

European Union adopts far-right refugee policy

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Shortly after the conclusion of the European Union (EU) summit in Brussels on Friday, another tragedy took place in the Mediterranean. According to media reports, a boat with 120 refugees on board sunk off the Libyan coast. Only a few people were rescued and estimates suggest over 100 lost their lives. According to witnesses, large numbers of Moroccan and Yemeni families were on the boat, including babies, women, and children.

As a result of the blockading and criminalization of rescue workers, several accidents in the days leading up to the summit saw the drowning of around 220 people. This is a conservative estimate, according to the head of the UN refugee agency UNHCR. According to UN figures, more than 16,346 people have lost their lives since 1 January 2014 (up to 18 June 2018), and since 2000, the death toll is around 35,000.

Responsibility for this mass murder lies with the EU and its national governments, which agreed on a dramatic intensification of their anti-refugee policy at the Brussels summit.

Plans include hermetically sealing off fortress Europe and deporting refugees en masse to war zones in the Middle East and Africa. “The European Council recalls that the member states must ensure effective control of the EU’s external borders with financial and material support of the EU. Furthermore, it notes that the repatriation of irregular migrants must be significantly increased,” stated the official conclusions from the summit.

To enforce the crackdown on refugees, the European border agency Frontex will be “expanded through an increase in its budget and an expansion of its mandate.” In addition, the establishment of de facto concentration camps in North Africa and inside the EU was agreed. In the summit statement, these camps were

euphemistically referred to as “debarkation platforms” and “control centres” for “resettlement and new settlement”

National measures, including border controls within the EU, are explicitly permitted. “Concerning the situation within the EU, the secondary migration of asylum seekers between member states is threatening the integrity of the common European asylum system and the Schengen legal system. The member states should adopt all necessary internal legal and administrative measures against these migration movements and cooperate closely in so doing,” states point 11 in the agreement.

The measures targeting refugees expose the EU as a reactionary monstrosity, which the national governments, their differences notwithstanding, are using to shift European political life sharply to the right. Other sections of the summit agreement include the “strengthening of European defence capacity,” the censorship of the Internet, the expansion of a European police state, and the continuation of austerity policies.

The EU has shifted so far to the right that it was applauded by nationalist and right-wing extremist forces throughout Europe following the Brussels summit. In a press statement, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who governs in Vienna in coalition with the far-right Freedom Party and whose government will take over the EU presidency on July 1, declared that he would “apply pressure” to ensure the results of the summit would be implemented. He expressed satisfaction that “more partners who support our line and that many who campaigned for a Europe of open borders have reconsidered their position.”

In Rome, Italy’s far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini stated that he was “satisfied and proud.” Europe had been forced by Rome’s firm hand to discuss

Italy's proposals—and ultimately to accept them, he claimed. He would now wait on “concrete promises.”

Among Salvini's fascistic proposals were the deportation of “all 600,000” immigrants in Italy and the counting of all the Sinti and Roma living in the country, in preparation for their deportation.

In Germany, Armin-Paul Hampel, foreign policy spokesman for the far-right AfD, backed the summit agreement. “It's moving in the right direction. This is something we've been saying for a long time, that the problem must be dealt with at the European borders and not only after immigrants have travelled for thousands of kilometres with the help of criminal gangs and smugglers,” he said on Deutschlandfunk. The “decisive thing” now will be the implementation of the measures, “if these reception centres are going to work, yes or no.”

The Christian Social Union also declared its satisfaction with the outcome. It was “the outcome of a debate in Germany, which is finally engaging with the refugee problem at the European level,” stated CSU parliamentary group leader Alexander Dobrindt in Berlin. A series of points, including better protection of external borders, are demands “that we in the CSU have been calling for strongly for some time.” In addition, he pointed out that in the summit document “the adoption of national measures is explicitly provided for.” They would be “prepared to make use of this,” and believe “still that national measures are required.”

The agreement in Brussels has also prepared at least a temporary truce in the dispute within the grand coalition between the CDU and CSU. CSU deputy leader Manfred Weber appealed in the *Münchener Merkur* for a positive assessment of the summit's results. Referring to Chancellor Angela Merkel, he said, “She has delivered.”

For her part, Merkel praised the summit outcome at a press conference and pointed to the necessity for national measures like those demanded by the CSU. They had “developed a comprehensive immigration strategy, which comprises the external borders and the control of these borders, incorporates external actions, meaning actions outside of the EU, and focuses on the internal issues, what we currently call secondary migration,” she said.

Already in her government statement on Thursday,

Merkel declared in typical CSU style, “It's about order, management, effective, sustainable. It's about our internal security and the EU's internal security. Both national and European measures are required for this.”

On Friday, Merkel announced the completion of “European” repatriation agreements with Spain and Greece. Both countries are ready “to start accepting asylum seekers once again if they have been stopped on the German-Austrian border by German authorities and have a EURODAC entry from the relevant state,” a government press release declared. In exchange, the member states would “receive more common support on the external borders...financially as well as the provision of more police officers.”

The fact that all governing parties in Europe—from the pseudo-left Syriza, to the social democratic PSOE Spanish government, Germany's grand coalition, and the openly far-right governments in Italy, Austria, and Eastern Europe—are cooperating so closely to intensify the terror against refugees underscores the correctness of the International Committee of the Fourth International's perspective. To beat back these dangerous political developments, which recall the darkest periods in European history, workers and young people must take up a struggle against all factions of the capitalist class and consciously fight for a socialist programme.



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