Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Contemporary Germany: A Critical Analysis of Political Debates and Media Depictions

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INTRODUCTION

Luckily, most people never face the predicament of needing to apply for governmental protection from persecution. There are many people, however, who do face this situation. Asylum seekers flee areas where they are persecuted for political, religious, and other convictions, and many attempt to seek shelter in Germany or elsewhere in the European Union. Migration to Germany itself is a broad area of research and discussion, and in 2011, the rate at which foreigners entered Germany was at a 15-year high. That Germany has the European Union's largest economy[1] as well as the largest population in the EU[2] no doubt contribute to the amplified numbers of immigrants. Within the past two years, asylum applications have increased worldwide as well,[3] partly due to the Arab Spring revolutions that escalated in 2010. Germany accepts very low percentages of asylum applications every year, but it gives more people a temporary, subsidiary protection.[4] Germany does not work alone when it comes to asylum seekers; its asylum system is thoroughly entangled with European asylum as a whole, and political debates between European leaders may threaten the amount of protection an asylum seeker receives, if he/she receives any at all. German media are generally critical of the asylum system and mostly sympathetic toward the asylum seekers. However, even when they escape persecution back home, asylum seekers are sometimes faced with persecution in the very country that is supposed to be "safe" for them. Germany's asylum system is designed so that very few people are legally qualified for protection, even if they do truly face governmental persecution in

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[1] Baghdjian, A. (2012, April 4). Germany attracted more southern Europeans in 2011. *Reuters*. Retrieved from http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/04/04/uk-germany-population-idUKBRE8330UF20120404

[2] EUROPA. (n.d.). Germany. *European Union*. Retrieved from http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/member-countries/germany/index_en.htm

[3] International Rescue Committee. (n.d.). Frequently asked questions about refugees and resettlement. *International Rescue Committee*. Retrieved from http://www.rescue.org/refugees

[4] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. (2011, December). Aktuelle Zahlen zu Asyl. *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*. Retrieved from http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/statistik-anlage-teil-4-aktuelle-zahlen-zu-asyl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

their home countries, a fact which must be extremely dismaying for people who truly need protection from persecution. This thesis focuses on the status of Germany's asylum system, which is only a small fraction of the entire discussion on Germany's migration as a whole. The distinction should be made because asylum seekers are attempting to relocate and, most importantly, qualify for government-sponsored protection from persecution, while other immigrants are simply looking for relocation. This thesis examines Germany's, and to a smaller extent Europe's, asylum system of the past few decades with an emphasis on 1989 and subsequent years, the political debates surrounding the system, and the media portrayals of how the system affects asylum seekers firsthand. Germany's current asylum system does not provide a hopeful future for most asylum seekers, and the European financial crisis and political environment are weakening the system even further.

THE BASICS OF GERMAN ASYLUM

The 1985 Schengen Agreement called for a borderless area between some of the European countries, including then-West Germany. The Schengen Area today encompasses almost all of the European Union, except for the British Isles, Bulgaria, and Romania, but does extend to Norway and Switzerland. This means that travel between most European countries is theoretically unregulated. However, the "borderless" area is not exactly without boundaries because the so-called Schengen Information System uses border agencies, which collect and share information about asylum seekers as well as criminals and other foreigners.[5] Regarding refugees, Article 34 of the 1951 Refugee Convention in Geneva asked for countries worldwide to

[5] Migration News. (2012, January). France, Germany, Benelux. *Migration News, 19* (1). Retrieved from http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=3733_0_4_0

integrate and nationalize them, bringing attention to the plights of refugees.[6] However, European governments are often frustrated with their asylum systems, not knowing how to deal with increases in immigration, especially during crises. Despite the illusion that there have been large "influxes" of refugees into Europe recently, Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, rebuts this idea.[7] Nevertheless, there undoubtedly have been asylum seekers fleeing areas such as the Arab Spring nations, and many head to Europe to seek protection. Further, the press coverage of these events is substantial, including headlines about "influxes" and "tsunamis" of asylum seekers, contributing to this perception, accurate or not.

The recent democratic revolutions in North Africa, known as the Arab Spring, have led to debate within the European Union over how to handle increased amounts of asylum applications from these countries. During this period of transition within the Arab League, the countries that have experienced the biggest governmental change include Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya. However, the percentages of asylum seekers from these nations each accounted for less than 2.5% of the total asylum applicants in Germany in 2011.[8] Nevertheless, there has been considerable debate over asylum seekers from these countries, especially considering the recent uprisings. The Arab Spring revolutions began in December 2010, with the beginning of the Tunisian revolution as a result of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's regime,[9] followed by the beginning of the Egyptian revolution against President Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak,[10]

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[6] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). Refugees: Flowing across borders. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html

[7] Ehlers, F., von Rohr, M. & Schult, C. (2011, April 18). 'Is this your democracy': Refugee influx exposes limitations of European solidarity. *Spiegel Online*. Retrieved from http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,757666,00.html

[8] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. (2011, December). Aktuelle Zahlen zu Asyl. *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*. Retrieved from http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/statistik-anlage-teil-4-aktuelle-zahlen-zu-asyl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

[9] Central Intelligence Agency. (2012, April 23). Tunisia. *Central Intelligence Agency: United States of America*. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html

[10] Central Intelligence Agency. (2012, April 16). Egypt. *Central Intelligence Agency: United States of America*.

then by the Yemen revolution against President Ali Abdullah Saleh,[11] and finally by the 2011 Libyan revolution against longtime dictator Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi.[12]

