



In 2022, Women in Exile & Friends celebrates its 20th anniversary. We, women from different parts of the global south, struggle to survive as refugees in Germany. Every human being has the right to seek asylum. But in the paradoxical understanding of “human rights” of those in power, this right to seek asylum is restricted, limited and in many cases completely denied. Over the past two decades, Women in Exile & Friends have highlighted how politicians increasingly seek to control the external and internal borders of the European Union to prevent asylum seekers from passing. At these borders, refugee women’s autonomy and freedom of movement are regimented, their choice of where and how to live is determined by others. The access to health care is precarious and inefficient. Work bans drive people into depending on arbitrary authority or into irregular employment. These and many other asylum policies promote structural racism, which we encounter in Germany. Asylum policies promote a social climate in which refugees are dehumanized and devalued. Their life stories, knowledge and culture are considered inferior. A real “refugee policy” would require opening visible and invisible borders. A true “integration policy” would break with privilege and grant rights without distinction of origin, gender, class or skin color.

International Women's Conference

20 Years Women in Exile

Weaving experiences, building networks. Analysis of the political, economic and colonial causes of forced displacement

4-7 August 2022

Back in 2017, Women in Exile & Friends hosted a nationwide conference called “Women Breaking Borders” with the goal of expanding our networks for action and solidarity. We empowered each other as organized refugee women in the fight against sexism and racism and reiterated our demand for the abolition of all camps. We continued discussions about the political motivations that drive people into exile. We made clear that we are not alone or isolated, but that we share struggles and successes, that we are part of a global human community.

In the twenty years of our existence, we have made different voices heard in workshops, conferences and actions, and in some cases brought them into the public sphere. We have walked this path alongside solidarity groups and friends who have worked with

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us to change the realities of refugee women and their families. We have recorded our knowledge and experiences in our book “Women in Exile - Breaking Borders to Build Bridges”, which will be published on the occasion of the International Women Conference “Weaving experiences, building networks. Analysis of the political, economic and colonial causes of forced displacement”

We invite all refugee women and friends in solidarity to come to the conference!

This year, let our call be even louder and reach further so that the voice of refugee women can be heard on different coasts, oceans and continents. We call for solidarity of diverse feminist practices. Let's cross borders and break isolation!

Healthcare For All Without Discrimination

When we demand healthcare for all without discrimination, we are demanding German authorities to respect the Art.25 of the universal declaration of Human Rights. It states that the human right to health and healthcare is enshrined for all - “no matter who they are, where they live or how much money they have.” Refugee healthcare is governed by the “Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz” which was passed in 1993 to discourage asylum seekers from coming to or staying in Germany. This is the reason why the Sozialamt has to give permission and allocate a budget to any specialised treatment. Recently we got a report of a woman who was turned away from the hospital because the money allocated for treatment was finished, although the problem was getting worse.

Refugee women and girls face gender specific challenges in accessing healthcare in Germany. Unnecessary “minor operations” to remove cysts and myommas are undertaken without proper information. This has resulted in some cases of the woman's uterus being removed without their consent. For the last five years, we have continuously been reporting on the racism and discrimination on the healthcare system especially in relation to refugee women.

In the Heims we share facilities like rooms, kitchens and toilets. 5–6 persons in a room, kids, pregnant women and the elderly are all in one room. This is



Crowded rooms in the Heims

difficult in times of corona without any isolation. We know of a women with Diabetes in one of the Heims and the women does not get any support or extra money for her to manage and take care of the disease. We all know diabetes is a serious disease that can cause coma, stroke, kidney failure and heart attack. She requested for better housing unsuccessfully. We also know of a pregnant women, who is sharing facilities with other women and got infected with Corona twice, in and out of the hospital and still no possibility to isolate herself in a private room. Where are children's rights? Where are refugee women's rights respected?

This is why we need to come together and fight for our healthcare for all without discrimination.

Safe Space For Refugee Women

In 2022 our safe space new cooperation partner is the “Monom Stiftung für Veränderung”. The Monom Stiftung is sponsoring the expenses of our safe space in Hermannstraße for the whole of the year 2022. This has promoted us to renew the rental contract for another term of two years. We want to take this opportunity to thank the members from the Monom Stiftung and those who donate specifically for the space and also those who contribute generously to our work.

