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Germany

German parliament classifies persecution of Yazidis in Iraq and Syria as genocide

In a resolution of the governing parties and the opposition CDU/CSU, the crimes committed by the IS militia against the Yazidi faith group in northern Iraq and Syria were recognized as genocide.

The Bundestag has recognized the crimes committed by the radical Islamic IS militia against the Yazidi faith group in northern Iraq and Syria as genocide. In Berlin, the deputies voted unanimously in favor of the proposed resolution. The Bundestag is thus the first parliament of a large European state to recognize the atrocities committed against the Yazidis in 2014 as genocide. "The German Bundestag bows to the victims of the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by IS," the resolution reads. Parliament thus acknowledges that the crimes commit-

ted by the IS militia constitute "genocide within the meaning of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide".

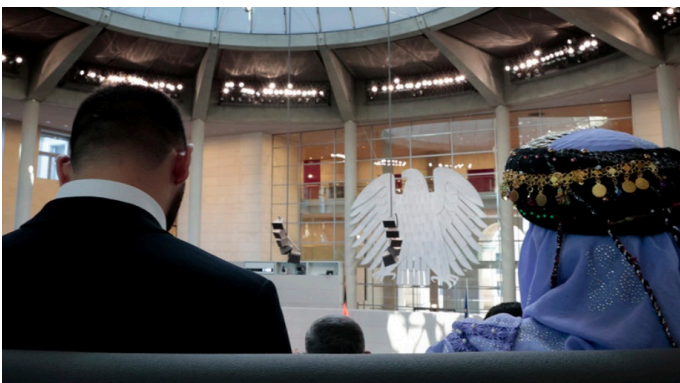
The approved bill is not legally binding. However, the Bundestag is taking a clear historical position and is addressing political demands to the German Government. The factions of the Left and AfD, which were not involved in drafting the resolution, also voted in favor.

In 2014, the jihadist militia conquered the Sinjar Mountains in northern Iraq, where the Yazidis have lived for centuries. In its dominions in northern Iraq and Syria, the militia forced women and girls into slavery, recruited boys as child soldiers and killed thousands of men. Since then, thousands of Yazidis have fled the region.

Iraqi Prime Minister first trip to Europe in Germany

The new Iraqi head of government, Muhammad Shia al-Sudani, deliberately chose Berlin as the destination of his first trip to a western country. The aim of his trip is to expand the partnership with Germany. Baghdad wants to benefit from Germany in key points of its government program: fighting corruption and economic development.

This includes expanding an energy partnership with Siemens to help counteract the constant power outages in Iraq. Even before the visit, there were reports that Siemens would sign a corresponding declaration of intent with the Iraqi Minister of Electricity, Ziad Ali Fadel. It is about the



Yazidi representatives during the debate in the Bundestag / Photo: Tagesschau

construction of conventional power plants, the expansion of renewable energies and the stabilization of the power grid.



Sudani (le.) and Scholz / Photo: dpa

During a joint appearance with Sudani, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said he hoped the agreement would be implemented “quickly”. In a joint press conference in the Chancellery, Scholz assured his guest that Germany would continue working with Iraq. This is not only in Iraqi, but also in German interest. Scholz and Sudani also discussed the possibility of gas supplies from the country. “Iraq would be a very welcome cooperation partner for us when it comes to importing gas and oil to Germany,” said Scholz. Gas imports could also be forwarded to other European countries via Germany.

In view of the gas reserves in Iraq, Sudani is hoping for German investors in this sector. The country already exports gas through a Basra Gas Company LNG terminal that opened in 2022. At home, however, the situation for the Iraqi head of government is complicated. Not only does he always have to keep an eye on the encroaching neighbor Iran, which can fall back on a network of influential politicians and heavily armed proxy militias in Iraq, but also on the Americans, who are hostile to Iran. As soon as the discussion about the desired expansion of the energy partnership with Siemens started, the question arose as to whether this would alienate the US competing partner.

