undertaking.” In the first place, this is about “establishing a common, effective European border protection. EU police

officers, no longer just those of the national states, secure the external borders.”

The brutal actions against refugees and the militarisation of Europe are directly linked to the intensification of the attacks on the working class in Greece and throughout the continent. Significantly, representatives of the infamous Troika (International Monetary Fund, EU Commission and European Central Bank) returned from Athens in order to verify how Syriza is implementing the austerity measures it has agreed. In France, the Socialist Party government of President François Hollande is using the state of emergency in order to push through labour market reforms and drastic cuts against the growing resistance of the French working class and youth.



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