

# Resistance to migrants challenges E.U.

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to do everything to keep it alive.”  
The borderless area, known as the Schengen zone, covers 26 countries, 4.3 million square kilometers and about 420 million people and is the most iconic achievement of the European project. The free movement of people has been central to how many Europeans want to see themselves: tolerant, open and diverse.

Mr. Kurz wants to effectively shut down Europe's southern border, ramping up patrols in the Mediterranean and systematically returning migrant boats to the countries — Libya and Egypt, for example — from where they embarked.

But is this the Europe of its founders, or is it something harsher, less optimistic and self-confident?

Mr. Kurz, whose country has just taken over the revolving presidency of the European Union, declined to answer this directly, but he acknowledged that this was “an important moment, a very sensitive time.”

The issue burst into the headlines in the past week when Germany's interior minister, Horst Seehofer, a conservative Bavarian, threatened to resign unless Chancellor Angela Merkel agreed to create something like a hard border between Germany and Austria.

Under European rules, migrants are supposed to remain in the country where they first landed, but once they are there — inside the Schengen zone — they can travel freely to where they really want to go, which is very often Germany, Sweden or Austria.

Ms. Merkel refused at first, saying that would produce a cascade of hard borders in other countries, destroying the Schengen zone. Migration, she said, needed a European solution.

In the end, to preserve her coalition, Ms. Merkel agreed with Mr. Seehofer to speed up asylum procedures and turn back asylum seekers who are already registered in other European countries. As part of that deal, Germany would run camps along the Austrian border to assess their status and arrange their deportation if necessary.

The German deal came into sharper relief on Thursday night after the Social Democrats, Ms. Merkel's other governing partners, signed off on it on the condition that instead of in new camps, migrants would be processed in existing police stations along the border and that they would be held for no longer than 48 hours.

In addition, Germany will pass an immigration law by the end of the year that gives would-be immigrants the chance to apply for work visas.

Still, many details remain to be resolved, not least agreements with other countries to take back migrants who do not qualify for entry to Germany. Mr. Seehofer came to Vienna near the end of the week to begin discussions with the Austrians, while the Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orban, was in Berlin meeting with Ms. Merkel.

Mr. Kurz said he had been a critic from the start of the 2015 decision by Ms. Merkel, to welcome Syrian refugees, prompting more than 1.4 million people to stream on foot through Europe.

He and other conservative and populist leaders — Mr. Orban; the Italian deputy prime minister, Matteo Salvini, and Mr. Seehofer — have recommended a series of measures to control Europe's borders: to set up screening facilities for migrants outside Europe; to return those rescued at sea to the country of embarkation; and to decide, country by



Above, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz of Austria said the only hope for preserving visa-free travel within Europe was to get tough on the external frontiers. Below, Mr. Kurz wants to return migrants, like these off Libya, to the country from which they embarked.



country, who will be allowed to come to Europe — including, he emphasized, legitimate refugees fleeing war and persecution.

Once dismissed as inhumane, all these ideas were endorsed by European leaders a week ago in Brussels, he said, though so far, no country outside Europe has agreed to set up centers for migrants and no country inside Europe has established transit centers where migrants can be held and screened to see if they are legitimate refugees.

But Mr. Kurz's idea of patrolling the

Mediterranean and systematically returning migrants to the countries — now reinforced by the ascension of a populist government in Italy that is turning back ships bearing migrants — raises moral and legal questions.

“They are doing this in the name of Europe,” said Gerald Knaus, director of the European Stability Initiative, a Berlin-based research group. “But that is a very different kind of Europe.”

Returning asylum seekers to countries in chaos or that are judged to be dangerous violates international law.

There are practical issues, too. No border is impermeable. “The people who made it to Germany in 2015 crossed many hard borders to get there,” Mr. Knaus said. “So they pick up West Africans and send them back to Egypt?”

Mr. Kurz acknowledged that problem, but emphasized that the European Union had taken steps that had reduced the numbers of migrants significantly, including the deal Ms. Merkel had cut with Turkey. “It shows that it is possible to reduce numbers dramatically, and now we have to go further this way,” he said.

Officials estimate that 300 to 600 migrants cross the German border a week, with half of them registered elsewhere. Germany gets about 6,000 asylum seekers a month now, half of whom are estimated to have been registered elsewhere.

Indeed, Mr. Seehofer acknowledged on Thursday night that the number of migrants he expected to be processed in police stations along the borders would amount to no more than three to five people a day.

Still, populists like Mr. Kurz, echoing counterparts in neighboring countries, warn that even if the numbers are down now, a new surge could come any time, and so the borders must be reinforced immediately.

