

FlüchtlingsRAT NRWe.V.

Newsletter February 2017

Dear Reader!

In this February issue of our newsletter, we report on various actions and protests against deportations from the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) to Afghanistan. On 11.02.2017, a nationwide campaign day took place. In many German cities demonstrations were held at the same time, including one in Düsseldorf. Despite a new report by the UN Refugee Agency, which describes the poor security situation in Afghanistan, on 23 January 2017 and last week Wednesday Afghan asylum seekers were again deported from Germany. We call on the North Rhine-Westphalian government to issue a deportation stop to Afghanistan.

This year two important elections will take place in Germany. The federal state parliament (Landtag in German) of NRW is elected on 14.05.2017, and in September the citizens decide about the composition of the Bundestag, the federal parliament of Germany. Based on these future events, we have launched a series of panel discussion with (potential) members of the Landtag in every government district called "Refugee Policy in the Focus of the State Parliamentary Elections". The kick-off event in Bielefeld on 3 February 2017 was well attended; the last panel discussion of the series will be organized on 03.03.2017 in Düsseldorf. Unfortunately, the current election campaigns are partly characterized by the fact that they are opposed to refugees. In 2016, the federal government of NRW already announced their intention to deport a greater number of refugees from Germany. Therefore, various measures have been launched, which we would like to present to you in this issue. At the same time, we are informing about many initiatives in the municipalities which have caused some turmoil in the recent weeks and are worth to be supported.

If you have comments on the articles in this newsletter, please write to initiatven@fnrnw.de. You can subscribe and unsubscribe to the newsletter under www.fnrnw.de

Afghanistan is not a safe country - call for demonstrations in Düsseldorf

Together with many other initiatives and organizations, the refugee council NRW (FR NRW) called for the demonstration „Abschiebungsstopp nach Afghanistan – Jetzt! #keinsicheresLand“ on February 11, 2017 in Düsseldorf. This day was a nationwide protest day against deportations to Afghanistan: e.g. with demonstrations in Berlin, Hamburg, Hannover, Rostock, Düsseldorf, Bielefeld, Nuremberg, Wiesbaden, Trier and Erfurt. Around 2000 people participated in the demonstration in Düsseldorf.



The refugee council NRW put its focus on the situation in Afghanistan and those of the Afghans living here by means of various activities, such as a postcard campaign or the dissemination of information on the security situation in Afghanistan under the hashtag # Afghanistanisnotsafe in the social media. On January 12, 2017, an open letter to the North Rhine-Westphalian Minister of the Interior, Ralf Jäger, requested an immediate deportation stop from North-Rhine Westphalia to Afghanistan and appealed to join an initiative from Schleswig-Holstein for a nationwide deportation stop. The letter refers to a new report of the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) of 22 December 2016, in which the UNHCR disagrees with the Federal Government's assessment of the security situation in Afghanistan. According to UNHCR, "the entire Afghan territory is affected by a domestic armed conflict within the meaning of Article 15c of the EU Qualifications Directive". The situation in Afghanistan has "worsened altogether".

FRNRW: call for demonstration „Abschiebungsstopp nach Afghanistan – Jetzt! #keinsicheresLand“ (25.01.2017)

FR NRW: postcard campaign „#AfghanistanisNOTsafe“

FR NRW: open letter to North Rhine Westphalian Minister of Interior Jäger – deportation stop to Afghanistan (12.01.2017)

Generalanzeiger Bonn: Tausende demonstrieren für Abschiebestopp nach Afghanistan (11.02.2017)

Activities against the deportation of afghan refugees

During the past weeks there has been a lot of communal protest against deportations from Germany to Afghanistan. On February 1st about 300 people demonstrated in front of the city-hall in Bochum due to a meeting of the municipal council, in order to support the initiative "No deportations to Afghanistan" by the Council Fraction DIE LINKE. The demonstration was initiated by the initiative "Treffpunkt Asyl Bochum" which appealed to the foreigner's office, the mayor Thomas Eiskirch and the politicians in Bochum to effectively prevent deportations from Bochum to Afghanistan. The request of the fraction DIE LINKE was taken back during the meeting, in order to initiate a resolution for a deportation stop together with other fractions in the next meeting of the municipal council.



On February 2nd, the initiative "Nedaje Afghan افغان ندادی – Afghanischer Aufschrei – Afghan Outcry" appealed for a demonstration in front of the city hall in Düsseldorf. Before the start of the meeting of the municipal council in Düsseldorf, the initiative handed over an appeal against deportations to the mayor of Düsseldorf, Thomas Geisel. During the meeting, the council of Düsseldorf allowed an application on deportations to Afghanistan. It requests a careful examination of the possibilities of a right of residence for people from Afghanistan whose claim for asylum has been rejected.

