

To the Governing Mayor of Berlin
Mr Michael Müller
- Senate Office -
Jüdenstrasse 1
10178 Berlin

Berlin, 20 March 2020

Open Letter: Solidarity with Homeless People

Dear Mr. Governing Mayor of Berlin, Ladies* and Gentlemen*,

Following a decision by the Berlin Senate on 13 March 2020, all schools and day care centres were closed starting 16-17 March 2020. This necessary step stands in line with the common task of minimizing the suffering and loss that the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to cause. By stating that "now is the time to stand together and overcome this crisis together" and by asking people to "show solidarity" you rightfully call for particular consideration of vulnerable groups of people, i.e. especially the elderly as well as people with weak immune systems. However, one must not abstract away from the people who are homeless.

Homeless people do not have the opportunity to escape the current situation. At the same time – due to their living conditions – they often suffer from various diseases that weaken their immune system. Therefore, homeless people undoubtedly belong to the group of people who are particularly endangered by the pandemic. The same care and consideration is required for them!¹

Hence, homeless people - in order for them not to be forced to remain in imperiling public places – should at least be allowed to find shelter. There is an increased risk of infection at public places such as busy streets and crowded railway stations. In contrast to the rest of the population, they cannot easily stay away from such places. They are inescapably exposed to a disproportionately greater risk of being infected solely due to the fact that quarantine is not a realistic option when there's a lack of shelter.

Thus, we fully support the demands put forward by the 'Wohnungsnotfallhilfe'. They call for the senate to offer protection from the virus to those who cannot escape public places by for instance making hotels that are now empty available. In addition, the senate should make use of empty flats and holiday apartments to accommodate homeless people. For example, the municipal housing associations are reported to have approximately 6.000 empty flats.² Vacancies all over the city including now empty second and third homes as well as Airbnb flats must be considered gross negligence in view of the vulnerable situation of the estimated 10.000 people on the streets of our city. Moreover, all forced evictions must be stopped in order to avoid endangering an even larger number of people. We are hereby in many aspects following the demands of the

1 Art. 1 GG; Art. 28 (I) Berliner Verfassung.

2 <https://youtu.be/CUjbENkKe-Y>.

Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Wohnungslosenhilfe.³ It is unbearable and supports the further spread of the Virus to continue accommodating people in refugee camps under the current circumstances.⁴

As the sale of street newspapers and other income for homeless people is also largely discontinued at the moment, the supply of food, drinks and daily necessities must also be ensured.

With greatest consideration for hygiene and the protection of everyone involved the immobile food distribution points must continue to run. Other facilities could be put into use in order to support, for instance the 825 empty buildings of Berlin Schools.⁵

If those affected by the closure of other distribution points were to access these facilities evenly, the 50-person mark⁶ would never be close to being exceeded. Thus, these locations could also be directly accessed for food distribution by food donating organizations, which would counteract the current closure of numerous immobile distribution points.

At the same time, care and accommodation must be provided for all people, regardless of their residence status! It must be ensured that no acute or future risks of persecution or deportation arise in the course of supporting with basic necessities. A review of the residence status and an obligation to provide proof of identity is to be waived. Health must be prioritized.

We demand that solidarity measures for homeless people are developed and implemented immediately! We demand that these people are housed in appropriate and safe accommodation, at least until the situation regarding Covid-19 has calmed down.

To say it in your own words: "Now is the time to stand together - please show solidarity! "

Sincerely,

AmMa65 e.V.
Arbeitskreis kritischer Jurist*innen HU Berlin (akj HU)
Armutnetzwerk e.V.
AWO Notübernachtung für Frauen mitten im Kiez
bergpartei
Berliner Obdachlosenhilfe e.V.
BUNDjugend Berlin
Bündnis #Mietenwahnsinn
Büro für ungewöhnliche Maßnahmen
Die Linke.SDS Berlin
Einzelpersonen aus der Wohnungsnotfallhilfe
Ev. Kirchengemeinde am Weinberg Berlin Mitte
Juso Hochschulgruppen Berlin
Mensch Meier
MIETERPARTEI
Netzwerk Zusammen für Wohnraum

3 <https://www.bagw.de/de/presse/index~177.html>.

4 <http://thevoiceforum.org/node/4718>; <https://taz.de/Schutz-vor-Corona-fuer-Gefluechtete/15672076/>; <https://www.women-in-exile.net/die-covid-19-pandemie-und-fluechtlingslager/#more-6271>.

5 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/519507/umfrage/schulen-in-berlin-nach-bezirken/>.

6 § 1 (II) der SARS-CoV-2-Eindämmungsverordnung – SARS-CoV-2-EindV vom 14. März 2020.

Quartiersmanagement Grunewald
Schlafplatzorga
Vernetzung der Akelius-Mieter*innen Berlin