

NOT PART OF THE BOOKLET

## *Printing Instruction*

*A6, black & white, 12 pages (printed back and front)*

### **Paper and Ink:**

Use standard A4 paper, as this size is widely available. Each A4 sheet will contain a single A5 page, centered and properly aligned. The final booklet size will be A6 after folding and trimming. The document is in black and white for compatibility with most printers.

### **Prepare Your Printer:**

Ensure your printer supports double-sided printing. The document is pre-arranged for booklet printing in A6 format, with A5 pages centered on A4 paper for easy printing.

### **Load the PDF:**

Open the PDF file in a PDF viewer like Adobe Acrobat Reader.

### **Test First:**

Print a small test copy to verify alignment, scaling, and print quality before printing multiple copies.

NOT PART OF THE BOOKLET

### **Set Printing Options:**

- Select Double-Sided Printing (Duplex) in the print settings.
- If your printer does not support automatic duplex printing, print the odd pages first, then reload the paper to print the even pages on the back.
- Ensure the setting Flip on the Short Edge is selected.
- Set the scale to 100% (Actual Size) so the A5 layout stays correctly centered on A4 paper.

### **Trimming, Folding, and Binding:**

- After printing, trim the A4 sheets to remove the excess paper and achieve A5-sized pages.
- Fold the A5 pages in half to create the A6 booklet.
- Stack the folded pages and staple them along the fold to bind the booklet.

*Enjoy and share  
as you feel like* 😊



Feel free to get in touch with us  
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[hello@sablechaux.ch](mailto:hello@sablechaux.ch)



جواز سفر



PASSPORT

CE PASSEPORT EST VALABLE POUR AUCUN PAYS  
THIS PASSPORT IS VALID FOR NO COUNTRIES



CE PASSEPORT CONTIENT DES TMOIGNAGES  
THIS PASSPORT CONTAINS TESTIMONIES

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- This document is real. . 1
- This is a creative work. It's not free of mistakes. . 2
- This is a fictional story based on real testimonies. . 3
- This document is the result of research conducted through residencies between Basel and Tunis. . 4
- In case this document is lost, it's not a problem. Many other copies exist on the internet. It has no legal importance; its importance is metaphorical. If you want to know why, go through it. If you want another copy, you can download it by following the QR code. . 5
- This document can be printed on a regular printer. Simply follow the folding instructions, and it's ready to use! . 6
- This document will remain valid until the vanishing of borders and the dissolution of the visa system. Until then, it embodies the ongoing struggle of oppressed individuals who are supposedly free. . 7

CE PASSEPORT EST VALABLE POUR AUCUN PAYS  
THIS PASSPORT IS VALID FOR NO COUNTRIES



CE PASSEPORT CONTIENT DES TMOIGNAGES  
THIS PASSPORT CONTAINS TESTIMONIES

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

1. This document is a simulation.  
(This document is not real.)
2. This work was created by humans.  
It definitely has mistakes.
3. These are real stories, embodied by a fictional character.
4. This is the outcome of a larger, ongoing research initiative. We encourage individuals and organizations invested in this cause to get involved with us.
5. In case this document is lost, don't inform any authority. Don't worry! It's available online and can be downloaded by scanning the QR code.
6. You can print this document on a regular printer. Simply follow the folding instructions, and it's ready to use!
7. This document is never valid. Until borders and visa restrictions vanish, it holds the stories of oppressed individuals who are believed to be free humans.



(2.) Everyone has the right to leave any country including his own, and to return to his country.

[illegible]

# Unesco Convention *on the* Protection and Promotion *of the* Diversity of Cultural Expressions

## Article 7. Measures to Promote Cultural Expressions

b) to have access to diverse cultural expressions from within their territory as well as from other countries of the world.

VISA / VISUM

non-entrée en visa part / n'importe pas

Valid for  
SCHENGEN STATES  
Surname Name  
BEN YOUSSEF, NOUR  
FROM 10-10-2024 UNTIL 12-10-2024  
Issued In REPUBLIC OF BORDERS ON 10-10-2024  
Type Visa

Duration of Stay Days  
2

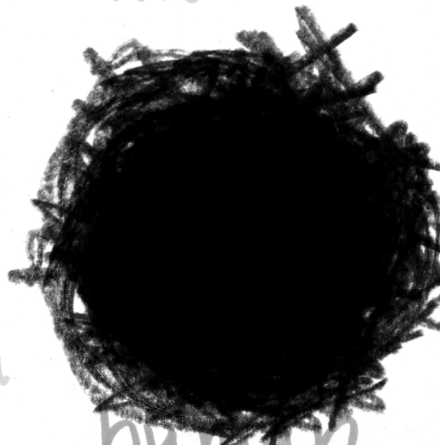
Number of Entries  
MUL

✕

I am a human

I am a human

I am human



I am

I am

I am

I am

human

human

I am

I am a human

I am

I am a human

*I am Nour. I am 33 years old. I am a filmmaker from North Africa. And this is my story.*