Austria

Control panel reprimands government for investigating terrorist attack in Vienna

Incomplete investigations, misjudgments and legal errors in parts of the Austrian government: This is how the final report of the Ombudsman’s Office on the terrorist attack in Vienna reads. For months, three investigators have been investigating the events surrounding the night of terror on November 2, 2020, in which the jihadist assassin K.F. murdered four people before he himself was shot dead by the police. The Ombudsman recommends Interior Minister Gerald Karner (ÖVP) for a “complete disciplinary clarification” of the failures in the protection of the constitution.

The Ombudsman Board in Austria, which consists of three members, is set up as a parliamentary institution to control public administration. It is available free of charge to all people who have problems with authorities, who feel that they have been treated unfairly by administrative bodies and have already exhausted all legal remedies. In addition, since 2012 the Ombudsman Board has also been responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights in Austria as the national prevention mechanism. The Ombudsman Board is also the General Secretariat of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), to which numerous institutions comparable to the Ombudsman Board belong worldwide.

The behavior of the Ministry of the Interior in relation to the examination of the Ombudsman Board is particularly criticized. The delivery of files or the answering of questions from the examiners had been refused several times. Files could only be obtained via the Ministry of Justice, which had shown itself to be cooperative.

In terms of content, the Ombudsman Board criticizes the behavior of the officials, especially in the State Office for the Protection of the Constitution (LVT) in Vienna. There were several indications of how dangerous the later assassin KF was, months before the attack.

Many of the points mentioned had already been raised in the report of a special inquiry commission. The corruption prosecutor’s office had also initiated investigations into abuse of official power against two constitutional protection officers, which have, however, been discontinued.

Turkey

Erdogan's election campaign in Europe: rejections from Germany, commitment from Austria

While the German federal government has no interest in Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan appearing during the election campaign in Turkey, the mayor of Vienna at least travels to in February to pay his respects to Erdogan.

In view of the upcoming elections in Turkey in June, the German Federal Foreign Office has expressly pointed out that campaign appearances by foreign politicians – unless they come from EU countries – require approval from the German Foreign Ministry.

Germany's Foreign Office, meanwhile, said it had "invited" a senior representative from the Turkish embassy in Berlin to the ministry. "Hate and agitation" have no place in Germany.

Campaign appearances by politicians from abroad are completely banned in the last three months before elections or votes in their countries. This regulation for approving and prohibiting such appearances goes back to an earlier conflict with Turkey: Before the Turkish constitutional referendum in 2017, Turkish politicians conducted an at times aggressive election campaign for the votes of German-Turks in numerous German cities. The current statement from the Federal Foreign Office reminds of this rule and clearly threatens it: If Turkish party representatives do not "play by the rules", the consequences would have to be examined.

According to information from those close to his party, Erdogan's planned working visit to Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin for January 27 will not take place. The Media Network Germany (RND) learned from those close to the Turkish governing party that it was not possible to agree on topics and a time for the meeting. During the visit, for example, the German side wanted to publicly criticize the election campaign appearance of AKP MP Mustafa Acikgöz in Neuss, it said.

So while in Germany the responsible authorities want to avoid giving election campaign help for Erdogan, who is weak in the current polls, politicians in Austria, flexible as politics sometimes acts here, show more benevolence. Vienna Mayor Michael Ludwig announced that he would travel

to Turkey on February 14th.

Even the spontaneous meeting of the head of the city of Vienna - about 76,000 people of Turkish origin live in Vienna - last year with the autocrat from the Bosphorus caused astonishment in Austria. Ludwig's visit at the time was seen as an attempt to gain sympathy for the social democratic politician in the Turkish community at home, but at the same time to improve the tarnished reputation of Erdogan and his AKP in Vienna.



The terror night in Nice / Photo: Sasha Goldsmith

So far there has been no confirmation from Vienna City Hall as to whether the mayor will also meet with Erdogan. So far, only one conversation with the Turkish Minister of Economic Affairs has been confirmed.

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