[report-D: Düsseldorfer Stadtrat verurteilt Abschiebungen nach Afghanistan \(03.02.2017\)](#)

[bo-alternativ.de: Keine Abschiebungen nach Afghanistan \(02.02.2017\)](#)

Standards for the accommodation of LGBTI*-refugees – Flüchtlingsrat NRW issues an information sheet for the municipalities

In the context of the project "Infopool LGBTI", the Flüchtlingsrat NRW (refugee council North Rhine-Westphalia) issued an information sheet for the municipalities. It contains suggestions for the improvement of the accommodation situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersexual and transgender (LGBTI*) refugees, who are in need of special protection. Unfortunately, LGBTI*-refugees (about five percent of all refugees in Germany) are not sufficiently protected in Germany. Thus, they do not only

face violence and discrimination in their countries of origin because of their sexual orientation, but also in accommodation facilities in Germany. This circumstance is another consequence of missing minimum standards for the accommodation of refugees in municipal facilities. On the base of a catalogue of criteria, the information sheet defines minimum standards for the accommodation of this group of refugees. The main demand is the opportunity to move into private apartments. Another suggestion are accommodation facilities, like flat shares, only for LGBTI* refugees. Currently, e.g. the city of Cologne is enhancing their capacities in this direction. Especially in rural areas there is a lack of counselling facilities. Therefore, the sheet suggests an urban accommodation as central as possible. Furthermore, the sheet contains best practice models from initiatives in Nuremberg and Berlin, as well as information about further sources.

FRNRW: LSBTI-Flüchtlinge in NRW – Ein Merkblatt für Kommunen*

Federal state government of North Rhine-Westphalia is testing a summary procedure for Dublin III cases in three federal accommodation facilities for refugees

In agreement with the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the federal state government of North Rhine-Westphalia launched a pilot project in three facilities (in Sankt Augustin, Ratingen and Bottrop) to locate asylum seekers of the Dublin III process in order to enforce a summary procedure. All three of the facilities have space for about 900 people. After the procedure, they are either assigned to a municipality in North Rhine-Westphalia, or deported to the country responsible for their claim for asylum according to Dublin III. According to Dublin III, refugees can be deported to the country of their first arrival in the European Union, e.g. Greece, Hungary or Italy. The main purpose of the pilot project is to shorten the time of residence in Germany. The legal background is that people are to be deported within the first six weeks of their residence. Otherwise, the claim of asylum is to be processed in the actual country of residence. The authorities argue that they hope for an increased efficiency through the pilot project.

In 2015, Germany requested 44.892 takeovers to other EU member states, of which 29.699 were accepted. In total, 3.597 people were deported. For quite some time Dublin III deportations to Greece were suspended. But now, Thomas de Maizière, minister of the Interior, wants to allow deportations to Greece from March 15th 2017. According to the WDR, the facility in Bottrop is in use since December 1st of 2016.

WDR: NRW testet schnelleres Asylverfahren (25.01.2017)

Federal state government of North Rhine-Westphalia plans to enhance “action plan Western Balkans” – Federal Government offers “go away”-money

In 2016, 25.375 people have been deported from Germany, 5.121 of them from North Rhine-Westphalia – more than from any other federal state. In a press release, the Ministry of the Interior in NRW stated on January 24th of 2017 that in 2016 26.611 asylum seekers either have left NRW “voluntarily” or have been deported. That is 10.769 more than in 2015. Nevertheless, on several occasions, e.g. the asylum political forum in December 2016, the federal government announced their will to deport even more people in 2017.

Within the framework of the “action plan Western Balkans”, the federal state government of NRW runs several accommodation facilities where people from so called “safe states of origin” can be held permanently in order to be deported collectively after their asylum procedure. In a new action, NRW

plans a major deportation to the Balkans for February. Up to 2.000 asylum seekers from the Balkans were planned to be relocated from other accommodation facilities to the reception centers in Cologne and Muenster. The goal of this action was to assemble people from the same states of origin in order to simplify deportation and facilitate collective deportations.

The plan was suspended after protests by the cities, the "Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft zur Unterstützung Asylsuchender" (GGUA) in Muenster and the refugee council of Cologne. Nevertheless, it may take place at another accommodation facility within the federal state. North Rhine-Westphalia also maintains its plans to create "special reception facilities" according to paragraph 30a of the Asylum Act, where refugees who are undergoing an accelerated asylum procedure are supposed to be accommodated, e.g. Asylum seekers from "safe countries of origin".

Minister of the Interior, Jäger, is also intending to carry out joint deportations by chartered planes to Algeria and Morocco. Currently, deportations to these countries take place only in normal scheduled flights.

The federation ("Bund") increases its deportation pressure. The federal program "Starthilfe Plus" offers extra money incentives for refugees who withdraw their application for asylum or renounce a legal action after a negative decision of the BAMF and leave Germany. The program does not include all asylum seekers. Thus, people from Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Moldova and Kosovo are excluded from "Starthilfe Plus".

