

CROSSING BORDERS

movements and struggles of migration



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European-wide Legalisation - or why the European space has to be turned into a battlefield for the rights of migrants...

From Brussels via Paris to Barcelona, from Gothenburg via Hamburg, to Rome and Athens, nearly everywhere in Europe today we see strong struggles and campaigns by migrants and refugees for their legalisation, for their right to stay. It is 10 years ago now, since the sans-papier-movement in France came up with the slogan "papers for all", obviously the starting point for a new cycle of increasing struggles. Certainly the conditions are still different in the various European countries, as well as between the various subjects. So sometimes it can be difficult to recognize the similarities, the "commons", between for example; a temporary seasonal worker, who is exploited in the fields of Andalusia in Spain, and a "legal" migrant, who lives and works everyday in Eurospace. Or between an undocumented migrant, working in precarious jobs in Italy, and a "tolerated refugee", living in an isolated "junglecamp" in Northern Germany. And what about the realities of migrants in a detention centre in Poland or in Ukraine, or in front of the borders of Ceuta and Melilla?

The European migration policy is both part of a global system and a trendsetter for more control and restrictive laws. The EU border regime is now more and more, shifted, "externalized" to the east and the south. Externalisation means, that "neighbouring" countries such as the former Yugoslavian countries and Ukraine, Morocco, Libya or even Mauritania, are increasingly involved in controlling European borders. And that detention camps are established in these countries too. But this policy is not simply aimed at keeping refugees and migrants out of Europe, rather at promoting a process of "selective inclusion". So that illegalized

young and strong migrants can be exploited, and some migrants can even enter legally, as long as they accept low waged working conditions.

Migrant struggles undermine, crisscross and attack this migration control. They challenge the external borders of Europe as well as the social and legal borders within Europe itself. This shows that migrants, including "illegalized aliens", are not simply a cheap and easy-deportable labour force. They are also political subjects who fight for their freedom of movement and right to stay. Everywhere, amnesties for the legalization of migrants have not been "dispensed" by enlightened governments. Rather they have been brought about by the struggles of migrants.

We believe that claims and demands aimed at national governments and institutions are not sufficient any more to fight this system. They need to be accompanied by a new political struggle directly addressing the European institutions and demanding for a European-wide legalization of all migrants. It has to be a permanent legalisation instead of producing illegality. And it must include an end to the linking of residence permits to labour contracts, to avoid increasing precarious labour-conditions.

With the pretext of preventing clandestine migration, the EU is waging a real war against people's free movement. This is why the European space has to be turned into a battlefield for the rights of migrants. If we believe that "No one is illegal" whatever border she or he has crossed inside or outside of Europe, then everyone must be legal in the whole European space!

From Warsaw in Poland to Nuakchott in Mauretania: 7th of October 06: Transnational Day of Action against Migration-control

The call and actions on 7th of October are an important step of common resistance against an inhuman migration-policy. Of course, all the organizing groups refer to their particular local or national situations. But at the same time the mobilisation clearly has a more and more transnational dimension. East European activists will protest in front of the Frontex-office in Warsaw (see beside), while in a press-conference in Nouakchott will criticise the criminalisation of migration. From London to Athens, from Hamburg to Barcelona, simultaneous demonstrations and actions are expected in dozens of cities all over Europe. And more importantly: not only in Mauritania, but also in Morocco, Tunisia and Benin activities have been announced too. Many more organisations from various African countries have signed the call and support the demands for freedom of movement and against migration-control. Thus another, more practical stage in European-African cooperation from below can be achieved with 7th of October.

From Bamako through Athens to Rabat

... In January 2006 first important meetings of African and European organisations took place in

Bamako/Mali in the framework of the World Social Forum. A migration related call from Bamako was published afterwards, strongly critical of European migration-policies. Influenced by this call, in May 06, during the European Social Forum in Athens, a common 3rd day of action was agreed in the migration-assembly. A 1st migration related action day had happened already in January 2004, focusing on legalisation and against detention camps. A 2nd day of action followed in April 2005, with freedom of movement as its headline. For 7th of October the date already recalls the escalated events in Ceuta and Melilla last year, and the so-called externalisation of migration control to Africa became key-issues now. At the end of June 06 in Rabat, a counter-conference to the "European-African summit" (see beside) was organised, and the call for 7th of October was signed by more and more initiatives in Africa. It will be - beyond 7th of October - a crucial challenge for next months and years to consolidate and to develop these contacts and cooperation. If we aim for practical results, if we want to disturb or even to prevent further steps of European proliferation of migration-control to the African continent, we need a growing networked process on a transnational level.

