

Angela Merkel says Germany may need to rescue 10,000 people from Afghanistan

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Germany has been involved in the occupation of Afghanistan for many years.?

Berlin, August 17 (RHC)-- Germany must urgently evacuate up to 10,000 people from Afghanistan for whom it has responsibility, Chancellor Angela Merkel told party colleagues, warning that the fallout from the conflict will last for a very long time.

The remarks, made at a closed-door meeting of her Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party on Monday and relayed by meeting participants, reflect growing concern about bloodshed in Afghanistan after the Taliban seized the capital and proclaimed peace. “We are witnessing difficult times,” Merkel said. “Now we must focus on the rescue mission.”

Merkel said those needing evacuation included 2,500 Afghan support staff as well as human rights activists, lawyers and others whom the government sees as being at risk if they remained in the country, up to 10,000 altogether. She also said Berlin should cooperate with countries bordering Afghanistan to support those fleeing now, adding: “This topic will keep us busy for a very long time.”

However, Paul Ziemiak, the general secretary of CDU, said Germany could not fix the situation in Afghanistan through a repeat of the open-door migrant policy it pursued in 2015.

Germany opened its borders six years ago to more than one million migrants, many of them Syrians, fleeing war and poverty – a bold move that won Merkel plaudits abroad but which proved controversial at home and eroded her party’s standing. “For us, it is clear that 2015 must not be repeated,” Ziemiak told broadcaster n-tv. “We won’t be able to solve the Afghanistan question through migration to Germany.”

Merkel, in power since 2005, plans to stand down after Germany’s September 26 federal election. Armin Laschet, the CDU’s chancellor candidate at the election, said Afghanistan is NATO’s biggest fiasco since it was formed.

Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer told the meeting that Germany had deployed special forces and paratroopers to help with the evacuation, adding it was “an extremely dangerous operation” for German troops.

“As long as it remains possible, the German army will get as many people as possible out of Afghanistan and maintain the air bridge,” she said, adding this depended on the willingness of the United States to keep the airport open.

No evacuation flights are leaving Kabul airport at the moment because desperate people trying to flee the country are blocking the tarmac, a spokesperson for the German foreign ministry said at a regular government news conference on Monday.

Forty staff from the German embassy were flown to Doha, the capital of Qatar, overnight, the spokesperson said, adding a small team of fewer than 10 staff would remain at Kabul airport to coordinate evacuations.

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