



Mit RechtDabei – From Complaint to Political Demand

Political Demands of the Participants

As part of the project “**Mit RechtDabei – From Complaint to Political Demand**”, refugees living in Berlin came together to discuss their experiences with the asylum system, life in refugee accommodation, public authorities, and their everyday lives in Berlin and Germany.

The starting point was their concrete personal experiences and complaints. Through the discussions, it became clear that many of these experiences are not merely individual problems but are connected to broader political and structural conditions.

The following demands are therefore addressed particularly to **Berlin’s political decision-makers, the Berlin Senate, the House of Representatives, the district authorities and the responsible public institutions.**

Not all of the issues raised can be resolved at state level. Some are regulated primarily by federal or European law. Nevertheless, Berlin has political and administrative scope for action. Where Berlin itself does not have legislative competence, participants expect the Berlin Senate to use its political influence at federal level.

The discussions resulted in the following key issues and demands.

1. Right to Work and Economic Independence

Many refugees want to work and earn their own living. However, bureaucratic obstacles, long waiting periods, and restrictions on access to the labour market make this difficult.

They demand:

- faster and less bureaucratic access to the labour market;
- the removal of employment bans and unnecessary waiting periods;
- fair working conditions and equal labour rights and protections for all workers;
- an end to the exploitation of refugees through extremely low-paid work;
- better access to the labour market for both skilled and formally unqualified workers;

- easier access to regular bank accounts and greater economic independence;
- the abolition of the payment card (*Bezahlkarte*) and the right to decide independently how social benefits are used.

Refugees should not be regarded as passive recipients of benefits. Many have professional experience, skills, and qualifications and want to earn their own living.

For Berlin, this means: The state should use all available administrative and political possibilities to facilitate access to employment and economic independence and should advocate at federal level for the removal of legal barriers that Berlin itself cannot abolish.

2. Reducing Bureaucratic Barriers

Participants reported complicated administrative procedures, long waiting periods, official letters that are difficult to understand, and a lack of translation and interpretation services.

It is particularly problematic when people are expected to make decisions or sign documents without fully understanding their content.

They demand:

- clear and timely information about the asylum procedure and their rights;
- multilingual information and access to qualified interpretation services;
- official letters and forms written in clear and understandable language;
- shorter processing and waiting times;
- simpler and more transparent administrative procedures;
- adequate independent advice before important decisions are made;
- that no one should be pressured into signing documents they do not understand.

For Berlin, this means: Berlin authorities should ensure accessible, understandable and multilingual communication. Administrative procedures involving refugees should be designed so that people can understand decisions affecting their lives and effectively exercise their rights.

3. Right to Education and Language Learning

Language and education are essential foundations for social and political participation.

Access to education should not depend on a person's residence status or country of origin.

They demand:

- free and accessible language courses;
- access to education and further training regardless of residence status;
- better opportunities for the recognition of existing qualifications;
- an end to policies that divide refugees into groups with better or worse opportunities for integration and education.

Education must be accessible to everyone.

For Berlin, this means: Berlin should use its responsibilities in education, adult education and integration policy to reduce barriers and expand access to language learning, education and qualification programmes.

4. Fair and Humane Asylum Procedures

Participants described the asylum procedure as, in some cases, difficult to understand and highly stressful. A lack of information and long waiting periods increase uncertainty.

People need to understand what rights they have, what decisions are being made, and what consequences those decisions may have.

They demand:

- transparent and understandable asylum procedures;
- early access to independent counselling and legal advice;
- clear information about rights and obligations;
- reasonable processing times;
- better advice about possible residence options and perspectives;
- procedures that take the individual circumstances of the people concerned into account.

For Berlin, this means: Even where decisions are made by federal authorities, Berlin should ensure access to independent counselling, legal information and support. Berlin should also use its political influence at federal level to advocate for fair, transparent and humane procedures.

5. Healthcare Is a Fundamental Right

Access to healthcare should not depend on a person's residence status.

Participants reported difficulties in accessing medical care as well as psychological stress resulting from insecure living and residence conditions.

They demand:

- equal access to healthcare;
- adequate treatment for chronic and acute medical conditions;
- uncomplicated access to necessary medication;
- better psychosocial and psychotherapeutic support;
- that access to necessary medical care should not be restricted as an instrument of migration control or punishment.

