

SPD interior minister threatens thousands of Syrians with deportation from Germany

Marianne Arens
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At the beginning of the year, Federal Interior Minister Nancy Faeser (Social Democrat, SPD) threatened thousands of Syrians living in Germany with deportation. On Sunday, Faeser told the Funke media group that Syrians who had fled to Germany but did not yet have a permanent job or training and “did not voluntarily return to Syria” would now face deportation.

A four-point plan provides for the first step of reviewing the protection status of all Syrian refugees. Secondly, voluntary returns to Syria are to be encouraged and supported in principle. The third point provides for the deportation of those who “no longer have protected status and refuse to voluntarily return to Syria,” according to the interior minister.

The last point of the four-point plan is pure window dressing and a result of the current election campaign. It pays lip service to “upholding human rights” and “the dignity of those affected.” Faeser leaves no doubt that she only wants to keep “well-integrated Syrians” in Germany, while “Syrian criminals” will be deported as quickly as possible. But what constitutes a crime? Is it enough for a deportation if, for example, a Syrian teenager who has no money is caught fare dodging several times?

According to Faeser, the “Federal Office for Migration and Refugees will review and revoke protection if people no longer need this protection in Germany because the situation in Syria has stabilised.” The interior minister is working closely with her counterpart in the foreign ministry, Annalena Baerbock (Greens), to assess the situation. On January 2, Baerbock made a pilgrimage to Damascus, meeting the Islamist HTS regime and its leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani and seeking to establish cooperation with him.

But in Syria, the situation has by no means “stabilised.” Instead, the same jihadists who had been considered dangerous terrorists for years and who have already established an Islamist terrorist state in Idlib province

have now come to power in Damascus with HTS. The new ruler al-Jolani, the former Emir of the Al-Nusra Front, could not even bring himself to shake hands with Annalena Baerbock, since she is a woman, during her visit. The deeply fragmented country continues to be threatened and militarily attacked by Israel and Turkey.

Almost a million Syrians (975,000 according to the Interior Ministry) live in Germany. The vast majority have come here via life-threatening escape routes since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, which was fuelled by the NATO powers. They have settled here, learned the language and taken up work in all sectors of the economy. Many have started a family here, and many do the hardest work in construction, restaurants, at the post office, etc.

A year ago, the federal government responded to mass protests against the repatriation plans of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) by increasingly openly adopting the fascists’ programme. While some representatives of the governing parties publicly feigned support for the protests or even took part in them to break their momentum, on January 18, 2024 the Bundestag (parliament) passed the so-called “Repatriation Improvement Act,” which forms the basis for mass deportations. And SPD leader Lars Klingbeil warned, “The state must function when it comes to returning people who cannot stay with us.”

One year later, this policy is being implemented ever more aggressively. Donald Trump’s impending return to the White House and his anti-migrant offensive represent this dangerous, global turn to the right. In Europe, after Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and Giorgia Meloni in Italy, Herbert Kickl in Austria is now also on the verge of taking over the government. In Germany, too, all the establishment parties are moving sharply to the right, paving the way for an extreme right-wing government to enforce the social devastation against the

working class necessary for their pro-war policy.

This is particularly evident in the way Syrian refugees are being treated. No sooner had the Islamists driven the Assad regime out of Damascus in November than 47,000 asylum proceedings involving Syrians were put on hold by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees on the instructions of the Scholz government.

In November, in a parliamentary motion, the AfD called “to end the influx of Syrians to Germany and to initiate the repatriation to Syria of criminals, suspects and all Syrian citizens no longer entitled to protection.” With Faeser’s proposals, the Scholz government is now adopting the AfD demands and making them official policy.

The number of deportations has also increased sharply in the last year. The federal government deported 18,384 people from Germany, 21 percent more than in the previous year. At the EU level, Berlin has pushed through and updated the GEAS, which tightens asylum laws. As a result, 2024 has proven to be the deadliest year on record for migrants trying to reach Europe.

In the most heated phase of the federal election campaign, leading up to the February 23 vote, the parties are not holding back on their right-wing policies, but are actually trumpeting them.

At its Epiphany Day celebration, Christian Social Union (CSU) leader Markus Söder called for a “hard course correction in migration policy.” Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) leader Christian Lindner explicitly and publicly offered his party’s cooperation to Elon Musk. And Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) has boasted that the coalition government under his leadership has “achieved the greatest turnaround in dealing with irregular migration.” At the beginning of the year, Scholz told *Stern* magazine that the increase in deportations was “real progress.”

Only the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) has taken up the fight against the unspeakable demagoguery and hateful incitement against foreigners. The SGP categorically rejects all attacks on the right of asylum and on refugees and appeals “to all workers, young people and all those who reject racism and fascism: Stand up to this development! Defend refugees and democratic rights!” The SGP is participating in the federal election in 2025 to give them all a voice.

The deportations and attacks on refugees are attacks on the entire working class! They are the flip side of the imperialist policy of war. Refugees are only the first and most defenceless victims of the right-wing course, which

inevitably leads to the expansion of wars and to fascism. The fact that the attacks on refugees are directed against the working class as a whole is also shown by the offensive against recipients of the citizen’s income benefit and social assistance.

The city of Schwerin (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) has just become the first city to introduce a compulsory work-for-benefits obligation not only for asylum seekers, but also for German-born recipients of social assistance. Asylum seekers are already increasingly being obliged to do community service. This is now to be extended to all those who receive basic social assistance. Those who refuse will in the future be deprived of even the most meagre state support.

Significantly, the motion introducing the new scheme in Schwerin was proposed by the AfD and adopted by the other parties, led by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). The practice of obliging asylum seekers to do forced labour is supported by all parties, including the Left Party. In Thuringia, this practice was introduced for the first time last year under Bodo Ramelow (Left Party) in two districts led by the CDU (Greiz and Saale-Orla-Kreis). There, refugees are forced to do community service for 80 cents an hour. Those who refuse have their benefits cut from €460 to €240.

The compulsory labour service shows how the attacks on refugees are increasingly being transferred to workers with German passports. It is therefore important that German workers defend their international brothers and sisters on principle. This is only possible by founding independent rank-and-file action committees in workplaces and neighbourhoods.

Only the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei fights for such an independent mobilisation of the international working class. Therefore, join the SGP and the Fourth International, inform yourselves about its programme and support its election campaign in the 2025 federal election!



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