What is Frontex? Why an 'African-European summit' in Rabat?

Since last year, the militarization of EU-migration policy has another tool: Frontex! This is the name of the new European Border Agency, which is based in Warsaw and has now started its first operations along the West African coast: to coordinate and to intensify control by ships and airplanes to prevent more African boat-people reaching Europe. Currently (September 06) this is without much success: every day new boats are landing on the Canary Islands, more people than ever before, with some starting from Mauritania or even Senegal, about 1200 km away. During recent months, hundreds of people have drowned or died of hunger or thirst, as they risked this new route, which is even more dangerous than the straits of Gibraltar. European governments are putting increasing pressure on African countries to become henchmen for their inhuman migration-policy. Early in July 06, a so-called "African European summit on migration and development" took place in Rabat, again mainly in order to push African governments to adopt more systems of migration-control. The idea being that the mainly North- and West African countries should block migrants on their way to Europe and help to deport them to the desert or sub-Saharan countries. Thus the European governments hold the main responsibility for the thousands of deaths of African people in the recent years. It is a kind of war against migrants and refugees. The above-mentioned Frontex-operation is another step in this war, aiming again at the destruction of the (new) routes of flight..

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Chronicle: Movements and Struggles of Migration...

On this page we have collected highlights and fragments of movements and struggles of migrants in some European and African countries. Of course, in a few sentences the various realities never can be presented in a sufficient way. But this collection tries to give an indication of the multiplicity and the diversity of campaigns and protests. It aims at greater mutual interest and exchange, in order to search for the possible "commons" in a needed transnational perspective. And if we look to the huge mobilisations in US-cities within last months, where millions of migrants demonstrated for their legalisation, we can recognize once more the increasing global dimension in the struggles for freedom of movement.

Belgium: The past year in Belgium saw the emergence and development of a particular form of undocumented migrants' struggles, which consisted of church occupations and sometimes hunger strikes. Dozens of churches were occupied with unconditional regularisation for all as the main demand. In the beginning, the state underestimated the dynamics and, without creating a new law, in practice granted documents to almost all of the Afghani refugees who were the first to go on hunger strike. But soon the authorities faced a new wave of strikes. Occasionally they used repression (at least two churches in Brussels were evicted), constantly they used fierce rhetoric ("the state cannot be blackmailed" etc.), but in general they more or less had to accept the strikers demands. But this is not enough for the sans papiers movement, who demand a law defining clear and transparent criteria for all.

France: Along with the new law, which establishes "chosen immigration" (i.e. selected labour migration) over "suffered immigration" (i.e. asylum seekers and family regrouping), the February 21, 2006 circulaire prepares the entrapment of sans papiers. The government also tries to deport school children from sans papiers families, along with the families. Since a year and a half, a wide network of associations (RESF) has mobilized: hiding children, launching campaigns, intervening in airports (sometimes succeeding in stopping deportations). During the anti-cpe-struggle, some 100 sans papiers occupied for a month empty official offices close to Tolbiac University. They were supported by the students and participated in several demonstrations, discussions and assemblies about

precarity and migrations issues. And the "1000 de Cachan", who occupied the Cité Universitaire in Cachan (south suburb of Paris) for the last 4 years, were expelled with struggles on August 17, 2006, but continue with further occupations ...

Germany: 22/4/06 "Right to stay" was the common demand of simultaneous demonstrations in various cities with around some 100 participants each. 1/5/06: Precariousness and migration is the title of a conference in Hamburg in the days before Mayday, when a Euromayday-parade took place with about 2000 demonstrators. 2/5/06: Activists occupied the roofs of two administrative buildings in the deportation-camp in Bramsche. Its closure is the demand of the inmates with repeated actions and protests. Antiracist networks and the self-organisations of refugees continue to struggle for right to stay, against camps/lager and deportations (e.g. to Togo or Afghanistan). www.nolager.de

Italy: In the last year, migrants' and antiracist movements in Italy continued to struggle in all the main important cities against the Bossi-Fini Law. Protests against detention centres spread from the north to the south. Refugees and asylum seekers demanded a law guaranteeing their status, which simply does not exist here. As the migrants' protagonism grew, new experiences of organization were attempted. On one hand, a form of social unionism to connect migrants and precarious workers. On the other hand, the networking of several local groups of migrants under the principle of their autonomy and protagonism. After the great demonstration on December 3, 2005, when 30.000 migrants were in the streets of Rome, another initiative was organized last July in front of the Internal Ministry, where migrants addressed their demands to the just elected government: the separation of labour contract and residence permit, the definitive closure of all detention centres, and permanent legalization not limited by wage or labour conditions.