*Today I had the chance to share my work at a renowned festival.*

*Today an embassy decided I didn't deserve it.*

*Today a power greater than me stripped me of that right.*

*Today I lost my passion and my dreams because of injustice and an imprisonment I had never known, not in my life, not in my skin, not even in my imagination.*

*Today for the first time, they broke the one thing that had always been untouchable: my imagination, my only refuge.*

I am a human

*I was born in North Africa. I am the child of two high school teachers. I spent my teenage years surrounded by books, music, and films, or rather, searching for them. These things didn't exist in abundance at home, but I was determined to find them. I traded cassettes for DVDs, books for cassettes. The more I grew, the more films became my refuge. I have always dreamed of scenes, images, and characters. They appeared in my mind and even in my dreams. I wrote down notes, imagined stories, and created small worlds on paper. Then I started filming with my phone. I joined an amateur cinema club. I pursued studies in film directing. I made video essays, mini-documentaries, and took countless photographs. After years of exploring cinema, I finally worked with a small production company and made my first film in a professional setting. It was one of the best experiences of my life: being recognized as an artist with something to say and having the chance to fully exercise my passion. But this passion, this work, only feels complete when shared with others. When shown in a cinema, discussed afterward, and seen through new perspectives that reveal layers I never noticed myself.*

*I received my visa the morning of my departure flight to Germany, scheduled for 2 pm. They granted me a 48-hour visa...does such a visa duration even exist?!*

*What if I miss my return flight...or my flight gets canceled...would I become illegal in Europe? Against my will?*

*I am Nour. I am 33 years old. I am a filmmaker from North Africa. And this is my story and the story of many others.*

EVEREVERVISA

Email: "We are pleased to inform you that your film has been selected for the International Competition at Oberhausen Film Festival." Can you believe it?! After years of sacrifices, personal, emotional, and financial investment in my first short film, made on a low budget with a small production team, my film is selected for a prestigious film festival in Germany. A world premiere. Relief...But the festival is in three weeks. Anxiety kicks in, remembering my past Schengen visa experiences. I rush to the German embassy's website. "To submit your application, please appear in person at our external service provider TLS Contact." I open the TLS website, create an account, fill out the Videx form. "No appointments available until November 1st, 2024." Stress immediately takes over despite the good news. I call TLS: no answer. I email the embassy: automatic reply. "Due to a high number of visa requests, waiting times for appointments can be up to 8 weeks." What now? I call friends to see if they have any contacts. Nothing. I call TLS again. Still nothing.

N EVEREVERVISA

controls our movement, deciding who has the right to travel and to be internationally represented in the arts. All I want is to pursue my passion and share it with the world.

To exchange. To share. To dream. To get inspired. To inspire. To reflect. To discover. To love. To be part of the world. To feel alive.

We are all born Human. We share this planet, breathe the same air, and have the same needs as human beings. Yet wars, colonialism, oppression, and apartheid have filled our history with pain, violence, and injustice. The stronger take power, deciding the fate of others. The victors wield domination, oppression, and colonialism in many forms, deciding who is seen as human, who is excluded and trapped within their borders, and who is erased from the map. Today, the West is the winner. Tomorrow, who knows?

There are no borders on this planet.

There are no borders on this planet.

THERE ARE NO BORDERS ON THIS PLANET.

A2IVREVERVISA

Anger boils in my heart. All I want is to pursue my passion and share it with the world, just like any artist or human being holding a “First World” passport. Why don’t we have the same right to travel freely, even though we share the same practice and passion? I am proud of my culture, proud to be born on this side of the globe, the one the West defines as the “Global South.” They name regions as they see fit, classifying human beings into boxes to tighten their control. SWANA, MENA, Third World, Global South, each label reinforces the borders they’ve imposed. They slot us into these geographic sections when inviting us to festivals and exhibitions: Pan-African cinema. Sounds of Women from SWANA. Sahara landscapes. Latin America on Stage. Arab Queer Video Section.

Am I only considered Human if I fit into one of these categories? These classifications and borders exist to strengthen the divisions they created, borders that didn’t exist and shouldn’t exist. The West invaded our countries, shattered our dreams, plundered our resources, colonized our imagination, and now

*I search their website desperately. It can’t be that I can’t book an appointment! Finally, I find an appointment through a travel agency. 100 euros extra. Just to be able to submit my application.*

**PS:** Visa centers are international outsourcing companies that handle visa paperwork on behalf of consulates but have no authority to make visa decisions. The two largest companies are TLScontact and VFS Global, operating across North Africa, including Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, etc. They manage applications for countries like the UK, Canada, and the Schengen area.

