

22nd Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall

From Construction to Fall: Discussing old and new walls in Germany and Tanzania

On November 9th 2011 we celebrated the 22nd anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In addition, on August 13th 2011 the 50th anniversary of the wall's construction had been commemorated. On the occasion of these two important dates KAS Tanzania in cooperation with the German Tanzanian Society (GTS) hosted an event on the topic "Old and New Walls in Germany and Tanzania". The invited guests, direct witnesses to the wall as well as representatives of the Tanzanian civil society were asked to identify not only concrete walls but to also uncover invisible, mental barriers in Tanzanian society. In the following open discussion the guests were invited to work together to establish solutions on how to dismantle those abstract walls.

After some welcoming words by Stefan Reith, Resident Representative of KAS Tanzania and Richard Shaba, President of GTS, the presenters and discussants of the event were introduced by

the moderator Stephanie Franz. Afterwards Klaus-Peter Brandes, Ambassador of Germany, shared some of his own memories of the Berlin Wall with the numerous participants. Following his speech, a short video on the events happening in Berlin at that time was presented to the guests. This helped them to understand besides the mere historical facts also the social and emotional effects of the separation of people in Berlin through the wall.

The first presentation was conducted by Dr. Stefan Chrobot, Country Director of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Tanzania. He focussed on the significance of the Berlin Wall in the conflict between East and West and referred to existing walls in the Tanzanian society. In the following presentation "Between Protection and Separation – What are Walls for?", Dr. Camilius Kassala displayed different kinds of walls and led the focus away from concrete barriers to walls as invisible mental obstacles. He identified six types: (1) Political walls which include besides corruption and god-fatherism also



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civic illiteracy. (2) Economic walls widened by the growing gap between rich and poor. Further he mentioned (3) socio-cultural and (4) technological as well as (5) ecological walls. Commenting on (6) legal walls, Dr. Kassala explicitly referred to the chance of bringing down invisible walls through the current constitutional reform process in Tanzania. Afterwards he illustrated ways of thinking which are crucial for dismantling walls in society.

Following a short health break the discussants Richard Shaba and Shafi Adam Shafi, a famous Tanzanian writer, analysed the presentations and complemented them with own experiences and comments. Shafi Adam Shafi talked about his time in East Berlin where he arrived as a student just one month after the erection of the wall. He also read out one chapter of his novel "Mbali ya Nyumbani" (Far from Home) in which he processed his experiences from that time. Mr. Shaba on the other hand led the focus once again towards walls in Tanzania. He stated that the growing extent of separation by increasingly erected concrete walls and fences around houses and plots in Dar es Salaam could be seen symbolically for the mental walls dividing society mentioned by Dr. Kassala.

In the following open discussion the public was invited to comment on the presentations, add their points of view and identify further walls. In various interesting contributions the main focus remained on political walls,

those in education and gender issues and the gap between rich and poor. Limited civic education which results in exclusion of a big part of the population from democratic processes was seen as one wall which has to be dismantled urgently. The creation of political and democratic awareness is one of the main foci of KAS Tanzania in co-operation with its local partner CETA (Civic Education Teachers Association). Another interesting aspect mentioned was the role of arts in dismantling walls within a society by the power of transmitting a message to different social strata in order to educate.

After closing the discussion Stephanie Franz invited the presenters and discussants to comment on the contributions and give some closing remarks. At the end of the event Stefan Reith expressed his gratitude to the guests and participants and promised on behalf of KAS Tanzania to consider the findings of the event in its further work. As the main focus was laid on civic education, a social market economy and political processes such as the constitutional reform process the event was a great success not only in contributing to an open discussion about obstacles in the development process of Tanzania. The findings also reconfirmed KAS Tanzania to continue its work on these topics.



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Impressum

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