

Statement Praying on Campus

The AStA strongly opposes the behavior of FH Aachen, Dean's Office 5, Department II, and Vice-Rector IV towards the students at the campus Eupener Straße regarding the topic of "Praying on Campus."

We have increasingly heard from students at the campus Eupener Straße that they feel helpless and oppressed by the FH. For a long time, these students had to be content with praying under a staircase. This location offered the students a minimum level of privacy, even though the staircase is sporadically used. The students have used the place and were mindful of their surroundings. For several years, the students caused no damage or disturbances to the university community.

Despite this long period, during which the students demonstrated that praying could coexist with the normal course of teaching on campus, aggressive posters were distributed on campus from one day to the next, without any comment to the student body. A large red inscription, an excerpt from the house rules, and the demand to comply with it immediately. One of these posters now hangs directly in front of the staircase where the students used to pray.

"...religious events or religiously/culturally motivated events are generally not permitted within the buildings and on the university grounds."

This poster and its message are terribly unclear. What constitutes an event? By definition, an event is a planned occurrence with an organizer, participants, schedule, etc. However, praying is a personal act. There is no organizer, no participants. The schedule, however, is determined by the FH through the breaks between classes. If several students now go to the most suitable place at the same time, it is still not an event. Groups are not intentionally formed.

The students on site came to the same conclusion. They were all the more shocked when one of the janitors asked them to stop praying and leave the staircase during their prayers. "Praying was only tolerated here, now no longer." These were the words that the staff expressed to the students, as reported by those affected. For years, the students used this place, only to apparently lose this right overnight for no reason.

"...This does not mean, however, that it is forbidden to pray."

This excerpt is from an email from Department II, written on behalf of Vice-Rector IV, to the students. And yet the students have now lost their last place where they could perform their prayers with a small amount of dignity. No event was banned, the practicing of religion was banned. This constitutes an infringement of a person's fundamental rights. All of this was done without explanation, overnight, only with an excerpt from the rules.



“A group of students flooded the toilets before praying.”

This is supposed to be the trigger for the incident. The washing of the body before prayer, including the feet, is called “Oduk.” However, this Oduk does not necessarily have to take place immediately before praying. Most students perform this ritual before leaving the house, so they do not need to use the toilets for this purpose. It was possible to specifically prohibit students from washing their feet or wetting the floor. Instead, a generalization was made, and all Muslim students who pray were punished for the actions of a few individuals. Such behavior is shocking, and the subsequent communication shows that this was not critically questioned in any way. More of these posters are still being distributed on campus. Particularly from the Office for Diversity and Equal Opportunities, we did not expect such hasty action.

The email from Department II, which was supposed to clarify this situation, is also unacceptable. This email states that praying at FH Aachen is not prohibited, but in the next paragraph, it directly threatens an interpretation of the house rules that would ban praying in “groups.” The “Room of Silence” is also mentioned, which is one of the solutions sought from the student body's perspective. This is a neutral space intended to serve as a retreat for all students. However, it is indirectly suggested that Muslim students would exclusively claim the facilities of a Room of Silence for themselves. This was never mentioned in previous discussions and further shows that Muslim students are being generally attributed with negative behavior.

Unclear, inconsistent statements are being announced to the students from above.

It seems that no conversation has been sought with the affected students.

It has been repeatedly shown that this issue was not treated with the necessary respect.

Therefore, AStA calls on FH Aachen to:

- Make a clear statement about whether praying under the stairs of the staircase at the campus Eupener Straße (building E) is allowed.
- If a ban is imposed, clearly communicate which activities are allowed and which are prohibited.
- Apologize for the manner of communication towards the students.
- Work with the affected students and the AStA to develop a concept to create a possibility of symbiosis between life and learning on campus within the framework of the “Room of Silence” topic.

