

Left Party-led government pushes anti-refugee agitation and police-state measures ahead of state elections in Thuringia

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After the murderous knife attack in Solingen, the *World Socialist Web Site* commented that there was now only one party in Germany: the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Representatives of all the establishment parties are engaging in right-wing extremist anti-refugee agitation and competing with each other with increasingly drastic demands for more deportations and the establishment of a police state.

The Left Party is no exception. Ahead of the elections in several east German states, it is placing itself at the forefront of the campaign, along with the spin-off Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW). This is particularly evident in Thuringia, where the Left Party provides the minister president, Bodo Ramelow, who leads a state government coalition comprising the Left Party, Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens.

The measures presented by Ramelow and the Thuringia Interior Minister Georg Meier (SPD) at a joint government media conference on Wednesday could also have come from the fascist AfD.

The police in Thuringia have been “instructed to significantly increase the visible presence of police forces in places where a large number of people come together,” said Meier. This would apply, for example, to social gatherings, folk festivals, sporting and major events, and music events.

In addition, “police video surveillance” is to be expanded. As a pilot project, the surveillance of Anger Square in the state capital Erfurt, among other places, was to be “vigorously pursued.” Camera locations for this have “already been determined.” In addition, the ministry “supports Thuringia municipalities in setting up video surveillance on the basis of the Public Authorities Act.”

Other measures aim to stigmatise refugees as supposed perpetrators of violence. Meier explained that from now on, the Thuringia police will educate newly arrived refugees in the initial reception centres “about rules, laws and manners.” For him, “at this point, it is crucial that we convey very clearly that carrying knives is not part of everyday life in Germany.”

The focus is on mass deportations. A “central office for repatriation” is being set up at the Thuringia State Administration Office, and funds for this had “already been earmarked in the budget for 2025”. The central office will support the districts and work closely with the federal government.

Thuringia is already notorious for its inhumane deportations.

“With the increased focus on repatriation, significantly more people required to leave the country have already been deported this year than in previous years,” Meier boasted. In 2024, 266 people have already been deported, 246 of them in the first half of the year. In the same period in 2023, “there were only 151 and in 2022 only 124 deportations.” Compared to the previous year, “63 percent more people were deported.”

In order to further increase the numbers and ensure that refugees who are to be removed are actually deported, “places for deportation detention will be created in Thuringia.” So far, none have been available, and “appropriate places” are being rented in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate, the interior minister complained. This would now be tackled and “places for deportation detention will be created here in Thuringia.”

These were also necessary in view of deportations to Syria and Afghanistan, the minister said. “It must be possible to deport dangerous individuals and migrants who have committed serious crimes to Syria and Afghanistan, Meier demanded. He said the federal government was “called upon to take all necessary measures.” At the state level, “all preparations are being made to immediately deport people to Syria and Afghanistan as well.”

Meier repeatedly attacked the federal government from the right, which is fuelling the war against refugees. Thuringia was calling on the federal government to continue border controls with neighbouring Austria, Switzerland, Poland and the Czech Republic. The controls had “reduced the number of illegal immigrants arriving last year by about 20 percent.” The internal border controls within Europe would only “no longer be necessary if the reforms of the common European asylum system at EU level effectively prevent illegal migration to the EU.”

The Left Party-led state government is thus also explicitly promoting barbarism at Europe's external borders. According to official figures, over 28,000 people have drowned in the Mediterranean since 2014 alone. With over 2,500 drownings, last year was the deadliest since 2020. The reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) referred to by Meier aims to further tighten the murderous “Fortress Europe” policy.

Meier also called for further measures to monitor and control the internet. He said that the federal government must “immediately present proposals for amending the Telecommunications Act to enable the storage of IP addresses and the identity data associated

with them.” He added that the federal government must immediately present a revised bill for “effective internet intelligence.”

In his remarks, state premier Ramelow fully supported the plans of his interior minister and took the nationalist agitation against refugees to the extreme. He growled that the state would not allow “any of the enemies of the constitution to destroy it.” He said that there had been “very intensive discussions about gaps in asylum law and in the enforcement of asylum” and that yes, “the question of extradition or repatriation quarters” was “a necessity.”

