"HEIMAT IS NOT JUST FOR YOU, HONEY. IT'S FOR ALL OF US!"

Tazir, journalist and former colleague of Montagscafé team

My name is Tazir. I am 30 years old and a Libyan refugee based in Berlin. I'm a journalist and have been working in several NGOs, mainly in the field of human rights, now focusing on queer rights and antiracism.

At first, I did not have any connection with the concept of "Heimat", it was quite new and strange to me. I couldn't relate to it, especially coming here as a refugee. When I first heard it, I was like "okay, maybe the translation for that is "home" in English", but it does not really work in that way. I also couldn't find it in Arabic, but I found a similar thing in my language, Tmazight, where people say "tammort". The meaning of the word is very close to "Heimat".

ⵜⴰⵎⵓⵔⵜ (/'taumurt = "Heimat" in berber language Tmazight)

When I traveled recently back home, where "tammort" is, I met two young people from Germany hanging out in Tunisia. I was like "Hi! My name is Tazir and I speak German". And they were so friendly and they said, "We are from Dresden". What a great coincidence. So I was like "Oh my God, I have a connection with this country on an emotional level". Unconsciously, I became a part of it.

So my view on "Heimat" is full of challenges: First of all, I can't speak fluently or understand perfectly German. It's giving me this barrier with people. Then, I feel an unfamiliarity with the German system, even after living here for four years and having friends … I still not feel really acquainted. And third, as a black refugee, I did experience discrimination on many levels. And these things just intersect: not knowing the system because of racism, homophobia and the language.

On the other hand, I found out that especially in Berlin or at Montagscafé in Dresden, Black Germans or Asian Germans have their own narratives of "Heimat". So we can say, that it is our own experience that forms the concept of "Heimat". So, in order to limit racism and discrimination, we could make foreigners – even the people who came yesterday – feel that this country is "Heimat" for them. By expanding and making this term inclusive to all of us: "It's not just for you, honey. It's for all of us."

What comes to my mind when talking about Europe now is the travel document that I have (now): the so called *blue passport*. Before I got it, it was not possible for me to go to other European countries. Now it's so easy to go to Italy, France or whatever. This has actually expanded the term of "Heimat", because when people now speak about Europe in a social sense, there is a meaning of traveling and freedom of movement. It makes you feel like you can go wherever you want.

But now, with the war in Ukraine, we can discover another concept of "Heimat in Europe", because here we are witnessing how discrimination can work between refugees. Between those who came recently from Ukraine and those living here for years or decades already but who are not from Europe. The Ukrainians are also in need and desperate to come here, but to them structures are more facilitated.

As a refugee, I would welcome new refugees from Ukraine, feeling their tragedy and relate to it. By sharing the immigration and refugee experience between, e.g. people from the SWANA-region (South West Asia and North Africa) and the people from Ukraine, a new concept of "Heimat" could evolve: one that is more powerful, stronger and more inclusive. A concept that reflects less on discrimination but more on diversity and richness – also when it comes to economic aspects. Because again, we will have new people to enrich a society. And so now the concept of "Heimat" must be seen with this crisis in Europe. I can think about this term including new people with other languages and experiences and becoming a part of it right now.