

## **Station\_PP: Pariser Platz**

### **What does statelessness mean?**

The street sign pointing to Pariser Platz is somewhat hidden. Have you discovered it yet? Several streets run from here through the star-shaped arrangement of the houses. If you feel like taking a break, you can relax in the cozy Café K located on the corner.

Maybe a little street corner in Paris could look like this, too, couldn't it?

Now to the topic. Hannah Arendt fled from Nazi persecution in Germany to France in 1933. She spent several years of her life in Paris.

In 1940, she was imprisoned by the French authorities in the Gurs camp in southern France because of her Jewish origins. In 1941, she managed to escape to America, where, after many years as a stateless person, she was granted American citizenship in 1951.

What does statelessness mean? What rights do people have who have left their legal system and no longer belong to any state?

These questions about the right to asylum, which are still highly debated today, occupied Hannah Arendt many years ago. Her personal experiences of flight, expatriation, life in exile and as a stateless person are of great significance in her writings and critiques.

We have lost our home and, with it, the familiarity of everyday life. We have lost our profession and, with it the confidence that we are somehow useful in this world. We have lost our language, and with it, the naturalness of our reactions, the simplicity of our gestures and the unforced expression of our feelings [...] and that means the collapse of our private world. - (Arendt, Hannah: We Refugees. Reclam, Ditzingen 2016, 7th ed. p.10.)

Arendt questioned the universality of human rights: "Statelessness on a mass scale has in effect confronted the world with the inescapable and highly perplexing question of whether there is such a thing as indispensable human rights at all, that is, rights that are independent of any particular political stature and spring solely from the mere fact of being human." - (Arendt, Hannah: Aporias of Human Rights. In: Elements and Origins of Total Rule. Piper, Munich 1986. p. 601.)

Arendt describes that people who are not protected by any state cannot be sure of their human rights. (Arendt 1986, p.606). Being stateless and without affiliation means being in a lawless space. National laws do not protect stateless people, and no government has the legal responsibility to enforce or uphold human rights.

"The right to have rights", is the only human right, according to Arendt, describes the right to belong to a political community regardless of birthplace and national affiliation.

There are currently almost 125,000 stateless persons living in Germany. The exclusion of ethnic or religious minorities in states, for example, can result in statelessness. So can state or political measures, such as state dissolution. People can also become stateless through administrative or technical failures. In some cases, stateless persons inherit their status to their children - because people born in Germany are not automatically entitled to German citizenship.

(Tagesschau. Almost 125,000 stateless people in Germany.11.08.2023. Internet:[https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/migration-deutschland-104.html#:~:text=In%20Germany%20living%20currently%20124,500,of%20%22Mediendienst%20Integration%22%20highlight](https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/migration-deutschland-104.html#:~:text=In%20Germany%20living%20currently%20124,500,of%20%22Mediendienst%20Integration%22%20highlight).)).

People continue to flee their home countries, they flee war, threats, natural disasters and are forced to change their location as a result. They leave their homes, take a long, difficult journey. In such situations, people are affected by exploitation, abuse and violence, and in the worst cases they are exposed to the loss of their own lives or those of their loved ones.

"Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." Article 14. para. 1 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

What Hannah Arendt criticizes, Heiner Bielefeldt explains as follows: *"That is precisely the crucial point, namely the transition, is to come in, simply falls out of this formulation. What about the many who got out somewhere but can't get in anywhere?"*

*"Or those who have then set foot on the ground somewhere but, in any case, legally speaking, have not yet won any land at all and always have to exist in some makeshift arrangement."*

An excerpt from the Süddeutsche Zeitung, 04.10.2023.

Asylum law: EU states agree on asylum reform:

In the struggle to reform asylum law in the European Union, the member states have cleared up the last central point of contention. On Wednesday, 4 October 2023, EU diplomats reached an agreement on the so-called crisis regulation. This regulation sets rules for the case that a country is affected by exceptionally high numbers of refugees. Refugees can then be held in camps for months, their rights massively restricted.

Who has human rights? To whom should they apply? Is this our idea of respect for the human being? What would Hannah Arendt have said about this?