

# WOMEN IN EXILE the UPDATE #22

NEWS FROM AND FOR REFUGEE WOMEN AND THEIR FRIENDS

Berlin, Germany

July 2021

Free



*The 2018 Bus Tour*

## Join us on the bus tour!

The bus tour this summer is organised by Women in Exile & friends for our different social and political actions: To fight against isolation, violence, discrimination, racism and exclusion, from which refugee women suffer in the lagers. It is a tour that also contributes to the empowerment of refugee women and children. Also, we want to support other organisations and groups fighting for refugee rights.

The bus tour will last 2 weeks going to the north of Germany. We will start our bus tour with a rally on 21.07.21 at the parliament in Potsdam. On 04.08.2021 we will return to Berlin with a rally at Oranienplatz. Our activities are based on exchanges with other refugee women. We organise workshops on empowerment, workshops on the health problems of refugee women, workshops on the problems of isolation of refugee women in the camps and lagers especially as they are victims of racism, violence and discrimination.

For many years, Women in Exile & Friends

has been doing summer tours in different German federal states to connect with other refugee women. This summer we are going to Hamburg, Bremen and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. We want to empower refugee women to become politically active, to fight for their rights as women living in this society. We also want to address the issue of opening up political structures to refugee women.

Our main political struggle is against the lager system. Shared and isolated accommodation is a breeding ground for sexual violence, trauma and depression that even lead some refugees to commit

suicide. We, the women of Women in Exile and friends, will share our experiences and bring into public the problems we face: Isolation, racism, sexism, trauma and sleepless nights fearing deportation and the effects of the corona pandemic. We also want to support refugee women by giving them strength, energy and courage to fight against these discriminatory scourges. We want to create social and political networks for a better future for refugee women.

Another aim of the tour is to break the loneliness that refugee women experience in the camps and lagers. To have the opportunity to connect with other women, to exchange ideas and to reflect on new strategies to fight against sexual violence, racism and discrimination against women – especially in this very precarious period of the Coronavirus pandemic, which continues to take its toll. Refugees are especially exposed to this Coronavirus in the camps and lagers, where they live without privacy.

**women\* moving**  
**against Lager systems**  
**BUS TOUR 2021 and racism**

21.07 - Potsdam  
22.07 - Hamburg  
24.07 - Bremen  
25.07 - Horst  
26.07 - Sternbuchholz  
28.07 - Rostock-Lichtenhagen  
29.07 - Rostock  
31.07 - Hof Ulenkrug  
01.08 - Jördenstorf  
02.08 - Stralsund  
03.08 - Greifswald  
04.08 - Oranienplatz (Berlin)

UNSTOPPABLE  
WOMEN

REFUGEES  
WELCOME

More info at [women-in-exile.net](http://women-in-exile.net)

*The bus tour flyer*

**Your attention and support, moral, financial and physical, is welcome for this tour to northern Germany.**

**Let us stand together: No Lager!  
For a better life for all of us!**

## Fear of Corona Vaccination

Fear has been installed in most of us by the many conspiracy theories going around about corona vaccinations. Many questions reached us from the refugee women living in the camps. So we decided to invite a medical doctor to talk to us about the vaccination and to answer some of those questions.



*Someone getting a vaccine, photo from pexels.com*

The women wanted to know, for example, which brand is best for whom, the side effects and who has priority. Some raised concerns about children and those with chronic diseases. Other concerns came from those who wish to have children in the future and from breastfeeding mothers. Those who have already been infected with the virus wanted to know, if they were exempted from the vaccination. Those with children going to school, wanted to know if the children needed to be vaccinated and if yes, from which age.

The medical doctor gave us a lot of information about the different vaccines. All the approved vaccines protect well against Covid-19, which means less risk of becoming infected and sick as well as transmitting the virus. After the first dose, the protection builds up in a few weeks and if someone got infected, the symptoms are less severe. The second dose improves the quality of protection and is meant to give long term protection effect. So it is really important to get both shots. The exception is the Johnson & Johnson vaccine which only one dose is needed. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is especially recommended to people who might have difficulties of following up the appointment of a second dose.

For those who have had been infected with the corona virus, the first jab should be taken six months after recovery. Chronic diseases raise the risk of suffering a serious Covid-19 infection, that means those with chronic diseases should have a priority in getting the vaccination. The vaccination does not affect fertility and is highly unlikely to be harmful to pregnant women or breast feeding mothers. However, breast feeding mothers and pregnant women were excluded from the pivotal studies (which is normal in pharmacological studies), so research data on these groups is still rare. Pregnant and breastfeeding women who got vaccinated did not suffer specific side effects. STIKO although does not recommend the vaccination to this group – single case decision should be considered. Pregnant women can name two close contact persons to be

vaccinated with priority.

Biontech vaccine is recommended from the age of sixteen years and will soon be available for children from age twelve. It should not be given to those with a very high allergy profile such as dangerous systemic anaphylactic reactions. Hay-fever, gluten-insensitivity and other common allergies are not at all a problem. Moderna is almost similar to Biontech and recommended from the age of eighteen years.

AstraZeneca is not recommended for those under 60 years of age, there are very rare but serious side effects, for example, possibilities of thrombosis and blood clots in younger women.

Johnson & Johnson is recommended for those, for whom it is difficult to follow-up on their cases, for example, those who do not have permanent addresses.

All Covid-19 vaccinations are likely to cause side effects of a few days like a hurting arm, feeling tired, headache and even fever. This indicates a strong reaction of the immune-system – that is the desired effect. Most people seem to prefer Biontech because it works well against mutations of the virus; though it is possible to have mild infection. The good news is from June, there will be enough of it for everybody.

