



11 June 2020

black lives matter

## Standing up to racist police violence

Stop the institutional racism of the police in Switzerland against Black People, People of Colour and people with precarious residency status

Black People, People of Colour, Indigenous People and allies in the fight against racism all over the world are angry and mourning for those who have been killed by racist police violence. We do not only mourn George Floyd, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor or Ahmaud Arbery, who were killed in the last weeks in the USA by police officers or by vigilantes. We do not only mourn for the many people who were killed in other countries like Ágatha Vitória Sales Félix and David Nascimento dos Santos in Brazil, Adama Traoré in France and Oury Jalloh in Germany. We also mourn those people who were killed in Switzerland by racist police violence, such as Mike Ben Peter, Hervé Mandundu, Lamin Fatty and many others. And these killings are not just isolated cases. They are an expression of the structural racism and the prevailing politics of deportation that characterise Swiss society and state institutions. **Racist police violence is a deadly reality in Switzerland too!**

In the last 20 years the following people have been killed in Switzerland because of racist policing<sup>1</sup>:

Khaled Abuzarifa suffocated during a deportation on 3 March 1999, shackled and with his mouth taped shut.

<sup>1</sup> Wa Baile, Mohamed (2019). Helvetid. In: Mohamed Wa Baile/Serena O. Dankwa/Tarek Naguib/Patricia Purtschert/Sarah Schilliger (Eds.), Racial Profiling (229-238). Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. The documentation of the cases comes from own research and the book augenauf (2015), «Dem einfach etwas entgegensetzen», Zürich: edition 8.

Samson Chukwu suffocated on 1 May 2001 with his hands tied behind his back during a deportation in Granges prison in Valais.

Cemal G. died on 3 July 2001 as a result of a violent police operation in Bern-Bethlehem.

Hamid Bakiri hanged himself in a cell of the Chur police station on 20 September 2001, the day of his planned deportation.

Claudio M. died on 29 April 2004 during a police arrest in Brüttisellen in the canton of Zurich.

Yaya Bakayoko died on 3 June 2004 after falling from a window during a police operation in Basel.

Anthony took his own life on September 1, 2004 in Bellinzona while in pre-trial custody.

An unknown man whose application for asylum was rejected hanged himself on 23 January 2005 while in pre-trial custody in Sarnen in the canton of Obwalden.

Ousman Sow died of thirst in the night from January 2 to 3, 2007 during his hunger strike in the St. Gallen regional prison Altstätten.

Alhusein Douto Kora died with breathing difficulties on 5 March 2007 during a deportation from Switzerland to Gambia.

Mariame Souaré died on 25 August 2007 in a fall from the fifth floor while fleeing from the police in Geneva.

Abdi Daud died on 23 March 2008 in Zurich University Hospital, after several months of imprisonment in Zurich airport prison.

Andy Bestman drowned in the Basel Rhine on 30 May 2008 while fleeing from the police.

Joseph Ndukaku Chiakwa died on 17 March 2010 in Zurich Airport during his deportation, in full shackling and with a spit shield and helmet over his head.

An unknown woman whose asylum application was rejected died in Zurich police prison on 3 June 2011.

Medina Yassin Suleyman took her own life on 18 March 2012 due to the threat of deportation at the Linth Hospital in the canton of St. Gallen.

Oleg N. took his own life in Zurich airport prison on the night of 11 to 12 November 2012.

Ilhan O. died on 4 January 2013 in Zurich police prison.

Hervé Mandundu was killed in Bex on 6 November 2016 by several shots fired by a police officer.

Subramaniam H. died on 6 October 2017 during a police operation at the asylum centre in Brissago in the canton of Ticino.

Lamin Fatty died in custody in Mont-sur-Lausanne on the night of 23 to 24 October 2017.

Mike Ben Peter died in the night from 28 February to 1 March 2018 during a police check in Lausanne.

Salah Tebbouche died on 30 December 2019.

\* list incomplete

Most incidents of racist violence are never made public and many are also made invisible. In addition to Black men, Black women and Women of Colour, people with precarious residence status, Jewish travellers, Roma, Sinti, trans people, queer and non-binary people and sex workers of all genders are also particularly affected by racist violence and violent police actions. For people who have had to suffer these violent experiences, however, there is little chance that their experiences are heard and that those responsible are sanctioned.

It is now time that all those who do not experience violent racism against their own bodies again and again become aware of systemic racism. Racism does not only consist of blunders by individuals, but is a historical and social condition that is still inscribed in Switzerland and its institutions as a colonial legacy and nationalist reality.

The time has come to take decisive action against all forms of racism, to stand together against the normality and matter-of-course way in which Black and Indigenous People and People of Colour are systematically dehumanised, presented as a danger, criminalised or illegalised. It is time that the bodies of Black People, Indigenous People and People of Colour are no longer treated as inferior. To this end, we as a whole society must unite our forces to ensure that all people in Switzerland can move freely in public and private spaces without hindrance, without fear, without humiliation and without being at risk of exposure to racist violence.

Racist police violence is only the tip of the iceberg, but it highlights the violent nature of all forms of racism.

## **WE DEMAND AN END TO RACIST POLICE VIOLENCE!**

### **SPECIFICALLY WE DEMAND:**

- that racism is recognised as a problem of society as a whole and documented and fought by all institutions, organisations and authorities. In a first step, this requires that political decision-makers and the operational police management recognise the problem of racist police violence, of racial profiling and of the deadly deportation regime as a fundamental, structural and institutional problem beyond individual cases;
- that decision-makers in the departments and directorates of the Confederation, cantons and municipalities who are responsible for the police and the Border Guard examine their own practice with regards to racism and fundamentally change it with an anti-racist concept, which is to be developed and evaluated by racism experts. In addition, the police work and the work of the Border Guard is to be examined by independent commissions of inquiry;
- that public statements on the fight against police violence and racial profiling are issued by all institutions responsible for security policy;
- that all deaths to date as a result of police operations, at the police station or in police custody are investigated by an independent commission of experts specially appointed for this purpose. This commission must have the power to hold all persons and institutions involved ethically and legally responsible and to enforce reparations;
- that an independent civil-society body against police violence is state-funded to systematically record racial profiling and cases of police violence;

- an immediate halt to all deportations and the abolition of administrative detention and the emergency aid regime;
- a redistribution of financial resources from the police through the parliaments in favour of organisations and projects that actively fight racial discrimination;
- that Black People, Indigenous People and People of Colour are actively involved in the constitution and development of counselling concepts of publicly funded racism counselling centres;
- that the media, institutions and politics deal intensively with racism in Switzerland and their own structures characterised by racism, take action against it and bring this to public attention;
- that all people living in this society fight structural, institutional racism and everyday racism and commit to an anti-racist attitude in their everyday encounters.