

The EU Migration Crisis: Towards the “Palestinianization” of the Refugees within the EU?

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The EU migration crisis is still at the top of the agenda. Various political forces are trying to use this problem for their own benefit, often forgetting that most of the refugees from the Middle East and Africa who arrived in the EU in the last two years did so out of fear for their lives. They traded their modest but stable and predictable lives for chaos, loss of loved ones, poverty of refugee camps, criminality of city outskirts, and ostracism by the EU populace.

In reality, the second decade of the 21st century, which only a quarter century ago was predicted to be socially progressive and technologically creative, saw millions of people displaced from their homelands due to their desire to simply survive physically.

The EU saw the arrival of 1,353,000 migrants in 2015. Germany received 539 thousand, Sweden 152 thousand, Hungary 149 thousand, and Italy and Austria 90 thousand apiece, according to Eurostat. Over 3,700 migrants have perished on the way to Europe in 2015.

Meanwhile, Germany will not reconsider its migration policies even after the series of terrorist attacks, according to German Chancellor Angela Merkel's statement on July 28. She emphasized that Germany will do everything possible to ensure security in a way consistent with humanitarian values.

Moreover, she stated that “Germany will continue to adhere to its principles and offer shelter to all who deserve it regardless of whether they come before September or after. There are enough volunteers and helpers to help everyone who wishes to live in peace in Germany. However, our understanding of freedom and security is being tested. We once again have to find balance among them. Terrorists want us to discard our key beliefs. They want to divide our society, our cooperation, they want to attack our way of life, our openness, and they want to prevent us from meeting others. They are sowing hatred among peoples. We are finally taking measures against them. I have told this to the entire German government and security services, including federal authorities.” Merkel added that the FRG will accelerate the deportation of those whose refugee status was denied.

In normative terms, Merkel was referring to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees which states that practically all unlawful migrants arriving in the EU have the right to refugee status. Refugees may not be deported if they are in danger in countries from which they arrived. Moreover, the Convention views any individual who “due to justified concerns of becoming a victim of persecution due to race, faith, citizenship, social group membership, or political beliefs, has found himself outside one's country of citizenship and can't use that country's protection or does not wish to use that protection due to concern for safety” as a

refugee.

The treatment of refugees is moreover enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights which likewise speaks to the individuals right to seek asylum, cross borders in search of protection from persecution, and seek preservation of individual freedoms and dignity, etc. These lofty ideals are increasingly being challenged by the facts on the ground in the form of the steadily deteriorating situation both in the EU (including Germany) and the EU's politically relevant immediate neighborhood from which the refugees, thanks to "regime change" and "color revolution" policies supported by EU's member states, originate.

Since the situation in the Middle East and North Africa is not improving, and will generate new waves of migration which will likewise be beyond German or EU bureaucracy's ability to cope, due to their inability to rethink their approaches to the problem. This will lead to the worsening of migrants' welfare, and to further splits within the society.

Given the dire circumstances among the displaced persons, their societal marginalization and inability or unwillingness to assimilate, humanitarian efforts are failing. Crime and inter-ethnic conflict is on the rise, and terrorists' appeals are finding willing recruits among the youth.

Organized crime groups in large German cities are trying to recruit the refugees living in shelters into their ranks. They are mainly interested in young, strong, and fit males who are to perform the dirty work, such as drug trade, robberies, and burglaries. According to the German police labor union head Bodo Pfaltzgraff, there are reports that as soon as a new refugee camp is opened, a few days later large black limos arrive there to begin recruitment. Berlin chief prosecutor for organized crime Sjors Kamstr explains that the migrants' lack of knowledge of German pushes them into the arms of those who speak their native language. Large German cities, in particular Berlin, Bremen, and Essen, are experiencing serious problems with Arab criminal family clans. Police estimate Berlin is the home to 15-20 such clans which have participated in unlawful activities, which up to 9 thousand members, according to several sources in Germany.

Moreover, European media are worried by the mass kidnappings of children who arrived in Europe as refugees. Authorities can't account for thousands of children who arrived in the EU. According to Interpol, up to 10 thousand adolescents disappeared without a trace since the crisis began. There is a possibility organized crime groups are deliberately targeting them for exploitation of various types.

EU law enforcement is convinced that unlawful human trafficking is a quick-profit multi-billion-dollar business controlled by over 40 thousand members of various criminal syndicates, says the Financial Times. Europol has described a broad spectrum of criminal activities revolving around the migration crisis: document forgeries, bribes, sexual exploitation of children, prostitution, slave labor. Moreover, organized crime is exploiting migrants in restaurants and underground workshops. In southern Italy, local syndicates are forcing migrants to work in agriculture. The organizers have arrived in the EU from the same countries as the current refugees, and already had residence permits or passports by the time the crisis began. The ongoing migration crisis is not only useful to the crime syndicates, but also criminal bankers since they are engaged in money laundering associated with trafficking. According to a Europol report, last year criminal groups earned up to \$6 billion on the migration wave that flooded Europe. Nine out of 10 migrants arriving in the EU in

2015 used the services far-flung criminal networks operating along migrant movement routes. In 2015 alone, approximately 1 million migrants arrived in the EU, and most of them paid between 3 and 6 thousand Euro. Thus the human traffickers' profit is estimated to have reached somewhere in the vicinity of 5-6 billion dollars.

