

German government plans mass deportation of refugees

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The German government is expanding deportations of refugees and intends to erect what will in effect be a deportation apparatus. To this end, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has commissioned a feasibility study from the consultancy firm McKinsey that calls for an increase in deportations.

Following a meeting of the federal and state interior ministers last week, federal Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière (Christian Democrats, CDU) outlined the goals of the deportation policy for 2017. He stated that of the 1 million refugees who arrived in Germany in 2015 and 2016, around half had not and would not receive recognition as refugees.

The minister demanded “that we get better in the area of repatriations, including voluntary repatriation as well as deportation.” As a result, the federal and state governments were preparing an agreement for a “national pooling of resources to improve repatriations.” A nationwide coordination office for repatriations would deal with practical questions, such as how refugees from various states could be brought together and transported in the same aircraft.

Already this year, the government has implemented 100,000 so-called repatriations of refugees. Together with 27,000 forced deportations, more than 60,000 refugees avoided deportation by agreeing to “voluntarily” leave the country. These numbers are to increase drastically in the years ahead. “Since we are getting more rejections, we have to improve still further,” de Maizière stated.

In addition, the government plans to strengthen fortress Europe. According to Spiegel Online, the federal Interior Ministry is preparing an agreement with Tunisia to establish an internment camp for refugees there.

Refugees who seek to reach Europe via the central

Mediterranean route will in this way find it impossible to set foot on European soil. Instead, immediately after their rescue they will be brought back to Africa. A departmental head of the federal police in the Interior Ministry is currently pushing for support for this plan from Italy and the European Union (EU) Commission.

In this way, the German government intends to intensify pressure on refugees. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has been working for some time on the ways in which mass deportations could be enforced. They hired the consultancy firm McKinsey to complete a feasibility study, the conclusions of which have been made available to *Die Welt*.

It proposes 14 measures for a “stricter repatriation for foreigners obliged to leave.” The McKinsey report appeals for “return management 2017” to be coordinated between the federal and state governments so as to achieve “measurable successes.” Assuming the existence of 485,000 refugees required to leave, the report offers a cynical cost benefit analysis to justify mass deportations in financial terms. According to this, monthly expenditure on a refugee amount to €670, which amounts in total to €3 billion annually. By contrast, the cost of a forced deportation is only €1,500 and in the case of a voluntary repatriation just €700.

In addition, the study complains about the length of time taken up by deportation proceedings. From the confirmation of the obligation to leave to the final departure “there is an average of 12 months for completed deportations, and in some cases even 4.5 years.” To accelerate deportations, the report’s main proposal is a vast expansion of deportation and detention centres. “Deportation detention and custody prior to departure should be organised so as to make them effectively usable in practice,” the consultancy firm writes.

The consultants also propose stricter legal controls for those tolerated as refugees. They should be given food and clothing as benefits in kind rather than money, if they cannot be deported due to illness or missing papers. The “financial flexibility” of refugees can in this way, in the opinion of the study, be “reduced.”

The feasibility study was announced by Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) during her summer press conference to “identify problems with deportations and make suggestions for improvements.” According to Spiegel Online, the company claimed payment for 687 consultant days, amounting to a total cost to the government of €1.86 million.

The line of argument advanced by government representatives, the federal office for refugees and the consultancy firm, that refugees are exploiting social welfare, avoiding deportations and costing billions plays directly into the hands of right-wing extremist forces. With the planned mass deportations, vast expansion of detention centres and cutting of social welfare, the federal government is adopting the programme of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Within the government, some demands even go far beyond this. Thomas Strobl, the deputy chair of the CDU and interior minister in the Baden-Württemberg Green-CDU coalition government, called for the establishment of a “repatriation agreement” with Egypt, even though the al-Sisi regime tramples human rights underfoot and regularly abuses, tortures and persecutes refugees.

Strobl even believes that those accepted as refugees should have social welfare benefits reduced massively, because “Whoever is searching for protection from war and persecution, the main issue for them is not welfare benefits. That we provide protection to refugees who fear for life and limb does not mean that we must make it possible for refugees to enjoy our standard of living.”

Ahead of the CDU party congress, which began yesterday, the party integrated Strobl’s proposals into its main resolution. In it, it is stated, “The reasons for detention ahead of deportation must be expanded if there is a risk posed by those obliged to depart.” In addition, deportation detention should be extended from four days to four weeks. Whoever provides false information or refuses to identify themselves would lose the status of an approved refugee, and their

authorisation to work and welfare benefits would be slashed.

The right to asylum has been undermined repeatedly since the autumn of 2015. This has included the expansion of “safe countries of origin,” the rapid conducting of asylum procedures in reception centres or emergency facilities, the cutting of assistance benefits, deportations without warning, relaxation of the restriction on deporting those who are sick, the limitation of family reunification, a “residency restriction” for those accepted as refugees and much more. The German government’s new plans will eclipse all of this.



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