



They complained of not being eligible for the little pocket money they are entitled to, to buy the basic items for their needs, until they are interviewed – a process which mostly takes up to three months! They expressed how the isolation is causing trauma and retraumatization of the already hard experiences of their flight. Time and time again we say: sharing of these inadequate spaces without privacy, leads to conflict, violence and sexual assaults.

To show solidarity to the women living in these isolated camps, we invite you to join our summer bus tour. This year we will stay in our home ground in Brandenburg. Starting on July 28th, 12 o'clock at O-Platz, we want to gather our forces and continue the struggles regionally. We will be expressing our anger at the discriminatory laws that force refugees to live in isolation, depression and trauma. We want to have a picnic in front of the camps, invite the women*, get to know them, and exchange ideas. We will also strengthen our local network structures in Brandenburg with overnight stays and visits in solidarity projects. Faced with the growing fascism of European societies, they too are under attack and we must unite, because it is only together that we are strong, united and open. We will continue to fight together against camps and expulsions. No discrimination or hatred can stop us. We will continue to speak, march and sing, and together we will set off for the land of freedom. So hop on the bus and join the fight!

During our 8th of March (International Women's Day) rally and picnic, which took place this year at the front of central reception centre in Eisenhüttenstadt, many of the refugees we aimed to support there came out and expressed their dissatisfaction of the living conditions inside their Heim. This was helpful to us because since the corona pandemic, visits to many Lagers have been forbidden or highly restricted. The women explained how they are forced to share accommodation in narrow spaces and facilities.

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Demonstrators in front of the Chancellery in Berlin

From EU Down To The Local Districts – Openly Racist Policies On All Levels

Again, the asylum discriminative laws are tightening and becoming stricter on local, national and EU levels. The politicians as usual are igniting the panic button to warn the public and the local authorities of the imagined numbers expected to arrive in the country.

Statistically, these are fairy tales, for example, in Brandenburg, the authorities expected in the first half of the year 2023, 25,000 refugees. So far only 5,000 have arrived.

Brandenburg's minister and the district councillors want to isolate refugees with so-called "bad prospect" of staying by forcing them to live in camps for up to 24 months. From our visits to the first reception camp in Brandenburg, we found out that refugees are accommodated in crowded rooms with limited space. In the beginning of this year it was taking months before refugees got first interviewed. Months during which they did not get pocket money to buy necessary basic items. This is all meant to isolate and break the spirits of the asylum seekers, so that they can be deported or exploited more easily. There is also a plan to build a camp at the BER airport similar to those the EU imagines to build at the EU Borders: a fast asylum procedure camp deporting people before they even legally enter European soil.

These policies are a level-up from former Minister of the Interior Seehofer's policies, which meant to push German society to view asylum seekers as

overwhelming social infrastructures. It is our economic system that is overburdening and destroying all social systems, not the refugees. Concealing this fact, the inhumane decisions of the ministers reforming the European asylum system described the joint European refugee and migration policy agreed on by the European Council in June 2023 as a "historic result", a celebration of EU citizens' right to free movement and as proof of "solidarity" between EU member states. In contrast, refugees are left to rot and drown not only in the Mediterranean but also in closed camps at the European borders.

Against those authoritarian developments we need a civil society that welcomes refugees and supports their arrival and participation. All of us need to look into flight reasons and hold the government accountable for their internal and external policies of protecting only capital and borders. The racist migration policies increase racism and authoritarian formations in the society. Recently, we can see the rise of extreme right parties in the whole of Europe. Against that, we need solidarity and an open civil society which stands firm – especially in the coming election in 2024 in the EU, Brandenburg and other east-German federal states.

HEALING SOUNDS: Music Therapy For Refugee Women

Refugee women often have traumatic experiences in their countries of origin and on the run. Violence, exploitation and life-threatening journeys shape their stories. Arriving in Germany, they find themselves in a foreign society and a cold asylum system. The circumstances of deprivation, the struggle to stay and isolation make refugee women particularly vulnerable to psycho-somatic disorders.

To change this situation, we have launched the project “Our music for our souls”. The project, funded by the Stiftung Deutsches Hilfswerk, aims to give us and fellow refugee women tools to process their traumatic experiences and give them new courage for the future.

Starting in September 2023, we will bring women together online and offline to alleviate their trauma in music therapy empowerment workshops with music and dances from their home countries. Participating in these workshops will not only provide the women with an opportunity for therapy, but also a space where they can feel safe and build confidence. Together with music therapists and health peers who are specially trained for the project,

the women can process their traumatic experiences and improve their mental health.

The role of the health peers is particularly important. Many refugee women have limited knowledge about mental health and are not familiar with the concept of trauma and therapy. The health peers are refugee women themselves that serve as educators and support the women in developing an understanding of their mental health. They give the women tools to improve their mental health and have a positive outlook on the future.

We start visiting refugee women in shelters in autumn to inform them about our project. We invite interested women to a get-to-know meeting in Potsdam, where they will be introduced to the content and process of the project in more detail. At the same time, we will continue our training on trauma and music therapy and have a kick-off meeting with the participating workshop leaders and facilitators.

“Our music for our souls” is intended to support refugee women to overcome their trauma and regain their inner strength. We want to make a crucial contribution to improving the situation of refugee women. Only if we take their traumatic experiences seriously and offer targeted therapeutic approaches can we help them to rebuild their lives after the loss and the hardships of fleeing.

▼ *The choir sings at the opening ceremony of the conference “Breaking Borders to Build Bridges,” August 2022*



We Still Demand: **JUSTICE for RITA!**

Rita's murder after her disappearance from the Heim of Hohenleipisch in Brandenburg in April 2019 continues to preoccupy us. We recently had a meeting with representatives of the Brandenburg Parliament from the Green Party (Bündniss 90/Die Grünen) and the Left Party (Die Linke) to discuss Rita's murder, which after 4 years, is still failing to properly being followed-up by the authorities.

The Cottbus prosecutor has been inactive for the past 4 years. We simply note that this has become an issue of discrimination.

On 8 March 2023, the Green Party invited us to a visit to Rita's Heim in Hohenleipisch. We went along and talked about Rita's murder and the various difficulties and problems of isolation and fear that the refugees of this Heim have to endure.

On 07.04.2019, Rita was reported missing from her residential Lager in Hohenleipisch. Her body was found almost three months later, 200 metres from the Lager in the forest. She left two small children behind. Her family members are still speechless. And we, the women of Women in Exile, are still concerned about Rita's murder. We want to know the truth. We want to know what happened. We're afraid to live in the Lagers as we're not safe in the Lagers. We still have no follow-up to the investigations on Rita's death. We have asked for the closing of the Heim of Hohenleipisch, which is in a forest. And yet refugees at this Heim continue to live in fear and trauma. We continue to call for justice to be done in Rita's death.



On International Women's Day 2021, we marched through Cottbus demanding justice for Rita



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