

# **The psychological and mental health of refugees in emergency camps in Berlin:**

## The role of social work in mental health services

Abstract

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“It is the amazing courage to flee oppression, to leave behind everything that is familiar, and to chance the hostility of a completely alien culture in order to find freedom, opportunity, and a better life”. (Sher, 2010: p.1a)

The history of people fleeing their homes and resettling in new places is long, and the reasons behind their movement are diverse. War refugees are groups of people who flee conflict, and face a unique experience of flight. They are forced to flee their homes, often after devastating loss and profoundly traumatic experiences. They take dangerous roads in order to reach their destination, and that puts them in very vulnerable and serious situations. They arrive in new countries with new cultures and they are supposed to find a way to integrate into this new society and to cope with the bureaucracy. All of these experiences might lead to mental and psychological problems, such as anxiety, heightened stress rates and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

This thesis uses the unique experience of refugees and asylum seekers living in emergency camps as a case study to explore the topic of mental and psychological health. It suggests through a participatory research, procedures such as support groups to deal with issues of mental distress from a social work perspective, and analyses this topic employing a human rights approach.