MIK: NRW steigert 2016 die Zahl freiwilliger Ausreisen und Abschiebungen deutlich (24.01.2017)

GGUA: Münster darf nicht zur Abschiebungszentrale werden! Landeseinrichtung in der Oxford-Kaserne soll für mehrere Wochen zu Abschiebelager umfunktioniert werden (30.01.2017)

Kölner FR: Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung (EAE) Köln-Bayenthal wird Abschiebeeinrichtung (27.01.2017)

WDR: Innenminister fordert Neuregelung von Abschiebungen (05.02.2017)

Miqazin: „Hau ab Prämien“. Innenministerium lobt neue Rückkehrprämien für Flüchtlinge aus (30.01.2017)

BMI: StarthilfePlus-Programm 2017. Zusätzliche finanzielle Unterstützung freiwilliger Rückkehrer/innen

Initiatives in municipalities request the reception of refugees from Greece and a winter deportation stop

In Cologne, a broad alliance of civil society supports successfully long-term tolerated refugees. In the middle of 2016 approximately 4,500 people lived with toleration in Cologne - about a third of them for more than 5 years and more than 800 for over 15 years. In an open letter to the mayor of Cologne, the alliance called on the use of all legal possibilities to tolerate this group of people. Among the signers were also 60 well-known inhabitants of Cologne like writers, artists, honorary women, politicians and clerics. The main committee of the city of Cologne received the request on January 9, 2017 and passed a request with a large majority, which urged the Cologne administration to create a safe perspective for long-term tolerated people in Cologne.

In other municipalities initiatives were launched against the restrictive course of the refugee policy too. In a press release on 12.01.2017, the *Bochumer Initiativkreis Flüchtlingsarbeit* requested from the Ausländerbehörde, the mayor Thomas Eiskirch and the local politics to restrain from deportation to cold target areas until Easter. In Muenster there is an alliance of different associations, initiatives and organizations

for such a municipal winter deportation stop as well. The city of Muenster was asked to make use of all the means of action and the possibilities of action to suspend "voluntary" returns and deportations to the Balkans during winter.

In Hamburg, the campaign group "Hamburg hat Platz" called on Hamburg's mayor Olaf Scholz to accept 1,000 refugees from Greece. Free capacities could be reactivated. The group launched an online petition, which is also joined by the German Union for Education and Science (GEW).

Kölnische Rundschau: „Geduldet“, aber „Kölner“ Auch Prominente fordern ein Bleiberecht (05.01.2017)

Beschluss des Hauptausschusses der Stadt Köln: Bleiberechtsperspektiven für langjährig geduldete Menschen in Köln (09.01.2017)

Bochumer Initiativkreis: Keine Abschiebungen in Kälte, Obdachlosigkeit und Elend im Winter (12.01.2017)

Pressekonferenz des Bündnisses gegen Abschiebungen Münster: Für einen sofortigen Abschiebestopp (18.01.2017)

Emsbütteler Nachrichten: Hamburg soll 1.000 Flüchtlinge aus Griechenland aufnehmen (31.01.2017)

Panel discussion on political party priorities in preparation of the Landtagswahl NRW

On May 14, 2017, the regional elections will take place in North Rhine-Westphalia. On this occasion, the Refugee Council in NRW organized several panel discussions on refugee policy in North Rhine-Westphalia in February and March 2017. Five events are planned, one in every government district, in Bielefeld, Bonn, Düsseldorf, Soest and Muenster. The aim of the events is to discuss with members of the Landtag the positions of the parties currently represented in the Landtag in order to help the electoral process.



On February 3, the first event took place in Bielefeld and was well attended with 100 people. The first discussion showed that the requirements for refugee policy in NRW have changed. A year ago, it were mainly the new arrivals; Today, administrations and politics need to deal more with the consequences of the immigration and the challenge of integration. Birgit Naujoks, Managing Director of the Refugee Council NRW, sharply criticized the increased "deportation pressure" of the regional government. The measures envisaged would be "in no way human standards". There is also much to criticize in the area of accommodation. Everywhere in NRW, giant facilities are operated, which are isolated and far out. During the dis-

cussion, Naujoks spoke out for minimum standards for accommodation and accused the policy in NRW of having taken a "restrictive path". The representatives of the parties agreed with Naujoks at the point of the accommodation situation: there were not enough offers to meet the needs of asylum seekers in NRW. The representative of the FDP, Stephen Paul, and Simone Brand of the pirates demanded a clear immigration law. André Kuper, of the CDU, made it clear that his party was demanding an asylum right, which would provide clear rules and protection, but on the other hand "must be consistently repatriated". Matthias Bolte from Bündnis 90 / The Greens questioned the "construct of safe countries of origin". Countries such as Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco are not convinced that deportations to Afghanistan are irresponsible. Nevertheless, the issue of Bündnis 90 / The Greens in the red-green NRW state government participated in the last two collective detachments to Afghanistan. The SPD did not participate in the event in Bielefeld. The dates of the further discussion will be published on our homepage as well as the media echo.