How does Germany play a role in these revolutions? It does so subsequently and indirectly and in cooperation with other European Union countries, but this collaboration is significantly strained. When asylum seekers from countries experiencing political upheaval flee to the European Union, the EU nations must decide whether these people should be allowed to remain in the EU, meaning whether they qualify for asylum protection, and whose responsibility it is to accept them as refugees or as temporary residents.[13] Some European leaders have called for support of those nations that are in turmoil so that their people can theoretically remain safely in their home countries rather than entering the European Union. For example, in mid-February 2011, after Tunisian President Ben Ali fled the country, more than 5,000 Tunisians arrived as asylum seekers in Lampedusa, Italy.[14] A civilian revolution which began in December 2010 as a result of unemployment, poverty, inflation, and governmental corruption forced Ben Ali, who took power via a coup in 1987, to flee Tunisia. The country has since created a Constituent Assembly, has elected a new president, and is currently forming a new constitution.[15] German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is the head of government as well as a member of the Christian Democratic Union (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, CDU) political party, replied to the situation in Lampedusa by stating that, naturally, not all Tunisians who wanted to enter

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Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html

[11] Central Intelligence Agency. (2012, April 26). Yemen. *Central Intelligence Agency: United States of America*. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ym.html

[12] Central Intelligence Agency. (2012, April 12). Libya. *Central Intelligence Agency: United States of America*. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ly.html

[13] European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (n.d.). Refugees in the EU. *European Council on Refugees and Exiles*. Retrieved from http://www.ecre.org/refugees/refugees/refugees-in-the-eu.html

[14] Spiegel Online International. (2011, February 15). Destination Lampedusa: European leaders struggle with wave of Tunisian migrants. *Spiegel Online*. Retrieved from http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,745669,00.html

[15] Central Intelligence Agency. (2012, April 23). Tunisia. *Central Intelligence Agency: United States of America*. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ts.html

Europe would be allowed to and that Tunisia should be given support so that its people can remain in their home country.[16,17] Deutsche Welle, a German public broadcasting agency, reported that in June 2011 Merkel stated that economic migrants would be deported, including many from Tunisia, but that people truly facing political persecution would be given protection on humanitarian grounds.[18] A common topic of debate is over whether asylum seekers are simply looking for better economic prospects, and though some are, others truly are facing persecution.

So what qualifies an asylum seeker for refugee status in Germany? The 1951 worldwide Refugee Convention defined a "refugee" as someone who:

> "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."[19]

Germany's stance is that it follows these guidelines for refugees, as stipulated by Paragraph (1) of Article 16a of Germany's constitution, which states that "persons persecuted on political grounds shall have the right of asylum."[20] Article 3 of the Asylum Procedure Act and Article 60 of the Residence Act also confirm Germany's legal commitment to asylum seekers.[21] Unlike

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[16] Al Jazeera. (2011, February 14). Italy struggles with Tunisia influx: Rome calls on European Union for help after 6,000 Tunisians flee to tiny island following political upheaval. *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved from http://www.aljazeera.com/video/africa/2011/02/2011214133653175984.html

[17] Spiegel Online International. (2011, February 15). Destination Lampedusa: European leaders struggle with wave of Tunisian migrants. *Spiegel Online*. Retrieved from http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,745669,00.html

[18] Connor, R. (2010). Germany protests 'watering down' of asylum law. *Deutsche Welle*. Retrieved from http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,5781199,00.html

[19] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). Refugees: Flowing across borders. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html

[20] German Bundestag. (2010). *Basic law for the Federal Republic of Germany*. Berlin, Germany: German Bundestag.

[21] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. (2011, January 18). Politisch Verfolgte genieβen Asyl: Asylrecht hat in Deutschland Verfassungsrang. *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*. Retrieved from http://www.bamf.de/

some other European countries, however, Germany only grants asylum to people who have been persecuted by state governments, directly or indirectly.[22] This means that Germany would not provide asylum to people from areas where there is no central government or who are persecuted by non-state groups that are not acting in coordination with the state. Also, since 1993, Germany officially does not accept asylum seekers who have entered from a presumably safe third country, which includes all of its neighboring countries, thus making asylum seekers who have reached the country by land ineligible for refugee status.[23] Paragraph (2) to Article 16a of Germany's constitution:

> "Paragraph (1) of this Article may not be invoked by a person who enters the federal territory from a member state of the European Communities or from another third state in which application of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is assured."[24]

Germany does occasionally accept asylum seekers who have reached the country by land as refugees, but some believe that these occasional allowances are merely public relations strategies.[25] Clearly, despite the 1951 Refugee Convention's definition of "refugee," the additional requirements for refugee status that Germany has developed promise that very few people are qualified for German asylum, whether or not they truly are facing persecution in their home countries. These additional requirements imposed on asylum seekers appear to be in place

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DE/Migration/AsylFluechtlinge/Asylrecht/asylrecht-node.html

[22] Migration News. (2000, April). Germany: Green cards? *Migration News, 7* (4). Retrieved from http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=2068_0_4_0

[23] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2011, December). Dialog mit jungen Flüchtlingen in Deutschland/A dialogue with young refugees in Germany: Angekommen/We have arrived. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=4f2155ab9&query=germany

[24] German Bundestag. (2010). *Basic law for the Federal Republic of Germany*. Berlin, Germany: German Bundestag.

[25] Preuβ, M. (2011). Refugees are Germany's problem too: Italy should not be left alone to deal with the flood of North African refugees. *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.* Retrieved from https://ip-journal.dgap.org/en/ip-journal/topics/refugees-are-germany%E2%80%99s-problem-too

in order to discourage asylum seekers from even entering the country.