These centers charge service fees in addition to visa costs, and appointments can be difficult to secure, especially during peak seasons.

N EVEREVERVISA

N EVEREVERVISA



01.10.2024, 10 AM

*I've been standing in line at TLS for 30 minutes. Panic is starting to set in...*

*The queue is full of people clutching piles of documents, all waiting their turn in front of a large, closed iron gate. It starts to rain. There's no shelter, and my papers are getting slightly wet.*

*It's my turn to enter. A security guard checks me and verifies my appointment—no appointment, no entry. I pass through the iron gate and face another door with a security scanner—for bags and for people.*

*They search me again, confiscate my phone and belongings, and lock them in a drawer. I'm handed the key. Why do I suddenly feel guilty... ashamed? A lump forms in my throat. A sudden urge to cry.*

*I step into another waiting room facing several counters. The atmosphere is tense, bureaucratic, oppressive. No clocks, no phones, no sense of time. I hear the interviews happening at the counters through thick glass, amplified by microphones and speakers.*

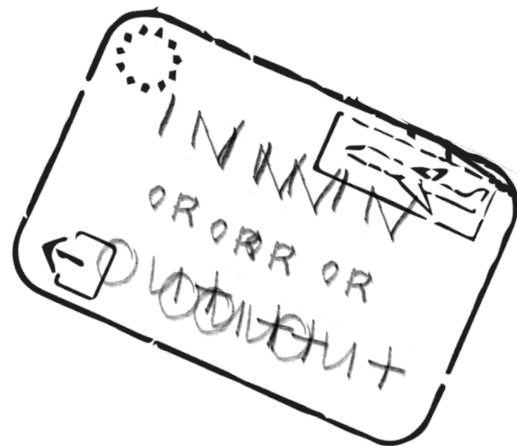
N EVEREVERVISA

10.10.2024, 10 AM  
GERMAN EMBASSY

*This morning, I went to the embassy, four hours before my flight. I received my visa in just 30 minutes.*

*A 48-hour visa, valid from 10.10.2024 to 12.10.2024.*

*With tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat, I took my passport, went home to collect my things, and headed straight to the airport.*



N EVEREVERVISA

*I didn't know what to do with the anger and rage inside me. I felt like I was losing my sanity. I started writing a statement and posted it on my Instagram. I didn't feel relieved, but I felt like I had to do it. I tagged the German embassy and TLScontact. Minutes later, my post went viral on social media. A wave of collective outrage from the art community, who have endured the same struggles, kept growing. For a moment, I felt sane, validated by others who had gone through the same process. Three hours later, the German embassy called me. What?! They asked me to delete my post, promising to issue the visa if I did. As shocked as I was—and surprised by the power of social media—I agreed.*

N EVEREVERVISA

*Fragments of strangers' stories drift through the air. Why do I hear their private stories? I dread being overheard when it's my turn.*

*Anxiety and frustration build...*

01.10.2024, 11 AM

*They call me to Counter 4. No hello, no smile. They take my papers, ask a few questions, then hand me a checklist and a receipt for the visa and service fees.*

*Next, I'm led to a booth where they take my biometric data. Fingerprints. A photo of my face.*

*I feel exposed, stripped off privacy, crushed to the ground. Is this normal? Why do I have to endure all this just to be able to travel to the premiere of my own film? I pay the receipt: 100 euros. I collect my things and step outside. It's already 11:40 a.m.*

N EVEREVERVISA

07

08.10.2024, 8 AM

*My screening is in two days, and still no response from TLS. The festival programmers and organizers are panicking, flooding my inbox with emails. I feel ashamed and under pressure. But there's nothing I can do except wait.*

