



# NEWSLETTER

# #25

## NEWS FROM AND FOR REFUGEE WOMEN AND THEIR FRIENDS

Summer 2022

Berlin-Brandenburg, Germany



At the end of a boat tour in the summer of 2014

## WOMEN IN EXILE - 20 Years of “Breaking Borders to Build Bridges”

As we celebrate our 20th birthday, we start by thanking all those who accompanied us on this journey of breaking borders and building bridges. Each one of you who has contributed to our growth, we thank you enormously. The role you played, big or small has contributed to what we are today. I encourage each one of you, as refugee women, friends and supporters of “Women in Exile”, to

reflect on your role in this long journey and know that you are appreciated.

As you read our soon to be launched book, “Breaking Borders to Build Bridges”; most of you will proudly see their roles from our stories. Maybe, you are the person who passed knowledge to us on different topics, took care of our kids during meetings; helped us organise events, demos, tours or hosted us in

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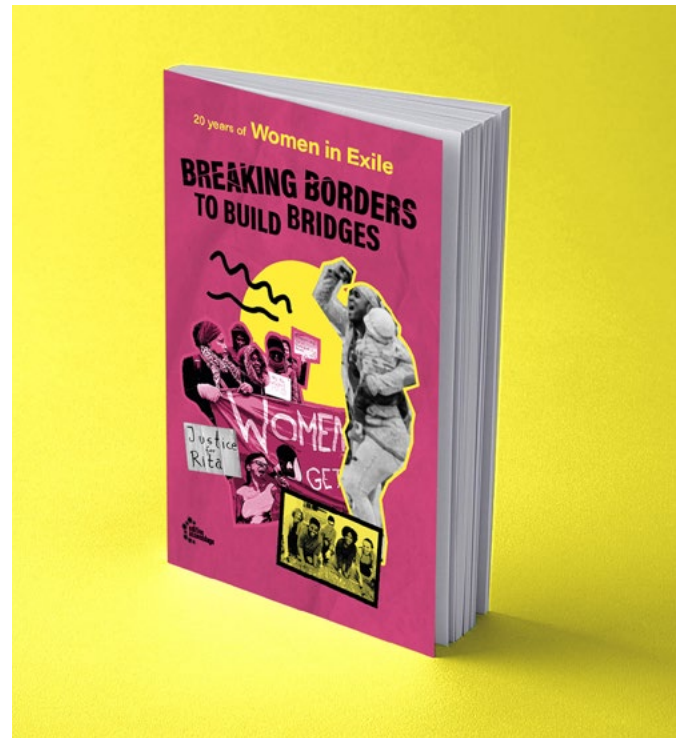
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different ways during our events, contributed funds, offered solidarity rooms, accompanied us in our daring raft/bus tours, connected us to individuals/foundations and so on. We cannot list all the solidarity you as individuals or organisations have given us along in empowering ourselves in different ways to enable us to celebrate our 20th anniversary internationally!

We have chosen the title of our book which will be launched end of June 2022 and the theme of our International Conference from 04.-07.08.2022 “Breaking Borders to Build Bridges” for the simple reason; because that is how we describe the work of our group. We have not only managed to cross visible and invisible borders; but see ourselves as a bridge for the refugee movement and the feminist movement. This bridge has been used by many of us to empower ourselves, uphold our dignity with the knowledge, that Foreigners ministry (BAMF) and the local Foreign Offices (Ausländerbehörden) should not decide on our destinies. For those interested in refugee and migration topics it was a bridge to engage in solidarity work, to gain knowledge for their academic work or working and networking experiences.

For this reason we recommend you to get a copy of our book and we heartily welcome those who are able to join our conference.

**The book can be ordered through our email: [info@women-in-exile.net](mailto:info@women-in-exile.net) or from the publishers: [info@edition-assemblage.de](mailto:info@edition-assemblage.de).**



*Preview of the book*

We want to celebrate our success together as we look forward to diverse guests, topics to learn from, exchange and of course a lot of space to network. For the planning of the conference, launching of the book and our future plans of our group, we are counting on your solidarity support and financial contributions to our work as we open another chapter in our activism.

We will keep you updated through our blog about the book and the conference.



*Photo from Top 5 Way on pexels.com*

## **Thank You And Farewell**

At the beginning of March, the daughters of Tatiana Friedrich approached us with heavy hearts. We are very touched by their message since Tatiana had unfortunately just passed away. Together with their father, both daughters decided to ask for donations for Women in Exile from the congregation of mourners instead of flowers at the funeral service to which many complied.

For us it is a great honor that the family thinks of us in such difficult hours. Some donations have been collected in the name of Tatiana

Friedrich and we would like to take this opportunity to say thank you and wish the family much strength. May Tatiana's soul rest in peace.

