



Edition 140 – December 2015 / January 2016

Good News

Two Berlin students took on the task of developing a university for refugees who otherwise often have to wait years before they can begin their studies again. Students study for two years online and then change to a regular university. In a fundraising campaign over half a million euros were collected - that's enough to allow more than 400 refugees to complete their studies. <http://kiron.university/>

- **Thank God for exemplary Berlin creativity**

Refugees in Berlin

About 750 refugees continue to arrive daily in Berlin. This means that every other day a new refugee housing must be opened. Thousands of people are looking for a place to live and are standing in line at the offices in order to receive benefits. That is and remains a huge challenge.

The good news: The mayor spoke strong words in a government statement and has urged all those responsible to improve the conditions. According to insiders, however, there are still districts that are trying to evade responsibility and block processes. In addition, additional temporary refugee housing was to be provided on Tempelhof Field, but it remains controversial whether on the tarmac or on the edges (which is so far not legally allowed). Thousands of volunteers, including many from churches, continue to be greatly involved.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for all the help that we in Berlin have been able to give to the refugees so far**
- **Pray for quick measures which will optimize processes and make them less bureaucratic**
- **Pray for solutions for accommodations**
- **Pray that more churches, people sharing a flat, and families would be willing to take in refugees or support them**

Situation at the LaGeSo

There have been some improvements at the State Office for Health and Social Affairs (LaGeSo): Through private donations, two buses could be financed in which men can wait during the night.

Mothers and children are allowed to wait in a tent. Measures have been taken to speed up the administrative processes and to relieve the LaGeSo: Mobile registration teams, benefit payments on site at the accommodations and in the districts, applications for extension of services by e-mail.

But the situation on the ground at the LaGeSo is still very critical. Night after night hundreds of people wait at the entrance with no protection against the cold and rain, hoping to be admitted the next morning. When the doors open, there are usually scuffles resulting in injuries. Every day, there are many standing in line for 15 to 20 hours – being cared for only by volunteers. (Here's a shocking TV report <http://is.gd/r9oIGX>) Across the street from the LaGeSo, the building of the former Ministry of Interior has been standing empty for a month, for which each month over 570,000 € rent is paid. The government wants to get out of the lease by the end of 2016, but the owner wants to rent the building as office space.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for all the recent improvements**
- **Pray that more districts agree to pay for refugee benefits**
- **Pray for more efficient structures in processing, waiting management, and supply**
- **Pray that the BMI will be opened for those who are waiting**

Increased Spending on Security

The horror of the terror attacks in Paris and Brussels drives us to prayer. The authorities say that there is also a "persistent non-specific threat situation" in Berlin. A new counterterrorism Soko (special commission) is being formed. Police chief Klaus Kandt reported to the committee on Internal Affairs in the German Parliament on Nov. 21 that 70 officers have been pulled together to form the Soko, which is designed to protect national security. These officials are to "sift and evaluate" all tip-offs about suspicious objects or persons. Numerous tips have been received since the terror attacks in Paris. Kandt also called for improved police equipment. The weapons of potential assassins have reached new dimensions, and therefore the police must make improvements to protect police officers. The coalition has agreed on an

expanded budget for 2016/17. The budget for police and fire department will be increased by 50 million euros annually. A large portion of the money will flow into the fight against terrorism through the special task force (SEC) and the Office of Criminal Investigation, including new weapons, DNA analysis devices, night vision equipment and 350 document verification machines, which can automatically identify fake passports. A new task force has been formed "to deal with special security situations", which has created 75 new jobs. Police resources to combat organized crime will also be strengthened. (Facts and Figures: Der Tagesspiegel Nov. 23)

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the increase in personnel and the funds for internal security**
- **Pray that police equipment will be improved**
- **Pray for successful prevention of terror attacks**

Islamist radicalization

The Salafist scene in Berlin is increasing at a tremendous pace. According to homeland security, there are about 670 Salafists in town, 350 of which are considered to be prone to violence. Over 100 have left Germany to go to Syria or Iraq, and ten of those have already died. The radicalization takes place largely through quite inconspicuous mosque members in "back rooms" that is, independent of the Imam and outside the mosques. "At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that terror attacks could be prepared under the guise of being refugees".

To prevent possible terror acts, homeland security is attempting to increase prevention measures. "We have already begun de-radicalization measures in the area of Salafism", said the head of Berlin's intelligence service, Bernd Palenda. But it is not enough to undertake measures only in the mosques – there must also be targeted projects in schools. Many teachers feel helpless because they cannot fight radicalization in the schools alone. (Source: rbbonline.de)

Prayer:

- **Pray that de-radicalization and preventative measures can be established and strengthened in mosques and schools**
- **Pray for supernatural wisdom for security agencies to uncover the "back rooms"**
- **Pray for preservation and salvation of Muslim youth**

Myfest 2016 cancelled?

The Kreuzberg Myfest, which was launched in 2003 as a counter action to the annual riots, might not happen next year. Local residents had complained against the now purely commercial event.

Thus it has been denied the status of a political event. Since the Senate had previously supported the festival with several hundred thousand euros, it is questionable whether it can survive as a purely commercial street festival.

During the last 12 years, Together for Berlin has contributed to keeping May 1 peaceful through onsite city city-wide worship services, prayer events, and last year for the first time, gospel music on a stage. Thus there is reason to give thanks that the counter-demonstration in the form of a the street festival is no longer considered to be politically necessary, since May 1 for the most part has become a peaceful day – even in Kreuzberg.

Prayer:

- **Thank God that May 1 has become peaceful**
- **Pray for a new concept for the Myfest which would also give Christians a place to be involved**

Day-care fees and staff

The SPD and CDU Senate has agreed to abolish the fees for the care of two-year-olds beginning August 1, 2016. A year later the fees for one-year olds will also be abolished. The complete exemption from fees from 2017 on will cost almost 41 million euros annually.

This was not meant to detract from the necessity of improving the quality of childcare, so funds for the expansion of day care centres have been increased by 30 million euros per year. And the caseload for children under three years is to be gradually improved from 5.9 children per educator to 4.9. This will cost 49 million euros annually, beginning 2017. The measures are controversial. Trade associations question whether these funds are sufficient and if enough candidates can be found for the approximately 1,000 new jobs.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the improvement of childcare**
- **Pray that parents will continue to experience the freedom of choice concerning how to care for their children**
- **Pray that dedicated daycare workers can be found**

Dates

- Dec. 9, 6pm **Prayer for City Politicians** in front of the Rote Rathaus
- Jan. 10-17, 2016 Evangelical Alliance **International Week of Prayer** with 100 events around Berlin. Detailed program <http://tinyurl.com/p82p6w3>
- Preview: March 3-5 **Transforum-Conference** from Gemeinsam für Berlin. Topic: *Live. Know. Learn – the city and its worlds*, Christus-Gemeinde Hohenschönhausen