

"We are people, not files!"

Again sharp criticism of the Erfurt Ausländerbehörde

The Erfurt Ausländerbehörde („Foreigners Authority“) has already been the focus of public criticism in recent years. Too long waiting times, hardly any free appointments, experiences with racism and discrimination are among the problems that migrants and refugees experience at the Erfurt Ausländerbehörde. In times of the Corona pandemic, these conditions have become even worse. Now, those affected and supporters have joined forces in an initiative and demanded in an open letter: Stop the unjust practice of the foreigners authority! In order to address this demand to the people in charge and the citizens of Erfurt, there will be events in the coming weeks.

About 21,000 people in Erfurt depend on the work and decisions of the foreigners authority in Erfurt - these are migrants, refugees, exchange students or emigrated professionals in Erfurt. The „Ausländerbehörde“ determines whether they are allowed to work, whether and when they are issued documents and where they are allowed to stay at all - and is also responsible for deporting people. Documents issued by the Ausländerbehörde in Erfurt are not recognised by other authorities and offices, especially the police, but also by landlords and employers. This means existential problems for those affected: no flat, no job, possibly even being arrested by the police. Many feel ignored and are afraid of the arbitrariness of the immigration authorities, which has far-reaching consequences on their lives. Added to this is the feeling of not being accepted in society.

At the first open meetings of the initiative under the motto "Let's Act About Ausländerbehörde!" ("Let's Act About the Foreigners Authority!"), it quickly became clear that very many people have had numerous bad experiences with the authority for years. "This is extremely frustrating. People live in constant uncertainty, they don't know what will happen to them and don't dare to speak out freely and critically against this injustice - for fear of arbitrary consequences. The problems have existed for years - it cannot be that responsibility continues to be shifted away from oneself, staff shortages or lack of space are used as excuses - and therefore people do not get residence permits for years, for example, or family reunification is not implemented. This is silent racism. We have to unite against this and make it clear that we are people and not files," emphasises an activist who is herself affected by the Ausländerbehörde.

Due to pressure from civil society, the city of Erfurt has meanwhile reacted to the inadequate space situation and the resulting understaffing of the foreigners office and has allocated it larger premises for the summer of 2023. It has not yet been clarified whether and how this will be used to improve the situation of those affected.

This is where the initiative comes in and demands in an open letter from those responsible in the city of Erfurt and state of Thuringia, including Andreas Bausewein (Mayor of the city of Erfurt), the implementation of four immediate measures:

1. "The immediate advertisement of the vacant jobs!" When advertising and filling positions, attention should be paid to sensitivity to the realities of life and everyday life of migrants, and people with a migration history should be explicitly addressed and hired.
2. "The immediate redesign of the website of the foreigners authority in Erfurt!" The translation of the website, including all its functions into the required languages, as well as into easy language, and a barrier-free, simple and clear application.
3. "The immediate establishment of a complaints office for discriminatory and other misconduct by staff in the budget, located in the foreigners authority and staffed by external personnel!"
4. "The immediate provision of all application forms and information sheets in the required languages!"

In order to bring the perspectives and demands of affected people to the streets, the initiative is calling for a **demonstration on Tuesday, 27 September 2022 at 4 pm** from the „Ausländerbehörde“ (Bürgermeister-Wagner-Straße 1) to the city hall at Fischmarkt. The open letter will be handed over to the Erfurt city councillors. The next day, the city council will meet in the Thüringenhalle at 5 pm. The initiative will also be present there from 4 pm to call on the city parliament to deal with the open letter and the demands in their meeting. Representatives of the press are cordially invited to the events.

The complete open letter and information on the upcoming events can be found in several languages at menschenkeineakten.blackblogs.org.

Press contact

The initiative is available for questions and interviews.

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