

Deportations are a crime

They act as a criminalization, punishment and deterrent of refugees and migrants – remand pending deportation and deportations were and are a central part of the European border-regime. At the latest in the middle of the 80ies the practice of deportation has reached a new dimension in the Schengen states. The number of persons who had been flown off states of the EU through the use of every means of pressure and violence possible must be in the order of numerous millions.

The racist terror of deportation is everyday life. Just to draw in sharp detail with an example – from the airport of Frankfurt 40 persons have been deported in the year 2000, every day! Today there are – in the face of declining asylum numbers – still around 10 deportations a day.

In 1996 the fight against deportation was a central element of the movement „Sans Papiers“ in France. At the demonstrations for „Papers for everyone“ money has been collected to fetch back deported persons. In Bamako there had been protest and solidarity actions for those deported out of Paris at that time.

Within few months 4 migrants have been killed by border police in Germany, Belgium, Austria and Switzerland during a violent attempt of deportation in 1999. In the year before the Noborder network was founded and the slogan „No Border, No Nation – Stop Deportation“ made clear that besides the situation of the external borders the main emphasis has to be put permanently on the ruling policy of deportation.

The virtually- public nature of deportations in airliners and the corresponding possibilities of resistance and solidarity (have a look further down) is repeatedly giving trouble to the deportation departments. Therefore they increasingly stake on collective deportations in planes chartered especially for that purpose – „the charter of disgrace“ – in the last years! At the level of the European Union Frontex plays a growing role under the title „Joint Return Operations“ to coordinate and finance those collective deportations.

With the so-called asylum competence order „Dublin II“ more and more deportations happen within the EU, mostly from countries in North-Western-Europe to countries at the Southern and Eastern external borders like Greece, Hungary or Italy in the last years. Refugees ought to be forced to carry out their asylum proceedings in the country of the first registration. In case of continuing their flight – mostly to a country where relatives or acquaintances stay, they are threatened by the immediate deportation back.

The fight against deportation were and is very diverse: from individual resistance of persons affected to wide-ranging campaigns. In the following a little selection of protests and actions of the last years.

Kaleidoscope of resistance

1998/1999: Dutch groups start a smear campaign against the deportation flight companies Martin Air and KLM. This has been developed further successfully to the deportation-class-campaign by the network „kein mensch ist illegal“ [„no one is illegal“] in Germany against Lufthansa in the following year.

London, July 2000: On a flight of British Airways a deportation is prevented by the present passengers! They called upon civil disobedience and managed that the refugee from Zaire was not deported.

Göttingen/Frankfort, February 2005: At the last moment the pilot of an airplane refuses to transport a female refugee from Iran. This was preceded by a wide public campaign and in the protests at the airport in Frankfort many hundred people were took part.

Frankfort, September 2006: An Ethiopian refugee resists and screams against his planed deportation by violent border police. Successfully! Because the pilot refused afterwards to transport him.

Conakry/Guinea, August 2007: 6 French police persons have been severely beaten up when they wanted to hand over two Guinean deported by them. Many passengers and the Guinean police had been involved in that argument.

London, March 2008: Flight passengers show solidarity with a Nigerian refugee in a charter flight of British airways who defends himself against his deportation. As a result of that the police evicted the whole economy class with 136 passengers push through the deportation.

Hamburg, August 2008: Almost 2000 persons participate at a „strike from outside“ against the deportation airport of Hamburg. One of the terminals is turned into a zone of protest for hours.

Copenhagen, August 2009: Many thousands try to prevent the eviction of a church and the deportation of Iraqi refugees protesting there in the Danish capital. 25000 persons take part in the demonstration afterwards.

Vienna, April 2010: After a raid in a stadium many hundreds activists participate within few hours at a blockade / block of a police bus in which the coach of the football club Sans Papier should have been transported to his deportation.

June 2010: Europe-wide is is called upon a week of action against (Frontex-) collective deportations and there are actions happening in many cities.

France, September 2010: In many cities big demonstrations take place against the deportations of Roma.

Brussels, October 2010: During the Noborder-Camp activists release two banners with helium ballons into the air in front of the departure board in the airport terminal. The inscription is: Stop Deportations, Stop Frontex!

Summary:

Spontaneous resistance of persons affected and the solidarity of passengers, organized campaigns in individual cases or against the deportation of groups of refugees in special countries of origin, smear campaigns against involved flight companies or protest against the „charter of disgrace“ (collective deportations) and the increasingly more important role of Frontex: the list of examples reflects the different levels and possibilities of resistance and the forms of solidarity existing.

The anti racist movements, the self organization of refugees and migrants and the networks of solidarity have at the moment nowhere in Europe the political and social power to call the Europe-wide deportation regime seriously into question. But they are at least able to scatter „sand in the transmission of the deportation machinery“ all the time. That has not only lead – directly and indirectly – to many thousand people not being deported. All those protests symbolize above all in a necessary and public way that the injustice of deportations is neither

tolerated speechlessly nor without resistance.