

“Refugee Crisis” in Germany and Subsistence Minimum of Asylum Seekers

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Unprecedented in European post-war history, some European countries rescinded border controls in late 2015 to allow huge numbers of people seeking international protection to enter the country. Germany led this policy and received almost one million new asylum applicants. The consequences of the policy were quickly termed “refugee crisis” by the German media. This lecture will describe the main political responses to the crisis, in particular with regard to the access to social benefits meant to cover the subsistence needs of asylum seekers. Germany resorted to a policy of curtailing the social rights of asylum seekers. Yet, in Germany, the right to be provided with a subsistence minimum is part of the constitutional right to respect for human dignity. Hence, the lecture will ask: Is the regime of (down-graded) social benefits, applicable to asylum seekers only, consistent with the right to respect for human dignity under the German constitution?

Ulrike Davy is Professor of Constitutional and Administrative Law, German and International Social Law, and Comparative Law at the Faculty of Law, Bielefeld University. She is also a member of the University Council of Bielefeld University and Co-Director of the Institute for World Society Studies. From 2010 through 2015, Ulrike Davy was the Managing Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies; from 2006 through 2007, she was Vice-President of Bielefeld University for Organisational Development. Her fields of expertise include global and European human rights; global and European social policy; German social law; immigration and refugee law.

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