Worldwide the number of asylum seekers has increased, and many people apply for German asylum every year, but few refugees are accepted for protection in Germany. In 2010, there were almost 10 million recognized refugees worldwide accumulated.[26] By the same year, around 80% of the world's refugees were living in the poorest nations,[27] likely because those are the countries asylum seekers already live near and/or because those are the only countries that will accept them as refugees. In 2012, there are reported to be around 42 million displaced people, including 12 million recognized refugees,[28] a significant increase from only two years before. Most of Germany's (and Europe's) refugees since 2010 have originated from Afghanistan and Iraq.[29] In 2010, over 48,000 people applied for asylum in Germany, about 5,000 less than in 2011. In comparison, from 1995 to 1997, over 150,000 people yearly applied for German asylum, but only 5-9% of those were granted, and only about 3-6% of the applicants were granted some sort of protection short of asylum. In 2011, Germany granted fewer than 700 people (1.5% of applicants) asylum but over 6,000 people (14.9% of applicants) some protection without full asylum.[30] Germany sometimes allows asylum applicants who are rejected but whose home countries are experiencing terrorism to stay in the meantime without full asylum protection.[31] Further, the European Union officially grants all asylum seekers the right to an interpreter, a personal hearing, and access to the UNHCR, which is the Office of the United

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[26] Migration News. (2012, January). Global population: 7 billion, refugees." *Migration News, 19* (1). Retrieved from http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=3742_0_5_0

[27] Scheithauer, S. (2011, June 20). Arme Länder nehmen die meisten Menschen auf. *Deutsche Welle*. Retrieved from http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,6552763,00.html

[28] International Rescue Committee. (n.d.). Frequently asked questions about refugees and resettlement. *International Rescue Committee*. Retrieved from http://www.rescue.org/refugees

[29] Migration News. (2012, January). France, Germany, Benelux. *Migration News, 19* (1). Retrieved from http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=3733_0_4_0

[30] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. (2011, December). Aktuelle Zahlen zu Asyl. *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*. Retrieved from http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/statistik-anlage-teil-4-aktuelle-zahlen-zu-asyl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

[31] Migration News. (2000, April). Germany: Green cards? *Migration News, 7* (4). Retrieved from http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=2068_0_4_0

Nations High Commissioner of Refugees.[32] Obtaining these services is not necessarily easy, though, and subsidiary protection as a faux replacement for recognized asylum may be used to further limit the financial assistance provided to these displaced peoples. The increased percentage of asylum seekers granted "subsidiary protection" without full asylum is likely a political move to make Germany appear to be humanitarian toward persecuted peoples but simultaneously decrease the amount of financial services that would otherwise be provided to these people if they were given full protection.

Not all asylum seekers are adults, and underage asylum seekers receive some additional services. Unaccompanied children often arrive in Germany as asylum seekers, eighty percent of whom are male. Afghanistan is the most frequent country of origin for these unaccompanied children, followed by Somalia and Iraq. In 2010, Germany granted 57% of the Afghani, 94% of the Somali, and 24% of the Iraqi underage applicants asylum or some measure of protection. The government only granted protection to 37% of all of the unaccompanied minors, though. However, almost always will the Germany allow minors to stay until they reach the age of majority, which is eighteen years old.[33] However, when they reach that age, if they have not already been granted asylum, they must apply for protection and present evidence of persecution, often from many years previous. Children born in Germany but whose parents are "tolerated" asylum seekers are not immune from risk of deportation, as will be shown later in an analysis of media portrayals.

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[32] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. (2011, January 18). Politisch Verfolgte genieβen Asyl: Asylrecht hat in Deutschland Verfassungsrang. *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*. Retrieved from http://www.bamf.de/DE/Migration/AsylFluechtlinge/Asylrecht/asylrecht-node.html

[33] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2011, December). Dialog mit jungen Flüchtlingen in Deutschland/A dialogue with young refugees in Germany: Angekommen/We have arrived. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=4f2155ab9&query=germany

If an asylum seeker is granted refugee status in Germany, there are several programs which are intended to help him/her integrate into the society. Article 44 of the Residence Act stipulates that all recognized refugees be allowed integration courses, including classes about German society and language. The government is also supposed to provide economic and cultural assistance. Non-governmental organizations operate publicly funded migration services, and these consist of both adult and youth migration counseling centers. The government provides unaccompanied children access to separate children's facilities, where they are said to receive psychological support, health screenings, and German language classes. Further, they are appointed private, legal guardians, as required by the German Civil Code. Schooling is mandatory; since 2005, refugees in all of Germany's sixteen states are required to attend school until the age of 16, though they often complete transitional classes beforehand. Some groups, including the Schlau-Project in Munich, allow refugees to enroll in vocational classes until the age of 21.[34]

However, for all asylum seekers, refugee or not, vocational school is not guaranteed. They must have lived in Germany for at least one year; someone must have offered them an apprenticeship; and the Federal Employment Agency must approve this offer. The agency will usually not approve the offer if a German citizen desires that same position. For those asylum seekers who arrive in Germany with no documentation of previous education and/or work history, the United Nations recommends that flexible measures of assessment be implemented. National competency tests may be provided in order to measure work-related skills so that

[34] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2011, December). Dialog mit jungen Flüchtlingen in Deutschland/A dialogue with young refugees in Germany: Angekommen/We have arrived. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=4f2155ab9&query=germany

people are more likely to obtain employment.[35] However, normally, the German government does not allow asylum seekers to work, especially if they have been in the country for less than two years.[36]

When it comes to asylum seekers and refugees, Germany does not work independently. Asylum seekers are unlikely to enter into the country before first entering into another European Union country, all of which are legally considered "safe third countries." According to the EU, it developed its 2003 Dublin II Regulation to help expedite the process of placing an asylum seeker in the country responsible for his/her application, which depends on several factors but mostly on where the asylum seeker entered into Europe first.[37] Another goal of this regulation is to diminish the frequency of "asylum shopping," which is when someone files several asylum applications (in different countries) and searches for the best offer.[38] The EU created a fingerprinting system called Eurodac to accompany the Dublin II regulation and to help identify asylum applicants (14 years or older), as well as identify in which countries they have previously filed applications for protection.[39] German asylum, though distinct in its requirements of asylum seekers, is nevertheless secondary to the entire European structure of asylum. One cannot study German asylum practices without understanding it in a broader European context.

