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Germany continues deportations to Afghanistan

On Tuesday evening another 26 Afghans were forcibly deported from Germany to Kabul on a charter flight. A total of 591 people have now been sent back to war-torn Afghanistan since December 2016. Tuesday evening's was the 24th such flight.



Protesters at a demonstration in defense of refugees

This latest deportation, just four days before the European elections, exposes the hypocrisy of all those politicians who promise a “humane” and “social” Europe. The very same politicians are responsible for the detention and forced deportation of people who have sought protection from persecution, war and social upheaval and are now forced to return to the source of their misery.

The Bavarian Refugee Council has uncovered new cases documenting the brutal actions of the German authorities.

Among the victims is a family from Nuremberg—mother, daughter and twin sons—who were deported to Iran. The husband remained in Germany due to missing documentation.

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His children had attended school for some time in Germany and were about to graduate from high school or middle school. Repeatedly, entire families have been apprehended in the middle of the night and deported.

Just a few days before the latest deportation, the Council of Europe's anti-torture committee criticised the fact that victims had been mistreated during a previous deportation flight directly under the eyes of observers. One man was squeezed by his genitals to make him docile, and was then restrained with a choke strangle.

Another man, fearing deportation, had jumped out of a window and broken a lumbar vertebra. He was nevertheless deported. He was only able to withstand the flight lying down and in great pain. The anti-torture committee also criticised conditions in the Bavarian correctional facility, Eichstätt, which had been recently transformed into a so-called departure custody facility.

The response of the government to this criticism has been to step up and accelerate its incarceration and deportation practices.

This was clear last week when the Bundestag debated interior minister Horst Seehofer's "Orderly return law". The legislation, which is described as a "get out" or "foreigners out" law, facilitates and accelerates deportations. It treats asylum seekers de facto as criminals and plans to house "refugees required to leave" in regular prisons.

The same parties in Germany which claim to oppose the rise of the extreme right in Europe are in practice implementing the policies of the far-right Alternative for Germany. This is true not only for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU), but in particular for the Social Democratic Party (SPD) as well. In the parliamentary debate, SPD spokesman Helge Lind openly admitted he saw "no alternative" to Seehofer's law. The German justice minister, Katarina Barley, lead candidate of the SPD for the European elections, approved the bill a month ago in the cabinet. So much for the SPD's claims in the election campaign, that it favoured "a social Europe" and was the party that "had fought the right wing since its inception."

Barley sits in a government that has deported nearly 24,000 people from Germany in 2018 and more than 5,600 in the first quarter of this year. The majority of those affected are secretly deported to Kosovo or other ex-Yugoslav countries, Turkey, the Middle East, Iraq, Iran, Georgia, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan or Nigeria, or even to other EU countries where they had first been registered.

There is broad agreement with the anti-refugee policy of the grand coalition by those parties which criticised the law in the parliamentary debate, i.e., the Greens and the Left Party. In those German states where they govern together with the SPD and the CDU, or even appoint the prime minister (the Greens in Baden-Württemberg, the Left Party in Thuringia), they deport as readily as the governing parties.

For almost a year, the anti-refugee and xenophobic policies of individual EU states has become the official guideline for the entire EU. With its decision of June 30, 2018, the EU effectively ceased all efforts to rescue refugees from drowning, and has expressly prevented private maritime rescue—with catastrophic consequences.

Less than two weeks ago, about 65 people drowned off the coast of Tunisia when their boat capsized in high waves. Only 16 survived and were rescued by fishermen from the water. It was the worst accident for months on this dangerous escape route.

The Mediterranean is increasingly becoming a mass grave. The mass drowning in Tunisia on May 10, brings the number of people who have drowned in the Mediterranean this year to over 500. According to the IOM (International Organization for Migration), there have been 18,426 deaths in the Mediterranean region since the beginning of 2014. This is an average of more than nine people per day.

The UN Refugee Council noted that the risk of perishing on the Libya-Italy route has increased significantly. In the first four months of this year, a fourth of all those attempting to reach Europe drowned, declared UNHCR Special Envoy for the Mediterranean, Vincent Cochetel. “If we do not act now,” he added, “then we’ll almost certainly face more tragic cases in the coming weeks and months.”

The EU, however, refuses to lift a finger to assist refugees from Libya. The only chance of rescue is offered by private NGOs, and these volunteer and donor-based organisations face almost insurmountable legal hurdles and harassment.

“Sea-Watch 3”, which rescued 65 refugees from a rubber dinghy, was forced to stay at sea for four days, before it could land the remaining 47 victims on the Italian island of Lampedusa on May 19 (18 sick and dehydrated migrants, including several children, had previously been evacuated). Although the organisation did not break any law, its ship has now been confiscated by the Italian judiciary.

The EU is pursuing a refugee policy based on the motto: “Let them all drown.” The banner of the Sea-Watch group on demonstrations held against nationalism last Sunday read: “This EU kills.”

In 1940, in its World War II manifesto, the Fourth International wrote a sentence that applies fully to the current situation: “Amid the vast expanses of land and the marvels of technology, which has also conquered the skies for man as well as the earth, the bourgeoisie has managed to convert our planet into a foul prison.”

But what is the answer? For the bourgeoisie, the answer is clear: it is arming state forces to the teeth and basing itself on the most reactionary forces in Germany—the AfD and other fascist organisations.

The working class has to give its own answer. It must unite worldwide and take up the fight for a socialist programme. In Europe, it must fight against the bankrupt EU and for the United Socialist States of Europe.

This is the only way to ensure that the Bundeswehr and all European troops withdraw from the Middle East and Africa, that every human being has the right to live and work in the country of their choice, and that the billions of euros squandered for building an EU army and Frontex is spent to fulfil the social and cultural needs of the population as a whole.

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