

Factsheet: Psychosocial Support for Syrians in Germany

Finding PSS Services

Both governmental and non-governmental actors in Germany provide psychosocial support services (PSS) to survivors of grave crimes. However, the bureaucracy of the criminal justice system in Germany is complicated and can be difficult to navigate. This is because government-provided services vary from state to state. Non-governmental [PSS support centers](#) attempt to fill the gap in government services by providing **culturally sensitive support in Arabic**. PSS is usually covered by health insurance, though individuals in the midst of an asylum process are typically uninsured and need to [file specifically for this support](#) [pp.98f.]. For more information on PSS providers, see the chart below.

Psychosocial Trial Support

For survivors involved in criminal proceedings as witnesses or plaintiffs, **psychosocial trial support** is an effective support measure that accounts for the unique psychological challenges that arise from participation. To qualify for psychosocial trial support, survivors must **prove their need**. A court must approve the survivor's application for psychosocial trial support which needs to be **filed in German**. The service is provided by federally-funded specialists with experience working with survivors of violent crimes. The specialists inform survivors about their rights, generally explain criminal procedures, and emotionally prepare survivors for their in-court testimony. They are not permitted to discuss the crimes at the heart of the proceedings or the survivor's testimony. However, they may accompany survivors to appointments with the police or prosecutors, and they are allowed to be present at court sessions. Psychosocial trial support is also available after a conviction as a form of aftercare, at which point a referral may be made to an external provider. Note that psychosocial trial support in Germany is not fully confidential. In exceptional cases, psychosocial trial support workers can be summoned to testify in court about aspects of the work with their client.

Practical Considerations

- Most authorities, including police, are not trained on how to interact with survivors of atrocity crimes, so be aware that you might encounter authorities who lack awareness about the situation facing Syrian refugees or cultural sensitivity.
- When searching for a PSS provider online, you might see that providers use different categories to describe trauma (e.g., sexual violence, physical violence, and psychological violence). Even though these categories seem limited (or you might have experienced more than one category), try to select the one option that is most fitting to your situation.
- If you are a survivor of torture, tailor your online search to PSS providers with experience working with survivors of torture.
- Free PSS services are easier to find in your nearest metropolitan city, so consider your commute when searching for a provider.

Overview of Available PSS Services in Germany

Name	Languages	Description of Services	Location
ODABS	Arabic	Searchable database of psychosocial trial support providers	Online
Hilfe-Info	English, German	Information about psychosocial trial support and contact information of Federal States' PSS services	Online
Federal Ministry of Justice Leaflet on Victim Support	Arabic	Information on victim support mechanisms and contact information	Online
Federal Ministry of Justice Leaflet on Victims Rights	Arabic	Information about PSS mechanisms available to victims and contact information of different service providers	Online
Name	Languages	Description of Services	Location
Weisser Ring	German	PSS for victims of violence	Online, phone, 19 offices across Germany
Helpline for Male Victims of Violence	German	PSS for male victims of violence	Online, phone
Helpline for Female Victims of Violence	18 languages, including Arabic	PSS for female victims of violence	Online, phone
TelefonSeelsorge	Arabic, English, German	PSS for victims of violence	Phone
BAFF	Arabic, German	Contact information of focal points offering PSS for refugees and torture survivors	Multiple offices in all federal states
Help in Berlin	Arabic	Information on focal points for PSS	Berlin
Center for Transcultural Psychiatry	Multilingual, including Arabic	Culturally sensitive psychological counselling	Berlin
Uniklinikum Bonn	German	Outpatient clinic for refugees suffering from mental health issues	Bonn
Name	Languages	Short Description of Services	Location
RefPsych	Multilingual, including Arabic	Self-help videos focusing on trauma after migration	Online
Refugee Trauma Help	Multilingual, including Arabic	Self-help material for survivors of severe trauma	Online
Soul Compass	Arabic	Information about PSS available to refugees and self-help measures	Brandenburg

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