

Berlin plans mass deportations and more police

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On May 24, the Berlin Senate (state administration) approved its so-called master plan for integration and security. It intends to implement the Integration Act, decided in May by the federal cabinet.

Like the federal law, the variant being implemented in Berlin is not about the humane integration of people who have fled war and poverty. Rather, it is about drip feeding and controlling refugees, threatening them with cuts in support or the withdrawal of their residency permit and dividing them up according to their country of origin.

Berlin was the first federal state “which regulates integration comprehensively and in detail”, the state minister for Work, Women and Integration, Dilek Kolat (Social Democratic Party, SPD) boasted when presenting the Berlin master plan, which has been drawn up with the help of business consultants McKinsey.

In fact, the integration measures apply only to a small portion of the refugees. Most of those that have fled to Germany will be deported as quickly as possible.

Along with a list of social promises, the 80-page master plan contains a section on special accommodation to support “repatriation logistics” and for a massive increase in the police apparatus. More than twice as many police officers are to be trained than had been previously foreseen—288 a year rather than 118. Advertising for new police officers has already appeared on Berlin's public transport system.

After months of oppressive and inhumane treatment of refugees in Berlin, the SPD-Christian Democratic Union (CDU) state administration is toughening its refugee policies before the upcoming state election. They consider “integration” solely as a bureaucratic administrative and police task, and, in so doing, are playing into the hands of right-wing forces such as the

Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Specifically, the master plan assumes that after the closure of the Balkan route and the routes via the Mediterranean, the influx of refugees to Berlin will halve. With “entries and exits,” an average “stock” of 50,000 refugees was to be expected

Of the current 55,000 refugees housed in Berlin, it is predicted 21,000 will be granted a “right to remain,” according to the state government's experts. The remaining 34,000 would have no “perspective of remaining” and should be prepared for “repatriation.”

To this end, the master plan expressly calls for them to be housed in “special facilities.” This is nothing other than interning people in order to be able to deport them later without problems. Literally, “In order to increase the efficiency of repatriations, transparency regarding the location of the refugees' accommodation is an important factor.”

These “repatriation logistics”, for which a budget line of 3 million euros is planned, also include the use of police violence, in case the “incentive” of “voluntary” return fails, as the master plan states.

In future, those without a “right to remain” are to be filtered out on initial registration. The former Tempelhof Airport is being transformed into a “reception centre,” with a “transit zone” for a maximum of three nights' stay. The language itself makes clear what is involved.

The people selected in this process are without any rights. They receive no money, are given meagre meals as “payment in kind” that are not part of their usual diet, and have absolutely no access to the so-called integration measures or the health provisions granted those with “good prospects of remaining.”

It is now clear that the establishment of a mass camp for refugees in hangars at the airport last November

was not a transitional measure, as claimed at the time, but preparation for mass deportations.

Currently, over 20,000 people live in emergency accommodation, such as in sports halls, trade fair halls and airport hangers, and have been doing so for months. Only in May, the Senate cancelled contracts with hostels, where at least some families had better conditions, and sent them back to the sports halls.

But even those who do not face immediate deportation can expect anything but a rosy future. With flowery words about “participation in social life,” the master plan promises better housing, education and integration into the labour market. On closer inspection, this all proves to be misleading.

In addition to the accommodation of a few in municipal apartments, whose construction is promised, and for which Berlin families themselves have long waited, the bulk of the refugees who remain in the city, the master plan puts this at 15,000, are to be shunted into residential container villages.

The announced “integration into the labour market,” according to the master plan “a chance for Berlin as a business location and diverse metropolis,” turns out to be a blueprint for the use of some well-trained refugees as cheap labourers.

On initial registration, refugees are to be quizzed about their skills, the plan states. With “Welcome to labour offices” in the mass lodgings, they could be introduced to skilled work, and the low-threshold access to training and the labour market be accompanied by a “Berlin needs you!” consortium of employers and training providers. And so that everyone knows what is involved, the advisors in the job centres are told to use their experience in re-integrating the long-term unemployed.

The division into “good” and “bad” refugees is itself fluid. For example, if a Syrian refugee misses his mandatory German language and values course, he can be redefined as a “bad” refugee.

The Moabit Helps refugee initiative quite rightly calls the master plan a “means of dividing society.”

But it is more than that. The systematic expansion of the police apparatus—not only with more police officers but also with new weapons—is not just directed at refugees. Its purpose is to prepare for the growing resistance among workers and youth against the entire gamut of anti-social, anti-democratic and militarist

policies.

It is no accident that the master plan points to the terrorist attacks in Paris last year, and claims “supposed war criminals and former members of armed groups” among refugees would endanger security. Just as the French government has used the state of emergency to act violently against striking workers, the Berlin Senate and the federal government will use the police state ultimately against the wider population.



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