

“Diplomatic relations with Syria should be restored and sanctions lifted”: Interview with Gunnar Lindemann, German Parliament Member

By [Gunnar Lindemann](#) and [Steven Sahiounie](#)

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The largest migrant boat disaster recently off the coast of Greece involved 750 persons wanting to get to Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Though this was the largest tragedy, similar voyages are happening almost daily with loss of life.

The US and EU sanctions prevent Syrians from a livelihood at home, and desperate people make deadly choices to feed their families. If sanctions were lifted, Syrians could find a job in the many reconstruction projects and new factories which could open if the sanctions were lifted, which currently prevent any reconstruction projects, or factories refurbishment or construction. The Syrian economy sits idle and the Syrian workers are unemployed because of sanctions. Many feel their only hope is an illegal boat ride to Europe, which has a seemingly open door policy that encourages human trafficking.

Germany has welcomed 560,000 Syrian refugees, and while many have become productive members of society, many others have remained uninterested in German integration, and a few have become criminals. In an effort to understand the problems surrounding the current Syrian economic migrants to Germany, Steven Sahiounie of MidEastDiscourse interviewed [Gunnar Lindemann](#), a Member of the Berlin parliament since 2016. who has been to Syria and has firsthand information, and has proposed a way to end the illegal migrant boats to Europe, and thus save lives.

Gunnar Lindemann is member of Parliament of the Federal state of Berlin from the party "Alternative for Germany".

Steven Sahiounie (SS): Recently, in Essen there was a massive fight between Lebanese and Syrian refugees. In the German media, the Lebanese were said to be operating as a mafia involved with the illegal drug trade.

From your perspective, how are the German police handling the problem, and what is the German citizens' reaction to these crimes?

Gunnar Lindemann (GL): The problem is not the German police. The problem is German politics and the German government. This government is acting irresponsibly by allowing hundreds of thousands of people, mostly illegally, to enter Germany for decades. The problem with the Lebanese clans has also been known for a long time. The mistake is that criminal or violent migrants are almost never deported, even though they disobey German laws.

SS: A ship carrying 750 illegal migrants to Europe recently sank with great loss of life, and it is an ongoing tragedy happening almost daily.

In your opinion, what can Germany and the European Union do to prevent this situation?

GL: Here, too, politics in Germany and Europe is to blame. All people rescued from the Mediterranean should not be allowed to go to Europe, but would have to be brought back to their starting point in Africa. If you did it like that for a few weeks, nobody would risk a voyage on an unfit ship anymore. And with that, no one would drown.

SS: Syrian refugees number about 800,000 in Germany, and are the largest refugee community. Syrian Christians and Muslims both reject the LGBTQ lifestyle and do not want their school aged children indoctrinated in an adult subject.

In your view, shouldn't parents have the right to choose what their child is taught in school about a sensitive topic?

GL: Yes, of course, parents should have more influence over school lessons on sensitive topics. Most German parents also reject this LGTB propaganda in German schools. From my point of view, this early sexualization in children has no place and should be banned.

SS: The armed conflict in Syria is over. The last period of open conflict was in 2017, and today the cities of Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, and Latakia are all safe and calm. There is even a growing tourism industry as visitors return, including Syrians living in Germany who often return each summer for a beach vacation and family visits.

In your opinion, is it time to ask Syrians in Germany to return home, especially those who do not want to integrate into the society?

GL: I was in Damascus myself 2 years ago. The war in Syria is over. The Syrians in Germany should now return to their homeland, whereby the German government should certainly provide financial return assistance here. Diplomatic relations with Syria should also be resumed immediately and sanctions against Syria must be lifted. Relations between Germany and Syria must finally return to normal. Syria has great potential in economic development and of course in the tourism sector. Which is certainly interesting for German investors and business people.

SS: The majority of Syrians never left home, and are still in Syria. They have suffered through years of armed conflict which left them without a home and without an income. However, due to US and EU sanctions, the rebuilding process is prohibited from beginning. Homes, hospitals, schools and businesses are prevented from making repairs and offering new jobs. The sanctions have not hampered the government, but have only hurt the Syrian

people.

In your opinion, isn't it time to lift the sanctions and allow the Syrian citizens to rebuild and attract foreign investors who want to help Syria recover?

GL: As I said, Syria is interesting for foreign investors. That is why relations must be normalized and sanctions must be ended. Cooperation between the official government agencies should also work again, and both the EU and the USA should support Syria's reconstruction. Joint ventures between Syrian and German companies, which should be funded by the EU, are one possibility. Syria has always been the most liberal Arab country and it is important to support Syria now as a factor of stability in the region.

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Steven Sahiounie is a two-time award-winning journalist. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

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