

Transnational network meeting 03/06/2007, Rostock

Workshop III: Against the border-, "lager-" and deportation-regime in Africa and Eastern Europe

Double slot workshop with activists from Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Ivory Coast, DR Congo, Tunisia, as well as African refugees in Germany for the Africa discussion and activists Poland and Ukraine for the discussion about Eastern Europe

Programm:

Militarized border controls, more camps and detention centers outside Europe, racism, discrimination, exploitation on the labour market and raids against undocumented migrants also in countries of transit, interrogations for "identification", deportations and readmission contracts (including a second version of "guest-worker" programmes) are some of the characteristics of the new EU migration policy of "externalisation". But struggles of refugees and migrants, human rights organisations and antiracist groups are developing everywhere, also in countries of transit and origin. How can these groups and struggles come together, how can we learn from each others and start common campaigns?

We want to divide the main topic of this workshop according to regions (Eastern Europe, Africa) and meet in the beginning in two different groups, but - after a summary of our main results - discuss together in the second part, especially concerning common campaigns which we think are necessary especially against Frontex, EU charter deportations, Dublin II and readmission contracts.

Both workshops will have a similar structure and have German, English and French, in the Eastern Europe-group also Polish translation.

organised by: ARI Berlin and Refugee Council / nolager Hamburg

Report from the "Africa" workshop

There were more than 40 participants from different countries in this workshop. We decided not to join the group about Eastern Europe because of lack of time. We started with a presentation of the activists invited from different African countries (from the north to the south):

- Hicham Baraka, ABCDS, Oujda/Morocco
- José Palazón, PRODEIN, Melilla
- Souhir Driss, ATFD, Tunisia
- Amadou M'Bow, AMDH, Mauritania
- Madjiguène Cissé, women's networks, Senegal, before: sans papiers movement, France
- Solange Koné, CADTM, Ivory Coast
- Victor Nzuzi, Via Campesina, DR Congo

Also some representatives of African refugee organisations in Germany were present, e.g.:

- Osaren Igbinoba, The Voice, from Nigeria
- Bruno Watara, nolager Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, from Togo

Then the activists from Africa gave short reports about the situation and struggles in their countries, concerning flight and migration, this time from the south to the north (I give only an outline of the main points):

DR Congo: (illustrated by pictures painted by activists)

- **dictatorship** of Mobutu, supported by EU and USA -> opposition people had to go into exile
- **wars** about resources, looted by foreign powers -> people flee to save their lives
- small farmers have no chance against **EU imports** -> migration
- **radio and TV programmes** by the Belgian embassy with pictures from refugee camps in Europe: "Stay at home!"
- but nothing is done against the real reasons of migration
- **our movements:** we are not many, but if we attack the power together, we are strong (like bees against the elephant)

Ivory Coast:

- **former country of immigration** from other African countries (30% immigrants) and leading economic power in West Africa
- since 10 years **war and conflicts** -> emigration became a topic
- struggle on two levels necessary:
 1. change the policy of African governments to improve the **living conditions** there
 2. to fight for **migration as a right** for everybody, not only for people from the North
- common struggle with activists in the North, e.g. against **EU charter deportations!**

Senegal:

- new situation since 2005: many young people want to **emigrate** - no visa, so they go **by boat**
- EU policy of **externalisation** = agreements with north and west African countries for border control and deportation
- **Frontex** patrols together with Spain
- independent **press** in Senegal -> a lot of sensibilisation against the EU migration policy

- **women's organisations** write leaflets and discuss about migration of their children (e.g. workshop on the WSF in Nairobi)
- **fishermen** fight against EU fishing agreements (blockades, demonstrations) and are forced to emigrate
- **organisations of "rescapés"** = migrants who were saved/came back
- all these organisations started to **fight together** against deportations -> blockades in Dakar -> flights now to St. Louis
- deportation agreements were a big topic in the **election campaign** (before february 2007)

Mauritania:

- situation between Subsahara and North Africa -> **country like a tampon**, sponge for migrants
- since the Ceuta/Melilla events Morocco closed her borders in 2005 -> **more emigration** from Mauritania
- many **boatpeople die** on the sea
- **Guardia Civil** (Spain) on the coast and on Mauritanian territory
- boat people who are intercepted are put into **secret camps**, tortured, "identified" and deported
- question of migration is new for the **human rights organisations**
- criticized the camps -> later empty, secret places to arrest migrants
- cooperation with **trade unions of fishermen**
- recognized refugees get little support from the **UNHCR** -> struggle for more money and right to go to school
- **transnational cooperation**, more intensive since the NGO Conference in summer 2006 in Rabat

Morocco:

- country of emigration and today **country of transit** for many subsaharan Africans
- EU gives money to Morocco to play the **role of a border police** and stop the migrants to go to Europe
- **Oujda** is a **gate** from **Algeria** (officially: closed border) to **Europe** -> more than 700 subsaharan refugees live there
- **raids** in Rabat, Casablanca and other towns -> 400 deportations to the Algerian border -> sent back -> go to Oujda
- war against subsaharan migrants and refugees!
- groups who **support** them are being followed by the police and **criminalized**

Tunisia:

- also country of **transit**, visa restrictions for a long time
- **emigration** no topic before, but living conditions have become worse -> many people unemployed -> more people want to leave the country, also women and people with university degrees
- also rise of fundamentalist tendencies because of poverty
- people who are **deported** from Europe **disappear**, no information about prisons and camps
- press is under control of the government
- **women's and human rights organisations** started to work on migration and want to contact trade unions

Discussion:

- importance of **colonialism and fascism** = still part of this system of border control and deportations!
- because of migration: governments declare a **state of emergency** = without rights for migrants -> becomes a "normal" situation
- important to build **new alliances** with different movements!
- **interests of African governments** in migration because of **readmittances** (more money than "development aid"!)
- but because of **corruption** they agree to readmission contracts and common border controls with the EU ->
- important to **create links between the struggles** against corrupt leaders and EU contracts in Africa and Europe!
- concrete proposal: **campaign against companies which export arms and technology**, also for border control and deportation!
- mobilisation of the people, also in African countries, e.g. **taxi drivers** at the airports, against deportations
- **participation of the people** in decisions and development is necessary to reach a real change
- **debts** of Africa: in reality debts of Europe to Africa!
- important to **spread information** about policies of the governments and activities against them
- **work together on the grassroots** level against the governments in Europe and Africa
- **concrete topics of cooperation:**
- **deportations:** try to stop them together by exchanging informations

- also look what happens to people who where deported -> support them, e.g. to get the money they earnt in Europe
- **exploitation**: attack the institutions and multinational companies and demand answers
- build **networks** of struggles in different countries also means to support organisations with **money**