

Urgent need for action!

About the situation at the refugee camp at Teichweg 6 in Bernburg.

Report of the second visit to Bernburg, 5th March 2020
by Antirassistisches Netzwerk Sachsen-Anhalt

The situation is intolerable, especially for (single) women and their children/babies! Call to concern yourself with the camp and its situation! Don't leave the people alone! Close the camp! Close all camps!

Aggressive security guards at the government offices, use of violence against visitors and supporters. Intolerable situation at the camp at Teichweg 6, especially for vulnerable persons, including people with chronic diseases and (small) children. That fact that refugees receive vouchers instead of money makes the situation especially difficult in the face of the corona crisis!

On Thursday, 5th of March 2020, we went to Bernburg for the second time this year, and visited friends, some of them living at the camp at Teichweg 6.

Just when we arrived, a friend, who had recently been allowed to move out of the camp into an apartment, asked us to contact a woman she knows, who lives in the big camp at the edge of the city. Before, we accompanied another friend to Ausländerbehörde - for support and as witnesses, to document - amongst other things - the actions of the administration that deprives people of their rights. This short insight into the daily business of the public office makes it possible to guess what happens if no 'useful witnesses' (following the legal estimation) are present, and corresponds to what the people affected report.

Our friends have already met earlier, waiting and drinking coffee, talking about the looks of disapproval by people driving by in cars, depressing normality in this town.

At 10 AM, we, two supporters, accompany our friend to his appointment at Ausländerbehörde.

He has to renew his Duldung and pick up his vouchers. At entering Ausländerbehörde, there are five security guards telling us to put our bags into the locker. Then, like at the airport, we have to put our valuable objects (phone etc.) in a box and they are being checked. Then, we have to pass a security check and a security guard palpates us. Only then, we can enter the waiting room, passing the security guards, and wait until our friend is called in.

A security guard walks up and down the waiting room, looking very aggressive, serious and dominant. As soon as people waiting with us look at their phones, he tells them not to, pointing at the sign saying phones have to be turned off. The security guard has a strong frightening presence in the waiting room.

Our friend's waiting number is displayed and we go upstairs together in order to renew his Duldung. We knock at the door and the very young official asks if we are social workers. We say that we are friends.

He asks us to sit again.

Again we are called in and enter the office. While we are inside the office to get the Duldung renewed, a security guard enters without knocking and places himself at our side. Without naming a reason for his privacy-violating presence. After we finish, we leave the office and want to sit again in the corridor to translate everything for our friend. The persistent security guard from the office comes and tells us to leave. We say we need a moment to translate everything. Again, he says we have to leave and that we are not allowed to stay in the corridor. We say that we need the time and that, if our friend has questions our doubts, we need to speak to the official responsible again. We also tell him it is not his task to send us away.

Now, we have to enter the waiting room again to get the vouchers. Because of the waiting time and because we don't expect complications, we decide to separate and later meet again at the car. But the behaviour presented until now by the wage workers of the security agency Lendex seems not to be sufficient to properly represent his profession.

Again, the security guard is causing stress repeatedly telling people to put their phones back in their bags. They persistently approach people taking a waiting number and ask them what they want here.

There is eye contact between us and the people waiting and we can feel their fear. In a short moment when the security guard is not looking, we shake our heads. All in all, there are seven security guards present at the ground floor, including entrance and waiting room.

Note concerning a problem known for a long time

In the waiting room, I overhear a conversation between a security guard and a person that seems to live at the camp at Teichweg 6 since a long time already. I hear the guard say that the pest exterminator comes regularly to spray the rooms. The man says something I can't understand, then the guard says it is because of the food that the people leave. This is how this person, pretending to be qualified, shifts the blame for the situation (actually occurring due to the hygienic condition of the building), going on for several years already, on to the residents. She blames those who, as well as supporters, have criticized the situation at least as long.

The camp at Teichweg has a cockroach problem since many years, and several times per month, the rooms are sprayed with poisonous substances.

Back in the waiting room.

At 10:30, a security guard tells children in the waiting room to be quiet, in a very loud and aggressive way. The children's father who is standing at the voucher/cash dispensing hears that and says that these aren't the guard's kids and that the guard should not talk to them in this tone.

The guard doesn't say anything! The father repeats it and the guard says: "get out now". He is close behind him and the father turns around again and repeats, until he reaches the door: "You can not talk like that to my children!"

The security guard gets violent. The father is violently thrown out.

I go there to see what's happening, also because it has become very loud, and though I am nervous, I intervene: "What are you doing here, you have no right to do what you are doing here. The man did not do anything." The wife of the man concerned asks what is going on and says that these are her kids.

Now, the (female identified) security guard intervenes and says: "If your children are not quiet, they have to stay at home". The situation is tense, and the security guards compensate their unprofessional lack of de-escalation strategy with their number of staff. The authority evades further hints about the unjustified behaviour causing a violent situation and further confrontation by throwing out the father (protecting his children) and telling me in an aggressive tone: All of this is not my business and I should get out if I don't agree and I should shut up. (Quote)

I answer that that is an insult and he gets angry and sends me to the waiting room, then he pushes me into the waiting room and slams the door behind me.

