

#NotMyCamps

Against the deprivation of rights of
people seeking protection



Picture: © dpa/Nicolas Armer

PRO ASYL
DER EINZELFALL ZÄHLT.

CAMPS ARE INHUMANE

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BIC BFSWDE33XXX

German edition published in October 2018
English edition published in January 2019

At a time when all around the globe the number of refugees is ever increasing, the EU and its member states continue to tighten their defence measures against people seeking protection. Deterrence, detention and isolation in camps – that is the response to people fleeing violence, injustice and oppression.

Undoubtedly it makes a huge difference to individuals affected whether they find themselves in a Libyan torture camp, a miserable EU hotspot, or a German »AnkER« centre, where they can demand their human rights to be respected. But no matter which camps we are talking about: an end must be put to the internment and isolation of people seeking protection. Camps are places of control, stigmatisation, humiliation and violence – strategies used in an attempt to deny asylum to those seeking protection.

The common foundation of Europe's democratic societies is under threat. EU member states must guarantee individual human rights. Camps are unworthy of a society committed to human rights.

»AnkER« CENTRES

Location: Germany

All refugees arriving in Germany are to be put up in the so-called »AnkER« centres (camps for »reception, decision-making and return«) planned by the federal government. Enforced internment of up to 18 months in these remote mass facilities leads to isolation resulting in various problems and restrictions:

- Contact with the general population and with voluntary aid workers is considerably impeded.
- A complete lack of independent legal counselling. Extremely short deadlines in the asylum procedure impede any possibility to appeal in court.
- Even vulnerable persons, children and adolescents are to be kept in these centres.
- The ban on employment and vocational training precludes integration and self-determination.
- Hopelessness, misery and a lack of privacy fuel conflicts.

Bavaria sets the tone: from isolation to deportation

Bavarian internment facilities – such as the ones in Bamberg and Ingolstadt / Manching – serve as a prototype for some 40 »AnkER« centres planned nationwide in the medium term. In these places refugees are being isolated in order to push them to »voluntary returns« or to deport them.

The following applies:

- **obligation of residence**
- **ban on employment or study**
- **strict principle of non-cash benefits**
- **restricted health care**
- **voluntary helpers are prohibited from entering**

TRANSIT PROCEDURES AND »SPECIAL RECEPTION FACILITIES«

Location: Germany and the European Union

The original plan by the Minister for the Interior, Horst Seehofer, was to create »transit centres« on the German/Austrian border, in order to stop refugees registered in other EU countries and to turn them back.

Following the coalition resolution, these plans turned into »transit procedures«, in which asylum seekers are turned back at the German/ Austrian border without any further examination. It is not checked if they have any family members living in Germany, and whether therefore their asylum procedures should be carried out here. Neither is it tested whether inhumane conditions prevail in the first EU country of entry, which would rule out deportation to that country. In the context of these transit procedures, the German federal police act outside EU law and without any judicial controls. For the affected individuals it is effectively impossible to lodge an appeal.

The federal police are filing an increasing number of requests for detention for asylum seekers who had previously been registered in another EU country. As many as possible are to be isolated in the existing »special reception facilities« or in »AnkER« centres until they are deported.

Tens of thousands affected by accommodation in camps?

Since the beginning of 2018, 60.875 people seeking protection, who had already been registered in the European asylum database Eurodac as having applied for asylum in another EU country, entered Germany. Of these, 25.632 came from Greece, Italy or Spain*. If the federal government's plans for transit procedures become a reality, these individuals are at risk of being forcibly detained.

Transit Zones

At the beginning of March 2017 the nationalistic anti-refugee governing majority in Hungary voted to detain asylum seekers in »transit zones« near the border for the entire duration of their asylum procedures. Since then, persons seeking protection are only allowed to submit applications for asylum in two transit zones at the border with Serbia. Since 2018, each week a maximum of ten asylum seekers is granted entry. In August 2018, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) brought legal action at the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg on eight occasions, in order to force the Orbán government to supply the asylum seekers in the transit zones with food.

In autumn of 2017, the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg passed a landmark judgment on the establishment of »transit zones«: if a police force (the Spanish police in the case in question) has control in a particular border region, then the standards of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) must automatically apply.

Transit Zone Röszke / Hungary, August 2018



HOTSPOTS

Location: EU external border

Since 2015, ten EU hotspots have been established at the EU's external borders – five each in Italy and Greece. Arriving people seeking protection are registered in these places and held in miserable conditions.

