
ANGELA MERKEL RULES OUT UPPER LIMIT ON REFUGEES

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Chancellor Angela Merkel has "guaranteed" she will oppose any limit on the number of migrants entering Germany. The chancellor's remarks put her at odds with her Bavarian sister-party.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel told voters on Monday she did not believe a cap on refugees entering Germany would be "practical" and "guaranteed" she would reject any such policy, marking a clear wedge in migration policy between her Christian Democrats and its Bavarian sister-party, the CSU.

Addressing a panel of some 150 voters on Monday night's "Wahlarena" (translated as Election Arena) television event, Merkel dismissed calls from Bavaria's Christian Social Union to impose an annual limit of 200,000 migrants entering Germany.

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Differences over migration have soured relations between the two Union parties since Merkel decided to engage in an open-door policy towards the newcomers. A potential ceiling was not outlined in this year's joint-CDU/CSU election manifesto, but was spelled out in the CSU's so-called "Bavaria Plan."

Going into her fourth election, this was Merkel's fourth appearance on "Wahlarena," where election candidates take questions from an audience representing a "cross-section of the German public."

Merkel's election rival, Social Democrat Martin Schulz, will take questions from the audience next week.

Migrant question nearly derails event

While the chancellor received much praise over the course of the evening, one particular question on migration almost derailed the entire the event.

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A voter from Thuringia told Merkel that he could not understand why Syrian nationals were allowed to apply for asylum in Germany because they had refused to fight for President Bashar Assad's military forces. "If our grandparents had done the same thing in 1945, Germany likely wouldn't exist anymore," he said.

The man's question visibly upset parts of the audience but Merkel responded calmly, calling Assad

a dictator intent on murdering his own people and referring to the "humanitarian emergency" that convinced her to open Germany's borders in 2015.

Responding to booing from the audience, Merkel said it was important that the man be allowed to express his opinion and worries. She did not comment on the Second World War comparison.

During the course of the program, Merkel also outlined her position on a number of key domestic issues, including child day care fees, retirement and pensions, and nursing care.

Merkel's political victory after 'open-door policy'

dm/kms (dpa, AFP)

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