

For Housing and Solidarity in Freiburg!

“Often more than four people live in one room here. More than 40 people share a shower.” This is what a resident of the LEA said in an interview with Radio Dreyeckland at the beginning of lockdown. What were already horrible living conditions before lockdown became a trap of infection during the pandemic. And that’s what happened. The worst was only averted, because part of the residents, that is 80 of 177, were evacuated and accommodated in the youth hostel. Here the city acted pragmatically, and we can tentatively say that the residents of Freiburg’s LEA and refugee homes have made it through the first wave of the pandemic.

Freiburg has a shortage of affordable housing. Where we find the LEA, on the grounds of the former police academy, a new neighborhood should have been developed. In 2014 the initiative Basisinitiative Stadtquartier Schildacker (BISS) demanded to create housing for all people, regardless of their status or passport. They wanted to devote space to refugees and to a community of people with different backgrounds: a space against racism and discrimination. In December 2014, however, the city decided that instead of the emancipatory pilot project, the old police academy should become a Landeserstaufnahmestelle. Up to 800 people can be accommodated here, with a total of 7 square meters per person. With the decision to put the LEA here, the city council has out-ruled any future longterm admission of refugees – that’s the rule if there’s a LEA in the city.

Not just the LEA is a place of mass accommodation in Freiburg. There are several residential homes, as well as the prison, where people have to live under cramped conditions, conditions that can be considered life-threatening during the pandemic. Solidarity City’s and other antiracist organizations’ longstanding demands for decentralized accommodation have not been responded to.

Since the lockdown, many have realized what has long been a fact: Having enough space for living, in which spending time is bearable, having a place that doesn’t make you sick, and in which you can come and go as you please – this has become a privilege. But it shouldn’t be that way! It is a basic human need to have a home. But if you don’t belong to the lucky few in Freiburg who either own a place, have a fat purse, or live in one of the few affordable flats here, or if you’re unemployed, homeless, illegal, an ex-prisoner, or if your name doesn’t sound German or your family is too big – then the housing situation looks pretty bleak for you. Solidarity Freiburg thinks that all of these reasons shouldn’t be relevant when it comes to getting a roof over your head. And we are not alone in this! We are in contact with many groups and initiatives in Freiburg, who are committed to making housing in Freiburg more social, and who work to run and provide spaces for practices of solidarity. Initially we had planned to hold a conference on these topics this summer, but due to the pandemic it won’t happen. But we still want to keep you updated on what’s happening in Freiburg in terms of activism. You can look forward to our next Newsletter, in which housing activists in Freiburg will have their say. If you want to subscribe, you can visit our homepage or write us an email. And maybe, maybe, we can discuss these things at a conference later this year. Until then we demand that all camps are abolished, that refugees are accommodated in a decentralized and decent manner, that no more deportations will be conducted, and that housing in Freiburg becomes more social and that it happens in solidarity.