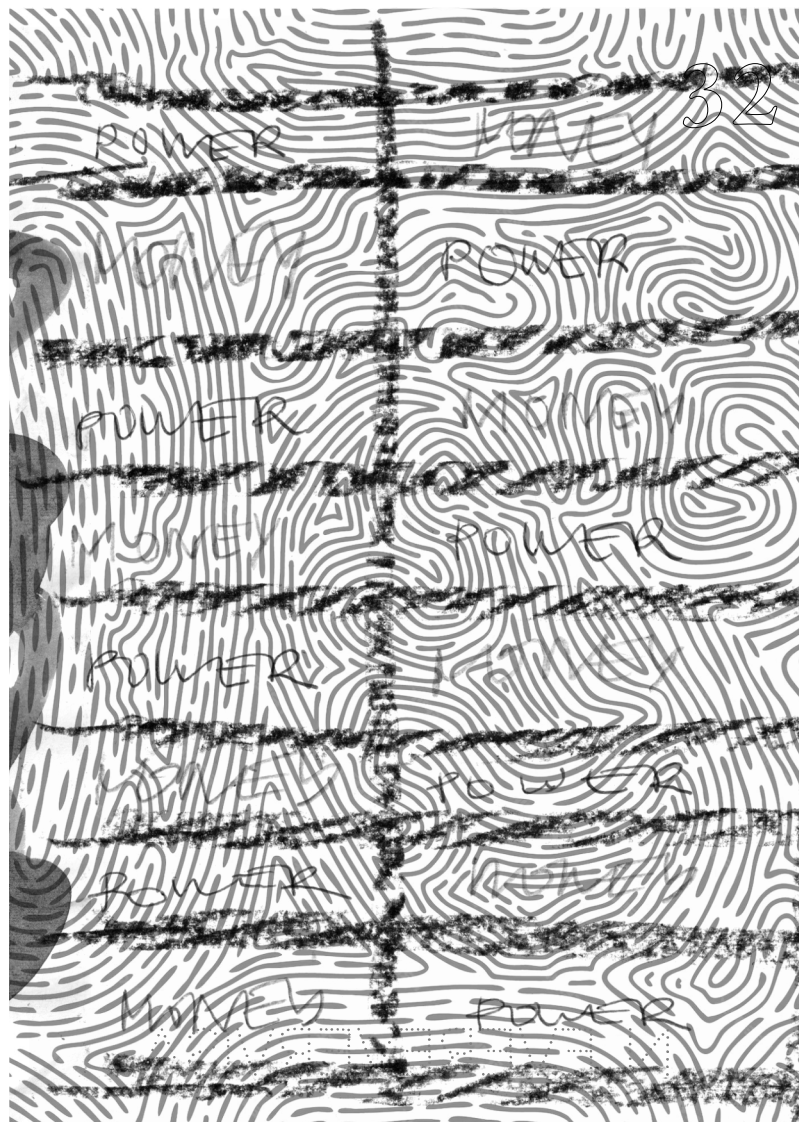
*My life is on hold. I've postponed important work and meetings beyond this date, assuming I'd be traveling. If I don't get the visa, I'll have lost time, money, and energy, for nothing.*

08.10.2024, 11 AM

*An email from TLS: my passport is ready for collection the next morning. I'm relieved. But very anxious. Will there be a visa stamped inside or nothing at all?*

*What a nerve-wracking wait...*

N EVEREVERVISA



31

09.10.2024, 10 AM  
VISA CENTER

08

*Another line outside. Same security guards. Same closed iron gate. Same number of people. Same waiting time.*

*They let me in, but this time, I keep my belongings since the passport collection desk is outside.*

*They hand me an envelope with my passport inside. I open it. My passport is there, along with a printout of my biometric photo and a piece of paper...written in German.*



*The world goes silent around me. All I can hear in my head is: WHY?*

*I can't even understand the reason. They wrote the explanation in German, a language I don't speak.*

N EVEREVERVISA

09.10.2024, 10 AM  
VISA CENTER

*A wave of rage crashes over me. I want to tear my passport apart, scream, spit at everyone; the staff, the security guards, the people in line, even the festival programmers. I hail a taxi and send a photo of the document to one of the festival organizers for translation. They are more shocked than I am. The letter reads:*

**We do not have sufficient proof in your file that you will leave the Schengen area after your stay.**

*How can anyone prove such a thing? And why would I want to stay in Europe? All my documents clearly showed that I have ongoing projects in my country, that I'm well-paid, and that I've traveled to Europe before and always returned. The rage and devastation I felt that day were indescribable, not because of the visa itself, but because of the entire process: the control, the violation of my dignity, and the constant underlying accusation that I'm a criminal or someone desperate to stay in Europe. Why would I abandon my family, my friends, my projects, and my life here just to immigrate there? Why would they assume that of me?*

N EVEREVERVISA

A NXIETY

**"They gave me a 7 days visa.  
I paid twice of course without  
reimbursement.  
And I got the visa 3 days after  
the end of the event.**