The Corona information evening helped to reassure many women on why it is important to get the vaccination, despite the many conspiracy theories going around.



From the Stop Deportation Info-comic. Read and download it at <https://oplatz.net/stop-deportation/>

# STOP DEPORTATION!

Despite the coronavirus pandemic, deportations from Germany have continued. Last year, most deportations were to African countries like Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Nigeria, Gambia and Ghana. This year the collective deportations planned in advance

for May and June were going to countries like Nigeria, Serbia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Albania.

This continues to be a nightmare to the refugee women\* who are still living in fear of being deported either back to their country of origin or to another European country. These are the refugee women\* who haven't yet recovered from their horrific journeys from their home countries' traumas and then to the militarised European Union's external borders where so much inhumanity is happening.

The police continue storming into the lagers at the odd hours of the night without notice, obviously with aggression and the refugees are left without the possibility to ask any questions nor any chance to say goodbye.

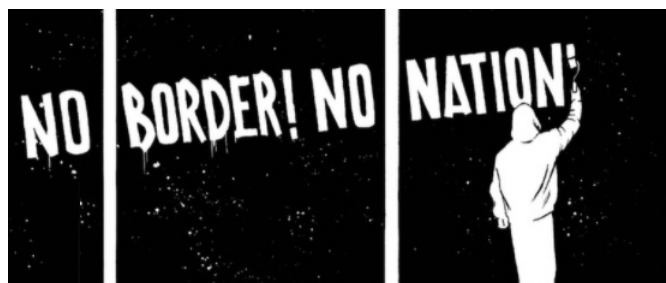
Some of the concerns that one shouldn't forget are that in most of these countries of origin, they don't have enough Intensive Care Unit beds or ventilators to care for corona patients and that vaccination programs are also only available in quite a few countries. Having in mind that during the deportation processes, the refugees are bundled on board close together for their long flights, and if there is an infected person on board, it is clear the rest could be infected with the coronavirus.

Another problem that the corona pandemic's impact has placed on the economy status world-wide has affected almost everyone in one way or another. So, what will become of the refugee women\* who are facing deportation, of their economic prospects at home? How will they, along with their children, survive?

Although the German courts have become stricter in determining who can be deported, unfortunately the pandemic did not dissuade the authorities from compelling refugees to identify themselves. This means, the refugees were still

being sent letters giving them time frames by which they ought to submit their documents, even though the borders and the embassies were not functioning. Due to these intentional and conscious pressure from the immigration offices, there have been several suicides and suicide attempts.

The German State claims only to deport quite a small number of the asylum-seekers to certain countries who have been found to be criminals and a threat to Germany. Most of the refugees, especially from countries like Syria or Afghanistan, say from their experiences that once that door for deportation will open, there will be a mass deportation for all of them regardless of how many years one has lived and integrated in the country. Therefore, the right to stay in Germany is far from guaranteed.



*From the Stop Deportation Info-comic, read and download it on <https://oplatz.net/stop-deportation/>*

Upcoming alarms of the already known published dates of the collective deportations can be seen and heard from sources like Aktion Bleiberecht, Flüchtlingsrat, ProAsyl and other activists' networks.

We demand, not only in times of the Corona pandemic, but as a matter of principle, stop deportation for anyone, no matter where to!

We are tired of going to the streets every time asking for the right thing to do! Change does not only occur when we're on the streets but should start from our homes, schools etc. and it is a high time to vote now wisely; NOT to the parties who are anti-migration!

We demand the closure of the deportation detention centres, the abolition of all Lagers in Germany and the immediate evacuation of the Lagers on the Greek islands where refugees live under most precarious circumstances without protection concepts.

**Right to come, right to go and right to stay!**

# Family planning

Though the right to access modern contraception is free by law, the coverage cost is state specific. In Brandenburg the gynaecologist has to approve, which makes the process complicated for refugee women. Lack of health education and minimal knowledge regarding the efficacy of different contraception methods has led refugee women to have very limited choice, but to take what is available even though it is not the best for their health.

Contraception plays an important role in reproductive health. Prevention of unintended pregnancies and reduction of abortion in the childbearing age are prevented by family planning. Unfortunately many refugee women can not access them freely. Most of the refugee women used the injectable contraceptives in their home origin before taking up their long and dangerous journey to Europe. They are forced to take potent contraceptives to avoid the added risk of unintended pregnancies on their way. But these are not accessible on their way or when they reached their destination country, so a follow-up is hard. Thus they end up taking the pill, which is available and easy for the doctors to describe. But the pill comes with a private receipt and the women have to pay to get it.

Racheal, a refugee woman in Brandenburg, shared with us her experience where she requested a follow-up dose of an injection contraceptive. This contraceptive she was getting freely from her home country. Here she was told, this contraceptive was unavailable and alternatives were refused. Three months later, she returned looking to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. There are a lot of similar cases among the refugee women. During our discussions we realised that many of the long-term damage and reproductive problems, which affects us refugee women, are a result of different body reaction to various family planning methods.

Excessive bleeding, infertility, weight gain and -loss, traumas and many more are some of the risks the women report and which become a long-term health issue. This has tampered with their right to reproductive choice, since there are those women



Workshop "Gebärmutter, Zysten, PCO und Co.", Potsdam 2018

who later want to conceive. But this becomes difficult and so some experience miscarriages. Others believe they are safe and protected, but still conceive. This forces them to either keep the unintended pregnancy or terminate it, which was not their wish or plan.

## For this, we demand:

- Access to health education and provision in all necessary languages
- Free access to contraception and family planning centres
- Healthcare for all without discrimination.