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Berlin-Brandenburg, Germany

In society at large, there are different attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people. Within Women in Exile, this may be explained by our different religious and cultural backgrounds. **That is why, this summer, we want to address discrimination against these communities.**

Accommodation for LGBTQ+ people is particularly difficult in the Lagers (asylum camp accommodation), where they are randomly assigned to rooms with other people with no regard for their privacy. A trans woman recently told us about having to share a room with gay men and being confronted with hostility by women in toilets and bathrooms. She has to explain herself all the time.

In collaboration with *House of Kal* (a collective of anti-colonial and LGBTQ+ artists) and anti-racist groups working for the abolition of Lagers, we are inviting BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) groups active in the LGBTQ+ sphere to organise with us an **Intersectional Empowerment Arts and Cultural Festival from 23 to 24 August 2024 at Oranienplatz in Kreuzberg, Berlin**. The festival will include exhibitions, murals, screen printing, banner painting, workshops, stage activities (films, dance, panel discussions) and much more. We will use materials from our archive, which document various creative actions to abolish Lagers and to break borders—on land and on water.

Continuing with our Breaking Borders theme, we want to bring our allegiance to the abolition of Lagers



and discrimination against refugee women* and any refugee identifying as queer, into an open space through art and culture. Our group is open to the diversity of different gender and sexual identities. As part of our commitment, our group also regularly holds workshops to sensitise refugee women to the different LGBTQ+ communities. People who identify as queer are active in the group, but there is still room for improvement. While on the surface there seems to be a lack of solidarity and togetherness, as the stress of the asylum situation and the right of residence (the threat to the chances of staying in Germany) are the main topics of discussion, deep down, it is always clear that we are a diverse group, regardless of our origin, sexual orientation, religion or age.

(continued on next page)

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:



**Feminist
Demonstration
On 8.3. In Potsdam**
Page 2



**Justice For Rita
Now!**
Page 3



**My Dangerous
Journey To
Germany**
Page 4

The aim of the festival is to encourage and empower participants to be active, visible and vocal, to unite activists through different arts and actions, supported

by different groups and networks, and to send a powerful image and message to create a coexistence within groups that should go beyond Women in Exile.

We will be happy for any support you can give us!

Feminist Demonstration On 8th March In Potsdam Against The Shift To The Right In Migration Policy

International Women's Day is known to most of us women* to be a day when we celebrate just how far we've come but also reflect on what we still have yet to do. This propels us to continue changing the narrative of what we see in society. With this in mind, Women in Exile & Friends demonstrated with many other feminist groups like Seebrücke Potsdam, Opferperspektive, BumF, PAWLO, Freiland, No Border Nation, Widerklang Chor, etc. in Potsdam against the shift to the right in migration policy. We started our demonstration at the Ministry of the Interior, Henning-von-Tresckow-str. and walked to the state parliament, Alter Markt 1.

The current government has succeeded in pushing for harsh policies to build a fortress Europe, which will see refugees imprisoned at the borders because it's of the opinion that their lives and lifestyles are being threatened by us, refugees. These inaccurate portrayals empower us to condemn the racism and discriminatory laws being passed to deport us en masse. However, there is a competition in political parties of who can enforce deportations more smoothly and quickly and who minimizes the already violated rights of refugees.

We believe both the former and current governments should be held accountable for their contribution of the state of the current political climate. The extreme right-wing is just fueling what the ruling parties have been proposing as reforms to migration politics. Instead of mass deportation for those who are considered as having no right to asylum, the AfD goes a step further on deporting all those who are 'not German enough'. In other words, there should be a complete abolition of the right of asylum and an attack on all of us.

Accordingly, the reasons for flight and how the developed countries are contributing to the effects which force people to leave their home countries

are not addressed. We cannot ignore the fact that capitalism driven by greed from the Global North by exploiting the Global South is causing poverty, wars, climate injustices and flight.

The EU decision on the new CEAS guidelines locks refugees in detention camps at Europe's external borders. The refugees as usual are the scapegoats—the easiest target to blame for all the problems in society because we have neither the right to vote nor have a party that fights for us.

“The concrete situation of the refugees living here is becoming increasingly precarious, especially that of the women, queers and children who have fled. We are not only suffering from patriarchy in the camp or on the street. The outdated and racist voucher system that we fought so hard against is being reintroduced. Now it is euphemistically called a payment card. Instead of strengthening social infrastructure such as schools, kindergartens, mobility and reproductive justice—which benefits everyone—the Brandenburg state government is planning to invest 1.9 (!) million euros in our exclusion and the fomenting of racism. Visa alone earns millions from this! This clearly shows that feminist struggles and anti-racist struggles belong together.” says Elizabeth Ngari, activist and co-founder of Women in Exile.



Marching through the streets of Potsdam on International Women's Day on 8th March, 2024

JUSTICE FOR RITA NOW!

