

# CROSSING BORDERS

## movements and struggles of migration



**Intro:** This 2nd issue of Crossing Borders appears at the same time as the World Social Forum takes place in Nairobi. As with the last European Social Forum in Athens, we believe that migration must be recognized as an own thematic axis. Nairobi is another opportunity to continue not only the euro-african political communication (page 2), but also to shift the migration related networking process to a global level. To foster transnational communication is the aim of "Crossing borders". The first issue was published on the 7th of October, the transnational day of action (page 3/4). It was distributed during the demonstrations, and the initial response was good. To accompany transnational mobilisations will continue to be our aim. Further issues will come for an europeanwide legalisation-campaign (page 2), the next 1st of May and migrant-workers activities, and for the coming Anti-G8-campaign in Germany in June 07.

### to our sisters and brothers in Africa - a common struggle for the freedom of movement and the right to stay

**Brothers and Sisters in Africa!** When we, migrants, have chosen to leave Africa, we did so as free women and men. Some used to say that we are victims of hunger, wars, poverty, that we were forced to escape. It is often true. But we always decided to move because we had and we have a project, we want a possibility, we want to keep our future in our hands. When we have chosen to migrate we wanted to free ourselves from those who pretend that some are rich and the others poor, some European, the others African, to free ourselves from a system of exploitation which has no borders, while it builds up borders and wars in order to exploit our needs and our projects, in Africa as well as in Europe.

When we have chosen to migrate, after having crossed with great difficulties the electric fences to ward-off the "unwelcome and unchosen" or the high borders of immigration laws, here in Europe we found further borders. To "grant" us the right to stay, Europe pretends we to be "disposable objects", just cheap labour force to exploit in the factories and in the houses, in the fields or in the services. Europe wants us to be "integrated", that means nothing but to work and keep silence, to renounce to our projects, our future, our struggles. Europe pretends to manage our movement militarizing its borders, even shooting us as it happened in Ceuta and Melilla, for exercising sovereignty in our lives. Europe gives voice to "cultures" for structuring hierarchies. Europe illegalizes us, and then constructs detention centers for our confinement before expulsion, when we are no more necessary to production, or even before having "tested" if we are good enough to be exploited. European laws defined us "aliens" or "illegal migrants", while the labour market puts us in competition with each other: European against Aliens, Migrants against Citizens!

Europe pretends to impede us to cross borders and then Europe herself crosses borders to export her control in the place from which we come. They call it cooperation projects, but they are an extension in Africa of European exploitation policies. Cooperation means that European capitals looks in African countries for cheap labour force to exploit, weakening the struggles of all the workers. It means that instead of "development funds", another way of enlarging profits, African countries must agree for the construction of detention centers, for the control of their coasts and territories by European army and patrols, for the forced readmission of thousand women and men. It

means that our freedom is more and more confined, that we, migrants, are a mean of making deals for the benefit of interests that are not our own.

When Europe attempts to violate our rights and to expropriate our freedom, we know that we must struggle. Every day, inside and outside working places, we fight to make hear our voices, to say loud and clear **WHAT WE WANT**.

On the 7th of October we crossed the borders of Europe and Africa, we spoke out uniting our voices beyond national and social borders that pretends we are silent, we showed that it is possible a common struggle. Uniting and multiplying our struggles is everyday more and more necessary: we cannot wait for someone else to decide for us! Migrants' movement across the borders cannot be stopped. Migrants' movements and organization are growing everywhere in the world. In Bamako, Rabat and in Nairobi today, there were and are more and more possibilities of a common struggle in Europe and Africa. Only a transnational dimension can strengthen our demands for freedom of movement and the right to stay! The reasons that led us to leave Africa didn't lead us to forget Africa! We are looking at our motherland, and as we see huge internal migrations and many internal borders, we also wish to see there powerful social movements developing for social justice. Our own movement, the movement of migration, and the struggles we fight every day in Europe can be one of the resources creatively used by these movements, in an attempt to build up new transnational spaces of freedom and equality. We freed ourselves from colonialism, today we must freed ourselves from every oppression in Africa and from the exploitation of migrant labour in Europe! We already have chosen to migrate and many more will migrate. Whoever choose this route now, aiming at freedom, must know that freedom is not a gift. We must fight for taking it. We do not want to be victims, we want to be protagonists, and the space of our freedom, today, is the space of our common struggle!

