

SOLWODI

Solidarity with
women in distress

Solidarität mit
Frauen in Not

Newsletter

No. 80, July 2009

Dear Friends of SOLWODI,

Good news for a start. The discussion we staged in Berlin on 6. May on the subject "prostitution and human rights" received much attention (page 4). But none of the plenty Berlin media had sent a journalist to report about that event. Prostitution, it seems, is not so much "in", that editors just don't listen to critical opinions on that subject. Sometimes however a journalist writes something critical, especially, when it can't be overseen what the consequences of the law on prostitution are.



On 30. May one could read in the Stuttgart news, that on 5. June a Pussy-Club would be opened in nearby Fellbach – a so called flatrate-brothel. The following explanation, what that term means, can be read on the club's homepage: "Sex with all women, as long and as often as you want and how you want it! Sex with all extras! Anal or oral sex or with 3 persons or in groups – everything is possible!" All this is possible for a flatrate of 70 Euro during daytime and 100 Euro in the evening.

Michael Isenberg complains in the Stuttgart news that police and local authorities could do nothing against that. The reason for that is, that the 100 Pussis (homepage quote) in that Fellbach club are voluntarily there and do everything voluntarily for that rate.

Against that powerlessness of the police, finally something is being done. The conference of the home secretaries of the German countries decided on its spring-meeting on 5. June in Bremerhaven to review the prostitution law – as far as the possibilities of the police are concerned to take action and to prepare necessary changes to the law, to enable the police to take action, when encountering criminal activities in the red light area. However results of that review and proposals for changes will only be discussed at the next meeting in spring 2010.

In the meantime, Patricia Florin, manageress of the Pussy-Clubs in Fellbach, Heidelberg, Wuppertal and Berlin will be delighted about her clubs' success. On her homepage she happily reports: "Already 4 times in Germany and soon all over the country!"

Inspired of those depressing news I wish you restful summer holidays. Return with a fresh aggressiveness, maybe in the tradition of the "Wild Minnas". Those Dutch feminists initiated in the end of the 60s sit-ins in front of brothels and they printed the car registrations of brothel customers on leaflets, which they distributed in the city-centre.

Yours, Sister Lea

Content

LILJA – A new Streetwork-project in Oberhausen

From Stefanie Köster

Page 1

The big business with Nigerian women

From Lukas Roegler

Page 2

The Juju-contract – Psychological terror against trafficked women

From Joana Adesuwa

Reiterer

Page 3

Great interest in discussion on prostitution

Page 4

Imprint

Page 4

LILJA – A new Streetwork-project in Oberhausen

From Stefanie Köster

After a long time of preparations, LILJA- a support project – has started its work in Oberhausen, Blumenthalstr. 72. Three colleagues advise German and foreign women who work as prostitutes, but who are interested to improve their life situation. The colleagues go in the nearby milieu and hear from the prostitutes, where help might be required. In Oberhausen the city administration doesn't offer health care for the prostitutes, although the city is levying a so called "sex-tax" from those women. We are meeting many women from Bulgaria and Rumania. They almost speak no German. A low-level German language course, which is being offered directly in the milieu, shall serve as a meeting point to get in contact with those women.

The work of LILJA is being performed in close cooperation with the SOLWODI advice office in Duisburg. Here, experiences are being exchanged and new ideas are being developed. The equal rights office of the city of Oberhausen advised us in the start phase and provided contacts to other authorities and agencies which could provide support. The project "Aktion Mensch" is sponsoring our work for 3 years.