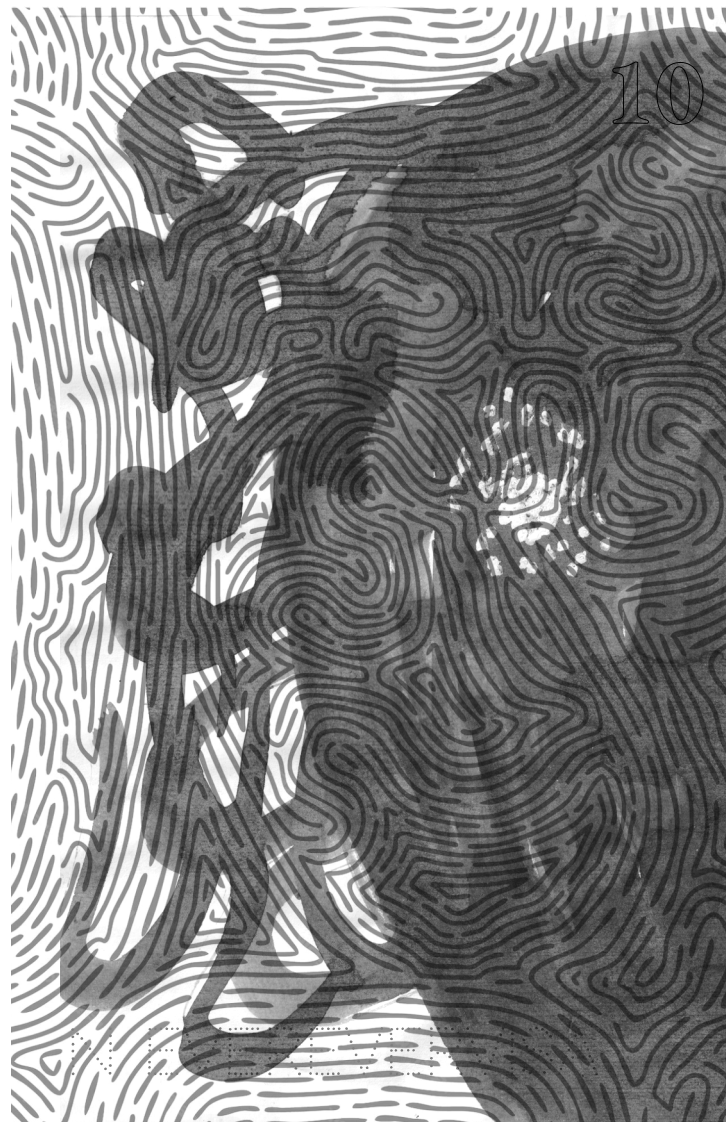
**That experience was so  
traumatic that I decided  
not to do it anymore.  
I travelled to countries  
that didn't require a visa.  
For 9 years I didn't go  
to any European country."**

ASIVREVERVISA

“Being humiliated with a 48-hour visa is an oppressive and suffocating experience.

As a human, an artist and cultural worker, I should have the freedom to travel anywhere, anytime, for my practice and career — just as any artist from the North.”

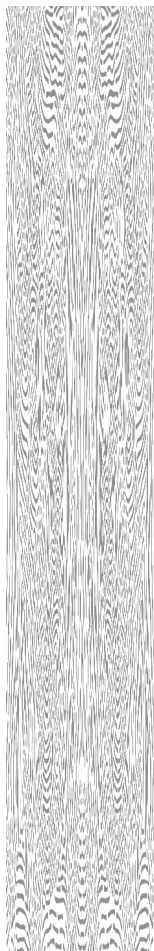
N EVEREVERVISA





“I remember the stress I felt while doing the visa request. I was so traumatized by the previous experiences.”

N EVEREVERVISA



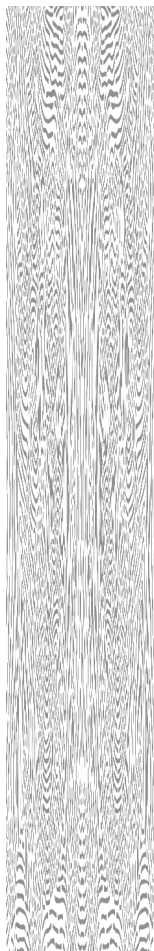
“It's disgraceful that authorities imprison us behind meaningless borders, preventing us from moving freely and denying us our right to travel.”

A2IVREVEVISA

“The paperwork was exhausting; bank statements, pay slips, social security proof, even legalized documents etc.

I got a visa but returned traumatized, feeling invaded. I shared information with the French embassy that I wouldn't even share with my parents.”

N EVEREVERVISA



“It is utterly disrespectful and humiliating to be without my passport for over 20 days, forced to prepare an absurd amount of documents and answer questions as though I were a criminal.

I spent hours waiting at both the TLS agency and the embassy, enduring mistreatment from security guards, including having my phone confiscated at the entrance.”