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# EURAFRIQUE - EURAFRICA - EURAFRIKA

Four months after the first conference of governments of EU-, North- and Subsahara-African countries on "Migration and Development" in July in Rabat, a similar conference took place in November 2006 in Tripoli/Libya. Their host Muammar Gaddafi opened the conference by telling the assembled ministers that the world should not try to restrict migration because it is 'inevitable' and commanded by God. Gaddafi failed to mention the Italian funded detention centers built in Libya and the repatriation programs for irregular migrants, sponsored by her northern neighbours. A joint declaration was adopted by the conference aimed at stemming the flow of "illegal" migrants to Europe, but a multi-billion dollar development fund, which the African governments demanded was rejected by the EU.

Instead, a 40 million euros fund was proposed to manage African migration to Europe. The fund should be used to lower the costs of Africans sending money earned in Europe back home and to set up a network of migration bureaus to match demand for jobs with supply of workers ("temporary" or "circulating" migration like the former

## No other choice...

The time has come for a new transnational movement and a new struggle to take place in Europe! Following the Actionday on October 7th 2006, we propose to organise a European-wide transnational assembly with the aim of coordinating the struggles for the freedom of movement of migrants and to demand a legalization of all migrants across Europe.

Today, an "illegal" migrant in a single European country is also an "illegal" migrant anywhere in Europe. Asylum seekers who are deported to a so-called "safe" third countries are banned from the whole of Europe. Joint flights for mass expulsions are organized by "partnerships" of EU countries in order to speed up and facilitate deportations. A recent proposal introducing common European standards on "detention and removal of aliens" provides for the detention of migrants up to six-months. The patrolling system of the coasts around Europe and beyond are causing an ever increasing number of deaths, while migrants deported to countries such as Libya or Morocco face death in the desert.

We believe that struggles and demands that address national governments and institutions are no longer sufficient to fight against this system. They need to be accompanied by a new political struggle that directly addresses the responsibility of European institutions and that calls for a European-wide legalization of all migrants. We do not want to provide the European institutions the opportunity of hiding their responsibility behind the "competences" and policies of national governments. On the pretext of preventing clandestine migration, the EU is waging a real war against people's movement. If we believe that "No one is illegal" whatever border she or he has crossed inside or outside Europe, then everyone must be legal in the whole of Europe! It means calling for a struggle that strikes at every border, which illegalizes the movement of migrants towards the European space, as well as the borders that Europe is building in so-called "third countries". There is an increasing awareness in and beyond Europe that the struggle for the freedom of movement is a global struggle. It has therefore become

German "guest worker" program). All these programs will not prevent people from leaving their countries of origin, claiming their right to freedom of movement to search for a better life. And particularly we cannot accept the readmission programs, which governments, put under pressure by the EU, are accepting to take back migrants of whom Europe wants to get rid of.

The Polycentric World Social Forum in January 2006 in Bamako/Mali called "for the building of an international alliance based on solidarity against these murderous policies, composed by civil societies, non-governmental organizations, social movements and organizations". Steps to build up such an alliance were the NGO-conference in June/July in Rabat, which claimed freedom of movement as a fundamental right and a pre-condition for the exercise of the other fundamental rights, and the Transnational Day of Action on the 7 October. A next opportunity will be Nairobi now. And we hope to continue and to deepen this process during the migration related actions in the frame of the protests against the G8-summit in June 2007 in Germany.

urgent to coordinate and articulate our political actions against the European migration regime, in order to build and spread struggles all over Europe. We have no other choice.