There are a lot of difficulties with the global asylum system, said Elizabeth Collett, director of the Migration Policy Institute Europe, a study group. “But the idea that there is something wrong about claiming asylum in Europe — that's quite a shift from a group of countries that created the Geneva convention 60 years ago” that governs refugees, she said.

Mr. Kurz's focus on external borders is too simple when Europeans cannot agree on a common asylum policy, Ms. Collett said. “It's not just about what happens on the border, but what happens after the border,” she said.

Europe's border dilemma was on display in Berlin on Thursday, where Ms. Merkel stood side by side with Mr. Orban at a news conference.

Protecting Europe's borders must not mean keeping out the needy, Ms. Merkel said. “If Europe with its values is to continue to play a role in the world, then Europe cannot simply turn its back on hardship and suffering.”

Mr. Orban, who has long spoken about migration as an existential threat to European civilization, struck a different tone, saying, “The strategic goal of Hungary is to protect Europe.”

Pierre Vimont, a former French ambassador to the United States, said it was often overlooked that the Schengen system allowed the reintroduction of national border controls as a temporary measure.

Such controls have existed for some time between France and Belgium and France and Italy, too. “If this can appease some of the populists for the moment, so be it,” Mr. Vimont said.

“So we can say we're still inside the Schengen system,” he said. “It's not very satisfactory but it's a way of dealing with current pressure.”

But temporary measures tend to last, he conceded.

He noted that the open-border zone, like the euro, was only half-built. European leaders eliminated internal borders without reinforcing external borders — because that was expensive, or touched on the sovereignty of countries like Greece and Italy or simply because they did not foresee the problems of terrorism or a migration crisis like 2015.

But the days of magical thinking are over, Mr. Kurz insisted. No state or group of states can fail to protect its borders, he said.

“The European Union is not only a great idea, but it's also an idea we must keep working on,” he said. “What every generation must do is try to make Europe better than it was in the past.”

Whether that will change it beyond recognition is anyone's guess.

Christopher F. Schuetz contributed reporting from Berlin.

# Japan hangs cult leader for subway attack in '95

Leader of Aum Shinrikyo is executed along with 6 of his followers

BY AUSTIN RAMZY

The leader of a cult in Japan whose followers released deadly gas in the Tokyo subway in 1995, killing 13 people and injuring thousands, was executed Friday.

The cult leader, Shoko Asahara, was one of 13 people sentenced to death in connection with the attack and other killings carried out by the group, Aum Shinrikyo. He was hanged Friday morning along with six followers, Japan's Ministry of Justice said.

Japan, which generally reserves capital punishment for people convicted of multiple homicides, usually executes a handful of people each year. The date of executions is not announced in advance, and the condemned are usually told only a few hours beforehand.

But the executions of Mr. Asahara and his followers had been expected since January, when Japan's Supreme Court rejected an appeal by the last member of Aum Shinrikyo to stand trial.

Members of the cult carried bags of sarin gas onto five crowded trains on three subway lines during the morning rush hour on March 20, 1995. The attack shocked Japan and undercut the country's image as a safe and orderly nation.

The cult struck at a difficult time for Japan, coming during a period of painful economic stagnation and just months after an earthquake in the city of Kobe killed more than 6,000 people.

Mr. Asahara, who founded Aum Shinrikyo in 1987, was captured two months after the attack in one of the cult's buildings. The group mixed Buddhist and Hindu teachings, and it had more than 10,000 followers in Japan and more than 30,000 in Russia at the time of the attack.



The cult leader Shoko Asahara had 40,000 followers at the time of the attack.

Pudgy, with long hair and a beard, Mr. Asahara worked as an acupuncture therapist, Chinese medicine retailer and yoga instructor before he created the group. He was visually impaired and attended a school for the blind, where he was known as a manipulative leader of other students, a role he continued with Aum Shinrikyo.

His multinational religious sect attracted young Japanese elite who had grown disenchanted with the country's material prosperity. The group was militantly opposed to the governments of the United States and Japan, and Mr. Asahara preached that by the year 2000, Japan would be decimated by a series of attacks from America and its allies.

The Tokyo attack targeted the Kasumigaseki station, near the offices of several ministries, raising suspicions that it was a meant to be a coordinated attack on the government.

During his trial Mr. Asahara said little, and he yawned and muttered incoherently when he was found guilty and sentenced to death in 2004. The judge said the attack was planned in order to prevent the police from cracking down on the cult.

Before the 1995 attack, the group had been linked to more than two dozen deaths. The police had been criticized for not moving faster to stop the group, particularly after a smaller gas attack in Nagano Prefecture in 1994 that killed eight people. Mr. Asahara, 63, was also found guilty of planning that attack.

