

Migration debate before the election - those affected remain unheard

Munich, 14 February 2025 - The current election campaign and migration debate in Germany is causing profound fears and uncertainty among refugees and migrants. The Bavarian Refugee Council warns of the consequences that these debates have on the people affected. 'The ongoing discussion about stricter asylum laws, more deportations and the growing rhetoric of racism are massively increasing the fears of refugees and migrants,' explains Uche Akpulu, spokesperson for the Bavarian Refugee Council. As it is an election campaign, it is mainly the voices of politicians that have been heard in the media so far, while those actually affected have barely had a chance to speak. 'It is telling that the current debate is mainly dominated by political actors, but the voices of those who are directly affected by the regulations - refugees and migrants - are largely absent,' criticises Akpulu.

Some statements made by politicians during the election campaign are fuelling fear. One example of the escalation of fears is the statement by Bavarian Prime Minister Markus Söder: 'What else will happen?'. This fear-mongering rhetoric not only reinforces social division, but also promotes the stigmatisation of those affected. The fact that politicians are blaming entire groups of people for the actions of individuals in the public debate is an injustice and extremely dangerous.

'Although refugees and migrants are just as shocked by the acts of violence committed by people of foreign origin and also have a greater sense of insecurity, they are equated with the perpetrators. They now have to justify their origin and are all lumped together,' says Uche Akpulu, spokesperson for the Bavarian Refugee Council

In Bavaria, refugees and migrants are increasingly experiencing racist attacks and discrimination. The number of attacks on accommodation facilities rose to 33 in 2024, and 277 attacks on refugees were also registered. This violence is a direct consequence of the verbal escalation in public discourse, which is also fuelled by the unspeakable migration debate during the election campaign. The fact that those affected are barely heard in this debate further contributes to the fact that stigmatisation and scapegoat narratives shape public perception. We would like to give two of those affected a chance to speak and share their perspective on the social climate:

Fear of racism and discrimination

A 50-year-old woman, originally from Uganda, reports: 'I have been in Germany for over 10 years, fully integrated, trained as a geriatric nurse and have worked here for the last few years. I have a settlement permit. I'm currently worried about whether I'll be allowed to stay in Germany. Every day there is a new piece of news, a new legislative proposal. With all the changes and uncertainties, it is very difficult and depressing for migrant women to concentrate on what they are doing here. Nobody knows what the future holds if politics develops like this.'

Fear of deportation and stricter laws

The fear of deportation is another concern among refugees and migrants. For many people who have been living in Germany for years, the question arises as to whether they will soon face deportation, whether they will lose their jobs and their livelihood. A single mother from Sierra Leone writes to us: 'I have been in Germany since 2020, and since then I have faced many challenges as a refugee. With a baby, I had to move from one refugee camp to another. Everything takes forever, waiting for the asylum decision, a place on a German course, a place in a daycare centre, a relocation and work permit. In all of this, I am still confronted with racism, which causes me a lot of anger, emotion and fear. I can't even sleep well because deportation keeps coming up. So I'm afraid of the future and deportation, even though my daughter has been granted refugee protection here.'

Appeal to politicians

The Bavarian Refugee Council calls on politicians not to base the debate on migration on fears and resentment, but to seek real solutions to problems associated with migration. This includes providing security for all people, reducing factors such as poverty and marginalisation and keeping society together instead of dividing it.

The Bavarian Refugee Council continues to stand by the side of refugees and migrants in these difficult times and calls for an objective and respectful debate on the topic of flight and migration.

If you have any questions or would like to be interviewed, please contact

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