

Student unions demand European solidarity instead of "axis of the willing"

The student unions fzs from Germany, UDU from Italy and ÖH from Austria condemn the racist and inhumane politics of isolation towards refugees by the federal governments of Germany, Austria and Italy.

The latest developments in Austria, Italy and Germany give reasons for concern. The political debate on the so called "refugee crisis" became the main subject of right-wing populists to proclaim a Europe of separated and isolated nations. The arguments of the far-right are underpinned by – or so they say – “real existing problems” supposedly provoked by refugees coming to Europe.

Prominent figures of this movement are the new far-right-wing interior minister of Italy, Matteo Salvini, the right-wing populist interior minister of Germany, Horst Seehofer, and the (far-right-wing Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz.

Horst Seehofer wants Germany to reject migrants at the German border who have no papers or who are already registered in another European country. The far-right party “Alternative für Deutschland” (“Alternative for Germany”, known by its German initials AfD) has gathered support in the whole of Germany. In Bavaria it is threatening the stronghold of Seehofer’s Christian Social Union which now risks losing its absolute majority for only the second time in half a century. He and his party have responded by veering sharply to the right: The proposal to turn back migrants at the border is reminiscent of a demand by the far-right AfD made late last year.

Seehofer has given an ultimatum to Merkel in recent days that – if she does not agree to the measure – he will push his agenda single-handedly. The implication is that the federal police in Bavaria, the main gateway to Germany for refugees, and the rest of Germany could start turning the people away at the border as early as next week. This violates especially forcefully the Dublin-III-agreement. According to this, each case first has to be scrutinised by the authorities before returning asylum seekers to the first EU-country they have arrived in.

Italy’s new radical-right interior minister, Matteo Salvini, turned away a rescue ship with more than 600 African migrants on the 11th of June, threatening to leave them on the doorstep of Italy’s European neighbours. Finally Spain agreed to let them in. “The nice life is over for illegal migrants,” he recently proclaimed, “they can pack their bags”. With these politics Salvini obviously hazards the risk of killing people in the Mediterranean Sea in order to empower his own politics.

On Wednesday, Horst Seehofer skipped a meeting with Angela Merkel to meet Sebastian Kurz. The Austrian chancellor who was elected last year on a pledge to clamp down on illegal immigration now leads a coalition with the far-right. During a joint news conference Mr. Kurz spoke of the need for “an axis of the willing” in the fight against illegal migration. Seehofer mentioned that his actions are also coordinated with Matteo Salvini. We, as representatives of huge parts of the population of Italy, Austria and Germany are worried about this new extreme-right-wing alliance and announce that we will fight for transnational policies of solidarity against alliances of the extreme-right-populist like these.

These actions and proposals taking place dehumanise refugees coming to our countries. They negate the human rights of people seeking asylum. Present tensions in our society can in no way legitimise these extraordinary, red line crossing measures. Portraying people in need as a heavy threat to supposedly “European culture(s) and identities” seems not just wrong, but also rejects the responsibility our countries have by their wealth and their pledge to human rights and solidarity.

The solution should explicitly not be the abortion of any kind of migration to Europe while detention centers are introduced outside of Europe. In fact, we should instead turn our attention to battle far more overlooked problems, like the dismantling of the social welfare state or climate change, hence causes of flight are made by social grievances as well, as grievances caused by the ecological crisis.

Educated decisions must be taken after the EU-summit by the end of July. We call for a Europe of solidarity. The initial foundations of the European Union were not meant to give space to the strengthening of its own profit, but by helping others for common good. It demands open borders for those seeking a better life in Europe. This means especially that Europe must be open for all those in need of asylum. Further on, this includes bringing attention to protection of the freedom of movement as well as offering appropriate living conditions for human beings.