

OPEN LETTER

*to the Lord Mayor of the city of Wuppertal
to the parties of the Wuppertal City-Council*

Save the refugees from Idomeni!

Since the „Visegrad“ countries with Macedonia and Austria decided not to admit more refugees to Europe, thousands of people got stuck at the Greek/Macedonian border in Idomeni. The border is secured with fences and razor wire and it is monitored by border guards day and night. Some reports about brutal violence against people got public during the last weeks, and on Sunday, 10th of April we witnessed a war-like situation during an attempt of hundreds of refugees to cross the border. Hundreds were injured by fired tear gas, shock grenades and rubber bullets, among them many women and children.

Meanwhile many politicians and media are describing the refugees who arrive in Greece as «illegal immigrants». But, as well as refugees who have already arrived here, all of them fled from the Syrian Assad regime or the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, from the Taliban in Afghanistan or from terror, deadly conflicts, hunger and hopelessness in Africa. These «illegal immigrants» often are relatives of those who have managed to arrive here due to more favorable conditions and who already got a residence permit in Germany sometimes. They are brothers and sisters, parents, wives and husbands of those who were greeted at the railway stations last September and who were warmly welcomed by numerous spontaneous «welcome initiatives».

The change in language paved the road for a changing of paradigm: Instead of making an effort to provide a safe location for the refugees, the EU itself now wages a war against the people who want to escape the violence. The suffering of the people in Idomeni on the one hand and the demand to «stand the images» on the other just have one purpose: Deterrence. We - self-organized refugees and initiatives of supporters - can't stand this situation any longer.

We can't understand why people have to sleep in tents and under foils in appalling conditions, while there are empty accomodations in Germany. We see more and more

empty reception structures that were recently created with impressive commitment of staff and volunteers. Social workers and security services in the accomodations fear to loose their jobs. So the question is not whether the admission of more people is possible - but only if there is a political will to decide that refugees still get protection in Germany.

In light of the German history, and also in view of international and international obligations and standards (Geneva Refugees Convention, European Convention on Human Rights) this ought to be self-evident. But we have to recognize that people and their rights have become political bargaining chips. We see European politicians more and more assuming the position of extrem right and right-wing populist parties and simply denying universal human rights.

Just because of that we maintain the right to protection. In addition, integration of the people who are already here won't succeed as long as their family, friends and neighbors are threatened by hunger, cold, illness and death. The German federal states have the legal possibility to decide to save refugees from other countries on a humanitarian basis in coordination with the federal government. In view of the current European and worldwide situation, this isn't only a possibility but a moral imperative.

As old and new citizens of Wuppertal we ask the City Council to decide that Wuppertal agrees to take an adequate contingent of refugees from Greece. Priority should be given to people with diseases and handicaps, and especially to those who have relatives living here as asylum seekers or with residence permit. We call on the head of the municipality to contact the Ministry of Interior immediately and to work for a humanitarian solution.