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[35] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2011, December). Dialog mit jungen Flüchtlingen in Deutschland/A dialogue with young refugees in Germany: Angekommen/We have arrived. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=4f2155ab9&query=germany

[36] Migration News. (2000, April). Germany: Green cards? *Migration News, 7* (4). Retrieved from http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=2068_0_4_0

[37] EUROPA. (2009, June 24). Dublin II Regulation. *European Union*. Retrieved from http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/l33153_en.htm

[38] European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (n.d.). Refugees in the EU. *European Council on Refugees and Exiles*. Retrieved from http://www.ecre.org/refugees/refugees/refugees-in-the-eu.html

[39] EUROPA. (2010, August 11). "Eurodac" system. *European Union*. Retrieved from http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/l33081_en.htm

POLITICAL DEBATES

The political debates that surround European asylum laws and procedures are numerous and often entangled with each other across multiple topics of debate. Furthermore, the debates often do not focus solely on asylum seekers; they encompass the entire realm of immigration, not just immigration as a result of some form of real or perceived persecution. Though my focus is primarily on Germany's refugee situation, one cannot discuss this situation without putting it into a broader European context and without including other European voices on asylum. Often, German political leaders make their opinions on asylum known by criticizing other European governments, and, of course, not all political leaders have the same viewpoint on the issue. One has to review multiple sides of the issue in order to understand the broader picture of European asylum and what this picture means for Germany.

The political debates about European asylum range from the stances that the Schengen free movement zone should be shrunk, that the European countries should each solve their own refugee problems, that European countries should help African and neighboring countries help themselves, that Germany should stop sending weapons to African governments as it supposedly currently does, and that Germany has reached maximum capacity of immigrants. As expected, some of these topics overlap somewhat.

One attempt to deal with increasing numbers of asylum applicants has been for some European leaders to ask for shrinkage of the Schengen free movement zone, a move which would limit overland access between European countries. Safety is sometimes cited as a reason to increase border controls; the EU Commission allows for temporary reinstatement of border controls if a country fears for its public safety. For example, in May 2011, when Tunisian refugees traveling through Italy arrived in France, the French government turned them away as a

result of its tightened border controls.[40] France, like Germany, also adheres to the safe third country rule,[41] significantly limiting the numbers of qualified applicants. Both France and Germany have proposed shrinking the Schengen free movement zone in times of crisis, especially to exclude Italy, where many refugees first arrive in Europe. Germany's Minister of the Interior, Hans-Peter Friedrich, a member of the Christian Social Union (Christlich-Soziale Union, CSU) political party, said in May 2011 that he was not aware of increased amounts of asylum seekers to Germany at that moment but that Germany would nevertheless tighten its border controls in case of impending crisis and that the country would not be able to accept many economic refugees who came through Italy, characterizing the asylum seekers as simply "economic."[42]

In December 2011, Nicolas Sarkozy, then-president of France and a member of the center-right Union for a Popular Movement party (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire), called for a revision of the Schengen free movement zone, and his Minister of the Interior, Claude Guéant, called for a reduction in both legal and illegal immigration, stating that "it is easier for immigrants to integrate if there are fewer of them."[43] By April 2012, Friedrich of Germany and Guéant of France formulated a letter to the European Union asking for the creation of "an ultima ratio" whereby EU countries would be allowed to temporarily reinstate anti-Schengen border controls for thirty-day periods.[44] It is evident that the Arab Spring revolutions fueled desire in

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[40] Weingärtner, D. (2011, May). No love lost for refugees: The EU member states quarrel over North African migrants. *The German Times*. Retrieved from http://www.german-times.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=41532&Itemid=25

[41] Human Rights Watch. (1997, October 1). France: Toward a just and humane asylum policy. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,HRW,,FRA,,45cc65f72,0.html

[42] Weingärtner, D. (2011, May). No love lost for refugees: The EU member states quarrel over North African migrants. *The German Times*. Retrieved from http://www.german-times.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=41532&Itemid=25

[43] Migration News. (2012, January). France, Germany, Benelux. *Migration News, 19* (1). Retrieved from http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=3733_0_4_0

[44] Spiegel Online International. (2012, April 20). Germany and France seek reintroduction of controls. *Spiegel*

both France and Germany to tighten their "borders." In both countries, however, attempts to tighten these controls seem redundant considering both nations officially do not accept refugees who have traveled through a supposedly safe third country, such as Italy, anyway. Reducing the Schengen free movement zone might discourage and prevent some asylum seekers from even entering into the EU, however.

Correlated with the support of a reduced Schengen free movement zone is the stance that each European Union country should solve its own problems, particularly related to immigration. By January 2011, boats holding asylum seekers from Arab Spring countries had begun reaching Italy. The European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, noted that at least 430,000 asylum seekers were fleeing from Libya at that time,[45] and this was notably before the Libyan governmental upheaval escalated later that year, in August.[46] European leaders offered different perspectives on the crisis in Italy. German Interior Minister Friedrich announced that "Italy must settle its problems on its own," although the then-Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, opined that the "human tsunami" "was not an Italian problem, but a European problem." Berlusconi said that other EU countries refusing to help would be an "egotistical answer." He further argued that if European countries did not feel that together they were one entity, then "it would be better if we separated again and every country followed their own fears and selfish desires."[47] Clearly, the issue here was not just a Schengen free movement issue; the issue involved the cooperation of the entire European Union, which Italy and then-West-

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Online. Retrieved from http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,828676,00.html

