

Deportations triple in Berlin

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According to a report from the Senate Interior Department, 1,068 people were deported from Berlin between January and the end of June 2016. The number of deportations has almost tripled compared with the same period last year, surpassing the total for last year. In all of 2015, Berlin authorities carried out approximately 800 deportations.

“The senate aimed at a doubling of deportations this year,” explained Interior Senator Frank Henkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), boasting that Berlin had “so far surpassed these expectations.”

Of the 1,068 deported, 904 came from Balkan states. The four countries to which people are most frequently deported are Serbia with 319, Bosnia with 213, Kosovo with 188 and Albania with 184. Almost 100 percent of asylum applications from the west Balkan countries were rejected according to official numbers.

The largest numbers of deportees are Roma families who have been seeking protection from civil wars and persecution since the first Balkan War in 1991 and the NATO bombings of Serbia in 1999. The majority of those sent back to their so-called secure countries of origin will face impoverishment and homelessness, as well as exclusion from the labour market, education and health care services, along with racist persecution and discrimination.

In addition to compulsory deportations, the Senate of the Interior reports that in the first five months of this year, around 790 people left the country voluntarily. Many only left “voluntarily” because family members were already forcibly deported with no consideration given to minors or people in poor health and the relatives who remained “voluntarily” followed them.

Tom Schreiber, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) spokesperson for constitutional matters in the Berlin House of Representatives, criticised Henkel on Twitter for failing to mention that there are still around 9,000 people obligated to leave the country. In doing so,

Schreiber attacks the CDU interior senator from the right.

Among these 9,000 are many who have lived in Berlin long-term and are well integrated but whose suspension of deportation will not be extended. Their children were in many cases born in Germany and speak German but will now be torn from the German school system. This is the real position of the CDU and the SPD on integration.

Police and other authorities have been ruthless in carrying out deportations. In a number of cases, families were torn apart and the seriously ill or families who had received no notice of deportation were nevertheless deported. This practice is cynically justified on the basis of alleged “tricks to remain” by migrants accused of hiding their children with relatives or obtaining false attestations from doctors concerning their inability to travel.

Henkel told the press, “Whoever has no prospects for staying must leave our country.” Because not everyone will go willingly, “Berlin will continue to consistently carry out deportations to enforce law and order.” This from a minister whom the Berlin courts just recently found had flouted “law and order” in a police operation in the city’s Friedrichshain district.

In order to catch “those obligated to leave the country” more quickly and boost the deportation quota, the senate has now established a special collection centre capable of holding up to 200 people, the location of which the administration has up to now kept secret. With this, a part of the recently adopted master plan for integration will be realised, with its euphemistic language about “payment-in-kind facilities” and the “increased efficiency of repatriations.”

Once detained in the collection centres, refugees will be processed and deported in groups. In addition to families from the Balkan states, migrants from the Republic of Moldova will also be affected, although the

former Soviet state is not considered a secure country of origin and is part of the Eastern Partnership of the European Union.

The establishment of special mass accommodations for “repatriation” is nothing more than the return to deportation prisons under another name. Only last November was the infamous deportation prison in Berlin-Grünau closed for violating EU regulations forbidding the housing of refugees in penal institutions.

With a few cosmetic modifications, it will now be transformed into a “repatriation centre” similar to the closed camps in Bamberg and Ingolstadt. In December 2015, the Berlin Senate responded to a request of the Left Party that separate accommodations be planned in Grünau for around 280 “people from secure countries of origin.” Amidst remodeling the prison, the Senate Department for the Interior stated that “the removal of bars from emergency exits took away a substantial feature of its character as a prison.” However, the high concrete walls, barbed wire and metal bars on windows are to remain.

The Left Party has no fundamental objections to the housing of refugees in the former prison. During the decade in which they governed in the Red-Red Senate, they themselves did nothing to close the deportation prison in Grünau and they supported deportations. According to a report in the *Tagesspiegel* last August, the chairman of the Left Party’s faction in the House of Representatives, Udo Wolf, only now calls for the removal of “everything that suggests a jail.”

Should the Left Party again participate in a government after the elections in September, they will continue the deportation policy, despite the campaign rhetoric of spokesperson for integration Hakan Ta?, who says, “Deportations are incompatible with human dignity.”

A glance in the direction of Thuringia, where Ta?’s party colleague Bodo Ramelow leads a Red-Red-Green state coalition government, shows what the Left Party does for “refugees with no prospect for staying.” Along with Bavaria and Saxony, Thuringia is among the three states with the most deportations.



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