

State election in Hesse, Germany: Social Democrats adopt far-right platform

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20 August 2023

Older residents of the state of Hesse, Germany will likely recall with disgust the right-wing campaign with which Christian Democratic Party (CDU) politician Roland Koch won the Hessian state election in 1999. By way of a signature campaign against dual citizenship, he fueled xenophobic sentiments and created a climate in which extreme right terrorist groups, such as the murderers of Kassel state official Walter Lübcke, and ultimately the far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD), could thrive.

In this year's state elections, which will be held on October 8, it is the Social Democratic Party (SPD) that is running on a xenophobic platform. The SPD candidate, Nancy Faeser, who is seeking to replace CDU Prime Minister Boris Rhein at the head of the state government, has retained her post as federal minister in order to distinguish herself as a law-and-order candidate in the election.

As federal Minister of the Interior, Faeser not only plays a leading role in the expansion of Fortress Europe, which hands millions of refugees over to authoritarian regimes, locks them in concentration camps and lets them drown at sea or die of thirst in the desert. Hardly does a week go by without Faeser publicly presenting new proposals to grind down the remaining democratic rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

In early August, Faeser's ministry presented a 'discussion draft' that lists 35 pages of brutal—in some cases sadistic—legislative proposals that make a mockery of elementary democratic principles. One could title the paper, 'Foreigners out!'

A total of twelve legal measures are intended to facilitate the deportation of refugees and asylum seekers. These individuals may still legally invoke certain rights, but no longer to any practical effect because they will be deported anyway.

For example, according to the draft, appeals against bans on entry and residence will no longer suspend deportation orders; anyone who files an asylum application can still be placed in detention pending deportation; the number of cases requiring a public attorney will be greatly reduced; the maximum duration of detention pending departure will be extended from ten to 28 days; and the authorities will be given far-reaching rights to search shelter facilities.

A particularly vile plan is that deportation will no longer be announced in advance, even in the case individuals with long-term "tolerated" status. Without prior notice, the police will be able to snatch up those targeted in nighttime raids and evict them from the country. Until now, people who have been tolerated in Germany for more than a year must be informed of their impending deportation at least one month in advance.

One can imagine what this means. Families who have been living in Germany for years, but heretofore have only been 'tolerated,' go to bed in fear every night that the police will ring the doorbell, put them on the next plane and ship them off to a country where they have no means to support themselves. The last time such psychological terror was instituted in Germany was under the Nazi regime.

More than 6,000 young people currently undergoing vocational training as tolerated persons are threatened by Faeser's new plans. More than half of all tolerated persons, 136,000, have been living in Germany for more than five years. Most hold regular jobs, have their own apartments and send their children to school.

Another proposal that Faeser has been propagandizing in recent weeks is the introduction of "Sippenhaftung" (kin punishment) under the pretext of so-called clan criminality. Members of families

designated as criminal clans are to be deported even if they have not committed any crime at all. In response to skeptical questions in the *Rheinische Post*, Faeser emphasized that she was concerned with 'effective solutions': 'The rule of law must show its teeth here.'

Why is the SPD in Hesse running an election campaign far to the right of Koch's infamous 1999 campaign?

The answer to this question lies not simply in the person of Nancy Faeser, but in the changed political circumstances. Today, the SPD leads a federal government that is carrying out the largest military buildup since Hitler and escalating the NATO war against Russia without regard for losses, even if it means risking nuclear war.

The federal government is ruthlessly offloading the costs of this policy onto the working population in the form of social cuts and falling real wages. As Minister of the Interior, Faeser is responsible not only for refugee policy, but also for collective bargaining in the public sector, where she forced through massive real wage cuts with the support of the service sector union Verdi.

The German Federal Police, the Federal Criminal Police Office and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution also fall within Faeser's jurisdiction and are being systematically strengthened by her. While right-wing terrorist networks operate unhindered in the state apparatus, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution lists the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (the Socialist Equality Party in Germany, SGP) as an "object of observation" and denounces it as 'left-wing extremist' because it fights for a socialist society by democratic means. In the preface to the latest report on the protection of the constitution, Faeser lets it be known that all viewpoints that run counter to the German war effort are to be banned from public discussion.

Faeser also bears responsibility for the criminalization of climate activists, such as the 'Last Generation.'

This policy, which could come straight out of the AfD's election program, is supported by all parties. This applies not only to the Greens, who are a member of the federal government and govern in Hesse with the CDU, but also to the Left Party, which was long led in Hesse by the current Left Party federal chairwoman,

Janine Wissler.

Wissler tried for years to form a coalition government in Hesse with Faeser's SPD. In December 2021, Wissler congratulated Faeser upon the latter's swearing-in as federal interior minister and absurdly praised her as a 'comrade-in-arms in the fight against right-wing violence.' This underscores the fact that the Left Party, like the SPD, defends capitalism and the bourgeois state, which it is willing to use it against working-class opposition.

Faeser, a native of Schwalbach/Taunus, represents the Hochtaunus electoral district comprising wealthy suburbs around Frankfurt boasting the highest per capita income in Germany, twice as high, for example, as the cities of Offenbach, Duisburg or Gelsenkirchen. As a lawyer, she worked at the Frankfurt business law firm GÖRG.

The motive driving Faeser's xenophobic election campaign is the fear of a working-class rebellion. While resistance to war and social austerity is growing, Faeser's campaign is a desperate attempt to divide the working population through nationalism and xenophobia. The attack on the democratic rights of refugees, the weakest members of society, serves as the prelude to abolishing all democratic rights of the working class.



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