

treatment both anonymously and free-of-charge. During our office hours, we direct patients to the specialists they require without the need for extensive bureaucracy.

There are always two people present in the office. This includes at least one woman as well as one person with medical expertise. If necessary, we try to arrange for interpreters to be present at scheduled doctor's appointments. Our project does not require patients to provide personal information and all participants are obligated to observe the confidentiality agreement. We maintain contacts with a number of information and help centers. This way, we can direct people to the proper organization if legal or social questions should arise.

Costs associated with medicines, orthopedic aids, glasses, laboratory examinations, medical imaging, etc. are paid by donations. For serious and chronic illnesses requiring hospitalization, we work together with the doctors in charge to find a solution. However, here we often reach our limits.

## ■ Our Goals

Health care must be available for everyone, regardless of their residency status. This is one of the basic rights of every individual. However, in Germany, it is difficult to ensure the

right to medical care for undocumented immigrants because due to current immigration laws, a trip to the doctor can quickly end in a detention center with a risk of deportation. Through our work, we try to make the public aware of the realities of life as an undocumented immigrant and help to reduce human suffering. **The long-term political goal of our work is the elimination of special laws for immigrants and refugees and the introduction of general medical care provision for all.**

## ■ Contact and Infos

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Monday and Thursday 4:30 – 6:30 pm

**Donations:**  
Account owner: Flüchtlingsrat Berlin e.V.  
Keyword: Medizinische Hilfe  
Bank für Sozialwirtschaft  
Account-Nr.: 3 260 302 | BLZ: 100 205 00

A donation receipt will be sent at the end of the year.  
Please let us know your adresse via mail or E-Mail.

# Büro für medizinische Flüchtlingshilfe Berlin

Office for Medical Assistance for Refugees



“The passport is a person's noblest part. Nor is it as easily produced as a person. A person can come into existence anywhere, in the most frivolous circumstances and without any good reason; but never a passport. That's why a passport is recognised, if it is good. A person can be so good and will not be recognised.»

Bertolt Brecht

Photo:  
Campaigning from the Office  
for Medical Assistance for  
Refugees  
- no one is illegal -  
Berlin 2002



Stand: 5/2011

## ■ On the Situation of „People Without Papers“ in the Federal Republic of Germany

According to estimates, there are between 200,000 and 500,000 „people without papers,“ i.e. people without a legal residency status, living in the Federal Republic of Germany. These people are a part of our society, but they live in constant fear, afraid of being discovered. Their reasons for immigrating, and in particular, the reasons that led them to live illegally, are very different from person to person. Totalitarian regimes, economic exploitation, social injustice and war can all cause people to flee. In many cases, wealthier countries in the Global North are indirectly or directly responsible for the creation or persistence of these conflicts. A lack of recognition of asylum seekers' reasons for immigration and the restrictive regulations in immigration laws mean that asylum seekers and immigrants are forced to live illegally. Although undocumented immigrants have different reasons for living illegally, the one thing they have in common is that because of current laws, they are party to discrimination and exclusion from educational and

work opportunities as well as medical care.

In addition to excluding undocumented individuals, this legislation often makes it

next to impossible for immigrants from the new EU countries, such as Romania, Bulgaria and Poland, to get the health care they need. They are living in Germany legally, but they are unable to get health insurance - neither in Germany nor in their country of origin. This includes many Sinti and Roma immigrants who often experience discrimination in their countries of origin.

It is not illegal to provide medical care to undocumented immigrants. Theoretically, undocumented individuals also have a right to medical care according to the German Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (AsylbLG). However, this is limited to acute illnesses and pain; it does not include any general medical care. In addition, as sponsors, social services are legally obligated to disclose personal information to the immigration authorities. This means that whenever they enter the doctor's office, undocumented migrants always run the risk of landing in a detention center awaiting deportation.

There is an exception for emergency situations. The hospital's administrative office is not permitted to disclose patient data to the immigration authority, as this information is protected by doctor-patient confidentiality. In the case of emergency

information is protected by doctor-patient confidentiality. In the case of emergency

treatment, this confidentiality protection is extended all the way through to the social services: these authorities are no longer permitted to report individuals when they have received information from hospital administration. If it can be proven that treatment was necessary, hospitals are also permitted to reclaim all treatment costs for medical emergencies from the social authority in question on the basis of the German Social Code (SGB XII). However, no other forms of treatment are included in this law.

## ■ Who We Are

The Office for Medical Assistance for Refugees (Büro für medizinische Flüchtlingshilfe) has existed since 1996 as a self-organized, non-governmental organization. Since its inception, this organization, as an anti-racist initiative, has worked to improve health care provision for undocumented refugees and immigrants through political and pragmatic means. The de facto exclusion of undocumented immigrants from the general healthcare system is primarily a function of politics. For this reason, we aim to increase awareness of these problems in the public arena and demand political solutions. All of our members work on a voluntary and unpaid basis.

## ■ Our Work

We work together with doctors, psychologists, midwives and physiotherapists who have agreed to provide qualified



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