[45] Preuβ, M. (2011). Refugees are Germany's problem too: Italy should not be left alone to deal with the flood of North African refugees. *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.* Retrieved from https://ip-journal.dgap.org/en/ip-journal/topics/refugees-are-germany%E2%80%99s-problem-too

[46] Central Intelligence Agency. (2012, April 12). Libya. *Central Intelligence Agency: United States of America*. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ly.html

[47] Preuβ, M. (2011). Refugees are Germany's problem too: Italy should not be left alone to deal with the flood of North African refugees. *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.* Retrieved from https://ip-journal.dgap.org/en/ip-journal/topics/refugees-are-germany%E2%80%99s-problem-too

Germany had both joined when the European Union economic community was formed in 1957.[48] Tensions *unrelated* to asylum between EU countries appear to be worsening asylum seekers' prospects of finding protection. By tightening border controls against asylum seekers, Germany and France are making political statements in favor of less European unity, deliberately or not.

A political debate that has developed in response to recent upheavals in North Africa is that European countries should help African countries help themselves rather than accept new immigrants from the region. In February 2011, Thomas de Maizière, who was the German Federal Minister of the Interior and is now the Federal Minister of Defense, in response to concerns that refugee numbers from Libya were about to surge, stated that "people stay in countries with stable democracies" and that rumors of a refugee crisis might become a self-fulfilling prophecy.[49] He opined that European countries should help African countries so that people will not need or want to leave those countries, though he did not specify what exactly that help would look like.[50]

There have also been criticisms about European governments sending weapons to countries in crisis. In February 2011, Monika Lüke, former general secretary of Germany's Amnesty International, said that not only did Germany have an "obstructionist attitude regarding a common refugee policy in the EU," it also needed to stop sending arms to regions in crisis, particularly Libya. Lüke reported that in 2009 the country had sent €53.1 million (over $70 million) worth of weapons to the Libyan government.[51] If this allegation is true, sending financial or resource aid to a government that frequently persecutes its citizens appears to either

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[48] EUROPA. (n.d.). 1957. *European Union*. Retrieved from http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/1945-1959/1957/index_en.htm

[49] Spiegel Online International. (2011, February 24). Libyan crisis: Italy warns of a new wave of immigrants to Europe. *Spiegel Online*. Retrieved from http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,747459,00.html

[50] Local, The. (2011, February 24). Amnesty: Germany must take Libyan refugees. *The Local: Germany's News in English*. Retrieved from http://www.thelocal.de/national/20110224-33313.html

[51] Local, The. (2011, February 24). Amnesty: Germany must take Libyan refugees. *The Local: Germany's News in English*. Retrieved from http://www.thelocal.de/national/20110224-33313.html

show support for or ignorance of that persecution.

An older debate over the issue of "carrying capacity" refers to the notion that Germany has reached a maximum capacity of immigrants and thus cannot economically allow for any more of them, asylum seekers or otherwise. In 2001, Otto Schily, Germany's Federal Minister of the Interior from 1998 to 2005 and member of the Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD), stated that Germany had reached "carrying capacity" for immigration. He reported that 260,000 immigrants, including 100,000 asylum applicants, were arriving in Germany yearly.[52] (In 2001, over 118,000 people applied for German asylum.[53]) Schily desired for a push for a green-card program that would allow for technically-trained specialists to live and work in Germany for up to five years. The program would stipulate that these workers would not be allowed to bring their families with them and would not provide them any residence status past five years of work. This plan was part of Schily's approach to an immigration system he believed could no longer handle large numbers of incoming foreigners.[54] Germany's Chancellor from 1998 to 2005 and fellow member of the SPD, Gerhard Schröder, voiced support for Schily's stance, stating that "the threshold of Germany's capacity to accept more immigrants has already been passed. Future quotas for foreigners must be set at zero." Further, the Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP) desired a migration quota and "not more migration, but more control over migration." However, Marieluise Beck, who was Germany's Commissioner for Foreigners and Integration, said that Germany "cannot afford

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[52] Migration News. (2000, April). Germany: Green cards? *Migration News, 7* (4). Retrieved from http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=2068_0_4_0

[53] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. (2011, December). Aktuelle Zahlen zu Asyl. *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*. Retrieved from http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/statistik-anlage-teil-4-aktuelle-zahlen-zu-asyl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

[54] Migration News. (2000, April). Germany: Green cards? *Migration News, 7* (4). Retrieved from http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=2068_0_4_0

to turn away immigrants for the foreseeable future."[55] What is clear is that within the past two decades, Germany has been experiencing internal disagreement over whether more immigrants should be welcomed into the country despite the increasing strain immigration brings to the country, a strain that some believe is at a maximum level.

Though these statements on immigration were dealing with immigration as a whole, the recent European financial crisis may further strain the refugee system by encouraging member countries to increase restrictions on asylum protection. As early as the 1990s, asylum seekers have been accused of being mere economic migrants and fueling German economic recession.[56] In response to these sentiments, among other reasons, politicians might attempt to tighten asylum seeker restrictions. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace reports that "Europe's economic crisis pushes refugees and migrants out" and agrees with a UNHCR position that the crisis is allowing populist political parties to discriminate against refugees as well as other immigrants by playing on people's xenophobia. Carnegie also describes Europe as "an ever more forbidding fortress."[57] A Reuters report declares that "rising political populism…driven by public anger over the impact of the financial crisis…heralds a new clampdown on immigrants and asylum seekers as Europe's ageing societies seek to protect their jobs, welfare benefits and living standards amid public spending cuts."[58] During financial crises, countries will, of course, have less money to allocate, and many citizens will demand tightened federal budgets, but unfortunately these situations do not fare well for people trying to escape persecution.