The trials of Mr. Asahara and other cult figures took years, and victims' family members said the executions marked the end of a long process.

“I was expecting this would happen soon,” Shizue Takahashi, who lost her husband in the subway attack, told the Japanese public broadcaster NHK. “And after 23 years, the time has finally come. That's all I feel.”

Minoru Kariya, whose father was killed by the cult, said, “I think the executions were righteously held following the law,” NHK reported.

Mr. Asahara's fourth daughter, who said she was abused by her parents and wished to have no relationship with them, said last year at a news conference that she was at peace with her father's sentence.

“I don't wish for his execution and never said so,” said the daughter, who goes by the name Satoka Matsumoto. “But given the weight of the crimes my father committed, there is no other way to take responsibility except carrying out the death penalty. It's fair and the sentence should be carried out.”

Makiko Inoue and Hisako Ueno contributed reporting from Tokyo.

# ISIS wives and children, unwanted and trapped

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backed by a United States-led military coalition, many of the men were killed or captured. The wives and children who survived ended up in camps like this, unwanted by anyone.

“We are working responsibly, but the international community is trying to flee from its responsibilities,” said Abdul-Karim Omar, an official in the local administration charged with persuading governments to take their citizens back, an effort he acknowledges has not been very successful.

“This is a ball of fire that everyone is trying to get rid of and threw to us,” he said.

The absence of any plan to deal with the detainees is part of the wider disorder in the lands liberated from the jihadists. In Iraq, many of the women who once lived among them face swift trials and death sentences on charges of supporting the Islamic State.

In Syria, they are effectively prisoners in dingy camps in an area under the control of no internationally recognized authority that might be able to press their home countries to take them back.

On a rare visit to the largest of these camps, known as Roj, Kurdish officials allowed us to interview Arab women held there but refused to let us interview or photograph Western women for fear the images would complicate negotiations with their governments about their return home.

But during a walk through the camp, we spoke informally with women from France, Germany, Denmark, Holland and a number of Arab countries. Kurdish officials did not let us ask the Western women their names.

Some said their husbands had forced them to come to Syria. Others said the trip had been a mistake for which their

children were unjustly paying the price. Near a bank of latrines, three women — two French and one German — dragged their toddlers down a rocky lane in plastic crates on wheels.

“Of course we made mistakes, but anyone can make a mistake,” said the German woman, a dark blue head scarf around her pale face.

She was 24, had come to Syria with her German husband and had three children, she said. Like many women in the camp, she acknowledged that she had

“Of course we made mistakes, but anyone can make a mistake,” said a German woman detained at Roj Camp.

come voluntarily, but she said that life under the jihadists had been worse than she expected and that once there it was impossible to flee.

“There was no way to go,” she said. “Either you go to prison, or they would kill you.”

One of the Frenchwomen, a 28-year-old mother of three, called her Syria adventure an enormous mistake.

“Don't we deserve, what do you call it, redemption?” she asked.

Foreign governments, including the United States, provide some aid to the local administration, but it is a pittance compared with what they spent on the military campaign. And the issue of detainees is particularly thorny, given the security risks of holding seasoned jihadists and the women and children who lived with them in a war zone.

The local administration has imprisoned more than 400 foreign fighters, said Mr. Omar, the local official, and the United States is helping finance their detention to prevent prison breaks.



“Who is responsible for us?” asked Sarah Ibrahim, 31, who is held at a detention camp in northeastern Syria, an area under the control of no internationally recognized authority.

But the administration has received little help in dealing with the women and children who are now held in three camps.

It has established ad hoc courts to try Syrians for crimes committed under the Islamic State, but it does not try foreigners.

The women and children in the camps have not been accused of crimes. The roughly 1,400 foreigners at Roj Camp are from about 40 countries, including Turkey, Tunisia, Russia and the United States, said Rasheed Omar, a camp supervisor. The women are generally well behaved, he said, although it is hard to determine what roles they performed under the jihadists and how much of the ideology they still endorse.

“There are some of them who are still following the ideology, and there are some who came because they thought

they were coming to heaven and found out it was hell,” he said.

Ms. Ibrahim, for instance, said she had been horrified by the jihadists' public executions, their dictates about women's dress and their ban on listening to music, even in her own home.

The biggest concern, however, is the children, many of them toddlers, who did not choose to join the jihadists. There are more than 900 children at Roj Camp, many with health problems, who have been out of school for years and lack any kind of official citizenship.

Most of the Europeans want to go home, even if that means standing trial, but few of the Arabs do, fearing that they will be tortured or executed.

Nadim Houry, director of the terrorism and counterterrorism program for Human Rights Watch, said the women