



Report about the detainment and planned deportation of Momodou B. by the *Black Student Union Bremen*

#ForMomodou
#FreedomForMomodou

We as the Black Student Union Bremen have learnt that Momodou, a young Black man, has been detained by the Bremen police, awaiting deportation at the beginning of April. As a group that stands for political education, promoting Black consciousness and believes in the liberation and healing of all Black people, we cannot remain silent in the face of what is not only happening to Momodou but also to many others.

Before sharing Momodou's story it is necessary to contextualize what is happening to him. He - like so many others - did not leave his country because he felt like it was going to be a fun trip.

"We run away from home because we are facing so many difficulties, we think that here it will be better, you can have a better education, a future, you know. But here as well it is some scrambling for us."

These difficulties that Momodou is talking about do NOT come out of nowhere. By now, it should be common knowledge that Germany and every other western nation enslaved and colonized African people and lands for centuries.

We all know where our resources come from, who works for them and who profits off African peoples' labor.

We all know who the corrupt leaders of our countries are and who pays them.

We all know whose political and economic thrive depends on our backbone.

We all know who is crippling us every time we try to organize and stand up for ourselves.

We will not explain all those things because we are not going to pretend like this is a question of not-knowing.

We all know.

Bremen officials know.

The German government knows.

How could you possibly not know when you are the one instigating these things? (And grace yourself with having "a concept about the remembrance of colonialism"?)

This is not a question of not-knowing. It is a question of ignorance.

Why - one might wonder - can white people, authorities, institutions, lawmakers and the likes continue a practice of colonization and destruction of our home lands and then honestly and seriously pretend like they don't know why we are coming here?

Because this world is built on ignorance towards Black people's suffering.

This is why the abandonment and criminalization of Black people is a normality.

Being ignorant about it works.

Anti-Blackness does not only come in the form of violence towards Black bodies but also allows people not to care about it. More so, next to not having to bother about Black peoples' suffering this ignorance is not even met with an outcry of injustice.

All the while, it is ignored why people would embark on the most dangerous journey of their lives in the first place, if not out of desperation. People are leaving their homes because their countries are not serving them! They are not serving them because they are serving the western powers they were colonized by. The government, the political climate, the land, the educational system: None of it serves or is owned by Black people!

Black people are trying to escape this toxic place only to find themselves in the lands of the makers of their misery, who then without any repercussions continue to disenfranchise, punish and marginalize Black people for their sheer existence on this earth. This is the situation that Momodou and many others like him find themselves in: Existing in an anti-Black world that wants anything but for us to be alive.

We know this. It's just that everyone ignores this reality.

Solidarity will not take us anywhere if we don't acknowledge that civil society at large is a toxic institution which is inherently anti-Black and which has to go before all of us can live in it. To pretend that "reforming" the system will change anything about the black blood it consists of is more than naive and aimed to keep us right where we are under the guise of "progress".

Our city calls itself a "safe harbor for refugees" which is committed to a "humanitarian duty to save people from drowning"; yet it will deport people into homelessness without the prospects of survival on the streets in the blink of an eye.

The discrepancy between priding oneself with the admission and integration of refugees while openly violating Black people's human rights is all too obvious. And it does not matter how often we point this out to you, you are fully aware of this. Yet, you don't see anything problematic or wrong with it because to you, in order to be deserving of human rights, you must be human. And you are not treating Black people as humans because Black people are not human to you. You see how we are drowning at sea in the news, how we get shot in the streets or live on them, how our children get taken away from us because you believe us to be unfit parents or we have to send them away because you made our homes unsafe. You see Black people imprisoned simply for being Black.

Momodou's story is not just about Bremen calling itself a "safe harbor" and it actually not being one. It is a reason to finally talk about what anti-Blackness looks like in this country.

Momodou was in Hamburg when he was arrested by the police and transported to Bremen:

"I was going to the supermarket and they saw me on the way and they control me. [...] And they were detaining me and they were treating me like criminal, like somebody who did some shit outside or who killed some people, you know. I tell them: 'You should not treat me like this.' At least if you tell me: 'do this'. [Ok] let's go. I will be cooperating, not running around. But they were just treating me like criminal and after then they transferred me here."

After his arrest Momodou was held in a cell for about eight hours without any food. When complaining about the conditions of his detention and the racist treatment of the police officers one replied with: "Du bist hier im Ausländerbüro."¹

For now, Momodou is being detained in the police station Bremen Vahr. About his current state he says:

"Well the conditions here it's like you are in prison. For nothing. And we don't cause trouble but they treat us like prisoners. They lock you at 12 o'clock and you will not come out until 10 o'clock in the morning. No, that is too much time you know. In the morning, maybe if you are used to wake up at 6 o'clock and used to read something or do something else you cannot do it. [...] [Y]ou can buy food because every week, like every eight to nine days they will give you 20€. You can buy cigarette, this stuff. Normally I buy cigarette and there are two- no, there are four boys upstairs we used to give 5, 5 [euros] and sometimes we manage

¹ „This is the foreigner's office.“

to give it to the police, and they buy us something. But if you give it to them to buy something; maybe if you give it to them today it will arrive...3 days or 2 days. [...] They open it [your cell] at 10, to walk outside a little bit. There is a small upstairs, you know yesterday I was lifting a book like this. [During the rally in front of the police station, on March 7, Momodou stuck a book through the window to wave to the protesters.] And they lock that place [the kitchen] because they don't want you to see me. [...] They used to open there around 3, and 5 to 6 they are closing. So we are always inside."

