

BNS-Symposium: Between Restrictions and Opportunities – Vulnerable Refugees and the Berlin Election

(08.09.2026 in the Refugio Berlin)

Time	Content
8:30 - 9:00	Registration
9:00 - 9:25	Words of Welcome from the BNS as well as from the State Secretary for Integration, Anti-Discrimination and Diversity Max Landero
9:25 - 10:15	Keynotes Being a refugee in Times of CEAS: Lived Realities, Self-Organization, and Demands For people affected by the migration and asylum system, legal restrictions and the CEAS reform are not abstract norms—they directly shape their everyday lives. In this keynote, Salma provides insights into what it currently means to flee to Germany under conditions of externalization and pushbacks, to live in isolated camp structures, and to face further restrictions of rights. At the same time, it highlights how refugees are organizing themselves and what demands they are formulating in the context of the upcoming Berlin election. Salma AbuSamra is a Sudanese filmmaker and visual storyteller based in Berlin, whose work explores migration, identity, and human rights while amplifying underrepresented voices. Drawing on years of experience in media, advocacy, and human rights documentation—as well as her own experience as a refugee—she uses storytelling to connect personal narratives with broader social and political realities.

	Particular Vulnerability in EU Asylum Law: Rights, Reforms, and Challenges In this keynote address, legal scholar Johanna Mantel examines the legal concept of "particular vulnerability" in EU law: Who is considered particularly vulnerable? What rights are associated with this status, and what changes does the CEAS reform entail? The presentation will highlight key findings from a recent legal opinion that examines these questions in depth. Johanna Mantel is a lawyer and works as a freelance lecturer, author, and editor in the field of asylum and migration law.
10:15 - 10:45	Coffee Break
10:45 - 12:15	Workshop Phase I 1. Access to Children's Rights for All – Youth Services for Refugee Children and Adolescents The "Young Refugees" Working Group of the Refugee Council of Berlin e.V. has published its demands ahead of the 2026 state election. At its core, the group calls for equal access for refugee children and youth to rights, protection, and support services, as it is stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and child and youth welfare law. Children's rights are universal—now it is a matter to consistently implement them in Berlin as well. This includes access to education, healthcare, adequate housing, shelter as well as to a secure right to remain—which is necessary to free the mind, enabling to learn and find one's way in a new context. These points will be discussed during this workshop, enriched by real-world examples, with the youth policy spokespersons of the four democratic parties. "Young Refugees" Working Group of the Berlin Refugee Council 2. Vulnerable Groups Under the CEAS – What's Changing and What Is Berlin Doing? This workshop provides an overview of the impact of the CEAS reform on vulnerable refugees. Legal expert Johanna Mantel presents key findings from her legal opinion on changes to admission and procedural guarantees under EU and national law, as well as the scope for implementation by the State of Berlin. Andrea Haefner (BNS) evaluates the current situation in Berlin, particularly regarding vulnerability assessments and the Tegel

10:45 - 12:15 arrival center. In the interactive session, practical implications for counseling and applicants will be discussed.

Johanna Mantel is a lawyer and works as a freelance lecturer, author, and editor in the field of asylum and migration law.

Andrea Haefner is responsible for network coordination, advocacy, and public relations for the BNS. She also offers training on special protection needs at the ÜBERLEBEN Competence Center.

3. An Anti-Racist Approach in Psychotherapy and Counseling

This workshop explores how language, power dynamics, and attributions in everyday psychosocial practice can contribute to the reproduction of racism. The goal is to develop an anti-racist sensibility and expand the range of options for a reflective, power-sensitive practice.

Rico-Benjamin Hiemeyer is a psychological psychotherapist specializing in behavioral therapy for adults, children, and adolescents.

4. Making Disempowerment Visible: A Workshop on Developing a Position Paper

The tightening of asylum and migration policies in recent months—ranging from cuts and exclusions in benefits to current political restructuring related to the CEAS—directly affect refugees and social workers alike. In this workshop, we will briefly review together current developments, including the effects of authoritarian political trends, and discuss the participants' concrete practical experiences: Where do the consequences of restrictive policies manifest in everyday work? What impacts do service recipients experience? Based on this discussion, we will develop building blocks for a position paper that highlights these impacts and translates them into concrete demands for policymakers. The goal is to establish a collective, practice-based voice advocating for social work as a human rights profession.

Alexandra Kattein is the spokesperson for the "Migration, Criticism of Racism and Anti-Semitism" working group (Migraas) of the German Association for Social Work (DGSA) and a visiting lecturer in the Social Work (B.A.) program at the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Berlin.

Sebastian Muy works as a social worker and conducts research at the intersection of social work and refugee/migration studies. He is also a member of AG Migraas.