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[55] Migration News. (1998, December). Germany: Citizenship and asylum. *Migration News, 5* (12). Retrieved from http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=3461_0_4_0

[56] Panayi, P. (1994, November). Racial violence in the new Germany 1990-93. *Contemporary European History, 3* (3), 265-287.

[57] Dempsey, J. (2012, April 19). Europe's economic crisis pushes refugees and migrants out. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Retrieved from http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/?fa=47883

[58] Taylor, P. (2011, April 18). Analysis – Crisis driven populism threatens euro zone rescues. *Reuters*. Retrieved from http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/18/uk-eu-populism-idUKTRE73H28120110418

One might wonder why Germany is so adamant about tightening border controls when its asylum system allows for the recognition of very few applicants already (mostly due to the safe third country rule). Certainly, if borders were tightened, fewer applicants would be able to reach Germany in the first place, and many people would likely be discouraged from even entering the country. This would probably save Germany the costs of returning these asylum seekers to their "safe third country," but it does not seem a big enough issue to warrant a shrunken Schengen zone. In addition, why would Germany occasionally accept asylum seekers if they are not technically eligible for German asylum? It is not unreasonable to propose that European politicians are using their official stances on tightened border controls as political efforts to appear as if they are doing something to discourage influxes of immigrants in attempts to avoid potential destabilization of European economies that may occur if a large number of immigrants are allowed to enter the EU. However, at the same time, the occasional acceptances of refugees are probably public relations efforts to appear compassionate toward foreigners when this perceived benevolence suits the politicians' desires at the moment. The Arab Spring conflicts have had widespread news coverage; therefore, Germany's occasional acceptance of them is probably an effort to appear humanitarian. However, at the same time, to assure German citizens that immigrants will not be allowed to flood the country, some German politicians advocate tightened border controls.

MEDIA ANALYSIS

The German media portrayals of asylum seekers and refugees range from a spectrum of being very sympathetic toward them to extreme xenophobia. The common themes in asylum portrayal are general concerns about the effectiveness of the system, positive public relations stories, personal stories of deportation and people awaiting deportation, stories of suicide among asylum seekers, and more biased accounts of pro-xenophobia or pro-asylum. Media stories generally portray European asylum less positively and more critically than Europe officially presents its asylum system, indicating that the system is not as cohesive as one might believe. In general, the media appear to be sympathetic toward asylum seekers themselves. Though this is largely unsurprising, one must nevertheless study the media portrayals to better understand what the general public is being told about asylum and how this might affect how they view the system, but most importantly to observe where problems arise in the system.

The first common theme in German media portrayals of refugees is general concern about the effectiveness of the European asylum system as related to perceived lack of cohesiveness between EU nations. For example, one of Germany's top news sources, Spiegel Online, reported a story in May 2011 titled "Is This Your Democracy?: Refugee Influx Exposes Limitations of European Solidarity." It should be noted that this article uses the term "refugee" mostly to mean "asylum seeker," though by definition refugees are people who have already been granted asylum. The article describes Europe as "a fortress of xenophobia" and says that an "influx" of Tunisian refugees "has exposed deep rifts in the European Union." Despite this article's portrayal of a refugee "influx" into Europe, it later appears to contradict itself; it reports that Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, disagrees with the notion that there is a "mass exodus" or "tsunami" of refugees. It also reports that Dutch politician and

advocate of stricter border controls Geert Wilders stated that "the influx of refugees is very, very limited." The article continues to argue that though there has not been a mass exodus to Europe, there have been large influxes of African asylum seekers into other African countries, and it also portrays the Tunisian asylum seekers as simply economically motivated.[59] The asylum seeker situation has certainly exposed tensions between European nations; however by insinuating in the article's headline that there has been a refugee influx to Europe but later contradicting that sentiment seems purposefully deceptive. Further, by classifying all of the Tunisian asylum seekers as "economic refugees," whether they really are simply economically motivated or not, the article portrays these asylum seekers in a negative light.

Positive public relations stories related to asylum procedure are less common but nevertheless present. Generally, media articles are more critical of the situation. However, one December 2011 article from leftist news source Die Tageszeitung, titled "Germany Incorporates Refugees," appears to be positive public relations with little to no criticism. First, it states that in the next three years, Germany will accept 900 asylum seekers from areas of crisis, especially from Libya and Syria, as reported by Hans-Peter Friedrich, German Minister of the Interior. Friedrich stated that it is important to give these asylum seekers "a perspective of our country." Despite this, at the end of the article, it is reported that since 2007, Germany has been cancelling refugees' rights of residence after eight years of residence and that thousands of refugees would likely lose their refugee status by the end of 2011.[60] Again, here is an article whose title portrays one thing but whose inner content appears at variance with that headline. First, Friedrich is the

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[59] Ehlers, F., von Rohr, M. & Schult, C. (2011, April 18). 'Is this your democracy': Refugee influx exposes limitations of European solidarity. *Spiegel Online*. Retrieved from http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,757666,00.html

[60] Tageszeitung, Die. (2011, December 9). Innenministerkonferenz zu Asyl: Deutschland nimmt Flüchtlinge auf. *Die Tageszeitung*. Retrieved from http://www.taz.de/!83443/

same person who said that Germany would tighten its borders in times of crisis[61] and that "Italy must settle its problems on its own,"[62] and he has since asked for temporary shrinkage of the Schengen area in times of crisis.[63] Furthermore, Germany granted less than 700 people asylum in 2011, so it is unlikely that the country will incorporate many more in the next few years, especially when factoring in that around 50,000 people apply for German asylum each year.[64] The article appears to simply be good public relations for Germany in an effort to appear humanitarian, but its line of argument seems deceptive at best. Only at the end is it mentioned that Germany would likely take away asylum protection from thousands of refugees by the end of last year. Thousands who may lose refugee status is certainly more than hundreds who may gain this status, but the headline as well as the majority of the article paint a different picture.

