

A Conversation with Residents of the Federal Asylum Camp

On the 3rd of March, a conversation between several residents of the *camp* and activists from Basel took place at a clearing near the Federal Asylum Camp Basel. It was conducted in Arab and recorded by a sound recorder. It took place, because several residents had reported very miserable living-conditions in the camp and accounted for the incidents of violence by the Securitas. The following is a collection of statements made in this conversation transcribed and translated.

Content Notion:

physical violence, daily life at the *camp*, humiliating admission control

You want information about the camp, how it is there? Are you friends of journalists?

No, we're not journalists, we live in Basel and organise and we want to protocol this violence.

There's a lot of violence at the *camp*, racist Securitas.

The three of us want to talk about these things with you, in order to protocol them and have proof of this violence happening. People should not be treated this way. The people in Switzerland have to know about the conditions at the camp, in order to raise awareness.

It's like a prison. There are cameras and the Securitas summon you inside at 5 pm. There are kids and adolescents among us. There are men* and women*.

They beat you, talk about it.

They beat me, because I had been away too long. They beat me at every opportunity. They always find a reason to beat me, to target and humiliate me, be it because of the food or because I do not behave how they want me to, or because I ask questions.

I came here from the Netherlands. When I arrived, my baggage was ransacked. They threw my clothes everywhere across the room. I asked them, why they would do that. They just said it had to be this way.

If you return after 5 pm you're not allowed inside anymore.¹ You have to sleep outside. If you bring food, you can't take it inside, they throw it away. If you're being punished you have to sleep in the 'consciousness-room'. There's only one mattress, a small carpet, nothing else.

They want a 'nice' person, ready to adapt themselves, to ask for asylum. But this person does not exist. I do not know this system and therefore, I don't know how to navigate it without giving up my origins and myself.

When I arrived I had to go in a dugout. They took our baggage and controlled everything. Even my body. I had to undress and they touched me everywhere, they also looked at my private parts. Then I had to sleep on a mat. I only wore shorts and a shirt and it was cold. They took pictures.

It's forbidden to take pictures or film inside the *camp*. If you want to talk to your family, you can only call them, without video. Your calls are being controlled as well.

They make you hate everything about yourself and while they profit from the money they get for you.

The admission controls are the following:

You have to put everything on the table. Your backpack is being ransacked. You have to put your hands on the table and then hold them up. Then they search your body. It's a show of force, they can take everything away from you as they please, to disempower you.

For the families in the *camp* it's very bad as well. They can't offer their kids anything and even the children are searched at the entrance.

I'm not allowed to go further than 200m away from the *camp*, because they accuse me of stealing. If I had enough to live, I wouldn't be forced to steal. Do they have the right to exert these exit restrictions? Why do they do that? It's no way to live like this.

At the entrance to the *camp* I'm already being humiliated. The Securitas touch me everywhere. They touch me down there, my penis and my testicles and I'm ashamed. They touch me below the heart. And I'm ashamed. It's so horrible for me that I start to talk to myself.

Nothing's as bad as Switzerland. I have experienced several stations in different countries and nothing's as bad as here. They hate us here.

¹ In response to public actions by our collective in February 2020 the exit time was prolonged until 8pm.

This is no *camp* to seek asylum, it's an open prison. We're given too little food. When I ask a question, they always just tell me to wait. They do it on purpose to bully us. I'm fed up by it. We all are. Yesterday they beat me because I was hungry and asked for food. Am I a criminal or am I seeking asylum? I don't know it anymore because they make me feel like a criminal.

I've come here to live, not to die and I'm dying.

We've come on boats, from many different places. When we arrived, we found ourselves in hell. At home everybody said Switzerland must be heaven on earth.

We've come to demand our rights. Switzerland does not want to grant me my rights. And they humiliate and beat us. How should we go on?