

Germany's incoming interior minister announces police state measures, mass deportations

By Christoph Vandreier
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Even before Angela Merkel and her cabinet are sworn in on Wednesday, Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union, CSU) has reaffirmed the reactionary character of the new government. In *Bild am Sonntag*, the designated interior and homeland minister presented a “master plan for more consistent deportations” and announced mass surveillance and other police state measures.

The aggressive tone and far-reaching plans make clear that the grand coalition is preparing for the brutal repression of any opposition to its policy of militarism and social cuts.

Seehofer's plans for the mass deportation of refugees go far beyond what is already stated in the coalition agreement. Asked by *Bild* how he wanted to change the situation, in that only 24,000 of the more than 200,000 migrants ordered to leave were deported in 2017, the CSU chairman announced a concerted plan of mass deportations.

“Immediately after assuming office, I will get together with all employees and the subordinate authorities to develop a master plan for faster asylum procedures and more consistent deportations,” Seehofer said, adding, “The number of repatriations has to be increased significantly.”

A fundamental tightening up of laws would be necessary for these plans, he said. The majority of the 200,000 migrants obliged to leave the country are people whose continued residence is permitted for legal or humanitarian reasons, and whose deportation is therefore prohibited by law.

According to the government, at the end of 2016, about half of those obliged to leave the country were not refugees or asylum seekers, but rather people

whose visas had expired or whose marriages to German citizens had ended. Of the remainder, according to ProAsyl 2017, only one third—i.e., about 30,000 people—were not permitted to remain, that is, they had to leave the country urgently. This comes very close to 24,000, the number of those actually expelled.

If Seehofer is calling for a significant increase in deportations, it means he is planning nothing less than deporting *en masse* refugees who have a temporary right to remain or even residence status, in many cases because they are in danger in their home country. The Bavarian state government led by Seehofer already leads the federal states for deportations to Afghanistan this year. Legal obstacles are systematically eliminated by, for example, indiscriminately classifying and deporting refugees who cannot immediately present all their papers as “stubborn identity deniers”. This will now be massively expanded.

In addition, Seehofer announced that the decision in the coalition agreement to create internment camps for refugees would be implemented within a few months. “That must not take a year or more,” the minister said. In such camps, refugees are kept penned in until the decision on their asylum application has been reached. They are excluded from society and deprived of fundamental rights.

These brutal measures against the weakest in society are an attack on all workers. If people are interned and deported without being accused of anything, this sets a precedent that goes against the fundamental democratic rights of all.

Seehofer is leaving no doubt about that. He wants to establish a “strong state” throughout Germany, as it exists in Bavaria. To this end, he wants to set up

“effective video surveillance” at all “hot spots” throughout Germany, which amounts to the systematic monitoring of the entire population.

He also announced the hiring of 7,500 new federal police officers and a “zero-tolerance” policy. Such a zero-tolerance strategy means a massive increase in police stops and a crackdown on trivial offences. It was made famous by New York’s right-wing mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who created the structures of a police state in the metropolis.

Seehofer’s vow to create Bavarian conditions throughout Germany is a serious warning in this regard. Under his rule, in July of last year, Bavaria passed the most far-reaching security law in German history. Among other things, it includes the possibility of detaining suspects indefinitely.

People who have not committed any crime can be imprisoned for life at the discretion of a judge; it is enough that there is a “concrete likelihood” of a crime resulting from the person’s behaviour. This is nothing less than the “protective custody” introduced by the Nazis in 1933, to which tens of thousands of leaders of the workers’ movement fell victim within a few months.

The decision to make Seehofer interior minister and to expand his department, among other things, including the word “homeland” (*Heimat*) in its title, was, from the beginning, a deliberate decision of the grand coalition. The CSU leader is known as a hardliner in domestic and refugee politics and is seeking to create a police state that is without precedent in German history. The interview in *Bild* makes clear how quickly and aggressively he will implement this policy.

Seehofer’s far-reaching plans illustrate the character of the grand coalition. The two parties that lost the last election and have no democratic legitimacy are forming a coalition that will pursue an extremely right-wing programme of rearmament, militarism and social cuts.

Under conditions where this meets widespread rejection in the working class, the government is strengthening the police, abrogating democratic rights and attacking the weakest in society to suppress any resistance.

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