

Open Letter to Initiative Respekt und Schutz für Sexarbeiter*innen

Support Ruby Rebelde to resist anti-sex work SLAPP

Dear member organization of the initiative "Respect and Protection for Sex Workers",

As you know, a symposium of the initiative to which you belong took place on May 12, 2023.

In this context, the sex worker and activist Ruby Rebelde was invited as an expert to give a lecture on the topic "6 years ProstSchG, sexworkphobia and anti-genderism". In this lecture, Ruby Rebelde presented narratives of sex work opponents who speak of a "prostitution lobby/pimp lobby" and interpreted these narratives as structural antisemitic conspiracy narratives. Ruby Rebelde referenced scientifically based research findings.

The term "prostitution lobby" or "pimp lobby" refers not only to sex work activists but also professional counselling centers such as Hydra or members of BuFaS e.V., which have been offering professional counselling and social work for sex workers for decades.

The organization Sisters e.V. was present at this symposium. This organization, which repeatedly uses this "lobby" argument and demands a client criminalisation in Germany, took Ruby Rebelde's presentation as an opportunity to take legal action against Ruby Rebelde - specifically in the form of a cease and desist order with the threat of a libel suit for damage to reputation and defamation.

After this and similar organisations defamed the reputation of human rights activists, experts and social workers in the field of sex work for years it's a clear victimblaming to press charges against a sex worker who speaks out against this.

Experts in specialist counseling centers, self-organized sex work collectives and cooperatives are demanding better working conditions, migration rights and a reduction in discrimination. They do this in the awareness of similarities and differences in the field of sex work. To speak here of a conspiracy "in favor of prostitution" is absurd.

On July 13, a Court in Berlin has convicted Ruby Rebelde in the first instance by a judge to refrain from certain statements about the association Sisters. This is a fatal decision, because it continues the trend to silence activists (mostly private individuals) via civil suits. This is strategic litigation against freedom of expression.

It is therefore all the more important that organizations and associations publicly support Ruby Rebelde, show solidarity and provide concrete support. We regards it

as extremely problematic that you, as the organization responsible for this specialist day, have not yet publicly commented on what has happened.

We urge you to do this as soon as possible, so that your member organizations, which stand up for the rights and against the discrimination of sex workers, actually protect sex workers.

As a result of the verdict, Ruby Rebelde has suffered monetary losses. There are also legal fees and costs to defend against the SLAPP. Therefore, we call you as to support Ruby Rebelde in the compensate for the disadvantages.

In addition to a public statement, it could be expected to share and support Ruby Rebelde's call for donations/fundraiser.

Furthermore, it is essential to develop a protection concept for future events to protect sex workers from anti-sex work groups and such civil suits.

Last but not least, we demand a public demarcation of Diakonie Germany, the regional diakonies, and diaconal organizations from positions and organizations hostile to sex work in their own ranks. The social work profession is subject to non-negotiable basic principles¹, without which ethical and professional social work cannot take place. In addition to an accepting attitude, partiality and openness of the counseling process, this also includes counteracting discrimination and preventing stigmatization and social inequalities. Professional counseling centers that demand the criminalization of clients, cooperation partners and/or sex workers explicitly oppose the basic principles of social work.

It can be assumed that the use of these basic principles has also led to the naming of your initiative. We would therefore urge you to take the slogan "Respect and Protection for Sex Workers" seriously and to take responsibility for the negative consequences that a sex worker has suffered as a result of the event you initiated.

We link Ruby Rebelde's statements about the SLAPP and the role of your initiative "Respect and Protection for Sex Workers*":

<https://rubyrebelde.com/2023/06/06/emma-ua-gegen-freie-meinungsauesserung/>

<https://rubyrebelde.com/2023/07/26/sexarbeitsfeindlichkeit-am-landgericht-berlin/>

<https://rubyrebelde.com/2023/08/25/wederschutznochrespekt/>

Yours sincerely

¹ See also International Federation of Social Workers (<https://www.ifsw.org/global-social-work-statement-of-ethical-principles/>) und Deutscher Berufsverband für Soziale Arbeit e.V. (<https://www.dbsh.de/media/dbsh-www/redaktionell/pdf/Sozialpolitik/DBSH-Berufsethik-2015-02-08.pdf>)

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