Just a few weeks ago, Ramelow had given a series of interviews in which he fully supported NATO's war course against Russia and even spoke out in favour of deploying the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) in Ukraine. In May, he had already brought up the deployment of German blue helmet troops in the Gaza Strip, thus supporting a push by German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, who plays a key role in enabling and defending Israel's genocide against the Palestinians.

Ramelow's call for German military intervention comes as no surprise, but rather arises from the character of the Left Party as a prop of German capitalism and militarism. From the outset, it supported the NATO offensive against Russia and also Israel's genocidal actions. On 10 October 2023, for example, the Bundestag (federal parliament) passed a pro-Israeli resolution by the government parties (SPD, Greens and Liberal Democrats, FDP) and the Christian Democrats (CDU) with the votes of all the deputies the Left Party! Shortly afterwards, Ramelow himself personally hoisted an Israeli flag in front of the state chancellery in Erfurt.

There is a direct connection between the agitation against refugees and the policy of war. The more aggressively the ruling class pursues the interests of German militarism and pushes ahead with the associated social cuts, the more openly it relies on police-state measures and fascism to suppress the explosive social and political opposition at home. With its xenophobic agitation, it deliberately tries to make refugees and migrants the scapegoats for the social catastrophe and to strengthen the extreme right.

In this respect, too, the Left Party is playing a pioneering role. Thuringia in particular shows how closely even supposedly left-wing parties are co-operating with the AfD. Immediately after his re-election in February 2020, Ramelow closed ranks with the fascists and voted to make the AfD member Michael Kaufmann vice president of the Thuringia state parliament. He had “very fundamentally decided to use my vote to pave the way for parliamentary participation, which must be granted to every faction,” he commented on his vote for the right-wing extremist on Twitter/X.

Since then, all parties in the state parliament have been cooperating closely with the fascists under Ramelow's aegis. The composition of the parliamentary committees in the Thuringia state assembly, in particular, provides a vivid illustration of this. For example, the Economic Affairs, Science and Digital Society Committee is headed by AfD member Dieter Laudenbach. And the committees for migration, justice and consumer protection, and for the environment, energy and nature conservation are also led by AfD members. The deputy in the prison commission, headed by

the Left Party, is also from the AfD.

In addition, it is becoming apparent in Thuringia in particular that the Left Party enforces the interests of capital wherever it is part of a government, thereby creating the despair and frustration that the fascists around the Thuringia AfD chairman Björn Höcke exploit. According to the polls, the AfD is expected to win around 29 percent of the vote in the state elections on Sunday. The Left Party, which received 31 percent of the vote in the last state elections in 2019, is now only polling at 15 percent.

This is the result of the anti-social and militaristic policies of the Left Party. Since its predecessor, the SED/PDS, reintroduced capitalism in East Germany in the course of reunification, the Left Party has repeatedly participated in right-wing capitalist governments. Ramelow himself has now been in office for ten years. His coalition government is implementing fierce social attacks with the support of the conservative CDU.

The result is a social catastrophe. The current poverty rate in Thuringia, at 18.4 percent in 2022, is well above the national average of 16.8 percent. According to a Bertelsmann study, almost one in four children and one in three young adults are at risk of poverty in the state. The average basic pension is only €1,100, which is below the poverty line of €1,186. High inflation in recent years – a direct result of NATO's war offensive against Russia – has further exacerbated the already desperate situation of the poor.

The fight against social devastation, fascism and war requires a political reckoning with the Left Party and its split-off the BSW, which is just as aggressively engaging in refugee baiting and nationalism in the election campaign. The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) strongly rejects this reactionary offensive, which targets the social and democratic rights of the entire working class.

“Refugees are not our opponents, but our closest allies in the fight against a system that has nothing more to offer people than barbarism and war,” emphasised SGP leader Christoph Vandrei in a recent statement. “That is why we call on all class-conscious workers: Defend the rights of refugees and migrants with us! Their rights are our rights. Support the construction of the SGP! Against capitalism and war!”



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