I am here to accompany my friend. Who tries to calm me down. I sit for a short while and try to think what to do, but already the female identified guard approaches me, angrily places herself in front of me, and demands that I give her my phone, claiming I have filmed the situation; and that I had no right to do so. I assure her the contrary, I did not film. But she only gets angrier. She threatens to call the police if I don't show her my phone. I show it to her because I don't want police. If the security guards in Bernburg are that bad, I don't want to know how the police are. Also it seems unnecessary to make that experience in a full waiting room of the local Ausländerbehörde. So I show her that I have not filmed anything and at the same time tell her that I will make this situation public.

They kicked out the people affected, and I called my lawyer because I had no witnesses. In the end I had to hand in my ID, they wrote down my personal information and I left. Outside, I waited for the person I was accompanying and I wrote a memory protocol.

In the meantime, two women came out that had witnessed the situation in the waiting room and said thank you for doing something against the security guards.

Together again, my friend I was with said: "Good that now someone has seen what we experience here daily".

While we are leaving the place, a bus arrives at Ausländerbehörde. Less than half of the seats are occupied, there are families with kids among them. The employees begin to murmur, they say to each other, sounding annoyed: "A bus arriving again?" "I hope not so many again...", "Where should they be taken to now..." and similar things, as if they had to do more about it than to occupy themselves with the supposed safety within their area of responsibility.

Back in the group, we decided to meet at noontime at Teichweg 6, some went shopping with the vouchers [more information in the first report -> link] with the friend, the other went walking to the camp together with our friends we had met in the beginning, and with her child.

At Teichweg 6

At our last visit, we noticed that there are many children here. There is an area "especially" for women (and children) at the ground floor. It is separated by a door, but the door is open for everyone - at least it was no problem for us to go in - though we had registered to visit a friend at the first floor. We were actually there because one friend had invited us, but it didn't take long until other residents at the corridor saw us and asked us to come to their rooms, too. And we did.

The women's and children's area includes, as far as we could identify, half the corridor on the ground floor. It's possible to enter without any restriction, some rooms are very small, it is very narrow, fridges occupy some space in the rooms. People we identified as masculine were permanently present in that area.

In the following, some of the impressions we had in half an hour there.

Obviously, these impressions don't represent full expertise and we don't have the mandate to speak for the people we met, but we find the situation more than dramatic and intolerable!

The accommodation seems neither appropriate to isolate sick people, nor are there separate wash rooms or toilets for each person.

We were able to talk to three people personally. All three of them say they don't feel safe here, which probably also has to do with fear of possible and already attempted deportations. But any way, this place is not safe.

One person has tried to suicide herself several times because of the residence status situation. Already because of this, she should not have to continue to live under these circumstances! Nobody should have to live like this!

Another person has a severe chronic disease that also leads to coma, through which she passed various times - and still it was tried to deport her to Italy more than three times. The last time was only two weeks ago, but, "fortunately", her health status prevented that... on a first glance, her health status is very worrying. For now, we won't name more details here.

The third person we met today lives in a small room with a baby. She seemed withdrawn from social contact and told us about her way to Bernburg. It seems she doesn't know why she landed here, speaks of an allocation to Germany that, presumably, may have been decided by others. She lives here with Duldung, though she did not want to go to Germany, but to a place where people with a similar story and cause for migration got a secure residence permit. She does not know what to do. She can't go back to her home country, alone and with a child.

An additional problem is that the security guards of the company "Lendex Security and Consulting GmbH" responsible for the "security" of the camp but also at the government offices, are mainly persons identified as masculine. We did not see any female security guard except the one at Ausländerbehörde at Friedensallee. We find that highly problematic, as well as the employment of security guards in this sector in general. It is as problematic as the fact that at our visit to Ausländerbehörde, described above, the company caught our attention because of the escalating behaviour of their employees. One situation between security guards and other persons even escalated in a way that one of us was kicked out of the office because of intervening to the violent behaviour of the guard. These situations and the reports of other people, in absence of possible relevant witnesses, are a cause for fear of worse, not hope.

We plead for dialogue, verbal exchange with all persons concerned, not only in conflicts, but there especially! Instead of the use aggressive security guards with a master race mentality!

We suggest every person or organisation feeling responsible to personally visit this place and especially talk to the women. We can arrange contact! We will probably go to Bernburg in the end of march, but who can go earlier should do so! We will probably be going to Salzlandkreis at 26th March (Thursday).

Concerning the camp at Teichweg 6: no one should have to live here. We have met people who have to live there or in a similar place for more than 20 years already.

In addition there are also children living here which does not comply with any law concerning, for example, the children's special need for protection! There has to be an urgent change for the women and children. But in general, the district needs to come up with an alternative to this place and to this form of accommodation! Let's support the people in getting their own homes! All the people in Bernburg, in Salzlandkreis, in Sachsen-Anhalt and in the rest of Germany!

Following the new antifascist constitution of the state Sachsen-Anhalt!

NoLager! De-centralized housing and living for all!

In the actual health crisis, which is a crisis of the health system, this general and always valid demand openly shows what has been clear for a long time. Hopefully, it will cause a change of thought at the people responsible for this situation. Hopefully, no more severe illnesses and deaths will occur - It is time for action!

End giving out vouchers. Pay full benefits and additional money for prevention and in case of illness!

Cancel the residence obligation, the prohibition to work or professional training, realize freedom of movement for all people!

Stop deportations!

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