



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

# Hamburg: Refugees, supporters demand COVID-19 protection

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Photo: Lampedusa Group

On May 7, activists from the Lampedusa Group in Hamburg, Germany, gathered in front of the city hall to demand basic human rights that have been denied them since their arrival in the city in 2013. Comprised mainly of refugees who arrived in Hamburg after fleeing the NATO-backed war in Libya, the group represents one of the demographics most severely affected by Germany's COVID-19 crisis policies.

Demonstrators were masked and kept distance from one another. During the city's half-hearted lockdown, permission to demonstrate has been largely restricted on grounds of public health and safety, with left-wing demonstrations being threatened by police intervention as recently as May 1.

The Lampedusa activists' demands could be read on the signs that they carried and had written on the pavement in chalk: "Housing and health care for all!"; "Close the camps in Moria now!"; "Solidarity should not end at the borders of the EU!"

Refugees without access to legal residency documents are refused state-covered health insurance and the means to be tested and treated for COVID-19 symptoms. They are also barred from seeking legal employment, thus making it impossible to finance their own accommodations.

Like so many of the most vulnerable in the "developed" world, many of Lampedusa Group's members are officially homeless. Their one publicly accessible refuge was the "Lampedusa Tent," which served both as a base where members could receive shelter, food and medicine, and as a symbol of resistance, as it was officially registered and acknowledged by city authorities as a "permanent demonstration."

This act of resistance was literally dismantled by the state, as the Hamburg city police [confiscated the tent on March 26](#), citing the newly mandated health and safety protocols instituted to battle the pandemic as grounds for prohibiting public gatherings.

### **'How can we go home when we're homeless?'**

That the state has weaponized protocols that should be used to ensure public safety during the current crisis to attack those most vulnerable was not lost on those gathered at this demonstration. Lampedusa activists and supporters spoke via microphone, reminding bystanders and demonstrators that since their arrival in 2013, the Lampedusa Group has received little more than slogans and empty promises from politicians, who have repeatedly sought to affiliate themselves with the group's cause to promote a progressive image for election campaigns — most recently the Greens.

These same political parties have stood idle over the past seven years as members of the Lampedusa Group and the Black community in Hamburg have been victimised by violent racial profiling, police brutality and maltreatment resulting in death. Last year, [William Tonou-Mbobda was murdered](#) by a security guard while he was seeking medical treatment at the University Hospital Hamburg-Eppendorf.

The perpetrators of these crimes, who go unpunished by the “justice” system, are the embodiment of both Hamburg city and German national politics: those of a white supremacist state which profits off of the exploitation and destruction of workers and oppressed peoples both domestically and abroad.

Since the turn of the century, Germany has increased its participation in military conflicts throughout the world, starting with its role as the staging ground for the NATO-led terror campaign against Yugoslavia at the turn of the century to the ongoing war in Syria, where German weapon exports led directly to the deaths of thousands, whether through the Turkish armed forces or their extremist proxy organisations.

These policies of the German state have contributed to the dire straits in which those assembled in front of the city hall find themselves: forced from their homes through wars of imperialist aggression and plunder, the refugees of the Lampedusa Group are now victims of the inability of the capitalist system to provide the basic human essentials of food, health care and housing to all.

These necessities are now more crucial than ever, as the German government has shown itself unable to combat the COVID-19 virus. In the name of “personal freedom” it has decided to loosen safety protocols while calling on individuals to take personal responsibility for both their health and the health of those around them. As always, the most vulnerable will be left to fend for themselves.

However, the Lampedusa Group is determined to carry on their pursuit of justice,

and they will not let their voices go unheard nor let their demands go unmet. As one activist put it, “[The capitalist countries] came to our countries for our resources ... and now we are here. We are here to stay.”

### **A statement by one of the demonstrators:**

“Hello. I stand here as a German citizen, the daughter of an immigrant and as a doctor.

“I think we can all remember that four weeks ago our politicians like [German Chancellor Angela] Merkel and others were talking about “solidarity.” Their solidarity means: to leave enough of us alive to produce and consume for their profit. Their freedom means the freedom to go shopping or to have a haircut. It does not mean the freedom to have a place to sleep, to have a safe home, to have enough food, to have access to health care, to be safe.

“This new disease does not affect people equally [as some speakers said before]. It affects people more who are poor. It affects people more who have no housing, who cannot provide healthy food for themselves, who have chronic diseases.

“What has also been discussed was our hospitals. Our health care minister said, ‘We are well prepared,’ which is just nonsense. And they say they want to flatten the curve, but they don’t mention the people in the nursing homes, old, sick people, who are just dying and dying; and at the same time, there are people locked up with hundreds in concentration camps without possibility to keep a distance, where the infection inevitably must spread.

“They don’t care; and it is such a shame, that such a wealthy country does not give anything to people — but we people are worth nothing to them but the profit they can gain out of us.

“This coronavirus crisis shows us problems which are not new, which were there

before. But this crisis has also made clear that it must be us. It must be us people who have nothing but ourselves, our labor power, our communities — it must be us who dictate the rules of how we live, how we run our economy, how we build up our lives!“

*For updates, visit [No Pasarán Hamburg.](#)*

