

German media and politicians launch smear campaign against refugees

Gregor Link

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Those who believed that the German bourgeoisie had emerged purified from its historical crimes are once again being taught better these days. Eighty years after the Second World War and the Holocaust, the ruling class in Germany is picking up where the Nazis left off, agitating against migrants and setting up a European-wide system of concentration camps in which people are interned for months on end, exploited economically and deported arbitrarily.

On Wednesday, Chancellor Olaf Scholz made it clear to the government cabinet that Germany would “not block” a further tightening of the European Union’s asylum regulation. This clears the way for the adoption of a crisis regulation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which EU interior ministers have been discussing this week. The draft provides for considerable restrictions on the rights of refugees in the event of a “crisis,” so that “standards of care may be lowered” and even more people than before may be detained in camps for up to eight months.

Such cases would occur if other states tried to “instrumentalise” migrants against Europe. This has in mind instances like Turkey in 2020 and Morocco and Belarus briefly in 2021 when these states did not hermetically seal their borders themselves and allowed refugees to pass through. According to this perverse logic, refugees are considered enemy weapons, not people in need of help, and are treated accordingly.

The draft contains no separate provisions for children. Speaking to the press in Brussels on Thursday, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser (Social Democrat, SPD) indicated that she would approve the crisis regulation on behalf of the federal government. By doing so, the German government is accepting the widespread existence of conditions like in deportation camps on Lesbos or in Libya, which are even described as “concentration camp-like” by bourgeois media and politicians.

In the days before, the Greens had spoken out against the EU crisis regulation, saying it could foment “chaos” and was not suitable for creating “order” on the continent. The parliamentary director of the Greens, Irene Mihalic, argued in the style of a fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) politician that the abrogation of parts of the CEAS through the crisis regulation could lead to “incentives being set for the

forwarding of large numbers of unregistered refugees towards Germany.” The German government could not be held responsible for this. Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock had made almost identical comments earlier on X/Twitter.

The CEAS in its current form is already a stain on modern European history. A joint statement by over 50 human rights and refugee aid organisations speaks of a “devaluation of European fundamental and human rights and the erosion of the principles of the rule of law” that call into question the “foundations of the rule of law.” The *World Socialist Web Site* recently noted that EU states are abandoning the foundations of the Geneva Refugee Convention by building detention camps and effectively abolishing the fundamental right to asylum.

The persecution of migrants is not limited to the EU’s external borders but is also being intensified within the Schengen free-travel area. On Wednesday, Interior Minister Faeser had announced that the federal police would carry out additional “flexible focus controls” at the borders with Poland and the Czech Republic “with immediate effect”—in addition to the stationary border controls already taking place at the German-Austrian border. The controls do not have to be requested at EU level and are to be supported by the German customs authorities with up to 500 enforcement officers. They would “complement the ongoing stops,” which have already been intensified in recent months, she said.

This is a targeted campaign by the ruling class to advance its war against the working class and to strengthen the most right-wing forces in doing so.

When proclaiming his reactionary “Germany Pact” at the beginning of September, Chancellor Scholz had already explicitly called for an intensified “fight against irregular migration” and an “expansion of detention pending deportation.” At an election event in Nuremberg, Scholz now held out the prospect of further possible measures to limit migration and called for more effective deportations. With regard to possible border controls, he said that depending on the situation, “further measures may have to be taken at the borders, for example at the Polish border.”

Only a few days ago, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, in solidarity with the fascist Italian head of government Giorgia Meloni, announced a “ten-point plan” to

fight refugees. This plan, in conjunction with a decree by the Italian government, provides for the internment of refugees under the supervision of the Italian military “in remote areas that are as sparsely populated as possible” and for the interlinking of the Italian navy’s operations in an “integrated approach” with Frontex, Europol and the regimes of the transit countries.

Leading German politicians from government and opposition are engaging in undisguised incitement. For example, opposition leader Friedrich Merz claimed, completely contrary to the facts, that refugees “get their teeth done for free,” while German citizens had to wait a long time for a dentist appointment.

According to a report in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Chancellor Scholz had claimed in a meeting of the SPD parliamentary group on Tuesday that the number of people coming to Germany was “much greater than what can be easily coped with.” Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier also invoked a “load limit” being reached by migrants.

The increasing number of refugees and displaced persons can be attributed solely to the war and class-war policies of the coalition government itself. With increasingly deadly arms deliveries to the Ukrainian military, it is relentlessly pushing the brutal proxy war on the backs of the Ukrainian population and is guilty of failing to provide aid in Libya, Morocco, Turkey and other disaster-stricken areas. When state and local politicians claim that they have no financial leeway to provide for asylum seekers, it is a result of the federal, state and local governments deliberately wrecking the social systems in order to finance the costs of war and rearmament.

The smear campaign has the particular aim of making hostility to refugees the all-dominant issue in upcoming state elections. In Bavaria and Hesse, where elections will be held October 8, as well as in Saxony, Brandenburg and Thuringia, where elections are due next year, the far-right AfD is being strengthened in order to legitimise a further shift to the right by all other parties.

Bavaria’s Prime Minister Markus Söder (Christian Social Union, CSU) demanded that asylum seekers only be supported with benefits in kind, that an “integration limit” of 200,000 refugees per year be set and that the list of so-called safe countries of origin be extended to include, for example, the Maghreb states and India. Saxony’s Prime Minister Michael Kretschmer (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) and Brandenburg’s Interior Minister Michael Stübgen (SPD) called for stationary police checks at the borders with Poland and the Czech Republic.

The media plays a central role in stirring up the public with this nationalist agitation. On September 23, *Der Spiegel*—the country’s biggest news magazine—appeared with a cover unmistakably borrowed from an anti-Semitic motif circulated from 1901 onwards by the far-right Vienna city government under Karl Lueger. The *Spiegel* cover employs alienation and

montage to paint the image of refugees, familiar in right-wing extremist circles, as a threatening and anonymous mass. Emblazoned above it is the title, “Can we manage it again?”

In its cover story, the magazine claims that amid “rising asylum applications” and “overburdened municipalities” in Germany, there is “hardly any sign of a welcoming culture.” When *Der Spiegel* launched a similar smear campaign in 1991 under the title “Der Ansturm der Armen” (“The onslaught of the poor”), it contributed to a pogrom-like mood at the height of which right-wing extremist gangs carried out murderous arson attacks on refugees in Rostock-Lichtenhagen, Hoyerswerda, Solingen and Mölln.

In reality, surveys repeatedly show that feelings of solidarity with refugees are very high within the population. In July, a representative survey by the German Council of Experts on Integration and Migration (SVR) showed that “the majority of the population in Germany expresses solidarity with refugees” and is “accordingly willing to help them.” According to this, “three out of four of the more than 4,000 respondents would make a donation; two thirds would help accompany refugees to the authorities; just under one third would take in refugees at home.”

This solidarity is a thorn in the side of the ruling class because it contradicts capitalist exploitation, which is based on the division of the world into competing nation states. A united movement of the international working class, which recognises its real enemy in the respective national elites and oligarchs, is to be prevented at all costs.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) fights among workers for the perspective of the United Socialist States of Europe and demands the immediate abolition of “Fortress Europe,” combined with the universal right to choose freely where to live and work. All people who seek protection at the external borders and within their borders due to the inhuman policies of the EU states must be comprehensively helped by confiscating the assets of the European capitalists and using them to meet the social and economic needs of all workers.

The SGP, together with its European sister parties, will also fight for this perspective in the upcoming elections to the European Parliament.



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