

Residenzpflicht

People under district arrest Challenges facing the campaign and struggle

(The VOICE Refugee Forum against the Obligatory Residency)

German state abuses and violations of Human Rights as well as exclusion and persecution of refugees are innumerable. They are closely related to the protest of refugees against restrictions placed on their free movement in Germany. Germany is one of the richest countries of the world that control and exploit the current total world resources. These countries are not only involved in the exploitation of the natural and human resources but they also directly or indirectly influence the economical and political decision making in the exploited home countries of the refugees. It is needless to say that this breeds war, hate, human rights abuses, displacement of persons, flight, refugees, collapse of the economy, etc. The long disturbing German tradition of exclusion of identified classes or groups of persons, restriction of movement of these groups, execution and exploitation and the instrumentalisation of "democratic" reforms to even enhance further repression of refugees and migrants are part of the agenda to be discussed with activists, campaigners and supporters.

Challenges facing the abolition of the Residency Obligation and the social exclusion of refugees
The campaign of The VOICE Refugee Forum against the Apartheid-like Residency Obligation, which restricts refugees to their designated districts has been constant and consistent. It includes much more than just denouncing the psychological abuses and the loss of rights associated with this law, which has its legal precedence in a police decree issued in 1938 during the Nazi regime. The activists of The VOICE Refugee Forum have initiated and are executing the campaign against the Residency obligation through civil disobedience by refusing to pay the fines for violations of the Residency Obligation. These activists have either been imprisoned or threatened with imprisonment in the name of this discriminatory and racist legislation against the freedom of movement of refugees.

The abolition of the Residency Obligation has become the main focus of The VOICE Refugee activists in the last years, as they have politically challenged this form of racist social exclusion

in Germany. Germany is the only country in Europe that practices the Residency Obligation, which was re-introduced in 1982 as part of a socio-political reform of exclusion and repression of refugees. It is also note-worthy that Germany carries out more deportations of foreigners than any other country in Europe.

The Struggle of The VOICE Refugee Forum against the Residency Obligation

We demand the immediate and total abolition of the Residency Obligation and any restrictions of innate rights for refugees in Germany. In the last ten years, we have been advancing the course and political struggles of refugees in Germany. We have had successful protests and public interventions in the campaign against the Apartheid-like restriction of refugees and migrants. This includes also campaigns against deportation, discrimination and criminalisation of refugees, migrants and foreigners as a whole. We have meanwhile been part of the Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants since its inception in 1998.

The International Refugee Congress in the year 2000 in Jena (Thüringen) was a turning point in our history. Refugees and migrants met with other activists from Germany, Europe and the rest of the world. The campaign and struggles against Residency Obligation were launched by refugees in the aftermath of this congress. Mass protests and actions against deportations, deportation prisons, police brutality, racist police controls, isolation camps, restrictions of any kind, criminalisation, facism etc. have developed since then. There have also been countless demonstration, campaigns and a number of court trials on those, who have refused to pay the stipulated fines for violating the Residency Obligation in protest.

The cases of Cornelius and Sunny have been through the various levels of judicial process up to the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe which refused to entertain the cases. Both cases are now at the European Court for Human Rights in Strassburg. Most recently, we had a huge success with the case of Ahmed in the court in Erfurt. Similarly, the case of Janak was also won and he has since then even been recognised as a political asylum seeker.

In the light of the above highlighted efforts on our part, we would like to invite other activists, groups or organisations that are active in the political struggles in Germany. We call upon activists from basic groups and organisations that have supported and contributed politically to the campaign, including the media network, to enter into the discussion, to broaden and the enhance the campaign.

Amongst other issues, we would like discussions the following:

1. The refugee struggle and the autonomy of protest
2. The new immigration law and its regulation of deportation and widening state contro
3. "Fortress Europe" as a part of the global Apartheid of the neo-colonial repression against migrants and migration here and in their home countries.

4. Recent examples of the ongoing expansion of lager (camps) for the concentration of refugees in detention and the militarization of migration control

Our continuation of the struggles of refugees in Germany has been inspired mainly by the solidarity and self determination of the old and new members of old The VOICE Africa Forum and now The VOICE Refugee Forum, and of course by others who support the political community of refugees and migrants activists in Germany.

Our intentions

Put shortly, we would first of all achieve the following within the activist network and also beyond: presentations of refugees and non refugee activists on the struggle of The VOICE campaign against the Residency Obligation, developing an understanding of the refugees' resistance against Residency Obligation and information about the campaign network.

While addressing the mobilisation and our struggle for freedom of movement we would also like to evaluate the Residency Obligation campaign and the networking structures among refugees for political information and other discussions on public space and support.

The following points seem to be of importance in order to re-invegorate the campaign and push for the abolition of the Residency Obligation:

- Review of campaign documentation on Residency Obligation
- Reports and media coverage on: the refugee struggle, litigation at the European Human Rights Court against the Residency Obligation; court hearings and imprisonment of refugee activists; the new Immigration Law with its regulations for deportation and Residency Obligation
- German lobbism to implement the Residency Obligation as a corner stone of EU Asylum Policies
- Case study: The disobedience of Ahmed Sameer and other comparable cases
- Concrete political demands backed with information on refugees that have been physically abused, arrested, tried, fined and punished for violating the Residency Obligation
- How German segregated legislation violates the fundamental right of free movement
- Criminalisation of movement: the contradiction between migration and political strategies for socio-political, economic and physical restriction of migrants
- The connection between German political corruption, confinement of refugees and discriminatory laws on the one hand and neo-colonial global exploitation on the other hand
- Strategies for civil disobedience, court trials, public protests and direct actions against racist police controls and regular meeting of refugees to exchange information.
- The interrelation between struggle against Residency Obligation and other forms of resistance against any kind of repression and social exclusion.

We will reflect upon the strategical developments and protests against the Residency Obligation in the last years. We urgently need a thorough evaluation to inject new ideas, perspectives and power into our campaign and resistance. Freedom of movement is the main weapon of our survival, for self organisation and settlement. If we cannot move freely, we cannot defend ourselves, we cannot shape our lives and take part in social engagement. The restriction of movement is the source of further restriction. To put it short: We cease to exist as a social and political human being if we cannot move freely! Freedom of movement is therefore the divine resource of our birth and existence - it should not be a subject of negotiation!

It is often easy to forget:

It's not about lobbyism and there is no compromise!

**We uphold the solidarity for the right to
freedom of movement for refugees and migrants.**

We are one world and one people!

We will call on various assemblies, organisations, groups and individual to support the initiatives of The VOICE Refugee Forum campaign against the Residency Obligation for refugees in Germany. Interested organisations, groups and individual in our initiatives should contact us under: Thevoiceforum@emdash.org, <http://www.thevoiceforum.org>