

## **Testimonial Youssuf**

Flumenthal, May 8<sup>th</sup> 2020<sup>1</sup>

The conversation took place in Arabic, was then translated into German and then into English.

Content notion:

Physical violence, indications of self-harming behaviour / suicidal tendencies, victim blaming, denial of rights, chicanery

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“About two months ago, three of us were in the room at the federal asylum camp in Basel. Three securitas<sup>2</sup> came and told us to get up. One of us refused. They yanked him down, he was on a bunk, and he hit his head on the floor. Another one of us filmed the act of violence then gave me the phone to continue filming. They hit it out of my hand and confiscated it. Then they beat me severely. I was so desperate I went to the kitchen and tried to hurt myself / commit suicide. When the securitas saw it, they called the police. They came with weapons at the ready and arrested me with one of the other two men. At the police station I was put in a *cell*. They threatened me with a one and a half year prison sentence and a large monetary fine. When they brought me back to the *camp* in the morning, the securitas would not let me in. They said I had to stay outside until 5 PM. When I came back at 5, the three securitas who had beaten me were there working again. This was very difficult for me.

Three days later I wanted to get the identification card that authorizes me to get food. But they denied me the card. Then I went to the *villa*<sup>3</sup> and asked for food there. But they didn't give me food because I didn't have my card.

Then one of the securitas came up to me and ordered me to follow him in into another room where he would give me my card. I went to the room with him and another securitas. Once we arrived, they started beating me for no reason. There, in

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<sup>1</sup> A video recording preceded this testimonial, in which Youssuf speaks about the assault in relation to the food card. The report was extended after an in-depth conversation from May 8<sup>th</sup> 2020. The material was then assembled and is at hand of our collective.

<sup>2</sup> Employees of the Securitas AG will be referred to as “the securitas” in this text.

<sup>3</sup> The “villa” is an old building adjacent to the federal asylum camp on Freiburgerstrasse in Basel. Unaccompanied asylum seeking minors, so called UMAs, are placed there.

this room, they treated me with ruthless violence. During this, my ring finger broke and my knee was injured. I also was hit on the back of my head and as I was laying on the ground, they continued kicking my head. Now it hurts when I walk. I don't know why they did this, there is no reason. I don't understand why they attacked me like this.

After this incident, the securitas called the police again. I wanted to press charges or file a complaint. A Tunisian Securitas employee wanted to help me by translating. But the police didn't accept her offer and only spoke to the other securitas. After this I was brought to the "contemplation room"<sup>4</sup>. The next day I was locked out of the *camp*. It dawned on me, how dependent I am. Without the identification card I couldn't even go to the hospital. Even the *camp* director forbade me to go to the hospital. I guess they were afraid I'd file a complaint against them first thing there. Health service at *camp* merely gave me a bandage. The feeling of being captive and dependent overwhelmed me. After a few days I could've gone back to school. But I was neither in a physical nor in a mental state to go.

From then on I repeatedly had verbal arguments with the securitas. During that time I didn't eat much because I didn't have any energy left to fight for it. I gave up on myself. I approached the internal HEKS<sup>5</sup> legal representation. But it didn't help either. I guess they collaborate with the securitas. I was in contact with my lawyer only once and haven't heard from her since.

About one and a half month ago I went to a psychologist. During the time I was there, there was a dispute at the *camp*. The securitas reported me to the police, claiming I had been part of the dispute. Even though I was verifiably at the psychologist's during that time. The document that proved it was taken away from me by the securitas. I wanted to talk to them and ask why they were doing this to me. I wasn't even at the *camp* at that point in time. They claimed that's because I always create problems. I went to see one of the bosses of the ORS. He asked why he receives so many reports about me if I don't do anything.

This whole thing has a system. The securitas beat us, then they call the police and claim we created problems. When the police arrive they drink coffee with the securitas and discuss the issue together. They never talk to us directly affected. At most they bring us to the station. Even though they see our wounds and injuries. The rest of the staff doesn't do anything because they're afraid. The Securitas employee from Tunisia once tried to help but didn't succeed. The other people who live at *camp* often don't notice because it happens in this "contemplation room". And they

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<sup>4</sup> The "contemplation room" is the cell described by those affected by violence.

<sup>5</sup> The Aid Organization of the Swiss Protestant Churches (HEKS) has the mandate of legal representation within the federal asylum camp in Basel. For more information about HEKS go to chapter 1: camp structure

are also afraid to interfere. Here at *camp*, our lives are threatened by the securitas. [...] Something has to happen, our life at *camp* is not safe, it's in danger."