

Experiencing discrimination

If you experience violence or discrimination, you have the right to call the police. Counselling centres such as [BuBS](#) or [Reach Out](#) can help you to take legal action against the perpetrators.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is a form of unequal treatment that has a negative impact on all aspects of an individual's or group's life. It affects all areas of life, including social, cultural, political, economic and public affairs.

People are often discriminated against on the basis of several ascribed characteristics, including ethnic origin, nationality, language, residence status, skin colour, physical appearance, gender, age, religious affiliation, ideology, sexual orientation and identity, disability, marital or social status and other immutable aspects of their identity. These characteristics can reinforce each other, and the discriminatory effect of a disadvantage remains independent of whether it is intentional or not.

Discrimination takes place on different levels.

Individual: Here, personal attitudes, feelings and prejudices lead to discriminatory statements or actions between individuals.

Institutional: Discrimination can occur in institutionalised processes that are often not obvious. This includes administrative regulations or established procedures that can lead to disadvantages.

Structural: Structural barriers arise due to firmly established social norms and stereotypes that lead to discrimination.

What is racism?

Racism is a deeply rooted social system that justifies and perpetuates differences in power. It manifests itself in discriminatory discourses and practices that judge people based on their origin, skin colour, culture and language and divide them into privileged or disadvantaged groups. This gives some groups access to rights and resources, while others are denied this access. Racism can take individual, institutional and structural forms and has a negative impact on various areas of life.

Racism in accommodation centres

In collective accommodation centres, there is a structural risk of assaults, belittling and arbitrary actions by staff, which can extend to violations of fundamental rights.

The living situation of refugees is significantly influenced by external factors, which means that they are often dependent on the authorities, professionals and volunteers.

Attention: In the event of a pending deportation, some of the above rights may be suspended, e.g. the ban on entering the room.



Addresses and contacts
for support in Berlin



YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESIDENT OF AN INITIAL RECEPTION CENTRE/ SHARED ACCOMMODATION

Who is authorised to open my letters?

Am I allowed to receive visitors?

How long can I be away?

What can I do against racism and discrimination?



Funded by
the European Union

Opening letters

In Germany, no letter may be opened by other people without the permission of the recipient. The accommodation manager may accept the letter, but may only open it or pass it on to other people with authorisation. If your letter is opened without your permission, you can file a complaint with the police for offence against the secrecy of correspondence.

In reception centres, the staff must inform you if letter has arrived for you. If there are personalised letter boxes or post boxes in your accommodation, these must be checked regularly.

Important letters from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) or courts are often sent in yellow envelopes and should definitely be kept, as they often contain deadlines that you should be aware of. The deadline begins on the day of delivery, which you can find on the front of the envelope. If your accommodation accepts these letters, they must be handed over to you within 3 working days.

Working in the accommodation

The staff at your accommodation can ask you to help with everyday tasks in the accommodation, such as cleaning the sanitary facilities, kitchens or outside areas. This is called community service. [...]

Receiving information

The accommodation management is obliged to respect the rights of the residents, including the protection of privacy and personal rights. Each residence should hand out or display the house rules in several languages in the accommodation.

Entering the room

The accommodation staff may not enter your room without your permission and without good reason, except in emergencies such as necessary repairs, but also not in your absence. This is your right to privacy. If the staff in your accommodation violate this, you can complain to the Berlin Independent Complaints Office (BuBS, see other side). If your room is entered against your will and without good reason, you can also file a criminal complaint with the police.

The accommodation staff and security guards are not allowed to search your cupboard or your personal belongings. This applies without exception. If your personal belongings are to be searched, the police must be present.

House bans

When issuing house bans, three written warnings must be submitted in advance; house bans must be justified. In special cases, such as violence or theft, bans can also be issued immediately.

In case of emergency

In a medical emergency, the accommodation staff should help to call an ambulance or the emergency doctor. In acute emergencies, you can also call the emergency services yourself. The telephone numbers for the police (110), fire brigade (112) and ambulance (112) must be displayed in your accommodation.

Receiving visitors

You may receive visitors, but visitor regulations may vary depending on the accommodation. Overnight stays by visitors must be agreed in advance with the accommodation management and may not be possible or only possible in exceptional cases. You should always adhere to the arrangements made with the accommodation staff.

Being absent

If you wish to be absent for a longer period of time, you should inform the accommodation management. The following applies to recipients of benefits under the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act or Citizens' Allowance: Absences of up to 20 days per year can be authorised, but you must also discuss this with the social welfare authority.

Video surveillance

Video surveillance is only permitted in the generally accessible entrance area. The recordings must be deleted when they are no longer required.