



28.4.16

This is what it looks like when the EU deports children to Turkey

by Michael Bonvalot, Photos: Tanja Boukal

When Angela Merkel [visited Turkey](#) last weekend, deportations from Greece were temporarily suspended. Now Merkel is back in Germany and the deportations from the EU are continuing. On April 26, a boat carrying deported people arrived in the Turkish port of Dikili. There were also three small children on the boat.

It's actually hard to believe that boats are setting sail on this day. A violent storm raged in the morning. All the fishing boats have stayed in the harbor. When the boat arrives, it takes a good 15 minutes for the mooring maneuver. The waves repeatedly whip the ship up and make it impossible to moor.

Video: Michael Bonvalot

Finally, the boat is secured and around 30 police officers line up in a trellis. The deportees are led off the boat one by one. There are also three small children, two are led by police officers, a third is so small that it is probably not yet able to walk on its own. Cameramen film the children from a distance of one or two meters.

A policeman carries the child, an older man, possibly the father, walks alongside. More policemen walk around the small group. It seems as if the man is not allowed to carry the child himself, but later, on the bus, he will hold it in his arms.

A few more people are taken off the boat. The exact number is unclear. The port area is strictly guarded and only selected media representatives are allowed to enter. An employee of the harbor master's office tells me that 17 people were deported on the boat from Greece. The Deutsche Presse-Agentur cites Turkish media and says there [were 12 people](#). It is not possible to find out why the numbers are so different. Representatives of the local authorities are not available for comment.

The people are led into the port building one by one and taken almost immediately from there to a waiting coach. A good 20 police officers, representatives of the authorities and men from the Red Crescent stand in front of the entrance to the bus. Once again, a guard of honour has been erected and the scene looks threatening.

When the bus leaves, we follow it to the next highway. It finally drives towards Çanakkale. In this region, close to Turkey's border with Greece and Bulgaria, is the large Pehlivanköy camp. It is a pure deportation camp, [built with EU money](#).