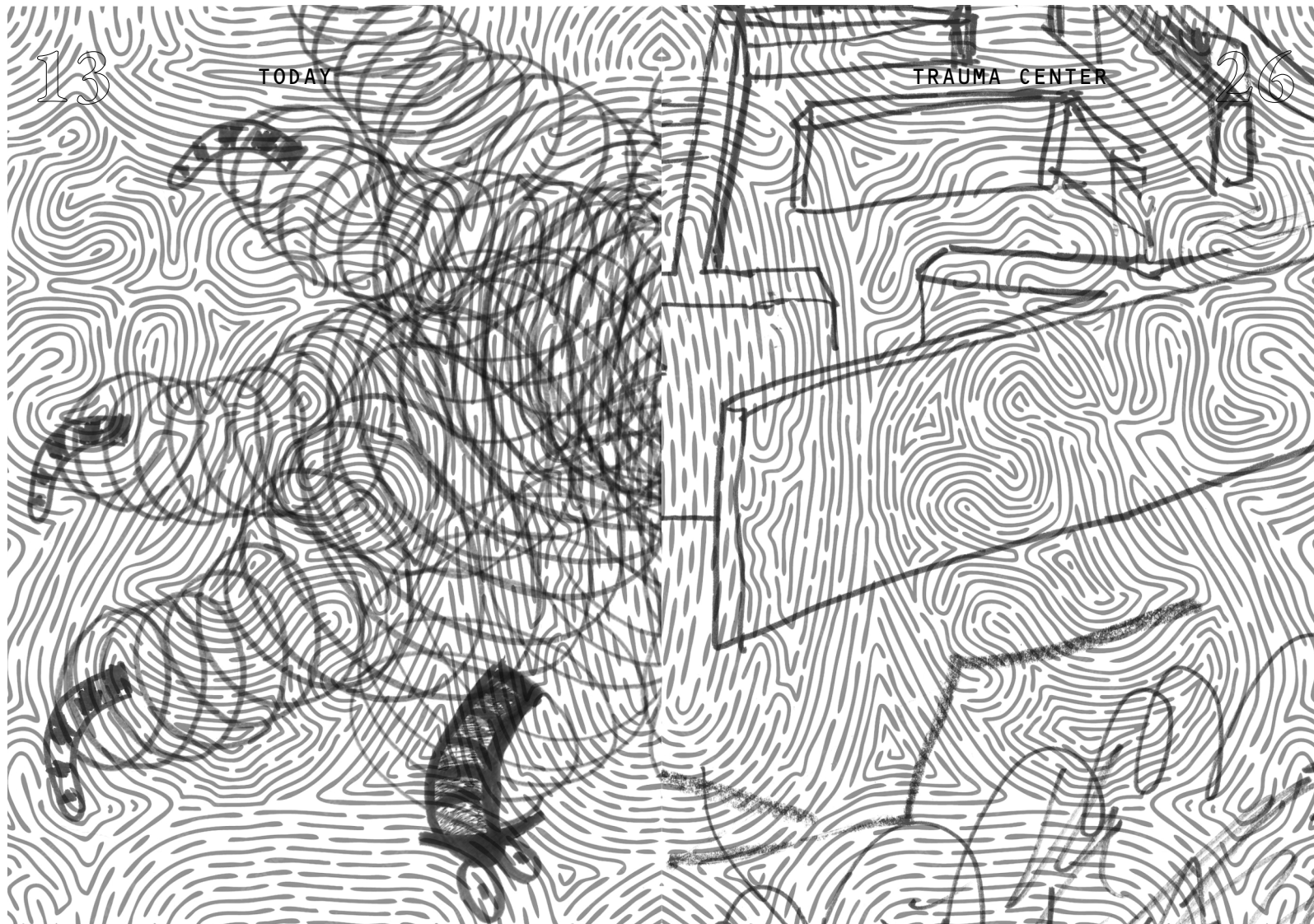
ASIVREVERVISA

13

TODAY

TRAUMA CENTER

26



25

TLS

I AM WHAT ?

