

Bamako-Dakar-Tour 2011: Newsletter Nr. 1/July 2010 – written by NoLager Bremen (Afrique-Euro-Network)

I. Languages:

This newsletter is available in english and german – and soon in french as well.

II. What is the whole project about and who is responsible:

Several groups and networks from Africa and Europe have started to get involved in the preparation of a 2-3 weeks Action-Tour from Bamako to Dakar in January/February 2011 – including participation at the next meeting of the „World Charter of Migrants“ on the Island of Gorée/Dakar (2nd till 5th of February 2011) and the next „World Social Forum“ in Dakar (6th till 11th of February 2011).

Up to now the preparation process is rather polycentric: Many groups and networks don't know each other or have at least not met so far. Nevertheless it is possible to say who is involved and who is carrying which responsibilities:

- a) The decision for the Bamako-Dakar-Tour has originally been taken on the last North-African Socialforum in Morocco. The Tour itself is first of all organised by groups in several (West-)African countries. The AME/„Association of deportees of Mali“ (which is mainly based in Bamako) is coordinating the preparation process - more information about the AME you find on their (French-written) website: <http://www.expulsesmaliens.info/>
- b) Secondly activists of several (in particular French-speaking) Networks are involved: Bridges not walls (Des Ponts Pas Des Murs), Manifeste Euro-Africain, Migreurop, NoVox International and GRAMI-AC.
- c) On the occasion of the Bamako-Dakar-Tour the Afrique-Euro-Network has been founded in January 2010. In the Afrique-Euro-Network activists with and without refugee/migrant-background are involved. Most of them are living in Germany, some in Austria and the Netherlands. The used languages are french, german and english.

As we said: Not all involved groups and networks are in contact with each other so far. In particular the ties between activists in France and Germany are right at the moment not as strong. We hope that this situation can be changed rather quickly. One good opportunity might be the NoBorder-Camp in Brussels (27th of September till 3rd of October)...

III. Bamako-Dakar-Tour – some basic informations

- a) Duration & point of time: The exact dates havn't been fixed yet! Right at the moment it is planed to start with the Tour itself on 25th of January and to arrive at Goree/Dakar on 2nd of February. After the WSF it is planed to travel back to Bamako (with arrival on 14th of February). Of course not everybody will be able to join the whole tour – in this respect some coodination will be needed as part of the preparation process.
- b) Name or title: The definite name of the project hasn't been fixed so far. For instance some call it „Tour“, others prefer „Caravane“: one of many open questions...
- c) Transport: We are going to travel with busses. Since the railway between Bamako and Dakar has been privatized it is mainly used for transport of goods. Apart from that the train doesn't stop in many of the small villages/cities anlongside the line any more.
- d) Participants: Everybody is invited to participate: The AME-activists are awaiting several hundred activists, mainly from African countries. The Afrique-Euro-Network will be involved as well – with approximately 15-30 activists. The distance of our Tour will be about 1400 Kilometres.
- e) Political topis or aims of the Tour: On the one hand the Bamako-Dakar-Tour is going to focus on the rights of migrants and refugees. On the other hand we want to illuminate critically structural reasons of flight and migration – or positively spoken: The fights of local people for social justice and autonomous/self-determined and sustainable development shall be supported as well (more in detail: see below).
- f) Tour-Stops & actions: It is planed to stop at least in five places and to organize assemblies with local people. Futhermore some bigger, non-violant actions are planed – amongst others against Frontex (in this respect the idea has been brought up to organize simultaneous actions in Mali or Senegal and Germany/Europe).
- g) Other Caravans/Tours: The GRAMCI-AC-Network is going to organize a Caravan from Yaounde/Cameroon to Bamako – in order to join the Bamako-Dakar Tour. Apart from that the idea has been brought up to organize a further Caravane from Morroco via Mauritania to Dakar.

IV. World Charter of Migrants – some basic informations

The meeting will be hold in the days before the WSF on the Island of Gorée. The Island of Gorée is a key site commemorating the slave trade as it was one of the departure points for slave ships to America and other countries. For more detailed information please go to the website of the project (with informations in french, english, espanol and arabic): <http://www.cmmigrants.org/spip.php?article46>

V. WSF – some basic informations

- a) Point of time: 6th till 11th of February
- b) Place of the WSF: University of Dakar – directly at the sea.
- c) WSF in Dakar: The WSF is broadly supported by political Networks, grassroot-organisations and NGOs in Senegal. However, right at the moment some fundamental discussions are taking place, for instance whether the president of Senegal should be actively involved in the opening-session of the WSF or not.
- c) Migration will be one on the central topics of the WSF.
- d) The AME-activists have already established close relationships to those people in Dakar/Senegal who are responsible for the migration-axis in the WSF. Furthermore Conni of the Flüchtlingsrat Hamburg has contacted some of those responsible persons as well.
- e) The activists of the Bamako-Dakar-Tour will offer workshops on the WSF (on the basis of the political topics or aims of the Bamako-Dakar-Tour). Apart from that a migration-related meeting-zone shall be organized at the WSF (for relaxing, informal discussions etc).
- f) For more detailed informations concerning the WSF please look at the official website (with informations in several languages): <http://fsm2011.org/en/frontpage>

VI. Topics of the Bamako-Dakar-Tour and the WSF-Workshops

Generally we have agreed on focusing on both: the right to stay and the right to go. Concretely the following topics have been mentioned or proposed:

