

EU and Berlin step up attacks on refugees

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On Monday, German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser (Social Democrats, SPD) visited the city of Plovdiv in southern Bulgaria. There she inspected the barbed wire fence on the border with Turkey, which serves as a model to seal off the European Union to refugees.

The border, which is almost 260 kilometres long and secured by a double fence, is notorious for brutal pushbacks, i.e., illegal deportations by the Bulgarian border police. Yet it is precisely there, at a border crossing called Kapitan Andreevo, that a pilot project of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is to be set up. This clearly shows the extreme right-wing attitudes that now prevail in the European Union.

With the final adoption of the CEAS on April 10, the European Parliament has effectively suspended the right to asylum and turned the immigration policies of the extreme right into law. The measures adopted provide for Europe's external borders to be hermetically sealed off. This means that refugees will have to undergo their asylum procedure outside the EU in closed, militarily guarded detention centres.

Completely sealed off, people traumatised by war, forced migration and fleeing danger, including children, will have no access to legal, medical or psychological support in such camps. Instead, they are detained, screened, registered, and selected with the primary aim of deporting as many as possible as quickly as possible—often to the same countries from which they fled, or even to so-called safe third countries. Their number has been increased as part of the reform, which means that even more deportations are possible.

As the WSWs has already shown, CEAS means the “abolition of the right to asylum, the extension of Fortress Europe, mass deportations and the detention even of women and children in deportation facilities similar to concentration camps.”

During the vote on April 10, refugee supporters demonstrated in front of the EU Parliament in Brussels. Some shouted from the visitors gallery in the plenary chamber to the MEPs: “Be human, vote NO!” Others

threw paper aeroplanes into the chamber with the coordinates of shipwrecked people and information about refugees who had died while fleeing.

Marine accidents with fatalities occur almost every day in the Mediterranean. On the same day that MEPs approved the CEAS, a life-threatening incident occurred off the North African coast, as reported by the rescue organisation Seebrücke.

The “Mare Jonio” had rushed to the aid of shipwrecked people and tried to rescue them from a sinking boat whose engine had failed. The EU-funded Libyan coastguard then turned up and ordered the rescue ship to move away immediately, which it did not do. The coastguard militias “carried out dangerous manoeuvres around the boat and fired into the air. ... Panic broke out and people jumped into the water.” In the end, the “Mare Jonio” was able to bring a total of 56 people to Pozzallo, Italy.

Every year, thousands of refugees freeze to death, starve or drown at Europe's borders. According to Statista, almost 30,000 people have drowned while fleeing across the Mediterranean in the last 10 years. This year alone, at least 459 people had already died at sea in the Mediterranean by the end of March.

Thousands of others die in the dangerous attempt to cross a border like the one in southern Bulgaria. Or they are crammed into overcrowded camps such as Moria (Greece) for an indefinite period. Or they are picked up on the high seas by the Libyan coastguard and forced back into the hell of a detention centre in Libya.

Nancy Faeser favours and promotes the murderous European asylum system in the name of the coalition government of the SPD, the Greens and Liberal Democrats (FDP). For the past six months, she has also been in favour of the massive expansion of surveillance at the EU's external borders by Frontex, a project being pursued by EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (Christian Democrat, CDU) together with Giorgia Meloni, Italy's fascist prime minister.

In Germany itself, the SPD-led government is also increasingly openly realising the policies of the far-right

Alternative for Germany (AfD). On January 18, the Bundestag (parliament) passed the shameful Repatriation Improvement Act with the votes of the coalition parties.

At the beginning of April, it was agreed to introduce a payment card for asylum seekers, which refugee support organisation ProAsyl rightly calls a “discrimination concept” and which serves exclusively as a deterrent and for anti-refugee propaganda. Refugees’ lives are made more difficult by the fact that they no longer have access to cash and can no longer send money to their families abroad. Refugees and immigrants are being increasingly stigmatised.

The militarisation of society as a whole is accompanied by intolerable nationalist agitation and propaganda. In order to divide and weaken the working class, the federal coalition relies on racism and the spectre of “foreign criminality.” In the media, immigrants and asylum seekers are only mentioned in connection with robbery, rape, drugs and terrorism.

Shortly before the CEAS was passed in the EU Parliament, Faeser presented the police crime statistics at the Federal Press Conference on April 9. Together with the president of the Federal Criminal Investigation Agency (BKA), she called for “tough action,” “swift action by the authorities” and a policy of zero tolerance. Faeser claimed, “The connection is correct that increasing immigration has led to more criminal offences.”

That is pure demagoguery. The crime statistics record all cases investigated by the police, even if no final court judgement has yet been made. It is well known that immigrants are prosecuted much more severely. The vast majority of cases are also petty offences, such as shoplifting or fare evasion, which are mainly committed by poorer people. The statistics also include physical confrontations in reception camps, where traumatised refugees fleeing war and hardship are crammed into very confined spaces and condemned to inactivity and a lack of prospects.

By contrast, the statistics exclude financial and tax offences committed by the rich as well as the political crimes of the ruling class. Instead, the figures paint a picture of a class society in which non-Germans at the bottom are not only perpetrators, but very often also victims.

This demagogic agitation was immediately taken up by Sahra Wagenknecht, who heads the BSW split-off from the Left Party. In response to the crime statistics, she called for a “summit of state interior ministers in the chancellery” to “tackle the problem of uncontrolled

immigration,” as she told the dpa press agency in Berlin.

Wagenknecht attacked Faeser from the right and railed, “If the crime statistics show that crimes are disproportionately committed by people from certain immigration milieus, an interior minister must not make this problem a taboo and play it down.” As if that were not enough, she called for the police to be better equipped and that they deserved “significantly more respect and social recognition.”

The vile demonising of refugees is directed against the entire working class. While the poorest of the poor, refugees and immigrants, are under direct attack, the unemployed, low-income earners and workers are also increasingly being deprived of their social and democratic rights. The growing opposition to militarism, war and the genocide in Gaza is being suppressed by the ruling class using increasingly brutal methods.

The resolutions of the European Parliament and Germany’s coalition government also provide clarity in this context. As the WSWs has written:

The fact that all sections of the ruling class support a policy of terror against refugees shows that workers and young people are confronted not simply with one or another government, but with the entire ruling class and its social system.

European capitalism cannot be reformed. It must be abolished by a revolutionary movement of the European working class and replaced by the United Socialist States of Europe.

Only the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) stands for this goal in the European elections. It fights for the unity of all workers, regardless of their passport, skin colour or ethnic origin, and also stands today by the appeal made by Karl Marx to the working class: “Proletarians of all countries, unite!”



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