German interior minister's "Master Plan" for refugees: Internment camps and mass deportations

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12 July 2018

On Tuesday, German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer of the Christian Social Union (CSU) presented his "Migration Master Plan."

With this plan, the grand coalition government consisting of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the CSU and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) is basically adopting the refugee policy of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Seehofer's plan envisages, among other things, the barricading of "Fortress Europe," measures to secure national borders, the establishment of closed camps for refugees in Germany and throughout Europe, and mass deportations to the war zones of the Middle East.

The co-chair of the AfD parliamentary group, Alice Weidel, praised Seehofer's plan as an "announcement that goes in the right direction," adding that it includes elements of the AfD's program. The chairman of the AfD, Alexander Gauland, said: "Mr. Seehofer has addressed some correct points. In-kind benefits instead of cash benefits, that's something we would also like to see."

He added that the plan would represent a "shift in asylum policy if people were really repulsed at Germany's borders." Germany, he insisted, will be forced to "close itself off even under this chancellor, because we will otherwise be left with all the refugees."

At a press conference, Seehofer repeatedly declared that his Master Plan bore the imprimatur of the Interior Ministry, but other high-ranking government officials left no doubt that it is essentially supported by all of the government parties.

"The Master Plan, which is now being presented by the federal interior minister, has been agreed in the coalition," declared Volker Kauder, the head of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group. He continued, "Now the Master Plan will be implemented by the government and we support that," adding that the CDU and CSU had "reached agreement with the SPD and that means we can move ahead in the federal states."

At the end of last week, the CDU, CSU and SPD agreed to a reactionary asylum deal. It calls, inter alia, for repelling at the German-Austrian border refugees who have already been registered in another country. In addition, it stipulates that refugees can be arrested by the federal police and detained for 48 hours before being either deported or transferred to so-called "anchor centres."

Seehofer's statements at the press conference give some idea of the speed and brutality with which the ruling class is intensifying its offensive against refugees. With a cynical grin on his face, the interior minister justified the largest ever mass deportation of refugees to Afghanistan a few days ago, declaring, "Precisely on my 69th birthday, 69 people—I didn't plan it that way—were returned to Afghanistan. This is far above the usual number."

It was reported yesterday that one of Seehofer's victims, a 23-year-old man, committed suicide in a shelter in Kabul only days after his deportation.

Seehofer's Master Plan explicitly demands the implementation of national border controls, along with the setting up of closed refugee camps in Germany. The section "Internal Borders" states: "A new border regime is being designed at the German-Austrian border to ensure that asylum seekers whose asylum procedures are the responsibility of other EU countries are prevented from entering the country. We are setting up transit centres that will directly return asylum seekers to their respective countries."

The existing system of mass camps in Europe and Africa is to be expanded. Refugees in such camps have virtually no rights. Immigrants held in Libyan camps are subject to torture, enslavement and murder.

Point 22 of the Master Plan calls for "strengthening structures at the external border" while supporting the reception centres in Italy and Greece with sufficient staff from the member states. It also demands implementation of the concept of "hotspots/controlled facilities as defined by

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the European Council resolutions of 28 June 2018."

Point 23 of the truce states: "Development of a standard model for European reception facilities: the working out of a German initiative by the European Commission for the development of a standard model for hotspots/controlled facilities. In this way, ensure transferability to other regions when necessary." Point 11 calls for the "establishment of so-called 'secure places' in North Africa and the Sahel region to prevent further movements of refugees and migrants.

The development of such a comprehensive system of closed camps—in the form of "hotspots," "transfer centres," "anchor centres" and "safe places"—must be taken as a serious warning. Like the first concentration camps in the 1930s, the new camps would be directed against political opponents and ultimately against the working class as a whole.

A closer reading of Seehofer's "Master Plan" leaves no doubt that the ruling class is returning to its fascist traditions. Entire passages recall the bureaucratic measures and language that played such a critical under the Nazi-organised reign of terror.

Instead of "better identification and security verification of third-country nationals," paragraph 37 calls for "the use of the AZR number for clear identification" and the "extension of the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR) as the sole centralised foreigner file system."

The numbering of refugees is to be carried out throughout Europe and used explicitly for the preparation of mass deportations. The document continues: "Extending the storage capacities in the AZR to better control deportations and voluntary departures as well as exit permits issued and better identification in repatriations."

This brutal treatment is also directed at children and adolescents. Among other demands, the plan calls for a reduction in the "minimum age for the taking of fingerprints to the end of the sixth year of life." Should the authorities have doubts about the age of migrants, they can order a "mandatory medical examination" to determine their age.

Refugees are to be subjected to a regime of tyranny inside and outside the camps. "We do not want immigration into our social systems," the plan states. "Our social benefits must not provide any incentive for immigration to Germany. That is why the issue of benefits in kind must be given priority over cash benefits."

Point 39 seeks to extend the "duration of low-level benefits to … 36 months instead of the current 15 months," and calls for "facilitating the inclusion of charitable work … to structure the daily routine." This euphemistic language cannot obscure what is really meant—slave labor.

The call for mass deportations runs like a red thread throughout the document. "Those obliged to leave must leave our country in a timely manner," says the section titled "Return." It continues: "The number of those returning voluntarily and repatriations must be significantly increased."

The preamble already formulates the following goal: "The promise must be fulfilled to consistently and permanently reduce the number of people fleeing to Germany and Europe and prevent any repetition of a situation like 2015."

Point 59 calls for a "more practical design of deportation detention centres" as well as "ensuring the apprehension of those required to leave and the prevention of any evasion of the authorities by those facing imminent deportation."

All "deportation and detention resources" would have to be used and the federal states "encouraged to establish sufficient detention places or deportation and repatriation custody." It was important, the preamble adds, to create at airports "separate detention facilities… to facilitate collective deportations."

The grand coalition's Master Plan makes clear that the brutal crackdown on refugees is directed against the working class as a whole, with the aim of establishing a veritable surveillance and police state. The paper calls for the "strengthening and enhancing of international police cooperation" and the development of a "liaison officer network of the federal police in the countries of origin and transit."

The building up of the state police apparatus at home is directly linked to a neo-colonial war policy abroad. A key aim is the "further development of civil UN and EU police missions in countries of origin and transit to stabilise the security situation in the affected states," and the "creation of a pool of personnel to increase German participation in international police operations and thus facilitate deployments in foreign countries."

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