The corona pandemic and the war in Ukraine have greatly affected women refugees who have already arrived here. At the same time, even more women have arrived in Berlin and Brandenburg and need support and networking. BIPOC refugee women

have it particularly hard and suffer a lot from systematic racism that they face as forced refugees.

The contribution of family friends and acquaintances helps us in the current situation. Thank you very much!

**Donations Account:**

Women in Exile e.V.

IBAN: DE21430609671152135400

BIC: GENODEM1GLS (GLS Bank)

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## **We Are Deeply Shocked By This Racist System**

**With the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, it has become clear that it is possible to treat and accommodate refugees generally in a better and humanitarian way.**



*Wheelchairs in the home*

In contrast, black refugees and refugees of colour continue to be poorly received, lacking information and opportunities. They are racially excluded and forced to live in collective housing. Unlike refugees from Ukraine, they cannot choose where they want to live and work.

They are neglected and abandoned in their asylum procedures; yet we talk of humanrights, all refugees should be treated equally. Some refugees live for six to ten years in collective housing, often on the outskirts of villages or in the middle of forests. Many of them face racism and other discrimination on a daily basis. The German government and society separate us into refugee groups. Some are treated well and have rights that allow them to integrate, while others are massively excluded and at the end deported.

Recently we visited a Heim in the district of Märkisch-Oderland, in Gusow-Platkow. The Heim is located on the outskirts of the village and is run by the Internationaler Bund.

We met a Syrian family with their four children. Among the four children are 24 year old twins and a 9 year old boy, who are handicapped and use wheelchairs. The 24 year old twins do not have access to mobility because of their living conditions. They share a small bungalow that has very little heating in winter. The children sleep on mattresses on the floor. This woman has serious problems, the children are regularly ill, especially in this period of the Covid 19 pandemic that is raging in the world.

The situation of this Syrian family is really alarming. For three years, they have been living in this camp in deplorable conditions! They need a barrier-free flat next to supermarkets, where they can do their shopping easily. Other refugees have been living in this collective camp for 6 and even 10 years in catastrophic conditions. This is gross negligence and we are deeply shocked by this racist system. There is no peace without justice.

Content warning: sexual violence, trafficking, suicide ideation and attempts

## Living With Trauma and Depression

Many refugee women have various health problems, which also affects their mental health. Below is an interview with one woman who is living with trauma and depression for the last 20 years.



Photo from Ave Calvar Martinez on pexels.com

**Q. What caused the trauma and depression you have been going through for the last 20 years?**

A. I am a gang rape victim from my country of origin. This happened in 2002, when my ex-husband sold me to a group for money and then divorced me. I got separated from my children and all these incidents resulted in my mental inaccessibility. I was in mental asylum after that incident.

**Q. Did you get any support?**

A. My younger brother helped me a little, but my own parents disowned me and advised me to commit suicide. My current husband is my brother`s best friend. Since that incident, I am suffering from depression, anxiety and I get panic attacks even if it is 20 years now. I am continuously under treatment having psychotherapies and taking depression and sleeping tablets.

**Q. Has your health improved so far?**

A. I tried to commit suicide few times, but I survived. I also have high blood sugar and high blood pressure. It is always impossible for me to manage both physical and mental health issues. But my husband has always been helpful. He manages all

my appointments and medication. I can never come out of my trauma. I could have died for sure if he was not with me.

I am scared of going out of my house alone. I get panic, crossing the roads. He always holds my hand while we are walking out. I mess up with bus numbers and trains to go anywhere. I feel safe when he is with me, in language class, traveling anywhere, attending all appointments.

**Q. How was your life before this incidence?**

A. Before that incident I was a typical house woman. But now I cannot even cook for myself because I know I will harm myself with knife. I am unable to do day to day activities without him. He does cooking, cleaning, laundry even helps me in shower.

I always pray to God please, I will die first, because I am helpless without him.

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*If you are depressed yourself, if suicidal thoughts are plaguing you, please contact the telephone counselling service on the internet or via the free hotlines: 0800/111 0 111 or 0800/111 0 222 or 116 123.*

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### KEEP IN TOUCH

Website: [women-in-exile.net](http://women-in-exile.net)

Facebook: "Women in Exile & Friends"

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/women\\_in\\_exile](https://twitter.com/women_in_exile)

Tel: 0331-24348233

E-Mail: [info@women-in-exile.net](mailto:info@women-in-exile.net)

### DONATE

Women in Exile e.V.

IBAN: DE21430609671152135400

BIC: GENODEM1GLS (GLS Bank)

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

**Rewegungs-**  
stiftung  
Anstöße für soziale Bewegungen

**Aktion**  
MENSCH

**AMADEU**  
ANTONIO  
STIFTUNG

**:do**  
Stiftung

**filia**  
die frauenstiftung

### JOIN AN EVENT

<https://www.women-in-exile.net/events/>