14



BUY  
A SEAT  
TO WAIT  
FOR NOTHING



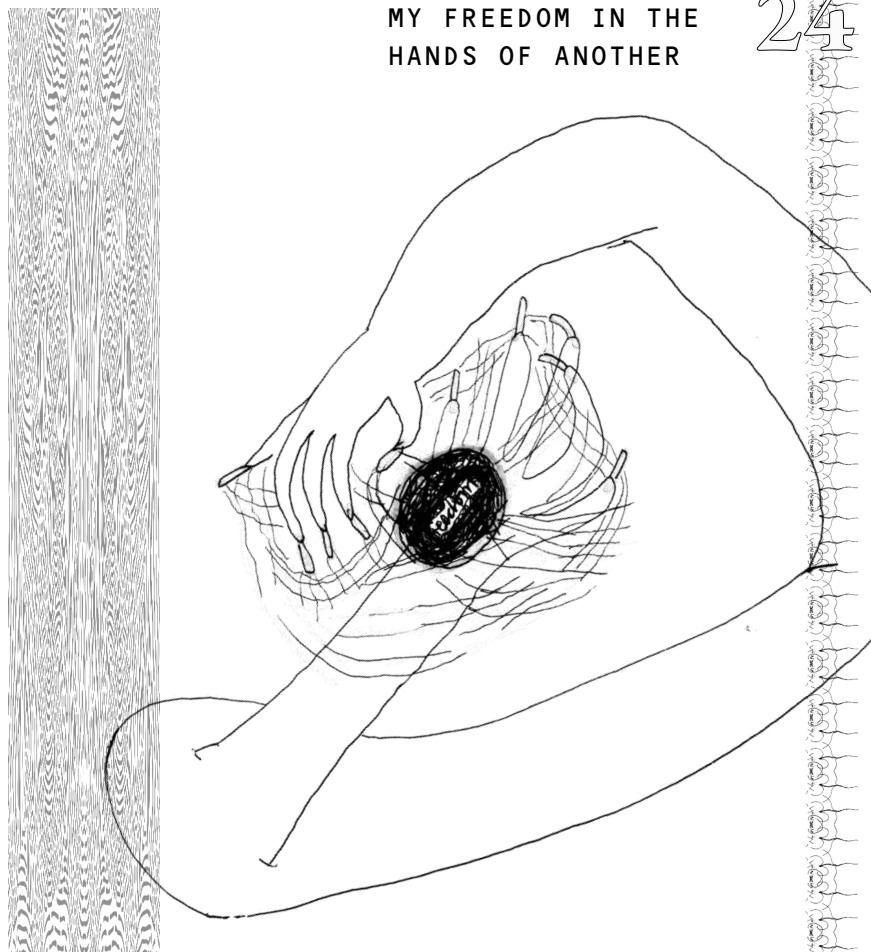
“I find the visa in itself a harmful, humiliating and traumatic question.

It is a restriction to my freedom of mobility. At this point I am not a “citizen of the world” because many countries restrict my right to circulate freely.”

€ 3'155'440.00

€ 3'111'680.00

N EVEREVERVISA



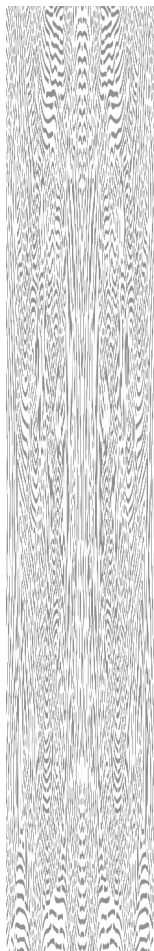
N EVEREVERVISA

"I am outraged  
because we should not have to  
endure this discrimination  
simply because we were born  
on the "wrong" side of the  
map!

I am outraged by everything I  
saw and experienced in this  
infernally race to obtain the  
visa.

I am outraged because, like  
me, thousands of people  
suffer mistreatment to enjoy  
their right to free movement."

N EVEREVERVISA



"The system takes advantage  
of us financially, and it's  
ridiculous that our freedom is  
in the hands of people who  
have no understanding of our  
lives or our struggles."

A2IVREVERVISA



## SCHENGEN VISA REJECTION

Estimated total costs of Visa Schengen rejection in Africa in 2023:

€ 54'000'000.00

Estimated total costs of Visa Schengen rejection in North Africa in 2023:

€ 32'000'000.00

ALGERIA

MOROCCO

EGYPT

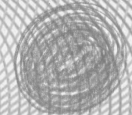
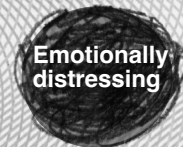
TUNISIA

LIBYA

€ 454'480.00

SUDAN

€ 79'920.00

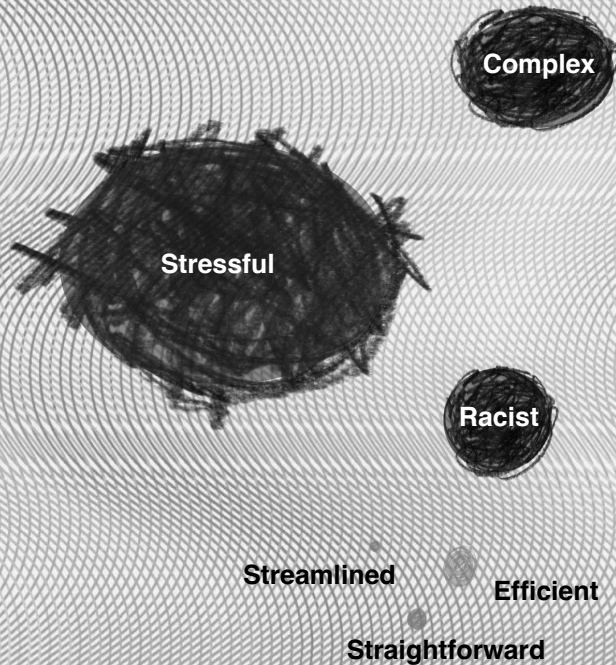
HORROR  
OF THE VISA PROCESS

Fair



Gender Discriminatory

Source: Ellingsworth, J. (2023) Schengen Visa Code and cultural mobility: Latest insights with a focus on artists and culture professionals from the African continent. Brussels: On the Move. Available at: <https://on-the-move.be>





## IMPRINT

based on an initiative by  
Transmitting Stones and Sable & Chaux.

