

WFWP Stuttgart, Germany's event marking the UN World Refugee Day

Ute Lemme
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'World Refugee Day' was introduced by the United Nations in 2000, to be held annually on 20 June, in order to raise awareness of the plight of refugees around the globe.

WFWP Stuttgart/Germany organized an event in cooperation with Mrs. Barbara Mobley of the 'Friends of Refugees, Wangen' to mark this year's World Refugee Day.

A group of 17 people including several refugees gathered in the Stuttgart UPF center. Initially, we took time to get to know each other over refreshments, before Ute Lemme officially opened the program and invited Mrs. Mobley to introduce herself and to describe her work as a volunteer. She organizes a monthly 'meeting place café' for refugees and local people in Stuttgart for Wangen, Hedelfingen and Untertürkheim. It was through this work that Gabriele Schickert had got to know Mrs. Mobley. Meeting different cultures is a theme of Mrs. Mobley's life as a German-American and her profession as a translator. She very much enjoys the work she does with the refugees and feels that they very much enrich our life.

Then we could listen to the participants to share about their lives.

We were moved by a German guest who shared about her experience of helping refugees and migrants on public transport or offering friendly words of support and encouragement to the lonely. A young refugee from Afghanistan told us that his family had already fled to Iran in 2001, when he was only 2 years old. At the age of 14, he went to work in Turkey and from there took the Balkan route to Austria, and in 2015, at the age of 16, further on to Germany. Here he was able to finish his schooling and underwent two operations for a congenital malformation of his jaw. His desire is to work as a carer.

A father from Syria introduced himself and his three sons. The oldest son is studying computer sciences and was the first of the family to find his way to Germany in 2015, on foot over the Balkans after having made the highly dangerous trip by boat across the Mediterranean. He was later followed by his parents and four siblings. His two younger brothers are attending high school here. The father explained why they had fled Syria; out of a longing to find freedom from the dictatorship and the desire to find a more hopeful future for his children. His house in Damascus, along with the whole neighborhood was destroyed. The ruling party has transformed a once tolerant and prosperous country into a living hell.

Once again, we realized that peace and prosperity cannot be taken for granted. We can be so grateful for our life here in freedom!

In closing, Gabriele Schickert gave our guests a tour of the center where they could view the pictures of the world's religions and Dr. Saidi's calligraphies. She extended an invitation to the Muslim family to attend the 'Interreligious Round Table', and Mrs. Mobley encouraged us all to participate in her next 'Meeting Place Café' on 7 July 2018.

Reported by Ute Lemme
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