

Germany to begin mass deportations to Afghanistan

By Martin Kreickenbaum
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Later this month the German government will begin the mass deportations of asylum seekers back to Afghanistan. Charter planes are to be used for the first time, with the German Interior Ministry announcing it would deport 50 Afghan refugees in the coming days.

Formerly asylum seekers from Afghanistan whose applications to stay in Germany had been denied were deported individually on regular flights—a procedure which led to a series of protests by pilots and passengers.

Until now the deportation of Afghan asylum seekers, the second largest refugee group in Germany after Syrians, has been limited due to the disastrous security situation in large parts of Afghanistan. On its web site, the German Foreign Office describes the situation in the country as follows: “There is a high risk of being kidnapped or the victim of criminal violence.” The recent attacks carried out in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, where the German Consul General was targeted, confirm the prevailing insecurity.

In a striking disregard for this assessment, the German Interior Minister, Thomas de Maizière (CDU), is pressing for mass, forced deportations. The basis for the project of the Interior Ministry is the shabby deal struck by Germany and the European Union with the government in Kabul. They have signed an agreement which obliges Afghanistan to accept rejected asylum seekers in exchange for financial compensation. The EU wants to buy its way out of its obligation to provide shelter and support for refugees.

On the fringe of the EU’s interior ministry meeting in early November, de Maiziere denounced the growing number of Afghan refugees. “Our concern,” he said, “is the large number of refugees from Afghanistan at the moment. We want the signal to arrive in Afghanistan: ‘Stay there! We will send you

back directly to Afghanistan from Europe!’”

Last week, German diplomats traveled to Kabul to clarify the final details. It is planned, among other things, to set up a separate terminal for the mass deportations at the airport in Kabul. The existing infrastructure of the Bundeswehr in northern Afghanistan is also to be used to repatriate refugees.

According to the current situation, approximately 12,500 refugees from Afghanistan now in Germany have been earmarked for deportation. About 80,000 out of a total of 213,000 Afghan refugees across the EU have also had their applications for refugee status denied. De Maizière made it clear that, in his view, nothing stood in the way of deporting tens of thousands back to the country, despite the fact that it has been ruined by decades of war incited by the Western imperialist powers—including Germany. Cynically he remarked, “We cannot send German soldiers and policemen into the country to provide more security, and then allow Afghan asylum seekers to stay in Germany.”

In other words, when the Bundeswehr is involved in NATO’s deployment in the country, the victims of their military operations have no right to seek security for themselves and their families.

Other leading Union politicians such as CDU General Secretary Peter Tauber echoed the Interior Minister and glossed over the precarious security situation in Afghanistan. The deputy CDU chairman Thomas Strobl, who is also a minister in the Green Party-CDU coalition in the state of Baden-Württemberg, issued a statement in which he advocated the relentless deportation of Afghan refugees. “The first planes with returnees to the Hindu Kush have to take off quickly. We must not be dependent on Kabul,” Strobl declared. In an interview with *Die Welt* Strobl continued, “If

there is no other way, then the repatriation must be carried out by force.”

The situation in Afghanistan has worsened considerably over the past twelve months. According to the United Nations, more than 2,500 civilians died in the current civil war during the first nine months of this year. In the period from 2009 to 2015, more than 21,300 civilians have been killed and some 37,400 have been injured in the course of fighting by Afghan security forces and Western occupation forces with the the Islamic Taliban movement and other rebel groups.

Despite this, the German government considers the security situation to be “sufficiently controllable” in the majority of the 34 provincial capitals in Afghanistan. In response to the public television news program *Fakt*, a government spokesman explained that the situation was less dangerous for civilians than for representatives of Western organizations or troops. The Taliban leadership has repeatedly “stated credibly and clearly, it would avoid civilian casualties and spare civilian infrastructure.”

The guidelines for countries of origin (HKL), which assess the situation of refugees for the German Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), paint a much gloomier picture. “There is internal armed conflict in all parts of Afghanistan in the form of civil war and guerrilla fighting between Afghan security forces and the Taliban, as well as other opposition forces.”

Human rights violations are also widespread and are largely ignored. The food supply chain is insufficient and half of all children in Afghanistan have been “harmed by long-term malnutrition”.

“Since the second half of 2012, the number of civilian casualties has increased,” and an end to this increase is not in sight, the HKL concludes.

In order to reject the asylum applications of Afghan refugees and classify them as “required to leave the country”, a supplementary sentence has been inserted at the beginning of the HKL guidelines calling for consideration to be given to: “The basic rules on internal protection for young, single and working men”. According to a report in *Die Zeit* Kabul, Balkh, Herat, Bamiyan, Takhar, Samangan and Panjshir are all regarded as “consistently sufficiently safe” areas. According to BAMF male returnees could work in these areas without undue risk.

In doing so, the BAMF is using a fraudulent system

to refuse asylum applications from Afghans. It calculates a “theoretical risk density”, a kind of probability calculation for possible death due to violent conflicts. On this basis 20,000 people killed in 2015 from a total population of 27 million for Afghanistan results in a mortality probability of 0.074 percent. BAMK concludes this is far from a “considerable probability” and thus poses no real danger.

This argument has been strongly criticized by former judge Paul Tiedemann. He wrote in the German magazine for immigration rights and foreign policy (*Zeitschrift für Ausländerrecht and Ausländerpolitik*) that the “risk density” in the bombardments of Coventry or Frankfurt in the Second World War was under one percent. Throughout the Second World War, with its tens of millions of victims, the official “risk density” for civilians was just 0.3 percent, according to *Die Zeit*.

The cynical calculations aimed at reducing the number of refugees from Afghanistan are also being used to put pressure on the BAMF staff to reject more asylum seekers. The recognition rate for Afghan refugees has already fallen sharply. In 2015, 78 percent received a positive decision from the BAMF; this year it is down to 52 percent.

One BAMF employee told *Die Zeit*: “You get to know how management presents the current decision-making practice. Whoever makes untypical recommendations or takes decisions must report to his team leader.” Another explained: “Actually, the basic law and the right to asylum specify who can stay and who can not. The fact that so many Afghans are being rejected now is entirely political.”

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