Morocco: 24 July 2006: Sub-Saharan refugees assembled in front of the UNHCR office and 27 of them entered a catholic church in Rabat. They demanded the recognition of their rights as refugees, protection and support by the UNHCR, especially for the most vulnerable people like minors and women and, because Morocco does not allow them to inte-



grate in its society, the right to go to third countries. The police drove them out of the church in a brutal way and two members of refugee organisations were abducted by the secret service, but later released.

Mauritania: 31 August 2006: Young fishermen, accompanied by their sisters and mothers, protested against the constant controls, harassment and confiscation of boats by the Mauritanian coast guard and threatened to stop paying licence fees and to emigrate secretly, if it goes on like that. About two weeks before, the Mauritanian government had accepted patrol boats, planes and helicopters from the EU on her territory to prevent migrants from going to the Canary Islands.

Mali: 26 August 2006: On the 10th anniversary of the expulsion and deportation of sans papiers from the church Saint-Bernard in Paris, people tried to make a demonstration on the "Place of freedom" in front of the town hall in Bamako, but the police came and drove about half of the people away and two were arrested. They came free after protests in front of the police headquarters. The Mali government obviously does not want public actions concerning deportations, because in the middle of august it accepted the secret deportation of 160 migrants from the Canary Islands.

Senegal: 02 June 2006: Migrants, who have been deported from the Canary Islands, blocked a highway out of Dakar to protest against mistreatment of deportees and demanded to stop the deportation flights. The Senegalese government suspended such flights for some time and also rejected EU sea patrols and helicopters on its territory, but at the end of August, it accepted "joint" patrols with the EU - probably in exchange for some money, so called "development aid".

Sweden: The network "flyktningamnesti 2005" campaigned for amnesty for the roughly 30.000 refugees who had had their asylum applications turned down by the Swedish migration authorities, but who for

various reasons had decided to stay in the country. As a result of the campaign, a temporary law was introduced, with the effect that all detained refugees have been released and until now about half of the 30.000 refugees have been given permission to stay. However, with the temporary law ending as of the 31st of March, the network decided to close down the campaign and to start a new one.

Ukraine: Activists from NoBorders-Kiev in February 2006 launched a campaign against the deportation of Uzbeki asylum seekers. 11 refugees turned to the authorities asking for asylum and have been deported straight back to Uzbekistan, where they were imprisoned; their fate remains unknown. NoBorders-Kiev together with refugees from Uzbeki refugees community and human rights activists from various organisations staged a number of street protests, combining them with media campaign and official inquiries, and forcing Ministry of Justice to recognise that the deportation has been committed unlawfully. At the same time, the campaign's goals are far from being achieved, and it goes on.

UK: This past year has witnessed an upsurge in migrant and refugee struggles. There have been an increasing number of self-organised initiatives by immigration detainees such as hunger strikes and collective demands over conditions which have on occasions, as in the case of Colnsbrook in London in April, occurred following demonstrations outside detention centres. Workplace-based struggles involving migrants have grown in strength over the past year, notably the "Justice for Cleaners" campaign on the London Underground and in the City of London. Networking and communication continues to develop, creating greater visibility for migrant struggles and increasingly vocal calls from NGO's, community groups and trade unionists to put the issue of regularization back on the political agenda.

What "Crossing Borders" wants - about this Newsletter...

"Crossing Borders" is an attempt to foster transnational communication, our aim is to consolidate and to extend the migration related networking process in, around and beyond Europe. We do not ignore the differences in realities and struggles in various regions, countries or continents. But we are convinced in the necessity to bridge and communicate these differences - crossing these borders too!. We are committed to a process of "becoming common", not only by exchanging information and experiences, but much more by fighting against the same global apartheid- and migration regime! And by struggling for the common demands of freedom of movement and the right to stay!

This newsletter will focus to the movements and struggles of migration, taking into account their multiplicity. In each issue we will present manifold protests and campaigns, social and political struggles from different local situations. That's one reason, why we ask all of you to contribute to this project and to provide -at least in a few sentences -your experiences. But wider participation is crucial for this newsletter on more levels. We follow a multilingual approach and so we need continuous help in translations! It is an Internet based project, but most important in our concept are decentralised printouts, copied and distributed in the various migrants-localities and communities. "Crossing Borders" is an initiative of Frassanito-network and we plan to produce regularly issues at least every three or four months. But it depends also to your feedback and participation! So all of you are invited to support this newsletter, by contributions and distributions.

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