# Chronicle: Movements and Struggles of Migration ...

As in the first issue we have collected again highlights and fragments of resistance from various countries. It remains our aim to give an indication of the multiplicity and the diversity of campaigns and protests, in order to search for the possible "commons" in a needed transnational perspective. Firstly we summarize the activities from 7th of October action-day in Europe as well as in African cities. Afterwards we have chosen a few more brief country-reports from Eurafrique. And last not least we present a few impressions from the immigrant rights movement in US.

## 7th of October transnational Actionday

Hundreds of groups and organisations had signed the common call, a first time actions took place simultaneously in dozens of European and African cities (see more detailed reports and pictures: [www.noborder.org](http://www.noborder.org))

## 7th of October in Europe

Small demonstration and street-theatre against racism in Moscow; Demo in solidarity with Chechen refugees in Warsaw; small manifestation in Gothenburg; Demo with bigger migrants participation in London, more UK-actions in Glasgow and Birmingham; Demos in Paris, Rennes and Angers; various street theater-actions and demos in 12 cities in Germany; Demo and actions in Vienna; Blockade against detentions and a migrants-protest in front of the local authorities in Bologna, smaller actions in Milan and Rome; Demo in front of the detention in Malaga, actions and manifestations in 9 more cities in Spain, including the Canary Islands; Demo in Lisboa;..

## 7th of October in African Countries

**Mali:** A "Forum of Migrants" was organized for 10 days in Bamako, where migrants, deported back from Europe or North Africa, reported about their experiences and discussed with activists and researchers. It ended on the 7th of October with appeals for freedom of movement, democracy and self-organization of African people.

**Benin:** On the 6th and 7th of October, a conference and a praying session were organized by refugees' organisations. For the following Monday, an assembly was supposed to take place in front of the offices of the European Union, but after the death of one member because of not enough care from the UNHCR of Benin, a spontaneous assembly was organized in front of the UNHCR office.

**Mauretania:** The Human Rights Association invited for press conferences and a "day of open doors" in the capital Nouakchott and in Nouadhibou, a town in the north, from where many migrants left by boat to the Canary Islands and, after an agreement with the EU, more than 4000 migrants were arrested and most of them deported since March 2006.

**Morocco:** A large number of migrants' and students' associations launched an appeal for an assembly at the fence of Ceuta, where in 2005 at least eleven migrants lost their lives. About 150 people came to remember these events and denounced the European migration

policies - in the middle of strong units of police and military.

## More brief country-reports

**Netherlands:** In the morning of 6th of October activists have climbed on the floating deportation prisons in the harbour of Rotterdam and blockaded the entrances by locking themselves to the gate. Another public action against detentions near Amsterdam on 7th of October. Last elections of November 2006 made an amnesty possible for some 20.000 undocumented migrants. The concerning asylum seekers for the legalisation is a limited group that made their asylum request before the 1st of April 2004. They are the ones remaining of the group of the '26.000 asylum seekers' planned to be deported in 2004. There have been lots of mainly local actions in the Netherlands for them in schools and from churches. This pressure resulted in a majority in the new parliament in favour of an amnesty.

**Greece:** From the beginning of September we had a new third legalisation, which actually refers to people who were involved in the last two processes but were illegalised afterwards. For the new comers the requirements are very hard so most of them couldn't get in the process. In the 7th of October in Athens we had a small demonstration, at around 700 people, for the legalization and for the right of the children who are born in Greece to get citizenship. Also in Thesaloniki and in Chios there were some actions in the same day. Apart from that we made actions at Foreigners Center in Athens where a detention camp for seniors is located, and outside the police station of Omonia, quite known for the hard treatment of migrants. We are now also trying to launch a permanent campaign in national level against detention centers and deportations.

## Resistance against Deportations to Africa

**Senegal:** After an agreement on the 14th of September, about 5000 migrants were deported from Spain to Senegal, most of them secretly to the small airport of St.Louis to avoid protests in the capital Dakar. But the Senegalese government - preparing for elections in February 2007 - suspended these deportations at the end of October, because the opposition protested, demanded the content of the agreement to be published and to know what would happen with the 20 millions Euro, which the government received from Spain.

