

Foreign Minister Maas on the repatriation operation from north-east Syria

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07.10.2021 - Press release 

Foreign Minister Maas issued the following statement today (7 October) on the return of 23 children and eight of their mothers from north-east Syria:

I am pleased that we were able to bring a further 23 German children and eight of their mothers back to Germany from Roj camp in north-east Syria last night. The children are in no way responsible for their circumstances. It is right for us to do everything we can to enable them to grow up in a safe and appropriate environment. The mothers will be held accountable for their acts under criminal law. The majority of them were taken into custody after arriving in Germany.

The situation in the region is very difficult, with millions of people dependent on humanitarian assistance. This has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the collapse of the economy. The people of Syria – including our contacts there – face severe challenges every day. We are deeply grateful to everyone on the ground, primarily the Kurdish autonomous administration in north-east Syria, who nevertheless did everything they could to assist us with our intensive preparations over recent months.

This operation was no mean feat, neither for us nor for anyone else involved. I thank our Danish partners, with whom we carried out this joint repatriation, and our US partners, who provided logistical support.

Background information:

Twenty-three German children and eight women were repatriated from Roj camp in north-east Syria on Wednesday night. They had been identified as especially vulnerable following assessments by relevant local bodies in particular. They primarily include

children with medical problems or with a legal guardian living in Germany, as well as these children's siblings and mothers. The operation was carried out jointly with Denmark, which repatriated 14 children and three women.

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