

Deportations from Germany to Maghreb states rise sharply

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The number of deportations from Germany to the Maghreb states (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) rose sharply last year. This was reported by the *Rheinische Post* in its online edition of February 22, based on figures obtained from the federal Interior Ministry. Almost 1,900 people were sent back to the North African states during 2018.

Last year, 369 people were deported to Tunisia compared to just 251 in 2017; 687 were returned to Algeria, compared to 504 in 2017; and 826 were sent back to Morocco, compared to 634 in 2017. This amounts to a 35 percent increase in the deportation rate in one year.

If the figures are compared with 2015, the deportation rate has increased 14-fold. Although only 135 people were deported to the three countries in 2015, the total last year was 1,873.

These countries are yet to be declared “safe countries of origin.” The Bundesrat—Germany’s second parliamentary chamber at the federal level, with representation from the country’s 16 states—postponed a vote on this issue on February 15 after state governments where the Green Party participates announced they would abstain. By contrast, the federal parliament declared the three Maghreb states and Georgia to be safe countries of origin on January 18, with the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD) voting in favour.

The description “safe countries of origin” has nothing to do with the political and economic realities in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Social tensions are at the breaking point across the Maghreb, with youth unemployment extremely high. As the refugee aid organisation ProAsyl reported, there have been several reports from the region of undesirable journalists and

oppositional youth being tortured, as well as homosexuals being persecuted.

Five years ago, the classification of the Balkan states as “safe countries of origin” laid the basis for the mass deportation of tens of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers. They travelled to Germany after the Western states incited ethnic nationalism in the former Yugoslavia and promoted war and civil war. Ever since, the authorities have brutally deported people to these war-torn countries, even though they can’t live a life there. The classification of the Balkan countries as “safe countries of origin” was made possible by Baden-Württemberg, which is led by the Greens and Minister President Winfried Kretschmann, voting for the measure in the Bundesrat.

The attempt to classify a growing number of countries as “safe countries of origin” violates the basic constitutional principle that the reasons for a person’s flight and persecution must be carefully and individually reviewed in each case. The expansion of the “safe country” concept would make it easier for German authorities to reject asylum applications and deport people more quickly who seek refuge in Germany. This amounts to a further hollowing out of the basic right to asylum, which has been all but abolished.

There have already been a number of arbitrary and erroneous asylum decisions. The Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) makes so many errors and dubious asylum decisions that in 2017, 40 percent of the cases appealed by asylum applicants were found to have been decided wrongly. The court found in favour of the complainant in each case, and many asylum applications had to be corrected because the BAMF used out-of-date facts and text passages from a template to reach its decisions.

According to Interior Ministry statistics, deportations to other countries have also increased. Between 2017 and 2018, deportations to Russia rose from 184 to 422, from 184 to 346 for Armenia, from 121 to 284 for Afghanistan, from 32 to 212 for India, from 32 to 144 for Gambia, and from 84 to 210 for Ghana.

The rapid rise in deportations is a component of the brutal anti-refugee policies of the grand coalition, which has fully embraced the far-right Alternative for Germany's (AfD) policies.

The deportations do not even go far enough for Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (CSU). In mid-February, Seehofer presented a 60-page draft law on deporting refugees which bears the imprimatur of the AfD from beginning to end. The draft law's purpose is to remove rejected asylum seekers from the country as quickly as possible if they cannot be deported to their home country due to war or persecution, or if the deportation can't be carried out due to the absence of personal papers. The draft law bears the cynical name "law for orderly returns," but it could more accurately be described as the "foreigners out law," as the *World Socialist Web Site* previously commented.

The draft law, which ignores all democratic principles, proposes to step up the practice of taking refugees who are due for deportation into detention in order to speed up the process. Additionally, it intends to criminalise the activities of those who assist and support refugees. Anyone who publicises deportation appointments or planned deportation flights can be punished with a prison sentence of up to three years.

The SPD is also endorsing this plan. The expansion of the "safe countries of origin" category to include Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia was already contained within the grand coalition agreement, which the SPD signed and is working to implement. This was underscored once again when Justice Minister Katarina Barley (SPD) criticised the Interior Ministry from the right for allegedly not carrying out deportations efficiently enough. According to the SPD minister, the biggest problem with deportations is that the countries of origin continue to refuse to take back rejected asylum seekers. "The Interior Ministry has been obligated to negotiate agreements for some time, but isn't managing to do so."

The Greens are also fundamentally in agreement with the basis of the government's stance. Their opposition

to the confirmation of further "safe countries of origin" is entirely unprincipled. Green party co-leader Annalena Baerbock declared on January 18, "The point that repatriations must take place more quickly is fully shared by the Greens. But there are other means of achieving this." For example, she described deportations to Georgia as "entirely appropriate," but added that the Interior Ministry has "not done its homework." In December, Baerbock called for sped-up deportations for asylum seekers convicted of a crime.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei vehemently opposes the attacks on refugees and their supporters. In our statement "No to nationalism and war! For the United Socialist States of Europe!" which calls for support for the SGP's campaign in the European elections, we state:

"To justify and test the ground for the construction of a police state, the ruling elites are intentionally picking on the most vulnerable members of society. Refugees are being herded into camps under inhumane conditions, robbed of elementary democratic rights, and deported to war zones following Gestapo-like raids. This is setting a precedent that will be used to eradicate the democratic rights of all workers.

"We defend the right to asylum, as well as the right of all workers to live and work in the country of their choice. The working class cannot allow itself to be divided. To defend their rights, workers must declare their solidarity with refugees and wage a common struggle against exploitation and war.

"We demand equal rights for everyone who lives here, an end to deportations, and the closure of detention centres."



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