

**Documented human rights violations and discrimination in the
Traiskirchen refugee camp during July. and August of 2015**



How did this documentation come into being?

Refugees document their own situation in Traiskirchen and their daily life in Austria.

For four weeks now, asylum seekers meet with activists of "Freedom not Frontex Vienna" in order to draw attention to their observations which are backed by their own photos and videos. The asylum seekers wish to make their difficult situation in the camp visible to the public, so rapid improvements for more humane living conditions can take place.

The documentation is based on talks with 60 persons of which ten have been involved in detailed personal conversations. Conversation partners included a group of around 35 Dari-speaking persons, mostly from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and a largely Arabic-speaking group (mostly Iraqis and Syrians, some coming from diverse African nations like the Maghreb states) of 25 persons. Many of them have already documented human rights violations and deplorable living conditions since their flight. These reports have been incorporated into this documentation.

The collected reports have been shortened and anonymised due to reasons of still open asylum cases and experiences of repression by the authorities. The supporting sources, details, reports and photos are available to Freedom not Frontex Vienna. The report has also been given to Amnesty International prior to their investigations.

Freedom not Frontex Vienna is part of a transnational network which, together with migrants and refugees, fights for their rights and humane policies. Freedom not Frontex stands for freedom of movement and opposes the policies of militant border regimes.

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Point 24: The refugees from Traiskirchen propose the following improvements:

1. Vulnerable groups: Lack of medical treatment and wheelchair-accessible facilities

The situation for wheelchair users is particularly precarious, as the rooms, toilets and bathrooms are neither barrier-free, nor suitable for wheelchairs. An affected person reports of several wheelchair users in the Traiskirchen camp who all share his issues regarding mobility, security and health.

M. fled from Syria, partly by foot. He is dependent on a wheelchair since experiencing a serious accident in Austria. Stationary therapy, which not only considered his physical, but also his psychological rehabilitation was abruptly stopped by the authorities without apparent reason and consultation with the medical team, which confirmed the need for prolongation of his treatment.

His following transfer to Traiskirchen was particularly incomprehensible for M., especially since they did not put him, as was promised, into the infirmary. His recovery was interrupted:

"They told me that it is too expensive to keep me in a hospital. They promised me good conditions and the possibility to complete my therapy. I came here, and there is no medical care at all! The sessions stopped and my health is getting worse dramatically. I asked a doctor in Traiskirchen camp for help, but she said that they don't have therapies here. It's a very depressing daily life - I can't go to a toilet or bathroom as they are not made for persons with disabilities, further no one gives me regular assistance. I need support of my wife, who is in Syria with our children."

2. Lack of psychological treatment

E. has a daughter who suffers from depression. She closed herself off, barely speaks and avoids overcrowded places. The prescribed medication shows no positive effect. There is no access to professional treatment in Traiskirchen. She would not be able to cope with a deportation, as she had horrible experiences in so-called secure third countries and other EU member states.

3. Pregnancy / Tuberculosis (TBC)

S., who is from Syria, lives in Traiskirchen for several months now, together with her family. As she is seven months pregnant, the required x-ray to check on tuberculosis has been replaced by a blood test, which falsely indicated TBC. To reassure herself, S. ended up undertaking an x-ray test which showed that she was in fact healthy. Due to the shock coming from the false diagnosis, she suffers psychological problems which also impact her family.

4. Psychological problems, caused by the accommodation

A. from Syria and a friend report that they suffer not only physically but also psychologically from the situation in the camp. They talk about bad food and an aggressive atmosphere in and around it.

"Here in Traiskirchen it's like in an 'open prison'. We are condemned to inactivity and can't do anything about it. Nor can we do anything for our families who are trapped in hails of bombs, which is the worst thing for us. The situation in Traiskirchen causes inner restlessness and psychological problems."

5. Lack of medical aid due to insufficient availability of doctors and resources

Refugees report of a particular lack of adequate medical assistance for children, chronically ill patients and emergency cases.

5.1. No treatment due to a lack of doctors

Over 20 people unanimously report:

"Medical assistance is only available from 8am to 4pm, with no doctors available at night. Sometimes we wait in line five or even seven times on consecutive days, without reaching the doctors in time or just being sent away without examination / medication / prescription."

The waiting time is almost always five or six hours, often it's only one's turn when the doctors already go home. The queue can be several hundred people long (some report having waiting numbers of 300 or 350)."

6. According to a number of refugees, patients are almost never examined or receive medical treatment:

"Once you can finally speak with to the doctors, patients are a) being sent away with the words "Come back tomorrow" or "It will get better by itself", b) sometimes only receive two or three tablets, although they would need more of them more regularly, c) are almost never examined: no anamnesis, no auscultation / measuring. There is lots of time pressure and no personnel for translations (they can only be provided by the few refugees who speak English or German)."

A concerned refugee confirms that he does not feel to be taken seriously by the doctors in the camp: "For one month now, I can't breathe properly, especially at night and I regularly have a sore throat. Every day the doctor tells me to drink water or tea and to come again tomorrow."