Momodou hasn't been outside for over a week now. By the time he will get deported he will have spent several weeks without having set foot outside the police compound.

"[The kitchen] is where we sit down, play some games- because everybody have stress. Some will be in the room, they don't talk. It's not easy in here you know."

During his detention in Hamburg Momodou received one meal a day. In Bremen he gets two. He has health issues with his teeth and the food he receives is sometimes painful to eat. About receiving health care treatment, he recounts:

"Yeah, I disturb them because it was paining me, you know. So I also disturb them every time I be ringing them, calling them every time until now they are tired of me and they took me to the doctor. But even the time they were taking me to the doctor and they just chain me [...]. Yeah, I was chained like this [puts his wrists together with the bottom of his arms facing upwards] in the car and then all the way and I see the doctor and the doctor check it and say the teeth must be removed but I will ask them if they remove it they will replace it because it is an important place, you know, for chewing. And I will see whether they will say yes or no."

He was not informed about what will happen after the removal of his tooth: "I don't know if they're gonna replace it with another one or not." Treatment such as this follows a paternalistic tradition that has allowed white people to decide about the treatment (or lack thereof) of Black peoples' bodies for centuries.

Next to not having any integrity over the decision made about his treatment, this is a precarious situation to be in because if sent to Italy, Momodou will not have any means to access health care or to be provided with follow-up treatment.

His demands to treat his aches have already been used once as an excuse to keep him from receiving a visitor. He, as well as the person who wanted to visit Momodou, were told that he had a doctor's appointment. Something that turned out to be a lie. His visitation seems to be subject to arbitrary decisions made by the wardens because just two days later visiting him did not appear to be an issue. The wardens exploit loose regulations at their leisure and at Momodou's expense.

When asked about his ability to remain in contact with family members in this precarious situation, he opens up about the difficulty in deciding how much to share with loved ones, knowing that his distress will be felt by those he cares about:

"My family jaaa...my boy's friends used to call me and I tell them to tell my family that- yeah I am in a small mess because I don't want them to think so much about me, you know. If not they will have stress. So I don't like that. So let me have the stress, I can handle it by myself. I don't want to bother my mum, like she will be thinking different, like that I am in hell or I do something bad. She will not eat and she will be sick and I don't want that. I used to be in contact with the other boys, like my uncles. They know but my mum don't know."

He thinks for a second before adding that about five years must have passed since he last saw his mother. He chuckles when he says: "Now when my mum sees me, she is not going to recognize me because she will say: 'Oh you are a big boy now.'"

The stress he is handling by himself has manifested into sleeping problems. He does not fall asleep until about 4 AM and does not sleep longer than 30-40 consecutive minutes before waking up again. He smokes a lot these days, way more than he did outside. Sometimes even at night, in those times when his body pulls him out of his sleep. He knows what he has coming once he is deported - he has been there before, and he doesn't want to go back:

"If I will go back to Italy I will be living on the street, sleeping on the street. Especially if I don't have money. I will just like – that's a very sad life. In Italy, you still see it on the news?! Yeah, Italy is very bad. It is very bad [...] because street life will always change your life. You will be a bad person, you will end up in jail and I don't want - I don't want to end up like that. So that's why I leave Italy and come here. And Germany also wants to throw me back so it's not easy...Yeah really difficult. "

Momodou was arrested and (is still being) criminalized because he exercised his right to freedom of movement. The right to move freely is barely ever questioned by white people as they navigate their lives in European countries. Being Black in the public sphere only seems possible if one stays in the space allocated to you by white officials or which you were given permission if requested. Otherwise, to move freely while being Black means to be detained by the police, to be treated with aggression, to be constantly reminded that you don't belong and that this space is already occupied.

Momodou sums it up:

"It is not right. Somebody who do not commit any crime and you just lock him up, you know." Meanwhile prisoners in regular prisons receive three meals a day, are allowed to be outside, and in comparison, to deportation detention regular prisons aim at the eventual "resocialization" of their detainees. Deporting someone into guaranteed homelessness is nothing close to resocializing someone. This form of punishment primarily targets Black people, as the German police still practices racially motivated stop-and-frisk searches in public spaces. Your sheer existence in the latter puts you at risk of a practice of punishment that the German state does not even exercise on convicted criminals. Momodou is living a nightmare that turns out to be the systemic criminalization of Black people.

"I am just praying to be free."

Mamoudou says visits help to ease his mind a little bit, "[b]ecause you cannot sit here upstairs every day, thinking, smoking cigarettes, every day. You will go crazy before enough months." But while any person visiting him is escorted out of the building, Momodou has to go back upstairs. He chuckles again when he says: "But we manage because...no choice, you know."

We know nothing about this is actually funny.