Indicative of the general state of denial, the German Federal Criminal Police claim that native Germans commit no fewer crimes than the migrants, and perhaps even more. "The existing trends show that the migrants are no more crime-prone than other population groups in Germany. The majority of migrants don't violate laws, they came to our country hoping for protection and peace," says the FRG Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere.

If this situation is not to get worse, it would require the adoption of a revised approach, namely a unified, well-funded and comprehensive EU-level migration policy, consisting of protecting the rights of migrants, combating organized crime among ethnic groups, screening new arrivals, guaranteeing access to social services and labor markets, etc. Otherwise the EU is risking a massive social explosion provoked by growing inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict, and the constant perception of a growing terrorist threat. Unless addressed rapidly, these problems could be sufficient to destroy the already fragile EU common security framework.

The other increasingly plausible alternative is the "palestinianization" of the refugees on EU's territory, which would actually represent a mere extension of the "no-go" zones increasingly in evidence in various major European urban agglomerations.

The original "no-go" zone, Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon are a classic ghetto, a state within a state. Neither the army nor police venture there. Formally they are under UN jurisdiction, but they lead to a trapped, self-contained existence with all the seeming attributes of independence: armed forces, ideology, population, and even social policies, with only sovereign territory being absent.

According to UN, 2/3 of the 400 thousand refugees registered in Lebanon live in poverty, with unemployment reaching 70%. Palestinians themselves claim these numbers are even higher, 90% and 80%, respectively.

The sad state of the local Palestinian diaspora is due to the country's government policies which are not aimed at assimilating these "guests." Palestinians in Lebanon are de-facto prohibited from working, there is a "ban list" of 67 professions which they may not engage in no matter what. The remainder (mainly consisting of physical labor jobs) are open to the Palestinians, but only with the individual permit of the Ministry of Labor. These permits are all but impossible to obtain. Palestinians are also forbidden to do many other things. Some camps forbid repairing or building housing. However, since it can't be enforced, army checkpoints around the camps simply stop anyone trying to bring in construction materials.

All Palestinians without exception are banned from buying real estate outside the camps. That law was adopted only in 2001, prior to which many managed to acquire an apartment or a plot of land. Recognizing that fact, Lebanese government adopted a law making it impossible to pass real estate from generation to generation. Once the owner dies, the property reverts to the Lebanese government.

After several Arab-Israeli wars, by the mid-1970s Lebanon and the UN lost control over all of the 15 camps which then came under control of armed movements which comprised the

PLO under Yasser Arafat. As was expected, the PLO soon provoked a conflict with the Lebanese government. The ensuing civil war saw Palestinians take active part in the fighting. In 1982, the PLO's existence outside UN's control was used by Israel as an excuse to invade and to occupy Beirut. Saving themselves from Israeli forces, the leadership and many thousands of armed PLO fighters left for Tunisia. The unprotected camps fell victim to mass slaughter.

The surviving camps function under a "primeval" self-government, consisting of collegial structures such as people's committees. They include the representatives of 12 influential Palestinian parties, the elders, and respected inhabitants of the camps. There is no tax collection. The committees only deal with questions of security, for which a small sum is collected from the camp's inhabitants.

While it may seem that, at the moment, nothing of the sort could spring within the borders of the EU, the presence of practically permanent refugee camps and the growing number of the refugees mean that, unless action is taken soon, the "palestinianization" of EU's refugees will take place by default, given the EU's inability to take concerted action and financial constraints imposed by the European Central Bank and the EU Stability Pact. But the natural consequence of the "palestinianization" of the refugees will be the "lebanization" of the EU, which would spell the end of the European integration project and of the very idea for decades if not centuries to come.

Therefore what is left for the EU to do? The most obvious answers are:

- The EU must quickly and honestly acknowledge the problem's existence and its magnitude, as well as the failure of earlier policies.
- It must quickly change its approach toward forming a unified migration policy and reaching out to migrants, ensuring their rights, and combating ethnic organized crime groups.
- It must implement effective screening of the new arrivals, in order to quickly determine whether the individual is to be let in or sent back.
- Those who are allowed to remain should gain access to social and medical services and the legal labor market.
- Migrants ought to be ensured basic living conditions, similar to what was provided to the mass migration from USSR to Germany or to the Turkish labor migrants to Germany in late 20th century.

Can all that be done? Will it be done in time? Will that be enough? These are the most pressing questions of our time.

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