

Bamako-Dakar-Caravan: January/February 2011. Newsletter Nr. 2 (november 2010)

I. Languages:

This newsletter is available in german, english and french.

II. Preliminary note:

Our first newsletter was send in july 2010. Since then a lot has happened – especially what the preparation of the Bamako-Dakar-Caravan is concerned. In this context the annual meeting of the AME (Association of the deported people of Mali) on the 23/24 of october in Bamako/Mali has played an important role; also a small delegation of the european 'section' of our network has participated in this meeting. Therefore the newsletter consists of two parts: While in the first part there will be current information about the network and the Bamako-Dakar-Caravan the second part holds a short report of the journey of our delegation to Mali.

Those who do not have heard about the Bamako-Dakar-Caravan so far – on the 18th of november our website will be online: www.afrique-europe-interact.net

III. News from the network:

a) Name: At the beginning our network was pragmatically called Afrique-Euro-Network. After longer debates we have now agreed - according to a proposal coming from the AME - on a new (politically more meaningful) name: Our network is now called „Afrique-Europe-Interact“.

b) Website: The trilingual website will be online on the 18th of november (at first in german, and a couple of days later in english and french): www.afrique-europe-interact.net The website is supposed to inform about the activities of our network – including topical backgrounds and main focuses. We are still looking for translators – no matter in which direction. Interesting articles (be they in german, english or french) can be send to the following address: nolagerbremen@yahoo.de However we want to point out at this point, that the website is no archive, therefore we consciously want to narrow the number of articles.

c) New combatants: One the occasion of the annual meeting of the AME in Mali more than 10 groups have singnalled their interest in our network, some of them have already decided their participation. Most of the groups are active in the practical support of deportees; several groups have been founded by deportees themselves. In addition to direct help objectives concerning especially the politics of development play a central role. This is so against the background that the deportees are supported in building up new means of existence, not least in the field of agriculture. It should also be mentioned that some of the groups have different focal points, for example the struggle against privatization or the expulsion from land. In general the groups in Mali expressed their interest to have a common declaration in which the most important aims of the nework are retained.

d) Mailing list: At the moment 130 people are subscribed to the mailing list of Afrique-Europe-Interact. In addition there is a mailing list in german for the activists coming from Europe in order to coordinate the organisational stuff for the caravan like flight-tickets, vaccination etc. (including support for translation for those who do not unerstand german). If you are interested please contact nolagerbremen@yahoo.de It should also be mentioned that the bi- andd trilingualism on the big mailing list has not always worked in the past months. On the one hand side this is understandable (because many activists are not aible to write their mails in two or three languages), on the other

hand transnational organization should only work out in the long run, when all participants strive for translation in one way or the other.

IV. News from the Bamako-Dakar-Caravan:

a) Research-Tour: From 16 – 19 september two activists of the AME have travelled to all places, which the caravan will visit in one way or the other – including Dakar. The talks during this research tour were all successful; in all the places cooperation partners for the caravan could be found. In addition it is important that the preparation committee of the WSF has shown big interest in the caravan. There is the concrete idea that all caravans going to the WSF (no matter which direction they are coming from) will meet one day before the beginning of the WSF in a small place („Diamniadio“) near Dakar and from there come in together as one big bus-demonstration into Dakar.

b) Name of the caravan: The official name of the caravan is: „Citizen-caravan to the WSF in Dakar 2011. For freedom of movement and just development“. It should be clear that this name can be varied according to the respective context; what the naming of the aims is concerned both of them should always be mentioned.

c) Beginning of the caravan: The caravan will start in Bamako between the 26th and the 29th of january. So far it is not clear if it will work out to come to an agreement concerning the time with those caravans also going via Bamako to Dakar. If it does not work out, we will meet only in Kayes (Mali), in order to then cross the border to Senegal together (the background of this is the fact, that the other caravans follow in parts a slightly different time-table than we.) The return to Bamako will last from the 12th to the 13th of february.

d) Stopps of the caravan: The different stopps of the caravan are not yet clear for good. So far the following places are unter discussion: Bamako – area Kayes (Yelimane et Kabate) – Nioro – Kidira (border Mali/Senegal) - Kaolack – Kedougou – Mbour- Keur Massar/Malika – Dakar. It is only at the point when the places are clear for good, that the planning of the political assemblies, which are supposed to be held together with the local population, can start.

e) Actions during the caravan: Before the caravan at least one action shall take place in Bamako, probably a demonstration with the motto of the caravan (for freedom of movement and just developement). In addition actions in Kayes, Nioro (against deperation between Mali and Mauretania) and Dakar (against Frontex) are planned.

