

# FlüchtlingsRAT NRWe.V.

## Newsletter **November 2016**

### **Dear Reader!**

*On October 29<sup>th</sup>, we honored the voluntary commitment to refugees in NRW and celebrated the 30th anniversary of our association together with over 130 guests. Yet, the joy about this anniversary is limited, because it shows that the work done by the Flüchtlingsrat NRW has not become redundant even after 30 years. The number of refugees worldwide is higher than ever before. All over Europe xenophobic forces are gaining momentum and in Germany the asylum law is constantly being tightened. In order not to be discouraged at such times, it is important not to lose sight of positive aspects such as the voluntary work of countless committed people in NRW who oppose the trend of sealing-off borders while continuing to welcome refugees. In this spirit, we thank and congratulate this year's winner of the price for voluntary engagement, the association Flüchtlinge werden Nachbarn in Ense.*

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### **The Flüchtlingsrat NRW welcomed more than 130 guests at *Ehrenamtspreis* (volunteering award) and anniversary celebration**

On October 29<sup>th</sup> the Flüchtlingsrat NRW awarded the *Ehrenamtspreis* for the first time and it was a great success. Over 130 guests from all over North-Rhine Westphalia came to the cultural center Zeche Carl in Essen to honor the volunteer work for refugees and to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our organisation. The eight initiatives and individuals nominated for the *Ehrenamtspreis* were introduced by short documentary films, which had been produced by students of the Dortmund University of Applied Sciences. Representatives of the Flüchtlingsrat NRW, the DGB and PRO ASYL highlighted the indispensable role of voluntary refugee supporters. At the same time, they harshly criticized the numerous tightenings of the asylum law, which have been enforced by politics in recent months. The jury had kept their decision secret, which retained the suspense among the guests until just before the awarding. Ali Ismailovski and Birgit Naujoks, who had represented the Flüchtlingsrat NRW in the jury, asked all nominees to the stage and declared the winner of the award: the association *Verein Flüchtlinge werden Nachbarn in Ense*. The reasons for this decision: in rural areas, refugee support initiatives often work under tough conditions. Nevertheless, the association from Soest district could convince the jury with an approach promoting the participation of refugees as well as partnerships between refugees and locals on an equal footing.

Looking at the film portraits of the nominees as well as at the work of the numerous refugee initiatives, which were represented at the information booth, it becomes clear that the jury's final

decision must have been a hard one. In this spirit, Daniel Keil, the representative of the prize-winning association from Ense, emphasized that he was proud to receive the prize, not only on behalf of his association but also of all active refugee supporters in NRW.

Following the award ceremony, the artist duo "Zuvielcourage" showed a small play which humorously gave practical tips to deal with populist and anti-refugee agitators. At the end of the evening, the guests drank to the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Flüchtlingsrat NRW.



Daniel Keil, the representative of the award-winning initiative Flüchtlinge werden Nachbarn in Ense holds the prize of the Flüchtlingsrat NRW on behalf of all refugee supporters in NRW. (Foto: Julia Gorlt)

### **30 years Flüchtlingsrat NRW: now more than ever!**

In December 1986, at a conference in the city of Mühlheim, local asylum working groups and refugees initiatives from all over North-Rhine Westphalia joined forces and established the Flüchtlingsrat NRW. 30 years have passed by and much has changed since then. We grew to a full-fledged association, whose work is now funded by the state government and other public authorities. Furthermore, the social environment has considerably changed and is nowadays characterized by an unprecedented rise of refugee supporters in society on the one hand and by the menacing advancement of xenophobic forces on the other hand.

Under the title "30 Jahre Flüchtlingsrat NRW: Jetzt erst recht!" we have recently published a brochure in which both, members of our association and representatives from politics and society, look back on the past three decades and on our association's work. Among others, we have received greetings from the prime minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, Hannelore Kraft, the Landesjugendring, and Amnesty International. In addition, fellow campaigners from the Flüchtlingsrat NRW's initial time give a vivid insight into the beginnings of the association in their reports.

One thing becomes apparent throughout all contributions: the goal of the Flüchtlingsrat NRW, namely the redundancy of the association and the fight for refugee rights, is not in sight. Today, Flüchtlingsrat NRW's work is still relevant and necessary, just as it was 30 years ago. We will continue to work for humane and just asylum policies – despite and precisely because of the growing anti-refugee and xenophobic sentiment in politics and society. Now more than ever!

*Broschüre „30 Jahre Flüchtlingsrat NRW: Jetzt erst recht!“*

## **Federal government wants to force deportations**

In the middle of October, Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel announced a "national effort" for the deportation of rejected asylum seekers at a meeting of the "Junge Union". It was a harsh rhetoric used by the Chancellor, who had hitherto just been known for moderate tones in the refugee question. Furthermore, the announcement is to be understood as a sign to Merkel's traditionally conservative Party Youth, showing that she wants to move back towards the right-wing electoral groups before the Bundestag elections in the upcoming year 2017.

