

Contact:

Asuquo Udo: 0152-146 725 37

Friday Emitola: 0152 170 052 71

Kofi Anane Mark: 0152 170 045 94

Ahmed Ali: 0152 13239181

**Open Letter****To the Nordkirche and the Christian communities**

Thank you very much for the great support from the Christian communities in Hamburg, in particular for the housing and supply in St. Pauli but also in many other parts of the city. We specially thank the African community of the Church of Redemeer which always kept us supplied twice a week with warm food and left the church room open for our meetings.

We appreciate very much, that you all help us to survive for months protesting together with us for our residence.

Because of this we could even suggest in our open letter to the Senate, that application of § 23 - Group recognition - even in the absence of social benefits, would be imaginable for us. Many of us would have long been working, many are learning the German language for months, the young among us could start apprenticeships. Along with the many people on our side, we might support those of us for whom it can be difficult to find work for some more time. The broad and lasting solidarity in recent months has shown us, that this is possible.

But it's about all of us, it is about a group recognition. We all have an equal traumatic history at the same time, which was led from Libya to Lampedusa and Italy. There, in Italy, this has already been recognized. We are Europe's recognized refugees and need the right to live and work. For almost 3 years, not only we, but also our families are in great need. We are fighting for our right to rebuild our lives.

This is what our group of the Libyan war refugees "Lampedusa in Hamburg" stands for.

That's what we have always said. We have also said that any help, support and advice is welcome. But we also had to repeatedly make clear, that we ourselves decide about our fate and our future, that we are victims of injustice and fighters for justice.

More and more people in the city and beyond are demanding the residence – and work permit for all. The political leadership of the city does not want a solution of our problem.

The Senate continued police controls against black people, kept people of our group in police custody for hours and forced the fingerprinting. At the same time we received proposals of the Senate through the Bishops office with the announcement that the controls would end if we accepted their conditions.

The proposals of the Senate result in more months and years of uncertainty for us. They want us to go through individual residence procedures. Our recognized refugee status by Italy changed exchanged against a „Duldung“. The Senate also further emphasizes that our reasons for staying will not be accepted and that we are free to then pursue legal action. We would not be deported until the completion of these procedures. But what happens after that? We do not see this as a constructive solution, but as a game on time to later get rid of us individually. A fair and reasonable solution looks different. Moreover, we still want to hold direct talks with the Senate.

This we have recently continued to state in our open letter to the Senate from 28th of October 2013 and at the press conference the following day. At the same time the leaders of the Nordkirche have

accepted the Senates proposal over our heads and advertised it to the public. The Evangelical Press Service published the false information that 80 of us from the St. Pauli Church would request a „Duldung“ at the authority . This has generated much confusion and mistrust.

From the side of the church it was emphasized over and over again, that it is delivering humanitarian aid in the first place, it is now that the Bishop of the Nordkirche and the Interior Minister of Hamburg have discussed a solution that would provide a fair trial for all. We see this completely different and also representatives of the Nordkirche have repeatedly expressed towards us, that with the proposed method, only a few of us will have a chance.

The Nordkirche may have its reasons - we have often heard the pressure of the Senate on the bishop is too large, the pressure on the pastors of St. Pauli is too big. But then it would be fair and decent to say this as well, instead of talking about some of the group to follow the dubious proposal in order to fall in the groups back. The former speaker of the refugees sleeping in the church of St.Pauli told us afterwards that he had accepted the offer, because the pressure on the church was too large. Some others have requested a „Duldung“ because they were told there was no alternative.

The vast majority of us refuse that procedure because of its insecurity and because of the same negative attitude of the Senate. We are disappointed and angered by the declaration of the Bishops office to have agreed with the Senate on a feasible solution.

We should go this route, but we were not involved in the negotiations. We have not instructed someone to negotiate on our behalf. We have always demanded direct talks. Why can this, what is the most normal and natural, not be respected? Why does the leadership of the church decide for cooperation with the Senate against our interests, in a moment where a huge solidarity is with us? Why is not accepted, that we decide for our lives? Why is it not possible for the church leadership to view us as equal subjects?

Why is a group solution not being supported by the Nordkirche? Why should the solidarity between us, which stems from our shared traumatic history be broken?

We have all suffered the same and we all need the same. How could we make distinctions between us?

We hope you can understand us - try putting yourself into our situation and ask yourself how you would act. We are grateful to each and every one of you who sincerely supports and accepts that we make decisions about our future.

We wish you all a wonderful and happy holiday season.

The group of Libyan war refugees "Lampedusa in Hamburg"

13th of November 2013