FR NRW: Flüchtlingspolitik im Fokus der Landtagswahl (25.01.2017)

Police in NRW advises refugees not to celebrate carnival and to accept police checks „without criticism“

In a press release from February the 3rd 2017 the Flüchtlingsrat (refugee council) of Cologne and of Leverkusen have criticized a letter by the police of North-Rhine Westphalia sharply. The police addresses the operators of refugee accommodations and announces that it considers refugees visiting carnival „rather critically“. Further, police wants to intensify security checks and appeals to refugees to accept these without criticism. In that letter police advises refugees and their supporters against visiting carnival parties „because of the incidents during the past turns of the year which can lead to undesirable interdependencies in the population.“

Both refugee councils reject the discriminating measures and demands. They point out that carnival „offers best chances for integration“. The police instruction which forbids carrying big bags and obliges refugees to carry their proof of arrival is strongly criticized. That kind of measures afford little protection: „Protection cannot be established by special treatment of the so called ‚others‘ or racial profiling. Instead such measures provoke the ‚undesirable interdependencies in the population‘.“

According to an article in the Kölner-Stadtanzeiger (KStA) from February the 4th after the criticism of the refugee councils, the State Agency for Central Police Service (Landesamt für Zentrale Polizeiliche Dienste (LZPD)) said the letter will not be spread further. In their statement the LZPD explained the writing was for „internal“ usage and „not authorized“. The Ministry of the Interior expressed itself critically on the letter.

Many refugee initiatives and other organizations joined the criticism of the refugee councils. Now more than ever they want to make a statement and organize joint events on carnival. The refugee councils advise those who celebrate to intervene if their neighbor is being checked because he or she looks „differently“.

FR Köln und FR Leverkusen: Flüchtlingsräte Köln und Leverkusen befürchten erneut Sonderbehandlung von vermeintlich „anders“ Aussehenden durch die Polizei (03.02.2017)

Neues Deutschland: Flüchtlinge müssen an Karneval mit Kontrollen rechnen (03.02.2017)

Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger: Ärger nach Polizei-Mail: „Werde Flüchtlingen nicht sagen, Karneval zu meiden“ (04.02.2017)

Events *

03.-04.03.2017: symposium „Auf Augenhöhe? Gemeinsam mit Geflüchteten vor Ort etwas bewegen. Ein Workshop für Engagierte in Initiativen – mit und ohne Fluchterfahrung“. Beginn am 03.03.2017 um 14:30 Uhr; Ende am 04.03.2017 um 16 Uhr, Dietrich-Keuning-Haus, Leopoldstr. 50 - 58, 44122 Dortmund.

For further information see www.mitarbeit.de

03.03.2017: panel discussion „Flüchtlingspolitik im Fokus der Landtagswahl“. 18:00-20:00 Uhr, Haus der Kirche, Saal 2 (EG), Bastionstraße 6, 40213 Düsseldorf.

For further information see www.frnrw.de

10.-11.03.2017: symposium „Folteropfer sehen – Versorgungspfade bahnen“. Beginn am 10.03.2017 um 12 Uhr; Ende am 11.03.2017 um 15 Uhr, Hörsaal der MNR-Klinik, Gebäude 13.55, Universitätsklinikum Düsseldorf, Moorenstr. 5, 40225 Düsseldorf

For further information see www.uniklinik-duesseldorf.de

14.03.2017: symposium „Das Geschäft mit der Angst. Rechtspopulismus als Herausforderung für die Migrationsgesellschaft“. 12:00-16:30 Uhr, LVR Horion-Haus Köln, Hermann-Pünder-Straße 1, 50679 Köln.

For further information see www.ajs.nrw.de

29.03.2017: symposium „Abschiebe- oder Willkommenskultur – wohin führt die Flüchtlingspolitik in NRW?“. 9:00-17:00 Uhr, Jugendherberge Köln-Riehl – City Hostel, An der Schanz 14, 50735 Köln.

For further information see www.koelner-fluechtlingsrat.de

31.03.2017: symposium „Integration Geflüchteter in Arbeit und Ausbildung“. 14:00-17:30 Uhr, VHS im BVZ, Clubraum, Gustav-Heinemann-Platz 2-6, 44777 Bochum.

For further information see www.vhs.bochum.de

31.03.2017: concluding conference of the project „Young Refugees NRW“. 10:00-15:00 Uhr, Kongresszentrum Westfalenhallen Dortmund, Rheinlanddamm 200, 44139 Dortmund.

For further information see (soon available) www.iss-ffm.de

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

*All the events are in German language.

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