This safe space in Hermannstraße, has become very important to the refugee women* in our group. It is a safe haven for those living in the isolated camps in Brandenburg and those in Berlin who are always seeking for advice in one way or the other. It is a meeting place to exchange, learn and getting connected to new women*. Women in Exile and Friends use this space for leisure, meetings, discussions and making strategies of our political work. It is a meeting point for networking with other organisations and an open safer space for women*.

Even in Corona times and with social distancing, we have used this space to organise our initiatives to support refugee women. Sometimes they had to happen online or in bigger spaces due to Corona rules, but our work continued. For example, we still used the space to provide women* with information about their rights and organised workshops, demos, magazine launch and more. This is our own safer space for refugee women*, a meeting point to break the isolation in the lagers and socialise with one another without prejudices. In this space we discuss and accept the diversities of our interests, sometimes with different views but at the end becoming aware of our common fights against discrimination and racism.

The space is at the moment strategically important as we organise the celebration of our 20 years anniversary. The Refugee Law Clinic (Berlin) meets in this space,



once a week to give legal advice to refugee women from Berlin and Brandenburg. That means the space is not only benefiting the women in our group but indirectly women* in general.

After facing dangerous routes on our journeys to Europe, as women we are confronted with sexist and racist borders which expose us to all types of prejudice – inner and outer borders, during and after the flight. When we arrive in Germany and request for asylum and think we are safe to build a new life, this is not the case because the next thing is being threatened with deportation. This makes life more difficult which results in depressions and sometimes even in desperate measures including suicides.

When, we leave our countries of origin, we expect to have freedom of choice to live in dignity, but contrary to our expectation we are facing dilemma. We are confronted with feelings of not being accepted due to isolation and discrimination. In such a situation empowerment is very important and that is why Women in Exile was founded 2002 in Brandenburg. Our main goal is to bring refugee policy demands to the public. We are coming from a Feminist perspective and we want to build a just society without exclusion and with equal rights for all people – no matter where they come from and where they are going.

International Women's Day 2022

The 8th March is an historic day!
Women all over the world stand up for equality and against any kind of discrimination and injustice.

On this day we show solidarity and fight together for equal rights for all in Rathenow. The conditions for refugees in Havelland are difficult. Especially for the women and children who are living in Heims. The Heims are isolated, don't allow privacy and are built to keep refugees out of society. They are not safe for women and not a place to be with children. Our children cannot flourish there. They have no good access to Kindergarten, learning in such a unsafe place is hard for school children. Children born with one of the parents being a German citizen are not given birth certificates.

This problem is not only experienced in Rathenow, it is a nationwide problem. The authorities are accusing the women that they are getting children to secure their residence. The denial of the birth certificates for the children is meant to be a punishment for the women and to discourage other women not to get children. They are making the life of these women as difficult as possible and it seems as if they are denying our right to choose with whom and when we have children.

We have our sisters fighting for these issues in Bremen (TogetherWeAreBremen). Some of them have been living in the camps for a long time with their children and demand rights for their children whose fathers are either permanent residents, European or German citizens.



Human rights are a myth for us! We witness it again and again. Our human rights are consistently violated. Every day we experience these small, disgusting racist borders that are meant to make us small! Every day we have to resist deportations, racism and sexism.

Really, enough is enough! We are fed up! And we say STOP to this discriminatory treatment at all levels! We demand participation, justice and safe living conditions! We demand respect for women's rights.

So this is why Women in Exile & Friends will go on the streets in Rathenow – together worldwide with so many others – and fight for our rights against all forms of discrimination and violence.

We are part of the history of resistance, social justice and equality based on grassroots self-organisation and radical democracy! We do this by empowering each other to understand and defend our rights.

And one thing is certain: As women, we have no country and we don't want a country, because our home is the whole world! So:

No camps for women and children! Abolish all camps!

For the RIGHT TO COME, RIGHT TO GO, RIGHT TO STAY!!!!

KEEP IN TOUCH

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JOIN AN EVENT

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We thank the following foundations and organisations for their continued support of our work:

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