The big business with Nigerian women

From Lukas Roegler

The young journalist Lukas Roegler from Bonn is the author of the price awarded documentary film "My Hell Europe", which can be seen on 5. August at 21:35 on the TV channel "Phoenix". The film reports about the life of Faith, Linda, Betty and Queen – 4 of the estimated 50.000 Nigerian women, who are forced to work as prostitutes in Europe. The main "receiver – country" was initially Italy, where in the meantime every 3rd prostitute comes from Nigeria. The German criminal office is confronted with a remarkable increase of victims from Nigeria. Also SOLWODI registers an increase of requests for help from Nigerian women. In the following text Lukas Roegler takes us to Benin City in the South of Nigeria. Benin City was already in the historic times of the slave trade a central place for that trade. Today is that city with 2 million people the centre of a modern slave trade with women.



Lukas Roegler when filming in Benin City

Betty is a pretty woman at the end of her twenties. "My father has 4 women and there are a total of 10 children". She is shaking her head. "It's not so easy to take care of 10 children here in Nigeria. I have 2 elder brothers, but none of them has a good job. For that reason her father had sold his plot of land to get the money for my journey to Europe. All their hopes rested in me" 4 years ago, Betty returned from Europe, however not voluntarily. She had been arrested as a prostitute and was deported. There are many women like Betty in Benin City.

In the former capital of the mighty kingdom of Benin, traditions are being held high. Especially the patriarchal ones. This also applies to the polygamy, which always provided many children. In a region with a high mortality rate among children and an old fashioned agrarian society, which required many working hands, the polygamy then assured the survival of the family and the living of the old aged people. Today however, polygamy and many children – in this overpopulated and urban country with a high unemployment rate – mean severe poverty for most of the people. As a consequence the demographic pressure in cities like Benin is high, which leads to increasing migration? But this is not the full truth, because not every overpopulated African city sells its daughters to Europe. And regardless of what western journal-

ists say after a short visit to Nigeria, under Nigerian circumstances Benin is not poor – Benin is greedy.

Nobody really knows how it started with trafficking in Benin. Some people say local merchants travelled in the eighties to the fashion-country Italy to buy their products which they could sell then in Nigeria. There they discovered that Italian men looked at them as exotic sex-objects. Regardless of the truth, at the end of the eighties the first women from Benin immigrated to Italy to earn their money there as prostitutes.

Very soon this first generation of Nigerian women could no longer satisfy the great demand for fast sex with African women. With false promises young girls from Nigeria were lured to Europe and then forced into prostitution. So the first generation of prostitutes from Benin City advanced to "Madams", brutal pimps, who made the trade with African women and girls and the enforced prostitution the sole, worldwide organized crime, almost only controlled by women: Women who enslave women, often with the help of the Juju – cult (see page 3). The money of those madams and their families is all over present in Benin City. On Benin's streets one sees today more brand-new Lexus, Mercedes or BMW cars than in many European places. The success of the "Italos" is very consciously being presented. There is no better advertisement for their business. It's a

fact, that every year thousands of Nigerian girls and women offer their services to those madams and dare to go on the dangerous journey to Europe. Many go voluntarily, but many are pressed by their parents. At the end, it's only the money that counts for those parents. And with that money the possibility arises to give an expensive education to the traditional more valuable sons, to prepare them for the difficult Nigerian labour market.

Almost all daughters without a real job perspective in Nigeria know by now, that they will be working as prostitutes in Europe – if they manage to cross the deserts alive. Indocinated by a patriarchal society, most of the Nigerian girls consider it as a natural duty to support their families at home, it doesn't matter how. Even if they have to earn first 50.000 Euro with their body – under inhuman conditions – to pay back the "travel expenses", before they start earning their own money. The victims of an old-fashioned family ideal sacrifice themselves for their parents, who stick to out of time traditions. And they do this often until they die.