Though the European Union paints a promising picture of how asylum seekers and refugees are treated, particularly when it comes to political refugees, reports on asylum seekers and their forced deportations present pictures that are not nearly as positive. These deportations are particularly alarming when they relate to children. Sometimes children who are born in Germany but to asylum seeker parents face deportation, as is the case in an article reported by news agency Der Spiegel. An article titled "Baby Karam is supposed to leave Germany" reports on a family of a Serbian mother and Iraqi father who have lived in Germany for over ten years as tolerated, "temporary" residents. In March 2012, the government issued them a statement saying

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[61] Weingärtner, D. (2011, May). No love lost for refugees: The EU member states quarrel over North African migrants. *The German Times*. Retrieved from http://www.german-times.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=41532&Itemid=25

[62] Preuβ, M. (2011). Refugees are Germany's problem too: Italy should not be left alone to deal with the flood of North African refugees. *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.* Retrieved from https://ip-journal.dgap.org/en/ip-journal/topics/refugees-are-germany%E2%80%99s-problem-too

[63] Spiegel Online International. (2012, April 20). Germany and France seek reintroduction of controls. *Spiegel Online*. Retrieved from http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,828676,00.html

[64] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. (2011, December). Aktuelle Zahlen zu Asyl. *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*. Retrieved from http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/statistik-anlage-teil-4-aktuelle-zahlen-zu-asyl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

that their eight-month-old son, who was born in Germany, must prove that he is facing political persecution in order to remain in country, as required by Article 60 of the Residence Act. Otherwise, Germany will deport him to Serbia, and at least one of his parents must accompany him. The article plays on the heartstrings of the readers by describing Karam, with his "dark eyes, blond hair, and wide laugh," a technique which is not uncommon in media when describing children. There is also a picture of Karam, one of his brothers, and his mom, which helps the reader feel more connected to the story.[65] Though the article gets the reader's attention with a shocking headline, a nice family picture, and a sweet characterization of Karam, it fails to address some of the main issues regarding asylum. First, though it mentions that Karam's parents have two other, older children, it does not speculate as to why the government did not send deportation notices to these children as well. This would lead to a critique of Germany's immigration situation. Why has Germany allowed the parents to stay for over ten years but not given them official asylum? Why suddenly has the government targeted their third child for deportation when they already had two other children who the German government did not target? Why would Germany deport a child whose parents have been living in Germany for ten years as legally "temporary" asylum seekers? How could baby Karam possibly prove political persecution when he has lived in Germany his entire life (of eight months)? Though the article does well at bringing a sympathetic and personal face to the plight of asylum seekers in Germany, it does not broach the difficult topics regarding an asylum system that appears at best ineffective, at least based on this one story of baby Karam.

[65] Neumann, C. (2012, March 20). Abschiebepraxis bei Säuglingen: Baby Karam soll raus aus Deutschland. *Spiegel Online*. Retrieved from http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/0,1518,822360,00.html

An asylum topic that unfortunately appears commonly in the German media is that of suicide among asylum seekers. These stories of suicide present a human face to the asylum debate, but unfortunately a horrible event must occur for this to happen. One such event occurred in Bavaria, in southern Germany, and the man's name was Muhammad Rahsepar. He had been a policeman in Iran but had to flee along with his sister, and they both traveled to Germany to apply for asylum. However, the two were separated because asylum seekers are only allowed to live together if they are married or if it is a parent-child situation, according to German news outlet Main Post.[66] Another article, from German news source InFranken, addresses Muhammad's death more thoroughly. For seven months in Bayern, Muhammad lived in a communal area that had previously been a military barracks. After he committed suicide, demonstrations against the asylum system were held. However, a press speaker for the town announced that there were no indications of suicidal tendencies in Muhammad despite the claims of a doctor who said Muhammad had expressed suicidal thoughts at least one month prior. The article reports that one demonstrator stated that the communal housing is making people sick, and another demonstrator opined that asylum seekers are being treated like animals.[67] Both of these articles bring a human, personal picture to the asylum topic and also raise other issues regarding asylum. The Main Post article describes how German asylum splits up families, and the InFranken article addresses concerns about asylum seeker housing as well as potential suicide prevention. Both describe the situation as "tragic" and generally present a sympathetic view toward Muhammad. There have been several other stories of suicide that also shine a sympathetic light on asylum seekers in Germany and elsewhere in Europe.

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[66] Main Post. (2012, February 5). Suizid im Asyl: Attest reichte nicht für Auszug. *Main Post*. Retrieved from http://www.mainpost.de/regional/franken/Suizid-im-Asyl-Attest-reichte-nicht-fuer-Auszug;art1727,6599808

[67] Köpplinger, T. (2012, January 30). Das tragische Ende einer Flucht. *InFranken*. Retrieved from http://www.infranken.de/nachrichten/lokales/kitzingen/Das-tragische-Ende-einer-Flucht;art218,246390

Soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, xenophobia and racist violence were on the rise in Germany, including attacks on asylum seeker homes. Most of the violence occurred between August and October 1991, but one of the most significant events occurred in August 1992. At the riot of Rostock-Lichtenhagen, extreme-right groups set fire to asylum seeker housing in northwest Germany, sparking a wave of more racist violence, as well as the publication of racist literature and fliers.[68] Since then, xenophobic attacks and demonstrations against asylum seekers have not subsided and have become increasingly based on religious intolerance. It is necessary to note that freedom of religion is officially guaranteed by Article 4 of Germany's constitution, which states that "freedom of faith and of conscience, and freedom to profess a religious or philosophical creed, shall be inviolable" and "the undisturbed practice of religion shall be guaranteed."[69]