**Gambia:** After signing an anti-illegal migration memorandum of understanding with Spain and receiving 5 million Euro, the newly elected Gambian government accepted 255 migrants being deported during one month to this small country in the middle of Senegal, at least 144 on the 28 October. Shortly after the plane landed at the Banjul International Airport, the deportees briefly refused to disembark from the two aircrafts. Some of them were spotted vandalising the glasses at the airport, smashing chairs, destroying air-conditioners and the wind-screens of vehicles, others were seen violently knocking their heads against the walls, as if they wanted to commit suicide. Thirty of them are now brought before a court. Despite of news about thousands of deaths in the rough At-

lantic Sea, especially young people are entering small boats heading towards the Canary Islands.

**Melilla:** A group of about 30 migrants revolted in the beginning of November during a deportation flight from the Spanish enclave of Melilla to Guinea-Bissau, attacked the police on board and forced the pilot to land on the airport of Malaga/Spain.

**Morocco:** Beginning in the early morning of the 23 December, raids, arrests and mass deportations of sub-Saharan Africans took place in Morocco, declared as a consequence of the EU-African conference in Rabat and well planned just before Christmas. 250-400 people, among them women, children, refugees and asylum seekers with documents from the UNHCR, were put into busses, driven to the border of Algeria near Oujda and - by shooting into the air - forced to leave Morocco in the middle of the night. Activists of refugees' and human rights organizations are struggling to contact the migrants and support them to come back. They accuse the government of human rights violations in the frame of collaboration with the EU migration regime.

**United Kingdom:** (Nov./Dec.) On the day the Chief Inspector of Prisons published a report condemning conditions in the Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre, near London, the detained migrants revolted causing extensive damage to the detention centre, which is UK's largest. The UK government described the uprising as 'deliberate sabotage' of their immigration policy, and protests spread to other migrant prisons, whilst migrant workers and activists demonstrated in solidarity in outside Harmondsworth and in central London.

## Immigrant Movements in USA

In March of 2006, Los Angeles saw hundreds of thousands of migrant workers and their supporters come out to protest national proposals to criminalize workers. The protest was the largest in the history of L.A. and showed that there truly was a sleeping giant that was waiting to be woken. The energy continued through to May 1st, where there were two large protests that outnumbered the March action, with estimates that over a million peo-

ple participated, again to make a statement against the harsh immigration proposals in Congress and for legalization. The protests were part of a national series of protests which successfully stopped the government from taking more action on the immigration proposals. Unfortunately current organizing efforts have not been enough to keep the giant's attention. Many community organizations are scrambling to figure out how to connect with the hundreds of thousands of people that came out into the streets. After the protests, there has not been a huge increase in membership to community organizations and there has not been any common strategic plans. There are some groups that believe energy should be spent on trying to register people to vote and get them to elect better people into the government. Others believe that the government will never be responsive to the needs of the low wage workers and will only pass guest worker bills that help companies get cheap labor without helping the workers get their papers. Different groups are planning for the next May 1st in 2007, we don't know if we will be able to wake the sleeping giant once again.



## Why Crossing Borders and why a TRANSNATIONAL newsletter?

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!

Movements and struggles of migration are of course never national but also inter-nationality cannot comprehend its importance. It is not a thing between states, rather a challenge to all concepts of borders and nation states, be it those of the governments but also for example those of the main unions. Migrants move for a better live and against the hierarchies of exploitation. Migrations undermine the border regimes and create networks and communities beyond all nation states, from countries of origin through transit- to the target-countries. To develop the transnational perspective of global social rights we need transnational communication. Crossing Borders offers a possible tool for it, but it depends on broader participation. Crossing Borders is an Internet based multilingual project, but most important in our concept are decentralized printouts, copied and distributed in the various migrants localities and communities. Contact us; send us your comments and contributions!

Contact: [frassainfo@kein.org](mailto:frassainfo@kein.org) Website: [http://noborder.org/crossing\\_borders/](http://noborder.org/crossing_borders/)