Further information to the film "My Hell Europe – from the trade with African women" can be found in the internet under

www.sisters-of-no-mercy.com

To contact Lukas Roegler go:

info@konfilm.com



The Juju – contract – Psychological terror against trafficked women

From Joana Adesuwa Reiterer

The author and film producer Joana Adesuwa Reiterer was born in Benin City in 1981. Since 2003 she is living in Vienna, where she moved to after she had married an Austrian business man with Nigerian origin. When she discovered, that the commodity that her husband was selling, were young Nigerian girls, she reported him to the police. In 2006 she founded "Exit", a human rights organization, which fights against the trafficking of Nigerian woman. In 2008 her autobiographical book "The Water goddess" was published. In this book she describes – taking her childhood as an example – the influence of the Juju-cult on the oppression of girls and women in Nigeria, an oppression which is often linked with an uncontrolled sexual violence. In the following text, Joana Adesuwa Reiterer is asking for more understanding for the Nigerian victims of trafficking, who are often not seen as such, since they appear to be free to move as they like, although they are slaves, tied up by Juju.

As a girl one grows up in Nigeria, knowing that there are ghosts and witches, that men are more valuable than women, that only money establishes respect and that Juju-priests are so mighty, that they can kill by using only their intellectual-diabolic power and this over every distance. One doesn't always recognize Juju-priests at first sight. Often they camouflage themselves by pretending to be priests of a Christian Whitsun-church. Acting openly or under cover, many of them are part of a criminal network, which earns great sums by trafficking women. They do this in a psychological very clever way by making use of the girls' patriarchal based thinking and Juju understanding.

A typical example for how this is being done, is the 18 years old Linda, unemployed, grown up in a polygamy family, which is believing in ghosts and Juju. When a neighbour – a so called madam, named Mama Susan – offered her a good salary as a dancer in Austria, Linda immediately accepted that offer. She also had no objection to sign a contract with Mama Susan. This contract was signed in the presence of Doctor Ulu, a highly estimated Juju-priest. Linda told me, what he did at that occasion: "I was told to undress. Doctor Ulu was shaving the hair under my arms and cutting my fingernails. He took my underwear and put everything in a pot, which was filled with red sand. While he was pouring a liquid in that pot – which looked like blood –

he said: Linda swear, that you will refund Mama Susan with 50.000 Dollar travel expenses. Swear, that you will never talk to the police about her and that you won't make any difficulties". After I had sworn that, Doctor Ulu threatened. "If you should try to escape, you will get mad. If you don't obey what you have sworn, you will get sick and die".

In Austria Linda didn't become a dancer, she had to work as a prostitute to pay back her debts. Like all the other victims, she got right after her arrival in Europe a mobile phone. Via that phone, the girls receive regularly threatening calls. In a frightening way they are being reminded of details of the ceremony when signing the contract. For example that they had to lie down in an open grave or that they had to undress in the presence of relatives or friends. But mainly the mobile phone is being used to remind the victims of the deadly consequences if the oath is being breached.

The victims normally refuse medical treatment or psychological therapies, which makes it very difficult for help organizations to help those women. But it's very important that those heavily traumatized women get support from social workers who know about Juju, who listen to those women instead of interrogating them. Since repeated questionings of those victims lead to flashbacks – that are suddenly coming memories

which are being experienced as reality – which – as one can imagine – reduce the willingness of those women to cooperate. To convince police, justice and the authorities dealing with foreigners, that those young women from Nigeria are not voluntarily prostitutes but victims of trafficking, the testimony of witnesses is required. Based on my knowledge of many cases like that of Linda, I am asking that only 1 detailed report of the case should be written, thereby helping the victims to avoid those traumatizing memories, but still have that report to prove the crime that happened to such a woman.

But unfortunately very often the young women from Nigeria are being confronted by the authorities with questions like that: "If you are a victim of trafficking and if you don't want to work as a prostitute, why didn't you escape? You were not kept as a hostage and you could move freely – why didn't you go to the police?"

Infos about EXIT

www.adesuwainitiatives.org

For further reading: Joana Adesuwa Reiterer: "Die Wassergöttin (The water goddess)", which was just published as a paperback (Knauer 8.95 Euro) or Mary Kreutzer and Corinna Milborn: "Ware Frau – auf den Spuren moderner Sklaverei von Afrika nach Europa" (Commodity women – on the track of modern slavery from Africa to Europe) (Ecowin 18.95 Euro).

