

EU Turkey Deal to Curb Migration

Agreement Designed to Enhance Ankara's Status . Clashes occur over the deportation of thousands from Greece

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Thousands of migrants residing in Greece from the Middle East, Africa and Asia are being sent to Turkey in an effort to curtail and reduce the number of people flooding into Europe.

Uncertainty about the status of those who have reached Greece contributed to the clashes between Macedonian security forces and migrants on April 10 when police used tear gas and rubber bullets to contain crowds which they claimed had attempted to break through the Idomeni border between the two countries. This standoff resulted in the injury of over 300 migrants and 23 security officers.

The Greek government denounced the Macedonian police for their actions saying “[T]he indiscriminate use of chemicals, rubber bullets and stun grenades against vulnerable populations, and particularly without reasons for such force, is a dangerous and deplorable act,” stressed George Kyritsis, a spokesman for Greece’s crisis-response co-ordination committee.

This latest round of unrest occurred just one day after four women and a child drowned off the Greek island of Samos. These were the first officially reported deaths in the Aegean Sea after the European Union (EU) began rounding up and sending migrants from Greece to Turkey on April 4.

In response, the security forces involved in the attacks on migrants attempted to justify their repressive measures.

Spokesman for the Macedonian police Toni Angelovski said “A large group of refugees attempted to destroy the razor fence and enter Macedonia. They threw stones, metal things and other objects towards police. No single migrant managed to cross on the Macedonian side, but [the situation] is still tense.” The police used “Teargas and all allowable means to protect [themselves] and the border”. (Irish Times, April 10)

At least 11,000 migrants have been camped out at the Idomeni village crossing since mid-February after the Balkan states closed their borders as the major entry points into Central Europe. There are reports that approximately 50,000 migrants are in Greece awaiting their possible deportation to Turkey.

Europe Divided Over Migrant and Refugee Questions

Over the last year more than one million people have entered the continent creating tensions between EU member-states and within their societies. Right-wing led governments

and political parties have utilized the migration crisis to build up their electoral bases along with escalating violence against those seeking asylum.

In efforts to normalize relations among European countries and at the same time curb migration, EU leaders reached an agreement mandating that all migrants coming to Greece by way of the Aegean Sea should be sent to Turkey. According to the plan, for every Syrian from the refugee camps in Turkey will be settled for each so-called “irregular migrant” returned to the country. The purported rationale behind this policy is designed to discourage migrants from entering Greece and its islands through passage provided by human traffickers.

However, humanitarian organizations have criticized the plan saying it will create even more problems related to the growing need to provide food, water, shelter and medical treatment for the hundreds of thousands still in need of assistance. Conditions in the Idomeni border camp are rapidly deteriorating prompting dissatisfaction and unrest.

Agencies dealing with migration and displacement issues such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have also pointed out that the EU agreement violates international legal conventions for the processing of migrants and refugees. On April 1 several people were hurt on the island of Chios which reportedly contains 600 more migrants than what the Greek authorities and international organizations have the capacity to handle.

The UNHCR website noted in a post that: “We are very worried about the situation there. Rioting last night left three people with stab injuries.” (April 1)

This same agency’s humanitarian division observed that instability and anxiety was also escalating at the Moria facility on Lesbos. Officially 2,300 migrants are being housed there exceeding the stated capacity of 2,000.

A statement from the UNHCR stressed: “[We are] urging parties to the recent EU-Turkey agreement on refugees and migrants to ensure all safeguards are in place before any returns begin. This is in light of continued serious gaps in both countries. Across Greece, which has been compelled to host people because of closed borders elsewhere in Europe, numerous aspects of the systems for receiving and dealing with people who may need international protection are still either not working or absent.”

Imperialism Caused the Migration Crisis

What is not mentioned in many instances by the corporate and government-controlled western media outlets are the reasons behind the flood of migrants and refugees and the dangers they face on a daily basis having been trafficked through Libya and other countries into the Mediterranean and across to Europe.

At the root of the crisis are the United States and NATO wars of regime-change and occupation along with the collapse of the economies throughout Africa, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific during the recent period.

Washington has led these interventions beginning with the Gulf war in 1991 continuing through the occupations of both Afghanistan and Iraq during the first decade of the present century.

Since 2009, new wars of destruction and occupation have been waged against Libya, Syria and Yemen resulting in the dislocation, deaths and injuries of tens of millions creating the worst humanitarian crisis of internal and external displacement since the conclusion of World War II.

In addition the economies of these targeted states and their neighbors have been adversely impacted. These wars of imperialist intrigue and domination are continuing amid the failure of a full economic recovery from the global capitalist crisis of 2008 and subsequent years.

Turkey, a key member of NATO, seeks to become a full member of the EU while serving as a conduit for the deployment of Islamic State operatives in Syria and other states. The Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad has been able to survive and drive back the rebel forces through the direct solidarity given by Iran, Hezbollah, Russia and other fraternal states and organizations.

These developments have worsened relations between Turkey, Saudi Arabia and their allies in the Middle East and Africa on the one side against the Syrian government and its supporters on the other. A ceasefire agreement worked out during talks in Geneva between Moscow, Washington and NATO forces appears to have reduced the fighting in Syria but has by no means ended the war.

This has been taking place in conjunction with a growing domestic war against the Kurdish people inside southeast Turkey as well. Turkish political leaders have threatened opposition members of parliament with arrest and prosecution claiming that they are allied with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and its supporters. If these actions are taken it would only escalate the current unrest and complicate relations with Europe and the U.S.

A recent article published by rudaw.net said that: "There is almost no doubt that imprisoning Kurdish elected politicians is to further intensify tensions in the mainly Kurdish southeast which has been hit by the worst violence in two decades since a two-year peace process with the PKK collapsed in July last year. In such a political landscape, it is very likely that the tension between Turkish security forces and the PKK might push for a social uprising similar to what we had observed during the Kobane unrest that ended by a call made by PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan." (April 4)

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