

# Social Democrats and Christian Democrats agree a coalition in Hesse with a declaration of war on refugees

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For the first time in the state of Hesse, a grand coalition headed by the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) is to lead the government. On Monday, the Social Democrat (SPD) and CDU leaders presented their coalition agreement for the 2024 to 2029 legislative period.

At their respective Hesse party conferences, the CDU and the SPD approved the agreement, for which the Federal Minister of the Interior and SPD state leader Nancy Faeser is jointly responsible with Hesse's Minister President Boris Rhein (CDU). It is nothing less than an open declaration of war on immigrants, refugees and all those who defend democratic rights.

The general motto of the new Hesse coalition is: "ONE—FOR ALL." However, this in no way applies to people from countries in crisis, war and civil war who are seeking protection and refuge in Hesse. Chapter 4, which deals with issues of "immigration and integration," is full of right-wing fighting words such as "repatriation offensive," "irregular migration," "expansion of detention pending deportation," "protection of external borders" and "asylum procedures outside the EU." The reader gets the strong impression that they are holding a programme from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) in their hands.

The CDU-SPD coalition that will govern in the state capital Wiesbaden starting January 18 apparently has so little to offer in terms of a social perspectives and future projects that it appeals to the worst xenophobia.

They write: "We are launching a genuine repatriation offensive and will enforce departure obligations consistently and with all constitutional possibilities." Detention pending deportation is to be expanded, new "repatriation centres" are to be established and the right to the inviolability of the home is also being undermined, with the following statement: "By expanding the right to enter homes ... we will ensure that state decisions are consistently implemented."

They want to promote the "willingness to leave voluntarily." To this end, new arrivals are to be forced into

detention centres, where they can be held for up to two years. The state wants to have access to them at all times: "In these facilities, ... accessibility for the authorities and courts as well as the execution of the departure should be ensured. In particular, people who prevent their deportation ... at the airport are referred directly to the return centres." And: "It is precisely in this procedure that we are strengthening the powers of the police."

And then again, openly and threateningly: "We are committed to the consistent return of rejected asylum seekers at all levels."

The extent to which the governing parties are trampling on basic democratic rights can be seen wherever they disregard existing law with the stroke of a pen or express their intention to change the legal situation. For example, the treaty explicitly questions the fundamental ban on pushbacks: "The principle of non-refoulement [which prohibits states from returning individuals to a country where there is a real risk of being subjected to persecution, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or any other human rights violation] must ... be critically scrutinised."

So far, so-called "pushbacks," the indiscriminate refoulement of people seeking asylum, are simply illegal. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, current EU law, the Geneva Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights are in complete agreement on this. According to all of them, it is strictly forbidden to forcibly deport people and ignore their asylum applications, even if they do not have valid papers. The coalition agreement now explicitly calls this into question.

Another example is the intention expressed in the agreement to override the existing right to petition, which states that people may not be deported as long as a petition they have submitted to a political body is still pending.

The existing legal situation is also called into question where people come into conflict with the justice system in any form, and particularly protected persons (e.g.,

unaccompanied minors) are no exception: “It must be easier to deport offenders who are entitled to protection,” the coalition demands.

The charity organisation Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband has already expressed its alarm at this, as the coalition agreement in Hesse would “undermine the protection of minors and the welfare of children” in the case of underage refugees.

As far as the “legal residence situation of offenders” is concerned, the coalition agreement states that federal law must be reformed and “any obstacles under EU law in this area must be removed.” An “indictment, or at the latest the admission of the main hearing in criminal proceedings, should be sufficient”—namely to affirm the “interest in deportation”, i.e., to deport a person. (Until now, this double punishment, which provides for deportation in addition to the criminal judgement, has been linked to a final conviction).

The coalition agreement calls on immigrants to take special responsibility to “integrate.” According to the Hesse SPD and CDU, this includes not only committing to the general values of the German constitution, but also unconditionally recognising Israel’s right to exist.

There is even a special section entitled: “We reaffirm the guarantee of Israel’s right to exist as a German reason of state.” It explicitly states: “Anyone who has been found to have committed antisemitic or extremist offences or corresponding confirmed activities must not be granted German citizenship”—whereby any criticism of Israel is considered “antisemitic.”

The consequences of this—and how far the new Hesse state government is prepared to go—can be seen in the next sentence, which is aimed at people who have already been naturalised. It states: “The same applies to people with dual citizenship. German citizenship will be revoked in this case.”

To put it bluntly: the Hesse SPD and CDU are threatening anyone who criticises the genocidal oppression of the Palestinians with the loss of their German citizenship!

The government politicians also want to restrict the right of assembly. They write that “against the background of Hamas’ terrorist attack on the state of Israel,” they would examine whether the right to freedom of assembly could be “legally adapted or tightened.”

At the same time, the police are being massively strengthened, their allowances are being improved and they are to receive body cameras, tasers and drones in addition to new protective equipment. The chapter on security and a strong state is by far the longest in the coalition agreement, alongside the chapter on the “Hesse homeland.”

In other chapters, the agreement is almost enthusiastically

in favour of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), Hesse being an armaments production location. The debt ceiling limiting public spending is to be maintained.

The Hesse state government is also expressly in favour of the new EU resolutions on the “Common European Asylum System” (CEAS). Among other things, this provides for people seeking protection to no longer be allowed into Europe at all, but to be intercepted outside the external borders and sent back. Accordingly, the coalition is in favour of “limiting immigration by protecting our external borders, including with stationary border controls.”

The new Hesse coalition agreement is part of a whole wave of far-right attacks on refugees and immigrants. In France, President Macron pushed one of the EU’s toughest immigration laws through parliament with the votes of Marine Le Pen’s far-right National Rally. Even young people who were born and raised in France no longer automatically receive French citizenship at the age of 18. The European Union is sealing off its external borders with the new CEAS asylum system and is effectively suspending the right to asylum. Governments everywhere are adopting the immigration policies of the extreme right.

In this way, they are trying to suppress the growing radicalisation of the international working class through divisions and police-state measures. The attacks on refugees, i.e., on the weakest and most defenceless section of workers, are in fact the spearhead of the attacks on the entire working class. That is why German workers must understand them as an attack on themselves. To beat them back, workers need their own party.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is the only party that defends basic democratic rights in principle. The SGP, together with its sister parties in the UK, France, and Turkey and with fraternal groups in Ukraine and Russia, is running in next year’s European elections. The aim is to build a European movement to end the war, defend social and democratic rights and oppose capitalist barbarism through the establishment of the United Socialist States of Europe.



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