

International

Germany repatriates 8 women and 23 children with ties to IS

Women from Syria deported in biggest transfer since 2019

BERLIN: Germany has repatriated eight women who joined the IS terror group and 23 children from northern Syria in the biggest such transfer since 2019, the foreign ministry said. “The children are not responsible for their situation... the mothers will have to answer for their acts,” Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in a statement issued overnight from Wednesday to Thursday.

“He said many of them were held in custody on arrival in Germany”. Federal prosecutors said three of the women were arrested on arrival at Frankfurt airport and charged with membership in a terror organization and for neglecting the care and upbringing of their children.

One of the accused, Romiena S, had allegedly showed her daughter IS execution videos as she raised her with the radical Islamist teachings of the group. She is also accused of keeping watch on a Yazidi woman enslaved by the IS and requiring her to say Muslim prayers.

The other two arrested were named as Solale M and Verena M. Denmark also brought three women and 14 children to its territory as part of the same operation, carried out with US military

support, Berlin said. Maas said he was “happy” to have brought back to Germany people, especially children, identified “as being in particular need of protection”.

“They are mostly sick children or those with a guardian in Germany, as well as their brothers and sisters and their mothers,” the foreign ministry said. The group was repatriated from the Roj camp in Kurdish-controlled northeastern Syria. Tabloid-style daily Bild reported that foreign ministry and police officials landed in the region early Wednesday on a US military plane, which then brought the group to Kuwait before they boarded a flight to Frankfurt. The women are aged between 30 and 38 and come from several regions around Germany, Der Spiegel weekly reported.

Countries have been wrangling over how to treat captives linked to IS since the group’s fall in March 2019. Most European countries carry out repatriations on a case-by-case basis. Germany’s last joint repatriation alongside Finland in December 2020 brought back five women and 18 children. — AFP



ESBJERG, Denmark: Attorney Mette Grith Stage (left) talks with journalists as she arrives for a court hearing yesterday at the court in Esbjerg, Denmark, where she is representing one of three women that have been repatriated to Denmark from Syria. — AFP

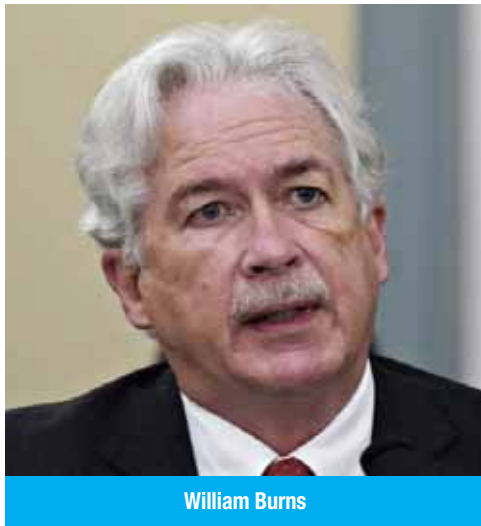
CIA steps up spying contest with China with new unit

WASHINGTON: The US Central Intelligence Agency announced yesterday a new China-focused unit that underscored its view of Beijing as the country’s toughest long-term adversary. CIA Director William Burns said in a statement that the new China Mission Center will address the challenge China poses to all of the US spy agency’s mission areas.

“CMC will further strengthen our collective work on the most important geopolitical threat we face in the 21st century, an increasingly adversarial Chinese government,” Burns said. The announcement parallels the broader shift of the administration of President Joe Biden to confronting China as its leading “strategic competitor.”

In June Biden announced a new task force at the Pentagon to assess and respond to Beijing’s military challenge. Burns’ announcement came after the CIA and FBI have unearthed dozens of cases of China recruiting US citizens to supply it classified or corporate proprietary information, and using Chinese citizens working in the United States as intelligence collectors as well.

It also comes as US intelligence sees their Chinese rivals making use of their strength in the global electronics market and in hacking to penetrate US government and private computer networks. Underscoring the challenge from Beijing as well as other rivals like Pakistan,



William Burns

the CIA recently sent a memo to its arms around the world admitting that it had lost dozens of its own covert informants in other countries, some captured or killed, according to the New York Times and Washington Post. “Throughout our history, CIA has stepped up to meet whatever challenges come our way.... And now facing our toughest geopolitical test in a new era of great power rivalry, CIA will be at the forefront of this effort,” Burns said.

Burns, a veteran diplomat who became CIA director in March, also announced a new position, CIA chief technology officer, and a new Transnational and Technology Mission Center. The center will address global issues critical to US competitiveness, the statement said, such as emerging technologies, economic security, climate change and health challenges. —AFP

French police cause misery for migrants in Calais: HRW

PARIS: French police are inflicting misery on migrants in the northern port of Calais, routinely tearing down their tents and forcing them to wander the streets as part of a deterrence policy, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in a report yesterday. The 75-page report documents methods used by authorities to prevent the emergence of another major migrant settlement in Calais, five years after the demolition of the sprawling “Jungle” camp which housed up to 10,000 people at its peak.

Calais has for years been a rallying point for migrants from the Middle East, Asia and Africa trying to sneak across the English Channel to Britain. Faced with growing public anti-migrant sentiment, President Emmanuel Macron’s government has waged a campaign to prevent new camps emerging.

Police tactics include systematically tearing down migrants’ tents in the woods, on wasteland or under bridges, regularly confiscating their belongings and harassing NGOs trying to provide them with aid, according to New York-based HRW. “The authorities carry out these abusive practices with the primary purposes of forcing people to move elsewhere, without resolving their migration status or lack of housing, or of deterring new arrivals,” it said in the report

entitled “Enforced Misery: The Degrading Treatment of Migrant Children and Adults in Northern France”.

‘Harass and abuse’

NGOs estimate the number of migrants currently living around Calais at between 1,500 and 2,000, including numerous families. Local authorities estimate that only 500 remain in the area. Last week, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin ordered the eviction of a camp housing 400 migrants near a hospital in Calais, which was presented as a danger to the hospital’s patients and staff.

On that occasion the migrants were taken to temporary shelters but often they are left to wander the streets. “When the police arrive, we have five minutes to get out of the tent before they destroy everything,” a Kurdish woman from Iraq told HRW. The interior ministry did not respond to AFP’s request for comment on the report. The government argues that the camps are havens for people smugglers, who command extortionate fees to help migrants cross to Britain, either in a small boat crossing the Channel in the dead of night or stowed away on a truck crossing by ferry or through the Channel Tunnel.

NGOs argue that the tactics do nothing more than make migrants already difficult lives even more miserable. The report quoted the Calais-based Human Rights Observers group as saying that in some cases cleaning crews cut migrants’ tents while people are still inside, in order to force them out. “If the aim is to discourage migrants from gathering in northern France, these policies are a manifest failure and result in serious harm,” Benedicte Jeannerod, France director at Human Rights Watch, said. —AFP