A research carried out in the context of  
residencies between Basel and Tunis.

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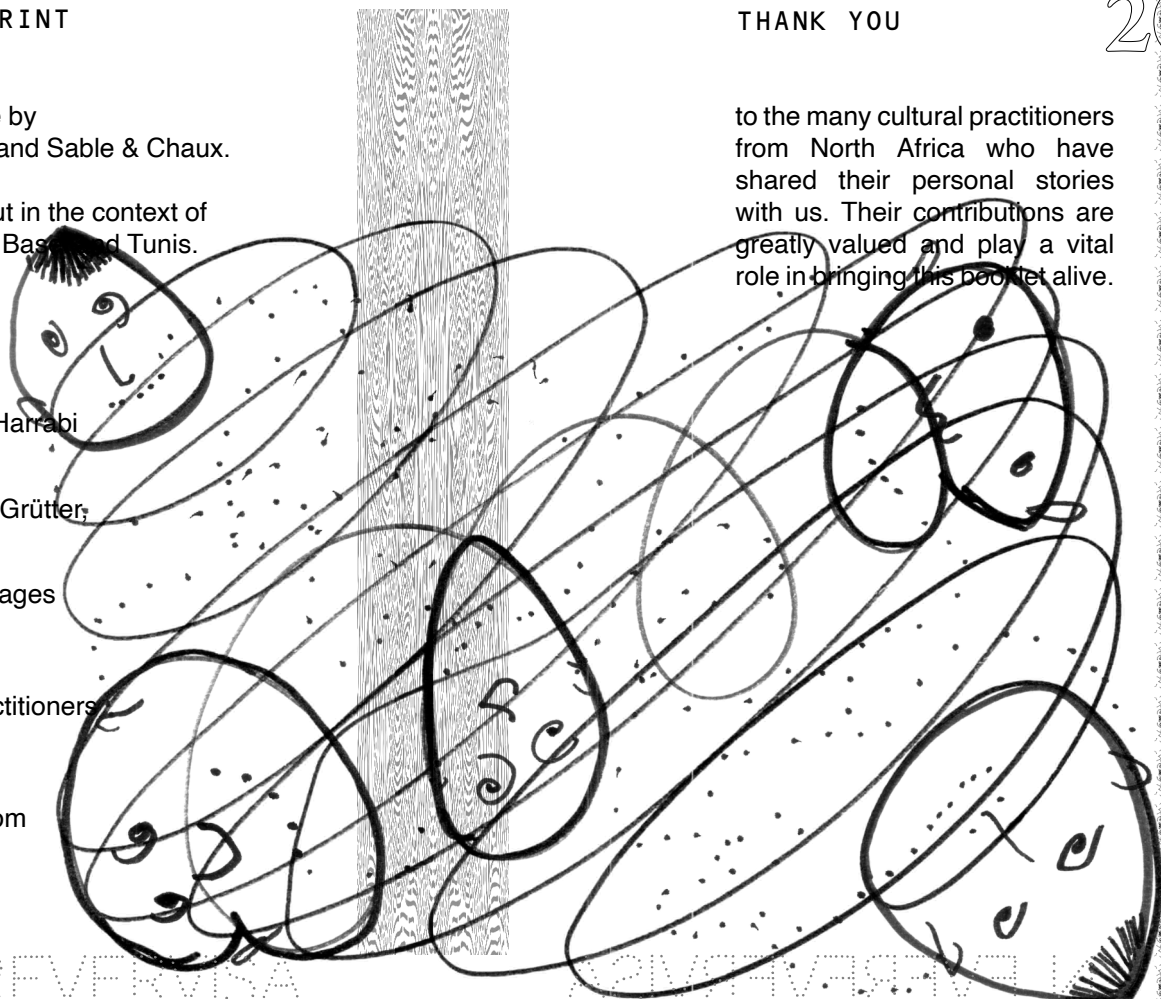
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Sara Grütter

Testimonies  
Different cultural practitioners  
from North Africa

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[transmittingstones.com](http://transmittingstones.com)  
[sablechaux.ch](http://sablechaux.ch)

N EVEREVERISA



## THANK YOU

to the many cultural practitioners  
from North Africa who have  
shared their personal stories  
with us. Their contributions are  
greatly valued and play a vital  
role in bringing this booklet alive.

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