7. Wrong doses of medication

A patient reports: "For weeks now I have been receiving wrong doses of medication!", although he has been pointing out the fatal mistake to doctors and translators alike on numerous occasions - they did not take him seriously. He is in possession of attestations about the prescribed doses from his home country, but cannot communicate them to pharmacists or doctors.

8. No medical aid in case of fever

A woman reports that her children had been having concerning symptoms of fever for days which she wanted to discuss with the doctors. After a waiting time of two hours they told her: "We don't prescribe medicine against fever to children". It was only by the coincidental help of a passer-by, who called a translator and an ambulance, that she was able to receive assistance.

9. No medical assistance due to a lack of translations

Another woman living in Traiskirchen reports that, on numerous occasions, there has only been one lay interpreter for Dari. Medical assistance in general suffers from a lack of translations. Especially those who speak a language that is not very present in the camp don't stand a chance of support for necessary communication. In addition, these refugees can not rely as much on resources of their own, or a larger community, in order to make up for the insufficiencies in the camp.

10. Medical treatment only for "severe" cases

Several asylum seekers report unanimously that the doctors in the Traiskirchen camp don't pay attention to their health issues as they are "not really bad".

11. Repression / Abuse of authority

M. reports of repression by the employees of the Traiskirchen camp. It is customary for the parents or other persons to bring food for children or sick people. Therefore, they bring along the identity cards of these persons. During food distribution, M. has been provoked to an argument by an employee of the camp who slammed his fist on the table. The following meal, M. only received food for himself, not for his children.

12. Repression / Humiliation

M. from Syria reports, that support is not only declined for everyday issues, but also in cases of emergency:

"I suffer from cancer and had to be brought to the hospital after having problems with my health. After returning to the camp, an employee told me that he would certainly not call an ambulance for me as this would cost the camp administration 1.000 Euros, money which is not available."

13. Lack of translations regarding the own legal situation

A group of around 25 asylum seekers unanimously report about translations and the access to informations:

"None of use has ever received a letter or other informations in another language than German."

This also applies to vital important informations, for example about the own deportation and possible legal steps until then, like the deadline for an appeal (usually within a couple of days). There are no police notifications in the mother tongues of the concerned. Therefore, people seek out the only Farsi interpretor, though she is not able to understand the similar Dari. Each day, several hundred Afghanis and Iranians stand in line to wait for oral translations; naturally only a small group are able to receive them.

14. No communication and orientation for the daily life

Everyday questions and pleas are neither understood nor answered by the camp personel who are addressed as there are no interpretors available. In response to our question whether the refugees can tell someone that they need clothes, shoes etc. (of which there are plenty, according to the camp administration), 20 of the refugees unanimously explain:

"The camp employees in Traiskirchen can't or don't even want to understand us".

There is also no written information about the camp infrastructure (i.e. fire-alarm buttons, which explains the numerous false alarms), resources and goods for the daily needs - especially not in different languages.

Due to this lack of means for communication, refugees also have no access to the plethora of donations in kind which are deposited in the camp, as the camp personnel can't or don't want to inform them where they can get hold of the most essential things.

15. Neither written nor oral translations

Around 25 refugees agree that they don't understand notices for interviews and their appointments, information about their own deportation or about medical examinations.

"We don't know where to get information. We are being sent from house eleven to house 17 to house 25 and back again. Explanations or interpretors are nowhere to be found."

16. No fair trial

Refugees - especially those classified as Dublin III cases who where already questioned - report, that they are hindered from stating and backing reasons for asylum. Many of them report of torture and show images they have taken themselves of the conditions in Hungary and Bulgaria, to which the authorities did not pay attention during their Dublin-related questioning.

17. No access to legal advisers and a fair trial

A refugee woman from Iraq summarises the core question of the asylum seekers in Traiskirchen as follows:

"What is our right?"

Many of the refugees are not informed about their own legal situation and their rights. This also applies to vital informations regarding appointments for interviews, decisions, information about the own deportation and possible legal steps until then, like the short deadline for making an appeal.

A group of 25 refugees agrees: The legal advisers for asylum seekers in the camp has to provide interpreters. Often this only happens via telephone, which is time-constrained and difficult to understand. If there is an interpreter present, he or she often only speaks Farsi, not Dari. This leads to frequent mistakes in the translations. There are many identical words in both languages which have a different meaning altogether. In any case, clients are often being interrupted before being able to state everything that might be important or substantiate their asylum application.

18. False birth dates due to a lack of translation

Especially the lack of translations impedes a legally correct asylum procedure: Regarding their first interview about ten asylum seekers report unanimously:

"If you state your date of birth or not, it is usually not translated and written down as the first of January. If, in further interviews, you state your correct date of birth again, you are being accused of contradicting yourself."

As a result, due to a lack of credibility, the authorities can refuse to grant asylum.

