

Speech by Fatoş Atali-Timmer (member of the selection committee) on 7 January 2023

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states: No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment – not Laye Alama Condé.

In the middle of Europe!

Exactly 18 years ago, on 7 January 2005, Laye Alama Condé died in a clinic in Bremen. He was only allowed to live to the age of 35. He died not only too young, but as a result of a practice of torture imposed by the state.

He died as a result of racist policies that deemed a chain of inhumane practices appropriate for racially-biased people. People with professions as: Politicians, police officers, doctors, lawyers.

Although four years earlier, in 1999, 19-year-old Achidi John died in Hamburg as a result of this practice, Bremen continued this method of torture. The then mayor Henning Scherf defended this practice in court in 2013 with the words: "We had a dealer scene, predominantly black Africans".

In the middle of Europe!

Racism is a European invention and has taught us to see skin colours of the "others" and to attribute certain characteristics (such as backwardness, laziness, emotionality instead of rationality, etc.) to them: In modern racism, criminality is also often associated with origin or skin colour. And yet it is racism that criminalises people and denies them their basic and human rights.

In the middle of Europe!

The Bremen judiciary has had to examine the question of guilt of the police doctor three times over the years. What a burden for Laye Alama Condé's family?! This is also part of the racist tradition that relatives of murder victims of racism cannot mourn in peace. They have to fight as if it were their task to solve the racist cases, as if they themselves were to blame.

In the middle of Europe!

In 2006, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg condemned Germany for violating the ban on torture.

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How is it possible that our current Chancellor Olaf Scholz at that time (in 2001) saw no problem at all in this inhumane practice (which predominantly affected Black people), and even advocated the implementation of this practice to "preserve evidence"? Were social democratic politicians like Olaf Scholz and Henning Scherf not sufficiently informed about human rights and the prohibition of torture? Or did they simply accept it because this practice never affected them or their white-privileged family members?

In the middle of Europe!

The use of emetics was used approx. 1000 times in Germany. In translation: approx. 1000 times torture was used in Germany with this method.

In the middle of Europe!

Angry people who do not want to accept racist practices against Black people like racial profiling. Grieving people who remember Laye Alama Condé, who have not forgotten him, who will never forget him. Especially never why he had to die.