

German police beat demonstrators attempting to prevent deportation

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Police brutally attacked protesters last week as they attempted to prevent the deportation of a student from Afghanistan studying at a training school in the city of Nuremberg.

Shortly after eight in the morning of May 31, police officers abducted 21-year-old Asef N. from the vocational school as he attended lessons. He was due to be flown to Kabul by plane with other Afghans whose applications for asylum had been rejected.

News of the abrupt deportation spread through the school like wildfire. The police car allocated for the young man was still in front of the school as Asef's classmates assembled to form a sit-down blockade. They occupied the street in front of and behind the car shouting, "Nobody is illegal! The right to remain for everyone!"

Facebook and Twitter rapidly spread the message about the deportation of the student. Students from other classes streamed outside and nearby residents also joined the blockade of the police car. Refugee organisations spread the news online, calling on people in the area to come to the school and protest. In total, about 300 people participated in the protest.

The police responded by escalating their intervention. As it became clear that the police car could not leave due to the blockade, Asef was dragged out of the vehicle by officers and taken to another vehicle. Some demonstrators tried to prevent this taking place.

The police, reinforced with heavily armoured members of the Support Command (USK), attacked the protesters with blows and kicks. Asef fell to the ground and was dragged by several police across the adjoining lawn. Other police cleared the way. All those attempting to help Asef were dragged away by police, who lashed at the crowd with batons and pepper spray.

The police then released a dog on the protesters who

had formed the sit-down blockade. One of the protesters quit the scene with a blood-stained face due to blows from the police batons.

A police spokesman later declared absurdly that demonstrators had not been hurt, but that nine police had been injured. Five demonstrators were arrested and Asef N. is also due to be prosecuted for resisting arrest.

Many of the students were shocked by the brutal police action. "This is a bit extreme," one student told TV reporters. "They intervened in such a radical manner and injured people who were just trying to prevent someone from being deported. As you can see, quite a few were injured with pepper spray, or struck in the face."

Jörg Weissgerber, who was due to give a lecture on immigration to Asef's class and observed the police operation, told *Spiegel Online*: "The violence clearly came from the police. I've seen a lot of demos, but I've never seen police use such disproportionate force against peaceful students. That shocked me."

In response to the police claim that no demonstrator had been injured, Weissgerber asked: "How can you report an injury to someone who has just attacked you?"

Asef N. was well integrated into the vocational school in Nuremberg. He has been living in Germany for four years and, according to school sources, had good chances of obtaining training as a carpenter. His knowledge of German was good and both pupils and teachers were shocked when he was seized for deportation. The school, which focuses on construction skills, is committed to the integration of young refugees and has received an award for its work.

"There was a legally binding deportation order. This had to be done, because the plane was due to fly on the same evening from Frankfurt. That is why the Afghan

concerned had to be taken into custody in Nuremberg and taken to Frankfurt for deportation,” declared police officer Bert Rauenbusch, thereby seeking to play down the deportation as merely an administrative measure.

The trainee was one of several dozen Afghans who were due to be deported to Kabul in the coming months.

Following the massive suicide terror attack in Kabul on the same day, which resulted in 150 dead, German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière cancelled the planned deportation flight. This, however, was by no means due to humanitarian reasons. On the contrary, the German Embassy in Kabul is currently unable to complete the bureaucratic formalities for the arrival of the flight due to the consequences of the attack. The flight would take place as soon as possible.

Despite the attack, de Maizière declared that the government stuck to its position that Afghanistan is a “safe country of origin.” Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) personally endorsed his statement.

On the evening of the day after the police action in Nuremberg, which led to an angry response nationwide, Merkel announced that she had agreed with Germany’s state premiers to suspend deportations to Afghanistan until July. In the meantime the foreign office is to undertake a fresh assessment of the security situation in Afghanistan.

The halt to deportations, however, includes many exceptions—for criminals, suspected terrorists and rejected asylum seekers who persistently refuse to provide evidence of their identity. Under conditions where resisting arrest or being unable to confirm identity is a criminal offence, this is a list which includes very many.

The police action in Nuremberg was not an isolated event. Last week, 14-year-old Bivsi R. was abducted from a high school classroom in Duisburg, according to a report in the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*. The tearful ninth-grader was informed in the teachers study that she and her parents were to be deported to Nepal the same evening.

Bivsi was born in Germany and has spent her entire life in the country. Her shocked classmates had to be reassured by an emergency physician and a teacher of religion. The headmaster was also stunned by the police action. The family was subsequently deported from Frankfurt Airport.

The actions of the authorities and the police in Nuremberg and Duisburg reveal the hypocrisy of the criticisms made by German political parties of the right-wing policies of US President Donald Trump. Since Trump took office in January, officials from the US immigration authorities have apprehended and deported thousands of immigrants. Germany’s parliamentary parties boast that, unlike the brutal methods used in the United States, Berlin pursues “a humane” deportation policy, examines each case individually and only departs to supposed “safe countries of origin.” The events of the last few days demonstrate that such claims are completely groundless.

It has since been announced that Asef N. will not be incarcerated in a deportation prison. The German Central Aliens Agency failed to convince a local court, which ruled there were no grounds for his detention. In front of the court building, Asef was welcomed by two dozen jubilant fellow students following his release.



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