Not all German media are pro-asylum, and notable examples are those distributed by the group Pro Deutschland, a group which can be described as xenophobic at best. Pro Berlin, a subunit of Pro Deutschland, states that it desires to prevent immigration and stop Islam from spreading in Germany but simultaneously promote democracy and citizens' rights. On its website, members can be seen holding signs condemning Islam.[70] The leftist Die Tageszeitung reports "Racist Flyer in Berlin: 'Pro Deutschland' is Against Asylum Seekers" and shows a photo of the group protesting with anti-Muslim signs outside an asylum seeker housing unit. A petition the group created reportedly stated that "most asylum seekers come from foreign cultures and speak no German" and that the asylum seekers are only looking for "a chance to improve their

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[68] Panayi, P. (1994, November). Racial violence in the new Germany 1990-93. *Contemporary European History, 3* (3), 265-287.
[69] German Bundestag. (2010). *Basic law for the Federal Republic of Germany*. Berlin, Germany: German Bundestag.
[70] Pro Berlin. (n.d.). Wir über uns. *Bürgerbewegung Pro Deutschland*. Retrieved from http://www.pro-berlin.net/?page_id=2

economic situations."[71] While some asylum seekers are simply economic migrants, or at least not migrants who could be classified as refugees according to the United Nation's definition of a refugee, this is not an excuse for xenophobia. Pro Deutschland is clearly anti-Muslim, not just anti-economic migrants, and considering most of Germany's asylum seekers and refugees come from countries which are predominantly Muslim,[72] Pro Deutschland is clearly taking a stand against asylum seekers and simultaneously fueling persecution, which is exactly what many, if not most, asylum seekers are attempting to flee from. Unfortunately, asylum seekers often cannot even escape persecution in "safe" countries, at least not from some citizens themselves. Pro Deutschland is much less "pro Germany" than it is anti-refugees, and one should not interpret its actions as in congruence with anything more than a minority, fringe group. Its actions and stances are, nevertheless, harmful to many people.

One group that attempts to prevent attacks against asylum seekers as well as advocate on behalf of them is the aptly titled, German group Pro Asyl, meaning "pro asylum." In a 2011 press release, the group, which formed in 1986, states that Tunisian "boat people" arriving to Italy must be treated humanely, that Italy must be provided with help, and that democracy must be promoted in Tunisia. However, it states that "a rhetoric of emergency is uncalled for" and accuses the Italian government of collaborating with Ben Ali's regime in order to help seal off Tunisia's borders and build detention centers there.[73] Although Pro Asyl is generally unfavorable of the European asylum system, another press release by the group praises Germany for a 2010 decision in which the German Bundesrat (Federal Council) decided to drop its reservations about

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[71] Wierth, A. (2010, December 21). Rassistische Flyer in Berlin: "Pro Deutschland" gegen Asylbewerber. *Die Tageszeitung*. Retrieved from http://www.taz.de/!63211/

[72] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. (2011, January 18). Politisch Verfolgte genieβen Asyl: Asylrecht hat in Deutschland Verfassungsrang. *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*. Retrieved from http://www.bamf.de/DE/Migration/AsylFluechtlinge/Asylrecht/asylrecht-node.html

[73] Pro Asyl. (2011, February 14). Boat people from Tunisia. *Pro Asyl*. Retrieved from http://www.proasyl.de/en/press/press/news/boat_people_from_tunisia/

the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. For over eight years, regional governments challenged the federal government in an attempt to have asylum seekers ages 16 and 17 be treated as adults and face detention and possibly deportation.[74] However, these challenges to the system failed; the vast majority of asylum seekers under 18 will continue to be allowed to remain in country until they reach adulthood.[75] Although Pro Asyl praises Germany for its new, definite stance, the situation makes one wonder why it took over eight years for the government to finalize its decision. It seems that the decision kept getting pushed back in order for the federal government to appease the regional governments without having to make itself a political target. This is just another example of how the game of politics threatens the rights and protections of asylum seekers.

CONCLUSIONS

Currently, the weakened state of the European Union is allowing for an increase in populist ideas attempting to save a battered economy, but these ideas are also hindering the asylum systems of many nations, including Germany. But even before these recent financial crises, European Union countries had developed regulations which drastically limit and/or discourage asylum seekers, even those people who are persecuted for reasons that would grant them asylum according to the United Nations, from even applying for asylum and from ever obtaining full protection. With the safe third country rule in its constitution, almost none of the asylum seekers to Germany are legally qualified for protection. Those asylum applications that

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[74] Pro Asyl. (2010, May 3). German government decides to withdraw reservations towards the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Pro Asyl*. Retrieved from http://www.proasyl.de/en/press/press/news/german_government_decides_to_withdraw_reservations_towards_the_un_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_ch/

[75] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2011, December). Dialog mit jungen Flüchtlingen in Deutschland/A dialogue with young refugees in Germany: Angekommen/We have arrived. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. Retrieved from http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=4f2155ab9&query=germany

Germany does accept are probably an effort to maintain some semblance of humanitarianism. It is fair to argue that asylum seekers' home countries should be helped in stabilization efforts so that fewer people will be persecuted there and need to ask for asylum protection in other countries. However, European countries have made it clear this is not the only issue at stake; the tensions within the European asylum system appear to reflect larger political tensions between national governments. What should be a system of protecting people from persecution has become a politicized system designed to discourage those people it is supposed to be protecting. Even German media sources have extensively criticized the European asylum system, and asylum seekers and refugees are of course not exempt from persecution even in these "safe" countries. As long as Europe's financial situation remains precarious, asylum seekers face increased restrictions and fewer possibilities to gain protection due to countries cutting back on certain expenditures, especially ones that a growing portion of the public want removed. Most asylum seekers must currently look away from Europe for help in escaping the persecution pursuing them.

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