On April 7th, Women in Exile and friends took the streets in Potsdam together with PAWLO, Seebrücke Potsdam, Opferperspektive and Flüchtlingsrat Brandenburg. We remembered Rita O., who was murdered in the Lager Hohenleipisch, demanded justice and denounced racist discrimination. We commemorate Rita annually on April 7th. Rita's children lost their mother that day. We have been living since 2019 in sadness and fear. The perpetrator is still at large. We will be there annually on April 7th to protest until there is justice: We will not give up until the perpetrator is held accountable. We do not accept that refugee women and children have to live in camps in the forest—in uncertainty, isolation and abandonment.

It is Rita's story that has traumatized us for five years.

Rita was reported missing on April 7, 2019. Her remains were found months later—only 200 meters away from the Lager Hohenleipisch—in the forest. Rita left behind two small children. Her family waited several more months until they finally could bury Rita's remains on December 14, 2019.

Why did Rita and her children have to live in a camp for seven years without any perspective? Rita was a 32-year-old woman seeking refuge and protection. Even after her death, she was discriminated as an asylum seeker. Although there was evidence of a crime, it took the police months before they searched more intensively.

What would the police have done in the case of a white woman? If Rita had the chance to integrate into society, connected to a community that would allow her to live a dignified life, her life would have been on a different level.

It's important to us to find out what happened and let the world know that Rita's life counts! Rita was a black woman who was very vulnerable in a former military camp in the forest—and was ultimately murdered. In this society she had no chance to raise her children with



WiE gathered in Potsdam on 7th April, 2024 to demand justice for Rita

dignity or to explore their talents. All that mattered to the authorities was finding ways to deport them.

We will continue to take the streets to demand answers: Why did it take the police so long to find Rita's remains? Who murdered her? How safe are camps for women and children when reported cases of violence have no consequences?

Why didn't the authorities close the Hohenleipisch camp although the residents expressed this demand in an open letter?

More than five years have passed. We don't receive any information. The authorities are waiting to investigate the matter and are even questioning the fact that it was a homicide. Bantleon, the responsible public prosecutor in Cottbus, made racist comments in a press interview, saying an "african cremation ritual" could be an option. We call on the higher-level public prosecutor's office to take charge of the case and appeal to the Prime Minister of Brandenburg for clarification.

We need answers to pressing questions. Rita had repeatedly reported to the camp management "human care" about sexual harassment in the camp. Nothing happened.

We loudly denounce the conditions in the camps and demand:

**WOMEN AND CHILDREN
OUT OF THE CAMPS!
ABOLISH ALL CAMPS—
IMMEDIATELY!**

My Dangerous Journey To Germany



This is part of the story of 24-year-old S., who was born in Kabul with her sister and grew up in war-torn Afghanistan.

We were always told, directly or indirectly, that being a girl was a big sin. In Afghanistan, every girl who is born is treated as if she has committed a crime. She is often told that people wish she were a boy. Is it a human choice to be a girl or a boy?

When I lost my father, I really understood what it meant: I wish you were a boy, not a girl. Everyone became hostile, like wild animals waiting for a moment to attack us. My sister got married. She moved to another country. Life in Afghanistan became more and more difficult for my mother and me. It was hard for us to breathe, we were two living bodies but we did not feel alive.

We have always heard about Germany from friends and relatives, who said that they defend women's rights. They are compassionate and kind people. My mother and I decided to emigrate to Germany, but we did not know how to do it, we had no one to help us.

We asked a friend of my mother's for help. We told her all our problems and the fear we were experiencing. I remember my mother's friend saying to us, "Are you aware of the problems and dangers along the way? Have you talked to people who have gone through the problems of immigration?"

My mother replied to her friend: "We may lose our lives once on the migration route, but here we die

every moment of fear and stress. We feel a thousand times a day that we might not be alive tomorrow. Maybe the worst thing in life will happen to us tomorrow." Hearing my mother's words, her friend introduced us to a person who transports people from Afghanistan to Germany.

The person asked us for 36,000 US dollars for our transfer from Afghanistan to Germany. We had no choice. We had to mortgage our house and sell our jewellery to raise the money. A few days later, after handing over the money to the person who was supposed to help us, we left Afghanistan for Germany with fear and trembling.

The first day we travelled by car for many hours, maybe more than 15 hours, then we got off and walked a very long way. We reached a house and stayed there for some time. After a while we moved on by car and walked some paths. The water and food we had with us was gone. We were so thirsty, tired and hungry that we often had to drink rainwater and dirty water. The smugglers' food was rotten, we had to eat this rotten food, we had no choice, we were starving. We had two sets of clothes with us. There was no place to wash the clothes, we changed the same dirty clothes.

Our journey from Afghanistan to Germany was never easy. We crossed the frontiers of several countries. Whenever we were near a border, they told us to run very fast, and part of it was a road. The smugglers didn't talk to us, they pointed at us. If we couldn't walk, they beat us.

After a couple of months, we finally made it to Berlin in Germany. After this long journey we were in a very bad physical and mental condition, hungry, thirsty and tired. Our first request at the immigration office was for food and water.



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