

German interior minister announces tightening of security and asylum laws

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The German government is extending state powers at lightning speed. Chancellor Angela Merkel announced a nine-point plan for domestic security in late July. On Wednesday, the Christian Democratic state interior ministers tabled a catalogue of demands and, on Thursday, Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière made several concrete announcements.

The measures include more money and staff for the security authorities, closer cooperation between the European and international secret services, joint exercises of the police and armed forces, increased monitoring of the Internet and the accelerated expulsion of asylum seekers.

These far-reaching attacks on democratic rights are linked with a racist campaign against foreigners. In Berlin, de Maizière announced a tightening up of the right of residence. Immigrants that have committed a crime and so-called “troublemakers” are to be held in custody until the date of their deportation. To this end, a new ground for arrest is to be introduced. This will remove the strict separation of detention prior to deportation and criminal imprisonment. In their paper, the Christian Democratic state interior ministers called for the rapid expulsion of “hate preachers” who call for violence.

De Maizière also wants to intensify the cuts in benefits for foreigners. The sanctions would not only continue for people who, for example, have provided a false identity, in future, these sanctions would also apply to those who commit a crime “or who otherwise endanger public safety.” With this, de Maizière has increasingly spoken in tones that have not been heard since the diatribes against the “insolence of the Jews” by Goebbels and the Nazis. The minister said, “In all these cases, it must not be that through impudence and awkward behaviour [their] stay in Germany is extended.”

The Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Greens support this course. Together with the SPD-Green Party state

government in North Rhine-Westphalia, a pilot project has been agreed to more quickly “process” the deportation procedures of those who have committed a crime and foreign “attackers,” de Maizière said.

The monitoring of refugees is to be generally expanded. The federal interior minister will examine whether the social media of refugees should be accessed “in individual cases” as “a precaution.”

The list of demands from the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) state interior ministers went even further. They called for a general ban of the burqa, and the abolition of dual citizenship. This was demanded in particular by the interior ministers of Berlin, Frank Henkel, and Mecklenburg Pomerania, Lorenz Caffier, who are currently conducting election campaigns.

De Maizière made it clear that he supports the demands but currently regards them as not able to be implemented. On the call for a burqa ban, he said, “You cannot ban everything you reject. And I reject the wearing of burqas.”

He did not want to “reopen the discussion” on dual citizenship. The paper from the Christian Democratic interior ministers called dual citizenship “a massive obstacle to integration.” Such a “divided loyalty” should be rejected. “Those who want to get involved in the politics of foreign governments, we suggest leave Germany,” the paper threatens.

The campaign against dual citizenship is being waged on a broad front, from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Bavarian CSU and wide sections of the CDU, up to *Spiegel Online* columnist Jakob Augstein.

The intensive campaign calling for the stepping up of the powers of the state, under the auspices of a so-called “security debate” following the attacks in Würzburg and Ansbach, and the shooting spree in Munich, is part of an international development. In France, it is clear that the

state of emergency introduced by the Hollande government, following the terrorist attacks of last November, is directed against the working class. The restriction of the right to assembly and demonstration, as well as the increased police powers, have been turned against the strike movement directed at the reactionary labour market reforms.

The measures announced by de Maizière have a clear direction. They serve the strengthening of the state, the dismantling of democratic rights and the mobilization of right-wing mobs. They are directed against the vast majority of the population. The measures which today are directed against “criminal foreigners,” “attackers” and all those who “endanger public safety” (in de Maizière’s words), will tomorrow be turned against those who oppose war, racism, poverty and the destruction of jobs.

The planned expansion of the police and preparations for comprehensive monitoring leave no doubt about this.

The police and intelligence services are to be expanded and their powers greatly enhanced. By 2020, some 15,000 additional police officers are to be employed at the federal and state level. The interior minister announced that the federal police, the Federal Criminal Police Office and the secret service will receive additional staff “averaging in the four figures.”

The intelligence services should also have access to retained internet service provider (ISP) and telecoms data. The CDU/CSU and SPD had agreed this last year. Without any suspicion, all data is being stored: when, how long you talk on the phone and with whom, as well as which web sites you visit. Previously, such data could only be viewed by the police when it involved concrete, serious crimes. In future, the secret services will also gain access to this data.

Bavaria is the first state to lift the separation of the intelligence agencies and the police, which were introduced following the terrible experiences with the Nazis. Since July, the Bavarian state secret service agency can use telephone connection data. The CSU state government has bypassed the principle of the separation of police and secret service by defining the latter as an “emergency management authority.”

According to the demands of the CDU/CSU interior ministers, the secret services should also be given the opportunity to investigate 14-year-olds.

At the Federal Criminal Police Office, a “Cyber Defence Centre” is also to be set up, according to de Maizière. In future, the use of cyber investigators in the so-called “darknet” would be stepped up, whereby the

definition of the “darknet” is used flexibly to cover virtually the entire Internet.

Surveillance will not only be conducted virtually, but universally. Both de Maizière and his party colleagues want to expand video surveillance in public places and at railway stations.

In particular, the demand for the lifting of confidentiality for doctors was combined with dangerous accusations against them. In the *Bild* newspaper, CSU interior policy expert Hans-Peter Uhl had accused doctors of hindering the fight against terrorism. “It is professional snobbery to say the physician must always be silent,” says Uhl. “According to current legislation, this is even a clear breach of the law.” Doctors should warn the authorities “if they have reason to believe that one of their patients poses a danger to others, and plans an attack or similar crimes.”

This is not far from alleging support for terrorism. The president of the German Medical Association (BÄK), Frank Ulrich Montgomery, immediately rejected this accusation and stated that there was no reason to change the current legislation. Doctors were clearly regulated. Even today, if a doctor had “concrete evidence about a threat to the life and limb of others, he or she would inform the authorities.”

De Maizière and his state colleagues want to agree on a joint list of demands next week. De Maizière will then see this package is adopted in the current legislative period.

The SPD supports this course and was clearly informed about it in advance. SPD leader Sigmar Gabriel said on Thursday, “The SPD is ready to talk about everything that helps increase security.” As an emergency measure, he demanded an extra 3,000 federal police posts be created.



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