For Berlin, this means: Berlin should use its responsibilities in health and social policy to remove practical barriers to medical, psychosocial and psychotherapeutic care and ensure that refugees can access necessary treatment.

6. Dignified Living Conditions in Refugee Accommodation

Living conditions in shared refugee accommodation have a major impact on people's health, privacy, and ability to participate in society.

Some participants described life in accommodation facilities as highly regulated and characterised by unequal power relations.

They demand:

- dignified living conditions;
- sufficient personal living space;
- protection of privacy;
- specific protection measures for children and other vulnerable people;
- appropriate hygiene standards;
- consideration of the needs of people with chronic illnesses;
- transparent rules within accommodation facilities;
- independent complaint mechanisms;
- greater participation and decision-making rights for residents.

Residents of refugee accommodation must be treated as people with their own rights, not merely as recipients of accommodation services.

For Berlin, this means: The Senate and responsible Berlin authorities should ensure binding standards in refugee accommodation, effective independent complaint structures and meaningful participation by residents.

Residents should be involved in decisions concerning everyday life in accommodation facilities. Structures such as resident councils, regular assemblies or other forms of self-representation should be strengthened.

7. Combating Discrimination and Racism

Several participants reported experiences of discrimination and unequal treatment.

The discussions addressed discrimination based on origin or skin colour, as well as differences in how various groups of refugees are treated by society and institutions.

The devaluation or non-recognition of educational qualifications and professional experience acquired in countries of origin was also identified as a significant problem.

They demand:

- consistent protection against racist discrimination;
- fair access to employment, education, housing, and social participation;
- transparent and fair recognition of foreign educational and professional qualifications;
- effective and independent complaint mechanisms in cases of discrimination;
- equal treatment of refugees regardless of origin, skin colour, or nationality.

There must be no social or political division between supposedly “good” and “bad” refugees.

For Berlin, this means: Berlin should consistently implement and strengthen its existing anti-discrimination structures. Refugees must have accessible information about their rights and independent possibilities to report discrimination, particularly where discrimination occurs within public institutions.

8. Pressure of Deportation and Permanent Uncertainty

Participants described the constant fear of possible deportation as a serious burden.

This uncertainty affects many areas of people's lives, including mental health, education, employment, social relationships, and their ability to make long-term plans for the future.

They demand:

- secure and reliable residence perspectives;
- greater consideration of humanitarian circumstances and individual situations;
- special protection for vulnerable people;
- recognition of the psychological and health consequences of prolonged uncertainty and the threat of deportation;
- no deportations in situations where the human rights, safety, or health of the people concerned would be at risk.

For Berlin, this means: Berlin should use the legal and humanitarian scope available at state level and ensure that individual circumstances, vulnerability, health, family ties and established social connections are adequately considered. Where federal law limits Berlin's room for action, the Senate should advocate for corresponding changes at federal level.

From Political Demands to Political Participation in Berlin

The discussions within the project have shown that refugees are not only affected by political decisions. They have their own political perspectives, experiences and proposals for solutions.

However, many of the people directly affected by Berlin's refugee, accommodation, integration and social policies do not have the right to vote in state or district elections.

This makes other forms of political participation particularly important.

Berlin therefore needs structures that enable refugees to represent their own interests and bring their experiences directly into political decision-making processes.

This includes:

- regular dialogue between refugees and Berlin politicians;
- direct participation of residents in decisions concerning refugee accommodation;
- stronger resident representation and self-organised structures;
- accessible participation formats independent of citizenship or residence status;
- multilingual political information;
- systematic involvement of migrant and refugee self-organisations;
- transparent mechanisms through which complaints can be transformed into political demands;
- regular feedback from authorities and politicians on demands submitted by refugees.

People who are directly affected by political decisions must have the opportunity to participate in shaping those decisions.

Our message to Berlin politics

The participants are not asking only to be heard.

They are asking for their experiences to be taken seriously as political knowledge and for concrete changes to follow.

Complaints about accommodation, bureaucracy, discrimination, healthcare, employment or residence are not merely individual cases. When the same problems affect many people, they become political issues.

Berlin should therefore create permanent structures through which refugees can formulate demands, enter into dialogue with political decision-makers and participate in developing solutions.

Do not just talk about refugees – develop political solutions together with refugees.