Persons who have crossed a supposedly safe third country (such as Turkey) while fleeing, are to be deported straight from the hotspots. However, it is scandalous to classify Turkey – where refugees are illegally detained, harassed and deported to persecuting states – as a safe third country. This absurd assertion is perpetuated in order to justify deportations to Turkey from the EU.

People are stuck in EU hotspots such as Moria on Lesbos in miserable conditions, often for years. The legal proceedings carried out in these establishments systematically violate the rights of people seeking protection and fundamental principles of the rule of law.



Number of EU hotspots: **ten**
 Duration of detention: **unspecified**
 Legal advice: **inadequate**
 Freedom of movement: **extremely restricted**
 Accommodation: **degrading**
 Supplies: **insufficient**

CONTROLLED CENTRES

Location: European Union

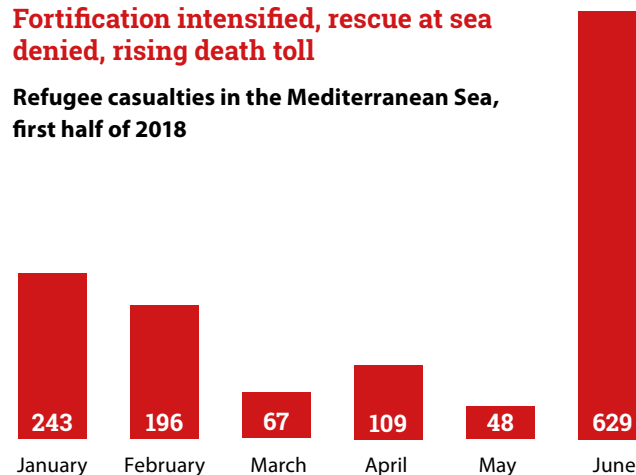
PLANNED

Another concept for camps – this one jointly devised by all European heads of government – envisages the creation of »controlled centres« in EU territory. In such places refugees rescued from boats are to be held, in order »to distinguish between irregular migrants, who will be returned, and those in need of international protection«*.

The function of these »controlled centres« is modelled on the already existing hotspots at the external borders. The systematic violations of human rights and miserable living conditions that prevail in the Greek hotspots give an idea what condition refugees can expect in these planned »controlled centres«. Their purpose is isolation and deterrence – protection of refugees on European soil is to be avoided as much as possible.

Fortification intensified, rescue at sea denied, rising death toll

Refugee casualties in the Mediterranean Sea, first half of 2018



* European Council conclusions, June 28, 2018, page 2

Hotspot Moria, Lesbos

Around 80% of the refugees arriving on the Greek islands come from the war- and crisis-torn areas of Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Two years after the initiation of the EU/Turkey deal, their situation is no less alarming: with no hope of fair asylum procedures and protection or prospects for the future, they are stuck on the islands in miserable conditions.

The hotspot Moria on the island of Lesbos / Greece



DISEMBARKATION PLATFORMS

PLANNED

Location: Neighbouring countries in the North-African Mediterranean

These external »disembarkation platforms« are to function in a similar way to the »controlled centres« within the EU. The crucial difference: by means of such »disembarkation platforms«, the EU seeks to pass its responsibilities on to North Africa. Refugees rescued from boats in the Mediterranean Sea are to be taken to these »disembarkation platforms«, where decisions are made on who will receive international protection and who will not.

It is entirely unclear which countries would accept the presumably small number of people, who would be granted protection at all, as willingness to do so seems very scant anywhere in Europe.

It has already been made clear that such »disembarkation platforms« are not meant to create any kind of incentives*; in other words, these camps are designed to effectively deter refugees while they are still far away from Europe.

Is there a place for refugees to go? The lack of willingness to receive refugees is well documented!

Around 55.000 people in Libya are registered as refugees with UNHCR. Between November 2017 and the end of July 2018, a mere 1.536 people seeking protection were evacuated from the Libyan danger zones to Niger under the so-called Emergency Transit Mechanism. From there, only 339 individuals were granted resettlement in Europe in the same time period.**

EXTERNALISATION

Location: Niger, Sahel region

Already in October 2016 Chancellor Merkel visited Niger. In the presence of President Issoufou she defined the priorities of a possible future co-operation: »The first of these priorities is the fight against illegal migration.«* Soon after, the EU promised €1bn in development aid to Niger for the period of 2017 to 2020.