Júlia Wéber holds a professorship in Migration Society and Democracy Education in the

	Department of Social Work, Education, and Upbringing at the Neubrandenburg University of Applied Sciences and is also a member of Migraas.
12:15 - 13:15	Lunch Break
13:15 - 14:45	Workshop Phase II 1. Practical Solidarity Under the CEAS: Perspectives from Refugee Self-Organization With the CEAS, many refugees are facing new challenges. Those particularly affected are people with special protection needs, such as people with disabilities, chronic illnesses, or mental health challenges. In this workshop, we would like to share experiences from refugees' self-organizations and from practical support work. Together, we will discuss the potential impacts of the CEAS on those affected and the forms of solidarity and support that are important. The workshop provides a space for exchange, discussion, and collaborative ideas. Hassan Nugud is project coordinator at BZSL e.V. for mobile counseling services for refugees with disabilities and chronic illnesses. He is also active in "We'll Come United" and in other networks of refugees and solidarity groups. Jennifer Kamau is the Co- Founder of International Women* Space and Co-Lead in the Migrant Justice Community of Practise, which is an Alliance of Migrant-led organisations confronting the EU Policies on Migration. Adam Bahar, a refugee activist from Sudan, came to Germany in 2012. He took part in the protest march from Würzburg to Berlin and in the occupation of Oranienplatz. Since the Alarmphone was founded, Adam has been active as a translator and point of contact for people on the ships. Today, he works full-time at the Berlin Refugee Council. 2. Psychosocial Care Between Solidarity and Border Regimes? Exchange and Reflection for a Resistant Practice Using the Comic "Psychology at the Border" In times of rollbacks of civil rights, rising fascism, and authoritarianism, psychologists and psychosocial counselors operate in a highly politically contested field. Psychosocial care practice is increasingly at risk of being instrumentalized for border management. How can we develop a critical stance and actively advocate for the right to stay? Building on Ricarda Theobald's research with psychosocial counselors in Germany and Greece (2022–2025), the comic-reflection-manual "Psychology at the Border: Reflection Impulses for a Resistant and Solidarity-Based Psychosocial Practice." was designed. In the workshop, participants will test the comic manual together, discuss dilemmas and

13:15 - (attitudinal) conflicts from practice, and critically examine potential entanglements with the
14:45 border regime. The manual will be provided free of charge and can subsequently be used for reflection within one's own team.

Ricarda Theobald is a doctoral candidate at Humboldt University in Berlin in the field of critical migration and border regime research.

Anna Paßlick works as a comic artist in Berlin.

3. Good Housing for EVERYONE – How Can Refugees Find Secure Housing?

The housing crisis is one of the greatest challenges of our time, affecting people in major cities—and Berlin in particular. The situation seems extremely hopeless for those who are particularly disadvantaged in the housing market. In this workshop, we would like to present a few best-practice examples of how refugees can gain access to their own housing and be supported as they move out of temporary shelters. Which approaches have proven effective, what obstacles need to be overcome, and how can ways of collaboration be leveraged?

Bea Fünfroeken works as a project officer for the "Housing for Refugees" initiative at Xenion e.V.

Niklas Kuhledahl is active at Campus Cosmopolis Berlin.

Imma Chienku is a human rights activist and part of Refugees Emancipation e.V.

Carla Regling represents the Brandenburg Refugee Council and the project "Improving Reception Conditions for Asylum Seekers, Persons Entitled to Protection, and Persons Entitled to Temporary Protection in Brandenburg."

Muthama Njeri and **Virginia Njeri** represent Women in Exile e.V.

4. „The House We Are Building“ – Dokumentarfilm & interaktiver Workshop mit Ban Ying

During the workshop, there will be a screening of the 20-minute documentary "The House We Are Building," which focuses on one of the oldest counseling centers for migrant and traumatized women* in Berlin. The film interweaves current scenes from the organization with newly digitized footage from the 1980s documenting human trafficking between West Germany, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Following the screening, participants will discuss continuities and changes in human trafficking, sex work, and migration policy—with a particular focus on the impacts of the CEAS reform.

In small, practice-oriented groups, participants will use a case study to explore specific challenges posed by CEAS as well as opportunities for action in the areas of housing,

	interactions with authorities, and public policy discourse. The workshop provides space for questions and collegial exchange. Dr. Babette Rohner works as a social worker for Ban Ying e.V. Parichat Pai (Noi) is a project coordinator at Ban Ying e.V.
14:45 - 15:15	Coffee Break
15:15 – 16:45	Panel: Berlin is holding elections in 2026 — what does that mean for particularly vulnerable refugees? Panelists: • Soltan Akbari, Board Member of the Berlin Refugee Council • Nicolay Büttner, Head of Political Work & Advocacy and Network Coordinator at the BNS • Bettina Jarasch, Chair and Top Candidate of the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen parliamentary group in the Berlin House of Representatives • Orkan Özdemir, Spokesperson for Anti-Discrimination, Strategies Against the Far Right, and Integration, Member of the Berlin State Parliament (SPD) • Katina Schubert, Spokesperson for Social Affairs, Inclusion, Migration, Participation, and Anti-Discrimination, Member of the Berlin House of Representatives (Die Linke) • Katharina Senge, Spokesperson for Integration Policy, Member of the Berlin House of Representatives (CDU) Moderation: Andrea Haefner, Network Coordination, Advocacy, and Public Relations for the BNS
16:45 - 17:00	Wrap-Up