f) Finances of the caravan: At the moment this point is the biggest problem: On the one hand side the caravan costs quite a lot of money (especially for travelling costs – be it from Europe to Western Africa or from Bamako to Dakar), on the other hand many applications for financial support have been turned down. Stating it more precisely it should be pointed out that the groups in Africa and Europe have respectively made their own applications; but it is nevertheless clear, that in the end we will have to look together that there is enough money for the project as a whole – at least what the participation of the african activists is concerned. It is against this background that we have to start next week with a broad donation-campaign for the project, because the cash position is very tight. This means concretely that all are called upon to either donate themselves or find donors (friends, relatives, political groups, church parishes, house-projects...). You will find more information concerning the donation campaign on the website, where there will also be the possibility for online donation.

g) Participants: At the moment about 200 activists from Mali and about 50 from Europe will participate. In addition there will be participants from other caravans (in case the timewise coordination will work out). The following is important: From Europe not much more than 50

people can participate, for the simple reason that otherwise the logistics concerning sleeping places etc. would be overtaxed (apart from the fact that it is important for the african activists that as many activists from the social movements in Mali as possible can come to Dakar). Therefore: Those who have not so far participated in one of the preparation meetings of our network should not just come to Bamako, because there is no guarantee for free bus places !!!!!

h) Safety: The german Foreign Ministry explicitly warns of the danger of kidnapping in the border area of Mali/Senegal/Mauretania. Our partners in Mali explicitly do not share these fears: In this region nothing has ever happened and at the border crossing Nioro there are always tourists crossing the border in their private cars. In addition the caravan is already registered at the authorities in Mali and Senegal and therefore there will always be police around.

i) Filming: There will be several film-teams, which accompany the caravan and will make a documentation of the caravan (more information about this will follow separately).

j) Journalistic coverage: Several journalists from Mali as well as activists from Radio Kayra (network of local radios) will report from the caravan in Mali/Senegal. In addition there will be information spots in the television and radio in the forefront in Mali. In Germany among other things a 4-page-information-newspaper will be made, which will be enclosed on the 24th of december in the christmas edition of the left-liberal daily paper „taz“ (of course, also with the hope to collect quite a few donations by doing this...)

k) Logistics (buses, overnight stay, food etc....): In Mali as well as in Senegal committees have been founded for these jobs; more information will follow in the next weeks.

l) T-Shirts/Shirts: For the caravan t-shirts/shirts with an own motif are supposed to be produced. For the motif a little competition among artists shall be proclaimed (please look for respective calls !). Different opinions were voiced in Bamako what the origin of the t-shirts/shirts was concerned: Some said, that the cloth should come in any case from cloth factories in Mali respective Western Africa (no matter if the cotton is biological or conventional). Others said, that it was more important, that the cotton was biological or fair trade, even if this meant that the t-shirts/shirts were produced outside Africa. Probably there will be a mix of t-shirts/shirts, even though they shall all have the same motif (the distinction between t-shirts and shirts refers to the fact, that also concerning this there are different wishes, among other reasons for the reason that in Mali/Western Africa barely t-shirt cloth is produced).

V. Short report from the delegation journey to Bamako and Yanfolila (village 200 kilometres south of Bamako)

a) Preliminary remark: Already in June the AME has invited the European part of Afrique-Europe-Interact to participate with a delegation in the annual meeting of the AME on the 23/24 October. Concretely the delegation consisted of four people – two without and two with a background of migration (Togo and Tunisia). The following short report is therefore written from an European characterized perspective, especially since it was for all delegation members their first stay in Mali.

We (the members of the delegation) want to start with a big thank-you: The hospitality in Mali was outrageous – no matter whom we met. This was not only good for us on a private level, also the political encounters and conversations have benefitted enormously from the open and warm atmosphere! What was also important was the fact that we were staying at the private place of an activist of the AME; in this way we got from the beginning a relatively realistic impression of the daily life in Djélibougou – the part of Bamako where the AME is at home.

b) Meetings & visits: In the course of our delegation journey we have participated in numerous preparation meetings of the Bamako-Dakar-Caravan as well as in the two-day annual meeting of the AME, which took place in a public place (many of the results have already been mentioned in the first part of the newsletter). In addition we have met up with several groups and organisations – among them the following: (1) the ARACEM (association des réfoûlés de l'afrique centrale au Mali/organisation of the deportees of Central Africa to Mali), (2) the MSV (mouvement des sans voix/Movement for people without a voice), (3) the AMRLEC (Association des Maliens Rapatriés de Lybie, de l'Espagne et de la Cote d'Ivoire/Organisation of the deportees from Mali being deported from Libya, Spain and the Ivory Coast), (4) Les Réfoûlés" Ceuta et Mellila" de Yanfolila/those from Yanfofila who were deported from Ceuta and Mellila, (5) Mobiom (Mouvement Biologique Malien/Ecological Movement of Mali), (6) Si Nafa (education- and health projekt for women), (7) les travailleurs de Huicoma (collectivité de grève)/the workers from Huicoma (strike collective) and (8) the Association espoir de Kachan Kalifa (Rapatriés de Paris)/the organisation of hope from Kachan Kalifa (deportees from Paris).

