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NO BORDERS! ASYLUM IS A HUMAN RIGHT

The fortress of Europe has to be taken down

The word asylum has Greek origin and means haven or place of refuge. Many times, fleeing from home means coping with death-trapping, long routes or even trafficking just to encounter the hope of a new life without grinding poverty, without prosecution, without having fear of forced marriages, FGM or war - a life in dignity.

In recent years, European countries have stepped up border control measures in an attempt to prevent migrants and asylum-seekers from reaching Europe. These measures have resulted in and contributed to serious human rights violations. The humanitarian disaster of Lampedusa was only one example of these violations spread in media. But why could Lampedusa even happen? In recent years, also under the pressure of the European Union, countries such as Italy and Spain have increased cooperation with North and West African countries to prevent asylum-seekers and migrants from even reaching Europe. In case of the Italy-Libya cooperation, this led to boats full of people being pushed back to Libya where they risked torture and prolonged detention. Lampedusa is not an individual case - every single day people die at the European borders.

The European Union has never been, but proved once more that it is not worth the Nobel Peace Prize.

The fortress of Europe is not a fairy tale - it is reality and it becomes deadly for refugees all the time. When we look for example at the Greek border of the European Union, refugees have to face a four meters high fence, ten kilometres long and armed with 140 000 meters of barbwire. The current legislation results in walls, barb wire fences and FRONTEX "guards" that prevent people from even trying to enter Europe – on their long way to finally live life in dignity.

Until now the Italian Mare Nostrum operation saved more than 130 000 people from distress at sea but couldn't save thousands of lives at the same time - now the Frontex operation Triton superseded Mare Nostrum there is evident alarm that a lot more people will die at sea, as Triton's main aim is not to save people but to control the borders. Also Triton's operational area is much smaller and leaves even more refugees without any hope for help. Frontex operations are a threat and no help for refugees.

Seeking a life in dignity is not a crime – stop the criminalization of refugees!

There has been a growing trend of criminalization of so-called irregular migration in Europe. Some countries have introduced criminal penalties for „irregular“ stay or entry. Some also punish people who help irregular migrants.

What does this mean for refugees? Many of those who do manage to enter Europe end up being detained for long periods. Countries use detention as a deterrent, despite the lack of evidence that detention deters people from migrating or seeking asylum. Refugees are put behind bars and are detained as if they were criminals, even though they have committed no crime. Most are detained for months, often in poor conditions without access to adequate medical care and usually unable to challenge the lawfulness of their detention due to the paucity of free legal aid.

In several countries, public officials, teachers and doctors who come into contact with irregular migrants must report them to the authorities. As result, children, pregnant women, people with chronic health problems and others do not seek medical care for fear of being reported. Parents are too afraid to send their children to school. Irregular migrants are scared to report crimes and abuses, such as labor exploitation, in fear of being detained and deported. These practices clearly violate the Geneva Convention on Refugees and must stop immediately!

Whether we look at Europe, the USA or countless countries in different parts of the world – refugees get criminalized everywhere. The criminalization of refugees has to stop worldwide. The international community has to step in in cases where the countries can't provide a treatment in dignity on their own.

Dublin regulation kills every day

If refugees manage to claim asylum in a European country despite all of these measures of the fortress Europe, they can be sent back to a “safe third country” they had to pass while fleeing, where they might be sent back again to another and another country. This regulation is unacceptable – and we don't want to repeat ourselves – but once again circumvents the Geneva Convention on Refugees and therefore must be abolished.

Also part of the Dublin II Regulation is the so called “one-state-only” rule. Especially for southern European border countries, most of all Italy, Greece and Spain, this implies problems. This rule implies to be only allowed to claim asylum in the first state that doesn't refuse the refugee the entry. As a matter of course, this applies in large part to border countries and the rest of the Union pretends to have nothing to do with taking responsibility.

Dublin III even deteriorates the situation further. The claims for solidarity with Greece, Italy and Spain were neglected and the custody pending deportation still exists also for minors.

The North has to take responsibility for exploitation!

Europe has a historical and an actual responsibility for many of the asylum reasons – and so does the formerly-called “industrialized” world. European countries and the USA got rich on the expenses of the global south. Rather than building fences, they finally have to take responsibility! They have to take responsibility for the on-going exploitation of the global south and its consequences – this is closely connected to the reasons why so many people flee from their homes – whether we go back to colonialism with its consequences until now or to the following Structural Adjustment Programs of IMF and World Bank. Whether we look at the profit, that is made with arms trade in crisis-hit countries or at the agricultural subsidies of European export that destroy regional markets. This on-going structural oppression is organized internationally and reveals the aggressive face of capitalism. All of this implies horrendous outcomes - that affect women even worse. As YES we know that we have to fight back internationally!

Solidarity with refugee protest movements all around the world!

As long as people have to flee we will not stop to fight against all of these afflictions. We will raise our voices against cruel legislation – and most importantly will we support all the refugee protest movements that rise around the world. YES takes international solidarity seriously and we want to show our support with all our strength.

No borders!

YES Congress claims:

- Respect the Geneva Convention on Refugees
- Stop the criminalization of refugees
- Dublin regulation must be abolished
- FRONTEX must be abolished, and instead EU should provide humanitarian aid for refugees in all operating areas instead
- Solidarity with refugee protests
- FGM and forced marriages have to be recognized as asylum reasons everywhere
- Asylum reasons have to be widened
- Asylum seekers must have the right to work
- Asylum as human right must turn into practice
- Fight the on-going exploitation
- Requesting asylum, should be possible in all diplomatic facilities of the European Union and its member states
- YES should make refugee and asylum rights a campaign topic for the proposed common campaign in the upcoming mandate.