19. Wrong age indications due to a tendency to determine an older age / systematically higher age estimates for adolescents

More than 30 young refugees observe a clear tendency in scientifically controversial age assessments to estimate their age to be older than 18. Thus, they do not qualify as being under-age or particularly vulnerable. Documents from their home countries, which they show in order to prove their actual age, are systematically being classified as not credible. Thus, the adolescents do not only have to cope with being classified as being older than they actually are, they also have to face the threat of a Dublin III deportation.

20. Existential hazards due to arbitrary denial of admission to the camp and exclusion from basic supplies

Numerous refugees in the camp are homeless or inadequately accommodated. This leads to severe psychological issues and reinforces traumatic experiences from the home countries and the flight. Refugees also report being denied access to the camp and therefore being left without accommodation, food and medical support:

"I urgently need a check-up for my wound at the camp doctor, but I don't have access any more as I missed an appointment once. I can't even go to another doctor, not even for removing the strings!"

X. has been assaulted and robbed in Traiskirchen (lost money, mobile phone and all the documents). He was stabbed with a knife. Following this incident, he went to the hospital and was then sent to the police station in Traiskirchen. Since then, he received neither food nor additional medical support. The necessary after-care is impossible, because the hospital personnel documented wrong information: "No Name", a wrong date of birth, and as address: "Erstaufnahmezentrum" (the Traiskirchen camp, of which he has been excluded).

An under-age Maghrebi has also been excluded from the camp, leaving him homeless. Once, when there was heavy rain and the securities prevented him from climbing the fence into the camp, he fell and suffered a fracture. He was operated in the hospital in the same night, but due to problems of communication, the necessary after-care was discontinued. Until today, he can barely move his fingers. He has no access to basic supplies and medical support, especially not in the camp, as he is not allowed to enter it any more.

21. Suicide and attempted suicide - lack of information and possibilities to healthy and adequate mourning

"There were two suicides and two attempted suicides within the last months in the Traiskirchen camp", asylum seekers report.

Refugees report, that in order to prevent these incidents from becoming public, the room-mates of those who attempted suicide have immediately been transferred to another accommodation facility.

Freedom not Frontex Vienna received photos from the refugees which document multiple suicide attempts. Regarding one of the attempts there are suspicions of a possible deadly outcome, which a couple of the refugees claim to have noticed and documented on-site.

The asylum seekers demand clarity, visibility, respect and the possibility to mourn. They want to denounce the living conditions in the Traiskirchen camp, which lead to health issues and psychological problems up to suicidal thoughts. Several refugees report unanimously of two respective suicide attempts and two suspected suicides. The alleged second suicide is placed in the period between march and April of 2015. An investigation has been prevented by the camp administration.

As this topic is particularly sensible and risks violating personality rights, panic- and sensation mongering, we request the authorities to clarify these cases. Not only is it an

additional burden for refugees to witness these incisive experiences, lacking clarity also leaves fertile soil for rumours to develop.

22. Specific problems of female refugees

"There are no doors in the showers for women, although they would be urgently needed. When there are no women in the showers, men also use them. Outside, there are mobile toilets, which are all extremely dirty and without toilet paper",

many of the women in and around the Traiskirchen camp report.

Numerous mothers and children are accommodated separately from the fathers for months now, partly outdoors. Transfers in particular often separate families. Many refugees experienced two to four transfers within a few months only.

23. Photographic documentation from refugees who are or have been accommodated in the Traiskirchen camp









24. The refugees from Traiskirchen propose the following improvements:

- Decent accommodation, considering the needs of all genders and people with special needs
- No homelessness, no forced endurance of extreme weather conditions
- No separation of families in Traiskirchen or during transfers
- Information about the own transfers and understanding of the transfer system
- Better and sufficient supply of food, drinks and sanitary products
- Guarantee of medical support (more doctors, translators for all languages) and medical support for emergencies around the clock
- Information and orientation regarding the daily life in Austria and the camp
- Sufficient access to legal aid, information about the own legal situation and rights.
- No constraints of movement - especially regarding medical and legal support - when there are deficiencies in the assigned area
- Quick clarification of the legal situation in order to be able to rescue the own family from the dangers of a war zone
- And end to Dublin III deportations due to the threat of prisons, violence and torture, as already experienced by the refugees in Hungary and Bulgaria
- No exclusion from the camp and basic supplies.
- Respect, decent treatment and and end of arbitrariness
- No isolation from the society through exclusion, but safety and freedom in Austria

Statement from Freedom Not Frontex Vienna: "For months now, politics are willingly leading the Traiskirchen camp into a humanitarian catastrophe. This is not an effect of incompetence, but of racist policies that exploit refugees in order to show to the population that the "asylum surge" is not manageable.

The rise in mobilisation of always broader parts of the public and the humanitarian engagement of many shows, that these plans don't work out. However, it is important to point out that the duty to accommodate and supply refugees lies with the state. A duty which can and should not be compensated by the civil society.

The numerous refugees we were able to get to know see very well, that the political system is creating a crisis of accommodation at their cost but emphasise that they perceive the population as "very supportive and friendly". They organise themselves and support each other by translating - many speak three to five languages - accompany each other to appointments and speak to the press in order to express their resentment.

“Let us together demand and end to the racists policies of exclusion!”