

Hartz IV

(from Karawane Bielefeld)

AGAINST SOCIAL CUTS, STATE RACISM AND EXCLUSION! EQUAL RIGHTS FOR EVERYONE!

*(Presseerklärung zur Kundgebung am 15 Juli 2004
anlässlich der Sitzung des Stadtrates zum Thema "Umsetzung von Hartz IV")*

On the occasion of a meeting of the (Bielefeld) City Council, we protest together with other initiatives against the anti-social effects of Hartz IV. Hartz IV has been the most deep-seated reduction in the social area since 1949. Everyone will realize this, either through the reduction of social benefits or through an increasing pressure on competition and job efficiency. In connection with the "neo-liberal reform package Hartz IV", from the beginning of 2005 the new Migration Law will come into force, whose effects will control the lives of many people. The ideology and the view on human beings of Hartz IV as well as of the new Migration Law are both guided by "profitability of labor", thereby cutting off the "principle of solidarity". Particularly, the Migration Law makes it clear that the greatest interest is not to protect the rights of refugees and migrants but to be able to use the good qualified migrants who are useful to the German labor market (with the effect of enticing away good qualified people from the poor countries by the power of rich countries). Phrases like "committed work has to be profitable again" or "migration into social systems has to be abolished", accompanying both of the discussions, support the neo-liberal spirit of the times. Solidarity and "equal rights and opportunities" are not part of the law and of the debates around it. Instead, the ideology of competition/rivalry and national/racial categories rules. Refugees are already punished by various reductions on their fundamental rights. By the neo-liberal principle of efficiency, by publicized pressure on the municipal financial administration and by the migration law, punishment on the refugees will increase.

Some examples of reduction of social benefits and state racism

- **The so-called "Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz" (living below the subsistence level)**

A great number of refugees get social benefits, based on the Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz, which has been in force since 1993. The main emphasis of this law is the distinctive reduction of social benefits below the subsistence level valid for people with a German passport. If refugees do not collaborate (for example, by organizing documents from the embassy of the country from where they took flight), then the municipality can completely cancel the social benefits which is already 34 % below the level of what German people get. With the new migration law, the group of people who will be punished by it will increase.

- **Apartment situation of refugees**

People who get social benefits are committed to live in apartments with a square meter limit of 4.17 Euro. The organization Widerspruch e.V. published that there are 3 % of apartments in Bielefeld conforming to this demand. For refugees it is more difficult to find an apartment, considering the racist selection criteria of many landlords/landladies. With this provision, stigmatization and exclusion will increase.

- **Getting social benefits cuts down the fundamental right for families to live together**

If refugees get social benefits, then the social welfare office refuses the applications for family members (wives/husbands and children of minor age) to migrate to Germany because of the question of cost. The fundamental right for families to stay together gets cut down.

- **Getting social benefits and the consequences for the residence permit**

At various levels, getting social benefits is already an exclusion criteria for acquiring a better residence permit status. It can also be dangerous for an existing residence permit. Because of this, refugees accept undignified and underpaid working conditions.

- **Labor market and one-Euro jobs**

For more than ten years now, refugees can be forced to do so-called "gemeinnützige Arbeit" (charitable work) (§5 Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz). This kind of work does not give the right to health insurance or pension insurance or other labor rights. The same situation will apply to

the German people soon. Over and above that, the obligation of refugees to work has never been made with the intention of integrating them into the labor market. Generally, for refugees who have to apply for a working permit for a particular job, opportunities will get worsened by Hartz IV. Because of the priority check rule, first it has to be checked that there is no interested or qualified German or European citizen interested or qualified for the job. Due to intense pressure which Hartz IV will produce, the employment exchange will increasingly respond that there are others for this job, or that there are others only in theory.

- **Hartz IV and further education**

A large group of refugees will be excluded from the rules of Hartz IV and get furthermore social benefits based on the Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz. By this, Pro Asyl has publicized that this large group will be excluded from further education measures and training, thus remaining stuck up in longtime unemployment and so-called one-Euro jobs.

The demonstrated examples are not entirely the direct results of Hartz IV: But due to the type of social-benefits cuts in Germany which do not take fundamental rights into consideration, we fear that all possibilities, also and specially on refugees, will be used to save money. And it also happens if people, after having lived of a long time in Germany, have to be deported to an unsafe country of origin, also if as a result of this the families get destroyed, and if refugees have to live below the subsistence level valid for people with German passport.

For us, Hartz IV makes it clear that the exclusion from enjoying fundamental rights will encompass even more and groups social groups. A society which accepts such a huge absence of social rights and indignity for a special group people, as is already the case of refugees, realizes the need to do the same to other groups of people.

Refugees and migrants are punished by a special form of exclusion and lack of rights as a result of racism and "globalization". Hartz IV, as well as the new Migration Law, makes it clear that the neo-liberal ideology of competition/rivalry pushes away the aspect of solidarity and equal rights for everyone. Because of this, we fight together with other initiatives against the exclusion from fundamental rights, an exclusion that includes more and more social sectors.

Together against social cuts and state racism!