Great interest in discussion on prostitution

On 6. May, in the Gutenberg – room of the representation of the country Rhineland-Palatinate in Berlin, there was a great crush; so many people came to SOLWODI's discussion about prostitution and human rights, that continuously extra chairs had to be provided.

On the stage were: Ingrid Fischbach, MP, head of the women's group within the CDU/CSU fraction and deputy head of the women's union in North Rhine-Westphalia Elke Ferner, MP, deputy head within the SPD fraction and head of the working group social democratic women (ASF), Prof. Birgit Thoma, specialist in criminal law and criminologist, criminal director Klaus Bayerl, head of the criminal department in Augsburg, the journalist Lukas Roegler (see page 2) and the head of SOLWODI Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann. The discussion was chaired by the TV-journalist and specialist for Southeast Europe Inge Bell. Also the CDU MP Ute Granold had been invited. She is, as a lawyer and expert for trafficking, a member of the committee of the German parliament for laws and human rights. Unfortunately she couldn't come.

Birgit Thoma reminded us: Already in 1949 a UN-convention has been passed, saying that prostitution was not in accordance with human rights. Germany never ratified that convention. With the exception of Sweden no other state honours that

convention. In Sweden prostitution is being defined as violence of men against women. For that reason a law called "women's peace", which was passed in 1999, makes approaching women to get sex, a criminal act. But the main purpose of the law was to change the thinking within the society about that subject, says Inge Bell. And she asked the female politicians: "Could this Swedish approach also be a way for Germany to solve that problem?" The social democrat Elke Ferner doubted that. "Prohibition doesn't change anything, also not the mind". A change of the society's mind has to start with a change of the sexualized picture of women, which gives the impression:

"Women are always prepared (to have sex) and they are 2nd class citizens". How much this picture of women is already fixed in the heads, was explained by Elke Ferner with the following example: When we from ASF draw the attention of the council, which oversees advertising, on cases of sexist advertising, they immediately tell us we were prudish.

Also the Christian democrat Ingrid Fischbach is not fond of the Swedish model: "It didn't improve the situation of the prostitutes". Similar as the German prostitution law, it didn't bring improvements. "We have to look for other solutions". The top aim is an exit from the prostitution. On top of that, the CDU / CSU fraction in the German parliament aims to declare all forms of exploitation of prostitutes a crime. Ingrid Fischbach also said: "I can subscribe to the demands of the SOLWODI campaign". Sr. Lea Ackermann however made it clear, that she favours the Swedish approach. She admitted that sometimes she would love to live in France. There human rights organizations like "Le Nid" and "Foundation Scelles" just say: "We are aiming for a Europe without prostitution" and they got applause for that demand. "That's something, we can only dream of here in Germany".

For a full report about that event please see:

www.solwodi.de

"Termin-Rückblicke"

Contact:

SOLWODI Deutschland e.V. / Propsteistraße 2 / D-56154 Boppard-Hirzenach

Tel: 0049 – (0)6741 – 2232 / Fax: 0049 – (0)6741 – 2310

Email: info@solwodi.de <http://www.solwodi.de>

Bank Accounts

Volksbank Koblenz Mittelrhein e.G.

Acc.-No. 656565 1000

Sorting Code 570 900 00

BIC GENODE51KOB

IBAN DE68 5709 0000 6565 6510 00

Landesbank Saar, Saarbrücken

Acc.-No. 2000 9999

Sorting Code 590 500 00

BIC SALADE55XXX

IBAN DE84 5905 0000 0020 0099 99

Kreissparkasse Rhein-Hunsrück

Acc.-No. 11 270 00

Sorting Code 560 517 90

BIC MALADE51SIM

IBAN DE02 5605 1790 0001 1270 00