- a) Migration-policies of the EU: Frontex, Readmissions Agreements, (Charter)Deportations, Camp-policies (in Europe and Africa). Concerning Frontex the proposal has been made that the WSF should be asked to support Anti-Frontex activities clearly.
- b) Situation of refugees and undocumented migrants in Europe: Camps, detention, police brutality, labour-exploitation etc. - not as deterrence of prospective migrants, but to support them to be better prepared
- c) Agriculture: Between Bamako and Dakar (amongst others) big groundnutfarms are responsible for the expulsion of small scale farmers. In this respect many people from this region have gone into migration in the last years. Furthermore subsidies for EU/US-Farmers or EU/US-exporters have negative impacts on small scall farming – in combination with the effects of the WTO's „Agreement on Agriculture“ and the power of the agrobuisness and big supermarket-chains. Last but not least the admission of genetically modified/manipulated cotton has been a reason for strong protests of farmers in Mali in the last years.
- c) Climate change has a strong impact on the agriculture in Mali or Africa as well. In this respect also the growing loss of water supplies plays an important role.
- d) Privatization: Through privatization of public transport, factories etc. many people in Mali and elsewhere have lost their jobs or livelihoods.
- e) Forced privatization is strongly linked to the enormous debts of African countries. Against this background the „Structural Adjustment Programs“ (SAPs) of the IMF and other financial instiutions shold be put on our agenda as well.
- f) Fish & flight: The fishing of big fishing armadas from the EU in front of the coasts of Westafrica has had particularly devastating effects on fishers in Senegal.
- g) Mining of uranium in Mali. More informations can be found here:
<http://www.forumcivique.org/de/artikel/mali-das-falea-projekt> (german) and
<http://www.forumcivique.org/fr/articles/mali-le-projet-falea> (french).

VII. Who we are/what are the basic aims of our Cooperation

The debate about the (longterm) aims of establishing transnational cooperations from below has only begun. Therefore no common or definite position has been developed regarding this question until now...

- a) As it has been already mentioned: In general we want to build transnational networks in order to support each other in our struggles – be it for freedom of movement or be it for autonomous/self-determined development. In this respect it is in particular crucial to establish contacts with local communities and with migrants who are right at the moment on their way.
- b) We should define ourselves through our struggles in Europe and Africa (in order to make understandable to the people in Mali/Senegal and at the WSF who we are or who we not are).
- c) Amongst others three characteristics might be central for all or most of the activists who are involved in the Bamako-Dakar-Tour: transnational-based, grassroot-orientated and in favour of „freedom of movement“.
- d) We shouldn't be too ambitious – at least in the first step. First of all the purpose of the Bamako-Dakar-Tour should be to learn from each other and to make new experiences (for many european activists it might be the first time at all that they are in Africa or that they are participating in political activities in Africa...).

- e) One activists of the AME emphasized that in one or the other way we have to deal with the very fact that there is a big gap between the wish of the people in Mali/Senegal (or Africa in general) for quick and profound change on the one hand and our limited capacities on the other hand.
- f) Last but not least: The „Bridges not walls“-Networks wants to make strong links from the Bamako-Dakar-Tour to further events such as 3rd Euro-African governmental conference on migration and development (March 2011).

VIII. To-do-List:

- a) WSF: The workshops for the WSF need to be registered rather soon. In this respect first steps have been already made. Apart from that coordination with all the other groups, networks and organisations/NGOs is needed who are also planning to offer migration-related workshops and assemblies at the WSF.
- b) Regarding the Bamako-Dakar-Tour more cooperation and communication is needed among those groups and networks who are already involved – in particular among activists living in Europe.
- c) A Website needs to be set up rather soon – with political and practical informations (idenpendently from the question how many website we will have in the end...).
- d) Money is needed – in this respect everybody is asked to send applications to foundations or to find other ways to collect money.
- e) Last but not least: Thousands of small things need to be organized in the next weeks and months: We will keep you informed via this newsletter...

IX. Next meetings/steps

- a) The Afrique-Euro-Network will meet at the 31st/1st of August in Bremen/Germany again. Everybody who wants to be subscribed on the Afrique-Euro-Mailinglist can send a mail to nolagerbremen@yahoo.de
- b) From 27th of September till 3rd of October a Noborder-Camp is going to take place in Bruxelles. A Workshop regarding the Bamako-Dakar-Tour has been already registered for 30th of September (Thursday). More informations about the Nobordercamp: <http://nobordersbxl.noblogs.org/>
- c) Furthermore there will be this summer once more Noborder-activities in Greece. This might be another opportunity for transnational coordination concerning the Dakar-Tour. More informations one can find on: www.w2eu.net
- d) In remembrance to the incidents of Ceuta and Melilla 2005 activities will be organized on the 5th and 6th of October on Oujda and Mellila. Probably this will be a further opportunity for coordination etc. regarding the Bamako-Dakar-Tour.
- e) The final decisions concerning the Dakar-Tour will be made on a meeting of the AME which is going to take place in the second part of October in Bamako. Therefore the AME-activists have urgently asked for strong participation of the different networks and groups. From the Afrique-Euro-Network at least four activists are planing to travel to Bamako.
- g) The multi-lingual newsletter „crossing borders“ is going to publish in autumn an edition which is focusing on the Dakar-Tour and the WSF: http://www.noborder.org/crossing_borders/index.php