

Germany carries out second expulsion of Afghan refugees

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In a joint operation carried out by federal and state authorities, 26 Afghan refugees were deported on 23 January with officials putting them on a plane in Rhein-Main airport in Frankfurt, Germany and flying them to Kabul. This was the second mass deportation of this kind, following the deportation of 34 Afghan refugees on 14 December.

The young men came from Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Hamburg and Rheinland-Palatinate, where they sought to find refuge from the war in their country. Eighteen of the 26 deported came from Bavaria.

Many of those affected were seized from their homes in the dead of night, detained like hardened criminals and flown against their will to Kabul, one of the most dangerous cities in the world. Many of them had been in Germany for several years, had friends and family, and a professional qualification or a job.

The daily TAZ reported on 24 January that “several of the young men came from Kabul or the western Afghan city of Herat, while others came from the unsafe provinces of Logar, Kunar, Kapisa or Wardak.” Among them were many “who spoke German and in some cases had worked for years.”

It further stated, “Badam Haidari (31) explained in easy-to-understand German that he had lived for seven years in Würzburg. For five years and eight months he worked at Burger King, ‘always full-time.’ He never caused any trouble. ‘No stealing, no war with anyone, no fights’ ... Arash Alokosai (21) from Kabul said he lived in Nuremberg for six years. He had an apprenticeship contract to manufacture vehicle bodies, but then ‘the rejection’ (of his asylum application) occurred. His girlfriend was three months pregnant. Ramin Afshar (19), also from Kabul, said he had attended vocational college in Germany. They got him out of bed on Monday morning and deported him in handcuffs.”

To avoid protest and resistance, the interior ministries provided no details about the planned deportation and only announced the timetable at the last minute.

Nonetheless, 200 people still gathered at the airport to

protest the deportations. A group of Afghan refugees from the Frankfurt area organized by the “Afghan Refugees Movement” and ProAsyl, a refugee support organisation, called the demonstration on short notice. Their banners read, “Right to remain for all,” “Stop deportations—now!” and “No deportations to Afghanistan.”

Roughly a quarter of a million Afghans currently reside in Germany. Of these, around 1,600 are facing potential deportation. More than 10,000 have obtained the status of “tolerated.” Although their asylum application was rejected, authorities have suspended the deportation for the meantime. They now live in constant fear that they will be thrown out of the country.

The mass deportations are based on the repatriation agreement reached by the German government with the regime in Kabul on 2 October, 2016. The dirty deal provides a payment to the Afghan government from Germany, plus additional EU funding for every refugee they take back.

Conditions in Afghanistan today are more insecure than ever. In the first half of 2016, there were more than 1,600 recorded deaths and 3,565 injuries to civilians, the worst figures since 2009. At the end of 2016, more than 1.7 million people were internally displaced. Half a million people were forced from their homes last year alone. During the first two weeks of January there have been attacks and kidnappings in Kabul, Kandahar, Helmand and Pamir leading to more than 100 deaths.

The latest report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on Afghanistan makes it clear those being deported will face countless perils and possible death. All of Afghanistan was in the grip of a domestic armed conflict, the report stated, adding that it was impossible to distinguish between safe and unsafe regions “due to the constantly shifting security situation.”

In newspaper interviews, former Afghan minister Amin Farhang, as well as former Afghan Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta—who both lived in Germany for decades—verified the findings of the refugee agency’s report. Even Hans-Peter Bartels (SPD), the parliamentary

ombudsman for the armed forces, told *Tagespiegel* on 27 December, “Afghanistan is not a safe country. That is why the international community has decided to make further efforts at stabilisation, both civilian and military, above all by training and advising the Afghan security forces.”

In fact, the disastrous situation in Afghanistan is due to the nearly 16-year US occupation of the country, which has been backed by Germany. After ruining the country, Germany and the US—now under Donald Trump—are scapegoating immigrants who escaped the war-torn region and suggesting they are somehow associated with “terrorism.”

To whip up public opinion in opposition to the refugees, the government is claiming that only dangerous criminals and “threats” are being deported. Federal Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière, in a letter to the state interior ministers, wrote that since the attack on a Berlin Christmas market on 19 December, “the entire practice of deportation in our country [has been] under review,” and repatriation measures had to be enforced “more decisively in the future.”

This is contradicted by information gathered by ProAsyl, which provides an entirely different picture. “Among those deported, there were people who had committed crimes,” the report acknowledged. “But as a whole it remains unclear how large the number is and how serious the offences they are being accused of actually were.”

ProAsyl obtained information on 23 immigrants, some of whom were deported in December while others had their deportation temporarily stopped. “The people are between 21 and 57 years old, had mostly been in Germany between two and five years, sometimes even longer. Some of them were on the way to completing training or already had a job. Many were receiving medical care—for example with psychiatric problems. For most of these 23 people, nothing is known about criminal acts.”

Although deportations fall under the responsibility of the states, decisions are being taken in the offices of the federal agency for migration and refugees, and implemented by the federal police. The federal government is collaborating closely with the states.

State governments currently have no uniform policy. Refugees have been deported from Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, North Rhein-Westphalia, Hesse, Hamburg and Saarland, while other states have yet to deport anyone to Afghanistan. A proposal was made by Schleswig-Holstein for a nationwide stop to deportations.

The mass deportations have been facilitated by this month’s decision by the Green Party in 10 states to support deportations to war zones like Afghanistan. This decision obliges state governments to complete forced repatriations, which are decided solely “by the federal government’s own

assessment of the local security situation.” Significantly, the Greens urge the government to better conceal deportations from the public. The federal interior ministry ought to avoid “the undignified public presentation of mass deportations,” their statement declares.

The Greens are thus jointly responsible for the shameful deportations. In Hesse, this includes Green Transport Minister Tarek al Wazir who, together with Volker Bouffier (Christian Democratic Union), leads the CDU-Green state government. The state government could choose to reject the federal government’s deportation orders—but it has not. The state government also has partial ownership of the Rhein-Main airport and oversees everything, including deportations, which go on there.

In Thuringia, Brandenburg and Berlin, where it is in government, the Left Party also supports the deportations. In these states, the Left Party claims it is only carrying out case “voluntary repatriations.” This is a cynical sham. The “voluntary” nature of the repatriation consists in the fact that refugees “voluntarily” agree to leave so they will not be forcibly deported at their own expense. The Left Party does not oppose the federal government’s deportation laws.

In Thuringia, where Bodo Ramelow’s Left Party leads the state government, they are carrying out a refugee policy just as brutal as other parties. Last year, with 1,762 “voluntary” repatriations from January to November, Thuringia was second among all German states for deportations.

In contrast to this, solidarity in the population is growing. Demonstrations against deportations are increasing and becoming larger. Many workers and young people have displayed a great willingness to help the refugees, many of whom fled imperialist war in 2015 and fled by foot to Germany through a perilous path of persecution and state repression.



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