c) Migration-development: In all of our conversations it has become clear that the political dealing with migration is a complete different one than in Germany respective Western Europe. While in Germany respective Western Europe questions concerning migration and politics of development are usually worked upon by different protagonists, these two perspectives are very closely interlinked in Mali: On the one hand side because social backgrounds of flight and migration are anyway omnipresent in every-day life, on the other hand because the deportees (with whom many of the migration-related groups are working together) ask themselves how life can go on for them in Mali. It is against this background that the motto of this year's annual meeting of the AME was no surprise: it was called „emigration & development: For social justice“ („Emigration & Développement: Pour une justice sociale“).

What the concrete reasons of migration and flight are concerned, in our conversations mainly three fields of problems were mentioned: First the world-wide circumstances of dominance and exploitation – this aspect played an important role in the first part of the annual meeting of the AME (also with reference to the fact that the independence 50 years ago had only initiated a new phase of power of the north). Secondly the failure of the government was pointed out again and again. In this context it was not only talked about corruption and similar phenomenas, but it was also insisted on the responsibility of the state for education, health care, infrastructure and so on. Thirdly also singular problems were mentioned, especially privatisation (in different sectors), land speculation & expulsion from land, the business of agro business (including the agrarian politics of the EU and the USA) as well as the sale of land to investors from abroad. A fact not well known in Europe might be in this context the fatal role which Libya is playing in Mali. Because Libya respective Gaddafi seems to perceive Mali as a sort of colony or backyard, what is shown amongst others by the fact that Libya belongs to those countries which at the moment are buying land in Mali in a big way. This together with the ruthless politics against migrants from subsaharian countries is one of the reasons why the libyan government is frowned upon by many activists in Mali.

d) Role of Migration: All the people we talked to agreed that under the current circumstances migration is a legitimate strategy of survival (whereas one should keep in mind, that most migrants from Mali migrate within Western Africa). Nevertheless migration to Europe is viewed mainly critical. Firstly, because it is at the moment too dangerous; secondly because altogether the disadvantages prevail (mass deportation...) and thirdly because for Mali it would be better in the long run if the young people stayed in Mali and lobbied for an improvement of the social circumstances. The remittances were important, no doubt, but the respective money would only be enough for the individual consumption, but an improvement of the infrastructure (education, health, economy...) would not be possibly by this. One of our dialogue partners told us that the government usually cuts public investment in those areas, where a lot of migrants are coming from.

Therefore it should not be surprising that several of the groups participating in our network are participating in self-organized sensibilisation campaigns against migration to Europe: In Yanfolila for example the „organisation of the deportees from Ceuta and Melilla“ reports in a weekly radio broadcast about the situation of migrants in transit respectively Europe – here also migrants get a chance to speak who are currently on their way to or in Europe. The central difference to the so-called sensibilisation campaigns of the European Union is that the groups in Mali are not talking about „irregular migration“. On the contrary: They explicitly declare themselves in favour of the right for freedom of movement. In addition in their eyes education would only be legitimate, if it went along with concrete offers of alternatives. The deportees of Yanfolila for example have – for example - bought land, which they cultivate together and which shall in the long run secure all involved a stable income (at the moment the field is cultivated once a week, with the income the reparation of a mill is financed, which shall later on work as a source of income).

e) CIGEM: CIGEM is an institution in Bamako financed by the EU. It is its function to avert „irregular migration“. This shall be achieved for example by sensibilisation campaigns, the support of group of deportees and programmes for apprenticeships for youth. According to the people we talked to the campaigns against irregular migration initiated by CIGEM are doomed to failure for four reasons: Firstly the right for freedom of movement is too deeply embedded in the culture of Mali; secondly the social need is much too big (one activist reported that the people felt insecure when viewing the CIGEM deterrence video, but they would still go), thirdly the offers of alternatives of CIGEM were a bad joke (a couple of dozens vacancies for an apprentice while millions of jobs are needed) and fourthly also the government was interested in the remittances and therefore only participated pro forma in the respective political discourses of CIGEM. In summary this means that CIGEM is at the moment in a political impasse, and this estimation was also supported by activists, who had received money from CIGEM in the past two years and with this were able to build up their project (for example the ARACEM).

f) Final remark: In this short report we explicitly refrained from formulating impressions of Bamako respective Mali. We will make up for this, when we have the necessary quietness and time...