Almost at the same time as the speech of Merkel, PRO ASYL published a draft law of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, which aims to put the announcement of the Federal Chancellor into legal form. With the introduction of a "second class *Duldung*", rejected asylum seekers are to be excluded even more from society than in the past, for example with regard to labor market and training opportunities as well as to regulations on the right to remain. Thus, the proposed law threatens hard-won achievements to improve prospects for immigrants in Germany. In addition, the individuals subject to such "second-class *Duldungen*" shall be able to be deported without prior notice - even if their deportation had been suspended for one year or more. So far, the persons in question had to be informed of the imminent deportation at least one month in advance. The Federal Government is also planning to tighten measures of detention prior to deportation by broadening the range of reasons justifying deportation and increasing the maximum duration of such detention significantly.

PRO ASYL has described the planned regulations as "inhumane" and appeals to the government and parliament to reject the proposal.

*PRO ASYL veröffentlicht Gesetzentwurf des BMI (14.10.2016)*

## **Federal Office handles record number of applications**

In September 2016, the *BAMF* (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) decided on asylum applications from 69,874 refugees. This is the highest monthly number in the history of the agency so far. Between January and September 2016, the Federal Office made 460,000 decisions, an increase of over 160 percent compared to the previous year. Thus, the average duration of the asylum procedure has been significantly reduced.

What the Federal Office is celebrating as a success is being criticized by refugee organizations such as PRO ASYL. For the persons concerned, faster asylum procedures mean a reduced quality of the whole process, resulting e.g. in reduced hearing times. Although the political situation in the most important countries of origin has not changed for the better, the *BAMF* is increasingly denying comprehensive asylum protection, as PRO ASYL argues in a press release published in mid-October.

That these decisions of the BAMF are often also legally refutable is proven by numerous court judgments of recent months. At the end of October, approximately 19,500 complaints by Syrian refugees, whom the Federal Office had granted only a very restricted, so-called *subsidiärer Flüchtlingsschutz* (subsidiary refugee protection), were pending before the administrative courts. So far, in about three-quarters of cases the courts decided in favor of the complaining refugees.

*PRO ASYL: Die Operation „Senkung der Anerkennungsquoten“ geht weiter (12.10.2016)*

## **Afghanistan is no safe country of origin**

The multitude of legal changes in recent weeks and months has caused some confusion. One frequently asked question is whether Afghanistan has now been included in the list of "safe countries of origin". This is not the case. Nevertheless, the recognition rate for Afghan refugees in Germany fell below 50 per cent, although the security situation in the country remains unchanged. In 2015, 77.6 percent of refugees from Afghanistan received protection in Germany.

As a result of a takeover agreement between the EU and Afghanistan, this disastrous decision-making practice of the *BAMF* (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) is likely to get even worse. The agreement was signed in early October 2016, According to media reports, Afghanistan has been promised several billion euros from the EU in order to promote the development of the country. In return, the EU calls for the readmission of 80,000 Afghan refugees, whose asylum application was rejected in Germany. According to PRO ASYL, this deal represents "deliberate and obvious blackmailing".

*PRO ASYL: Afghanistan: Rückkehr in die Unsicherheit (19.10.2016)*

*PRO ASYL: EU-Afghanistan Konferenz: Aufbau der Abschiebelogistik (04.10.2016)*

## **Termine**

**19.11.2016:** Conference „schlechte Bleibeperspektive! – Kritik am politischen Konstrukt der Bleibeperspektive“ 9.30 am, FH Dortmund, Room 1.01, Emil-Figge-Straße 44, Dortmund  
For further information see [www.fnrw.de](http://www.fnrw.de)

**18.-19.11.2016:** Congress „Antiziganismus entgegenwirken! Aber: Wie?“ Hotel Tulip Inn, Arena-Str. 3, Düsseldorf.  
For further information see [www.politische-bildung.nrw.de](http://www.politische-bildung.nrw.de)

**23.11.2016:** Lecture „Die Bedeutung von Flucht und Trauma bei Flüchtlingen“. 18.15 Uhr, Evangelisches Studienzentrum „die Brücke“, Universitätsstraße 19, Essen.  
For further information see [www.uni-due.de](http://www.uni-due.de)

**02.-04.12.2016:** Asylpolitisches Forum 2016. Haus Villigst, Iserlohner Str. 25, Schwerte.  
For further information see [www.kircheundgesellschaft.de](http://www.kircheundgesellschaft.de)

**06.12.2016:** Networking meeting „Arbeitsmarktliche Integration von Flüchtlingen in OWL“.  
For further information see [www.fnrw.de](http://www.fnrw.de)

**07.12.2016:** Lecture „Fluchtort Kommune – sozialräumliche Integration“. 6.15 pm, Evangelisches Studienzentrum „die Brücke“, Universitätsstraße 19, Essen.

For further information see [www.uni-due.de](http://www.uni-due.de)

**11.01.2017:** Lecture „Stadt mit sozialen Strategien entwickeln“. 6.15 pm, Evangelisches Studienzentrum „die Brücke“, Universitätsstraße 19, Essen.

For further information see [www.uni-due.de](http://www.uni-due.de)

**25.01.2017:** Lecture „Warum haben wir überhaupt Verpflichtungen gegenüber Flüchtlingen?“. 6.15 pm, Evangelisches Studienzentrum „die Brücke“, Universitätsstraße 19, Essen.

For further information see [www.uni-due.de](http://www.uni-due.de)

*Further events, news on political developments concerning refugee issues and information about our work can be found on our homepage at [www.fnrw.de](http://www.fnrw.de) or on our Facebook-page <http://www.facebook.com/FluechtlingsratNRW>.*

\*All the events are in German language.

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