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Burning Fingers

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Good Evening Ladies, Gentlemen and Transgenders,

Take a strong painkiller. Then turn the two front burners of your stove on and wait until they are red hot. Then lay the four fingers of your right hand on the right burner and the four fingers of your left hand on the left burner.

Why you are doing this?

It could be the only way to destroy the relationship between, on the one side, you, your sacred personality, your beautiful body which enables your possibly more beautiful soul to move, to get intoxicated and to have orgasms, and, on the other side, the fingerprints, birth and registration information, police photos and further information, which allegedly refer to you, determine you and which allegedly label you.

Why is this necessary?

Maybe you are a Chechen fighter against the Kadyrow Regime. You fled and wanted to go to Salzburg, where a part of your family lives. But in Hungary you were caught by the police. According to the Dublin II Regulation, Hungary is now responsible for you and even though you managed to get to your family in Salzburg several times, after a few weeks the Austrian police sent you back to

Hungary, where you can't expect a fair procedure of your asylum application.

Maybe you come from an Arab country and would like to love and have sex with whom you like, when you like and for whatever reason you and your lover want. This is not a reason for asylum - half the Arab world could come if it was. Your application for asylum was turned down in Germany. You made your way to Vienna and would like to try again there. But of course, your fingerprints are in the Eurodac register, where all fingerprints of asylum seekers throughout Europe are stored.

Or you are a Kurd? Do you think that Kurds, like Kosovars, have the right to their own state. You don't agree that while the UCK-people were treated as freedom fighters because they were politically right wing and fought against the socialist Yugoslavia, the Kurds are treated in Europe as terrorists because they are politically left and fight against Turkey, a NATO front-line state. You previously were a commander of the PKK and fled to Germany, where you are now pursued by the German authorities as a "member of a foreign terrorist group". After the murders of three Kurdish politicians in Paris, one of whom was your close friend and comrade, you now fear for your life. Everything points to the Turkish government ordering the murders of Sakine Cansiz, Fidan Dogan and Leyla Saylemez. You could be next on the list.

Or you have learnt from history? You know that many of the people who were persecuted by the Nazi regime in Austria 75 years ago and could escape, survived because they managed to destroy the relationship between themselves and the data registered by the authorities about themselves. With a false passport they might have been able to cross the border in time and save themselves and, with a false identity, escape death. By burning your fingertips, you

want to send a message for the right to ambiguity, to diffusivity, and the right to disappear. Moreover, a right to live unidentified and uncontrolled. You want to point out that it is an unreasonable demand that the fingerprints of every citizen are saved in one's passport. Originally a police measure which was invented to help in the fight against crime, it has become widely used against immigrants and refugees and is now a standard application of state technology. Today everyone is a potential criminal and is as such registered. This enrages you!

Or, you are one of the refugees who marched in November from the refugee camp in Traiskirchen to Vienna and sought refuge in the Votiv Church. One of the demands for which you went on hunger strike was that your fingerprints be deleted from the Eurodac register when one country declines your asylum request, so you have a chance for asylum in another EU country. You don't see any other chance of making your demands known than by hurting yourself like this. "The borders that exclude me from elementary human rights, from leading a good life, lay beyond barbed wire. The border which separates people from unworthy people: these are the fine lines on my fingers." This is what you say before you put your hand on the stove.

"Stop! Wait!" I hear myself saying. "Maybe we can achieve it - a large protest movement might be the trick to getting human rights without somebody having to hurt themselves to do so".