The result: for some time now, Niger has closed the central migration route through the Sahara via Agadez. This plays into the EU's declared aim to inhibit fleeing the Sahel region and the sub-Saharan states.

At the same time, the EU severely impeded the option of fleeing via the Mediterranean Sea, with the result that now Algeria – Niger's immediate neighbour – is taking action against refugees. Between August 2017 and June 2018 almost 15.000 people had to leave the country in the direction of Niger**. Many of them were deported in trucks and abandoned in the desert. Countless people perished on the forced marches through the desert. The EU commented that it was »aware of Algeria's actions«, but that »sovereign states had the right to deport migrants, as long as it was done in compliance with international law.«**

*derStandard.de, July 1, 2018, Fragen zu Asyl in Anlandezentren sorgen für Aufregung

**<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/65147>

* taz.de, Endstation Agadir, December 13, 2017

** taz.de, Gewaltmarsch durch die Sahara, June 26, 2018

Camps in Libya

According to UN reports, torture, rape and murder are rife in Libyan prisons. Between March 2018 and the end of July 2018, the number of refugees detained in Libya rose from 4,400 to over 10,000; among them around 2,000 women and children. Most of these people are victims of the shameful co-operation between the EU and the so-called Libyan coast guard, which is trained, equipped and financed by Germany and the EU.

European governments are well aware of the situation in Libyan prison camps: »One form of the extremely grave human rights violations in private and Libyan reception centres is the de-facto sale of refugees on Libyan slave markets...«*

* Government response »On the situation of refugees in Libya«, March 9, 2018, document no. 19/1146 (in German)

Refugees in the camp Tariq al-Sikka in Tripoli / Libya



RETURN CENTRES

PLANNED

Location: outside the EU

This concept is the brainchild of the 2018 EU Council presidency Austria, and is especially popular among right-wing nationalist hardliners: no asylum applications at all should be accepted on European soil. Instead it is envisaged that refugees are detained in so-called »return centres« outside the EU.*

»A large number of currently de-facto undeportable persons ... but also people who have made an application for the right to remain...«* would be held in this way. Another group of people who would be taken to these return centres from EU territories are »rejected foreign nationals, who cannot – be it through a lack of co-operation by their countries of origin or the affected persons themselves – be returned to their country of origin.«*

The goal is clear: no asylum anywhere in Europe for people seeking protection.

»THE OBJECTIVE MUST BE TO ONLY ALLOW APPLYING FOR ASYLUM OUTSIDE EUROPE.«

Herbert Kickl, Austrian Minister for the Interior **

»MY GOAL IS NOT THE REDISTRIBUTION [OF REFUGEES] IN EUROPE, BUT IN THE COUNTRIES OF DEPARTURE...«

Matteo Salvini, Italian Minister for the Interior ***

* www.derstandard.at, July 9, 2018, Austria suggest plans for repatriation centres outside the EU (in German)

** www.heute.at, July 25, 2018, Kickl: No more asylum applications in Europe (in German)

*** The Sidney Morning Herald: No way: Italy's leader takes Australian cue on refugees, August 24, 2018

#NotMyCamps

At the instigation of the EU and its member states, measures designed to hold and detain people seeking protection are steadily advanced. There are no longer any limits on deterring and repelling refugees. Failed states such as Libya and dictatorships on Europe's doorstep are armed in order to close down escape routes. People rescued at sea are to be taken and dumped outside Europe's borders. Those who do manage to enter Europe often get stuck in the most miserable conditions in camps such as the one on Lesbos, where they are under constant threat of being deported from the EU without substantive examination of their initial reasons for fleeing.

PRO ASYL'S DEMANDS:

1. Refugees and migrants must not be deprived of their rights, be isolated or even detained in camps – be it in Germany, the European Union or outside the EU.
2. People who apply for asylum at the border of an EU state must have access to fair asylum procedures within the EU.
3. People rescued at sea must be taken to a safe European port and their human rights and refugee rights must be respected.
4. Newly-arrived refugees must be permitted to travel onwards within the EU, according to humanitarian and familial criteria.

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

#NotMyCamps

PRO ASYL's campaign opposes the deprivation of rights of refugees and migrants in camps and detention centres.

This is our appeal:

People seeking protection are deprived of their dignity and frequently their rights in camps and detention centres. These are not my camps: I call on Germany and the EU to put an end to the politics of detention and deprivation of freedom as a measure to deter and repel refugees. Access to protection and the right to asylum must be ensured. Human rights are inviolable.

Join us:

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www.NichtMeineLager.de



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