

Massive protests in Germany against deportations to Afghanistan

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On Wednesday, 34 Afghan refugees were forcibly deported to Kabul from Frankfurt on a charter flight from the Frankfurt-Rhein-Main Airport. This is the first time such a mass deportation has taken place in Germany. A spontaneous demonstration at the Frankfurt airport involved about a thousand people, including many young people. They wore stop signs and chanted slogans such as “Deportation is torture, deportation is murder. A right to stay for all, immediately!”

Protests and demonstrations have already taken place. On Saturday, the “International Day of Human Rights,” thousands of people in Berlin participated in a demonstration to stop deportations to Afghanistan.

In spite of these protests, the German government went ahead with the deportations using extreme brutality. It is deporting refugees, many of whom have been tolerated for many years, back to a country where war rages and basic human rights are nonexistent.

In October, the EU agreed a repatriation agreement with the puppet government in Afghanistan and assured the payment of €1.7 billion when the Afghan government accepts refugees in return. The driving force behind the shabby deal was the German government. On this basis, the German Minister of the Interior, Thomas de Maizière (CDU), wants to expel up to 12,500 people from Germany to Afghanistan whose asylum applications have been rejected and only have “toleration” status.

It was originally planned to deport 50 Afghan refugees on Wednesday. Fifteen people had gone underground, however, de Maizière explained. He announced that “in future families and women would also be deported.”

The deportees were by no means “criminal asylum-seekers,” as had been claimed earlier. Most of them were refugees who had lived in Germany for years and were now being deported overnight. Twenty-two-year-old Babur Sedik told the *Frankfurter Rundschau* that he had been in Germany for four years and had lived exclusively in refugee homes and camps. Rahmat Khan, also 22, had fled from the fiercely contested region of Paktia and has now been deported.

The Bavarian refugee council reported that an Afghan refugee from Dingolfing had jumped out of the window at 3 a.m. when police sought to arrest him. He was taken to a clinic and apparently placed on the plane after short-lived treatment.

The ruthlessness of the security authorities against Afghan refugees is also shown by the case of 24-year-old Samir Narang from Hamburg, who went to the Aliens Office to extend his toleration status. Instead of the extension of his residence permit, however, he received an expulsion permit and was put into the deportation prison in Büren, and has now been deported to Kabul. Samir Narang is a Hindu and belongs to a persecuted religious minority in Afghanistan, and who now has to fear for his life there.

The deportation of one 29-year-old Afghan was stopped at the last minute by the Federal Constitutional Court, because he was still pursuing an asylum procedure. This means that the authorities planned to deport refugees whose asylum applications had not yet been finally rejected.

The Federal Constitutional Court reported that the question of whether deportations to Afghanistan were constitutional had been expressly left open. Despite the obvious concerns of the highest German court, the deportations on Wednesday were carried out in a hurry.

The collective deportation is a clear violation of human rights. This is also the position of the international medical organization IPPNW (Doctors for social responsibility). According to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which is also applicable in Germany, deportations of refugees to countries where they are threatened with death, persecution or torture are illegal.

But that is exactly the situation in Afghanistan. Even the guidelines of the Federal Office for Migration, which serve as the basis for asylum decisions, leave no room for doubt. “In all parts of Afghanistan there is a domestic armed conflict in the form of civil war and guerrilla fighting between Afghan security forces and the Taliban, as well as other opposition forces.” Human rights violations are widespread, food supplies are scarce and half of all children

in Afghanistan are “endangered by long-term malnutrition.”

The security situation has dramatically intensified in the last 18 months. The UN mission to Afghanistan reported more civilian casualties in the first nine months of this year than since censuses began in 2009. The *New York Times* reported recently that Taliban militias killed 30 to 50 Afghan security forces every month. They have also increased their attacks on provincial capitals, destroyed roads and infrastructure. The government in Kabul is losing control in more and more parts of the country. According to data from the US government, Islamic groups are increasingly filling the power vacuum.

A commentary on German TV by the journalist Georg Restle described the deportations as a “Christmas present for the extreme right.” He demanded an immediate stop to the deportations.

Restle went on: “The truth is: Germany is safe, Afghanistan is by no means safe. Also because we have fought a war there, which has made things much worse, rather than better. This is why the federal government has a special responsibility for this country and the people who flee from it. That is why the deportations to Afghanistan have to be stopped. And now, immediately!”

The brutality with which the federal government is enforcing illegal deportations in the dead of night and fog recalls some of the worst crimes of German history. The Nazi deportations also began with resettlement, long before the trains rolled into the extermination camps.

As was the case in those days, racist attacks are a reaction to the growing economic and social crisis. The ruling class is trying to divert the growing opposition to unemployment, poverty and distress with racism. This is why xenophobia is systematically encouraged to incite workers against one other. The attacks on asylum law in Germany and the brutal deportation measures are the prelude to massive attacks on all workers.

The choice of the right-wing demagogue Donald Trump in the US has also given rise to a sharp turn to the right in European and German politics or, more accurately, accelerated the turn to the right. Bavarian Prime Minister Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union, CSU) commented on the deportations on television: “I hope this is not a one-time action.” Hundreds of thousands more people would still have to be deported. He based his comments on Chancellor Angela Merkel, who had said that now “return, return, return” was the order of the day.

Just last week a conference of the ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU) took up the main slogan of the far-right Alternative to Germany, “Foreigners Out!” in its main motion.

In the implementation of this policy, the federal

government works closely with all other parties, which are governed by different coalitions at a state level. The states of Hesse, Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Hamburg, Saarland and North Rhine-Westphalia all participated in the collective deportation. The main responsibility fell to the Hessen state government, a CDU-Green coalition, which has ultimate control over the Rhein-Main airport and the deportations, which are decided upon at state level. The Greens in Hesse expressly agreed to the deportations.

In the Hessen parliament, Green Party chair Mathias Wagner declared the deportations to Afghanistan “difficult to bear,” but that the state parliament could not assess the security situation there and it was necessary to rely on the judgement of the federal authorities.

In Baden-Württemberg, Green Premier Winfried Kretschmann is working closely with Thomas Strobl (CDU). Strobl is the son-in-law of the federal minister of finance, Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU) and a right-wing rabble-rouser, who represents the politics of the AfD in the CDU. Green politician Boris Palmer, the mayor of Tübingen, also recently called for deportations to Syria.

As usual, the Left Party plays a miserable double game. It was involved in protests at the airport, but is careful not to jeopardize its coalition with the Social Democratic Party and Greens. In Berlin, it has recently formed a coalition with the SPD and Greens and is also preparing deportations.

In Thuringia, Premier Bodo Ramelow (Left Party) has boasted of his success in deportations. Apparently, deportations to Afghanistan are not taboo. In an appeal issued on the “Day of Human Rights” the Thuringian Refugee Council pointed out: “Many refugees living in Thuringia come from Afghanistan. Very long waiting times for a decision on their asylum application and more and more refusals lead to anxiety about their future among Afghan families, unaccompanied minors, women and men.”



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