



Permanent Mission
of the Federal Republic of Germany
to the Office of the United Nations and
to the other International Organizations
Geneva



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Note Verbale

The Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Office of the United Nations and to the other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to submit herewith a communication by the Federal Republic of Germany in reply to the Joint Communication from Special Procedures, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - JAL DEU 3/2021, dated 26 January 2021.

The Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Office of the United Nations and to the other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 25 March 2021



To the
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais Wilson
Geneva

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany welcomes the joint communication sent by the Special Rapporteurs and seizes this opportunity to communicate the following with regard to the questions outlined in the letter:

General remarks

After the liberation of the last strongholds of the terror organization ISIS in March 2019, tens of thousands of women and children arrived at Al-Hol camp. According to reports from international non-governmental organizations and from human rights organizations, the new arrivals were mostly family members affiliated with ISIS fighters. Due to the existing, inefficient structures of Al-Hol camp, which were not designed for the said high number of residents, the so-called IS affiliates were mingled with IDPs and victims of the brutal aggressions of ISIS who had already sought refuge in the camp prior to ISIS' loss of its final territory. According to NGOs working in the camp, the overall security situation was tense due to the ISIS structures still existing among the so-called IS affiliates as well as attempts by IS supporters to infiltrate the camp.

Germany's support for the camps

Given the said situation, one of the priorities of the German Government's civilian engagement continues to be the improvement of the humanitarian situation and living conditions of camp residents, regardless of their citizenship.

The German Government provides humanitarian assistance via international NGO partners as well as UN agencies and the ICRC in Al-Hol and Roj camps. Access to basic health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, is supported through a mobile medical unit in Al-Hol annex and a field hospital in Al-Hol main camp.

Moreover, the German Government is currently funding several projects aimed at improving the living conditions, safety and protection of persons in Al-Hol and Roj camps, with a particular focus on women and children. Activities are implemented both in the main camps and in the annexes. They include improving safe access to services such as water and sanitation, health services, as well as the provision of educational materials, informal education, psychosocial support and vocational training or life skills workshops.

Finally, the German Government is in a regular exchange with humanitarian, human rights and other civilian actors to understand more about the needs of the residents of Al Hol and Roj camps in order to further improve the overall living conditions and thus prevent a resurgence of the heinous propaganda and terror regime of ISIS.

Assistance to German nationals in the camps

As there is no consular representation in Syria, due to the fact that the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Damascus is closed, consular assistance for German nationals in Al-Hol and Roj camps cannot be provided. The German Government is therefore cooperating closely with international NGO partners with the aim of ensuring individual medical and social care for German citizens in the camps.

With regard to the registration process in Al-Hol and the transfers from this camp to Roj, the German Government has neither demanded nor supported the reported registration, data-collection and relocation exercise. While the German Government is aware that the said registration exercise took place in Al-Hol camp on June 10-12, 2020, Germany has not received any information from the local actors of possible transfers of German citizens from Al Hol camp to the newly extended area of Roj camp. No data of German nationals that might have been collected during the said registration process has been shared with the German Government.

In keeping with our general policy on repatriations, the German Government has carried out three operations, repatriating a total of four women and 19 children from the camps in Northeast Syria so far. Furthermore, Germany has provided consular assistance in Turkey to nine women and 13 children who had left the camps in Northeast Syria on their own, and has facilitated their return to Germany.

While the German Government is aiming for further repatriations, the local administration is currently limiting repatriations to orphaned children and individual humanitarian cases. The local administration claims to be seeking prosecution for crimes committed by members of ISIS. To this end, according to the local administration, adults, including female individuals, would have to stand trial first before a possible repatriation. This policy has been openly communicated by the local administration.