

The anti-refugee policies of Germany's Greens

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The “ten-point plan” of the Green party candidate for chancellor, Robert Habeck, makes clear that he wants to expand attacks on the democratic rights of refugees and the working class as a whole. In this month’s federal elections, the Greens are mimicking the xenophobic agitation of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) in order to justify stepping up the repressive powers of the state at home and drastically increasing rearmament to fight wars abroad, while making refugees the scapegoats for social inequality.

While the Greens have previously sought to portray themselves as defenders of human rights and refugees, a look at reality reveals that these phrases are a mockery. Their pro-war policies in the Middle East, Ukraine and elsewhere are responsible for driving people to flee their homes, and they play a key role in attacks on the rights of refugees once they reach Germany.

The Greens are in government not only at the federal level, but also in seven states: Bremen, Hamburg, Lower Saxony, Rhineland-Palatinate, Schleswig-Holstein, Baden-Württemberg and North Rhine-Westphalia—in the latter three, in a coalition with the Christian Democrats (CDU).

It is particularly clear in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), Germany’s most populous state, how the Greens are taking an AfD-style approach to refugees. Since their coalition government with the CDU took office there in 2022, Green Party Minister for Refugees and Integration Josefine Paul has been responsible for increasing the number of deportations.

In 2024, 4,440 deportations and transfers from NRW to other EU countries took place, 21 percent more deportations than in the previous year. Nationwide, the increase was likewise 21 percent.

Paul claims that only “people with no prospects of staying” are being deported. However, according to research by the broadcaster WDR’s programme *Westpol*, people who are well integrated into the labour market are also affected. *Westpol* cites the example of a 41-year-old Georgian woman “who works in a permanent position in a nursing home in Herford.”

Georgia is one of the countries that has been categorised as a “safe country of origin,” so that people can be returned there more quickly. This category includes all EU countries, the impoverished Balkan states of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina,

Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Ghana and Senegal. Those fleeing from these countries have little chance of being granted asylum in Germany.

Last August, the NRW state government used the fatal knife attack by a refugee in Solingen as an excuse to further tighten its migration policies. In the autumn, it passed a “package of measures on security, migration and prevention.” It includes new legal powers for the security authorities, a strengthening of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as the domestic secret service is called, easier data exchange between all authorities, three additional asylum chambers at the administrative courts, an expansion of the responsibilities of the five central immigration authorities to provide greater support during deportations, and the planning of an additional deportation detention centre.

A deportation prison for up to 140 refugees will be built on a former British armed forces site in Mönchengladbach, where there is already a branch office of the Federal Office for Migration, an initial reception centre for refugees and a police training centre. With 175 places, this will be the second largest deportation detention centre in NRW, after the prison in Germany in Büren, Paderborn district.

The number of people in detention pending deportation has also risen significantly under the Greens, from 1,006 in 2022 to 1,567 in 2024.

Refugees are also victims of the austerity budget in NRW. The provision of social advice services for refugees has been cut by almost two thirds—from €35 million last year to just under €13 million this year. According to the NRW Refugee Council, unaccompanied refugee minors are particularly affected.

A “payment card” has already been introduced in NRW, which means refugees receive lower benefits for their personal needs and can only withdraw a small amount in cash each month. As the refugee organisation Pro Asyl writes, such policies primarily serve the purpose of “making life difficult for people here and deterring them.”

In several municipalities in NRW, asylum seekers are now also required to work. Although the Asylum Act has long authorised this measure, it has rarely been implemented. Under

the “work obligation”—which is more akin to forced labour—refugees have to work for just 80 cents an hour, for example, in waste disposal.

Refugees are generally banned from working for the first three months after their arrival. If they live in shared accommodation, this can even last six months. This makes it difficult for them to integrate into society by finding a regular job and learning the language.

In addition, refugees do not receive sufficient psychotherapeutic care, as the WDR programme points out. In the first three years after their arrival, asylum seekers are entitled to medical treatment only for acute illnesses and pain, but have no access to regular and comprehensive healthcare. Yet many of them urgently need treatment.

According to the 2024 care report by the Federal Working Group of Psychosocial Centres for Refugees and Torture Victims, 87 percent of refugees have experienced “potentially traumatising events such as war, persecution or forced recruitment.” Thirty percent suffer from depression or post-traumatic stress disorder.

“There is far too little capacity,” Birgit Naujoks, managing director of the NRW Refugee Council, told WDR at the end of January. The NRW network of psychosocial centres for refugees and victims of torture is overloaded; its location in Siegen had to close last year due to underfunding. WDR received reports from several centres in NRW that mentally disordered and violent refugees were “not receiving any help for cost reasons and in some cases for years.”

If people traumatised and made mentally ill by war, violence and flight are left alone and given no prospects for the future, it is only a matter of time before some of them resort to violence against themselves or others. Although refugees are living in an extremely precarious situation without sufficient support, the establishment parties and media are making them the scapegoats for wider social problems.

In NRW, the Greens under Economics Minister Mona Neubaur are largely responsible for the economic decline. According to the latest NRW-Trend survey, conducted by Infratest dimap in January, 70 percent of people are worried about the outcome of this month’s federal elections. The most important problem for respondents is the economy (36 percent), followed by immigration, the environment, peace/foreign policy and social injustice.

In a survey published by WDR last October, a majority of 52 percent were against the Greens being in government again from 2027. “The economic situation in NRW is viewed more critically by voters than at any time since the end of the financial crisis in spring 2010: 67 percent rate the economic situation as poor,” it says. One in four people in employment with an elementary or secondary school qualification fears for his or her job.

The already high levels of unemployment and poverty in the Ruhr region will continue to rise with the threat of mass

redundancies. Thyssenkrupp Stahl wants to destroy 11,000 jobs through redundancies and job outsourcing. At Hüttenwerke Krupp Mannesmann, 3,000 jobs are at risk, and at the steel group Arcelor Mittal a further 1,000. This wave of redundancies is hitting a region that has been scarred by decades of deindustrialisation and the closure of mining.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is committed to combining the defence of refugees with a revolutionary economic programme that meets the urgent needs of all workers—regardless of their origin, skin colour or religion.

The globalisation of production has led to the growth of a working class that is closely intertwined across national borders. According to the latest microcensus figures, 24.9 million people in Germany have a migrant background, i.e., they or at least one of their parents were not born with German citizenship. That is almost 30 percent of the total population. Employees from many countries work side by side. In the workforce of Thyssen Krupp alone, 140 different nationalities are represented.

This objective basis for an international unification of the working class frightens the entire ruling elite, and especially the Greens, as the party of wealthy upper-middle class layers. That is why they spout anti-refugee propaganda and hatred. It is an old and perfidious trick to blame migrants and refugees for the social crisis, which in reality is created by the ruling parties and corporate executives themselves.

The SGP opposes the politics of social division and state oppression with the strategy of socialist internationalism. It calls for rank-and-file action committees to be formed in all neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces, for workers to fight together for the defence of their immigrant neighbours, classmates and colleagues against deportations and harassment.

In in the elections in North Rhine-Westphalia, the deputy chairman of the SGP, Dietmar Gaisenkersting, is standing as an independent candidate in the north of Duisburg. He is the only candidate in NRW who defends the rights of refugees and migrants in principle and opposes the pro-war agenda, mass dismissals and xenophobic agitation with a socialist programme.



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