EU migration politics in Westafrica

By all included

Each night Spanish navy ships set sail out of the Dakar, Senegal, harbour hunting for boat refugees which are attempting to reach the Canary Islands. Frontex is actively patrolling the West-African seas since 2006 within the framework of the Joint Operation HENA up to 1300 kilometers from the Southern-European coast. In the lead up to the World Social Forum – WSF 2011 – in Dakar actions be organised against Frontex´ presence in Senegal. During the No Border camp in Brussels there will be more focus on the Transnational Campaign against Frontex. Hopefully the Association Malienne des Expulsés will be present to tell about the Caravane Citoyenne Bamako-Dakar for free migration just before the WSF 2011.

Externalisation of European border control

Previous years we´ve witness that the European border security has increasingly come to exist beyond the geographical borders. The European Union is since 2001 demanding her member states that each joint operating agreement includes a clause about the ´mutual management of migration flux´ (read: preventing ´clandestine´ migration) and the obligatory readmission of ´illegal´ migrants from Europe. Over the past years Senegal and Mauretania have signed several readmission agreements with Spain and France. In 2006 it has been agreed that Spain will carry out joint surveillance operations along the West-African coast together with Senegal and Mauretania. This agreement consist of a gift of four navy boats, a helicopter, 20 specifically trained border guards by the Guardia Civil and the financing of 63 police and 37 gendarmerie checkpoints on the Mali and Senegal borders. The latter includes police unit trainings, vehicles, and modern technology. “Europe is closing our borders!” was the conclusion of the Senegalese newspaper Le Soleil. Expulsions of migrants from the Canary Islands to Senegal are very unpopular among the population of Senegal that´s blaming their government of betrayal. African states have become ´Europe´s gendarmerie´.

Development aid against migration flows

Border controls, readmission of ´illegal´ migrants and development make up a three-unit of the integral European migration policy. In Mali 17 new border crossing points at the Mauretania and Algeria borders are financed by AENAS-funds (which aim is to technically and financially support a more effective management of migration flows in transit countries, particularly the readmission of ´illegal´ migrants from Europe). The readmission agreement with Spain in 2006 – which has been prolonged early 2010 – offered 20 million euro of development aid to Senegal. Europe is paying for the detention of migrants that are intending to go to Europe and the collective expulsions to neighbouring countries. The detention center in Nouadhibou, Mauretania, has been financed by Spanish development aid, even though it´s (poorly) run by Mauretania (on request by Spain as Mauretanian authorities admitted). From this detention center, where legal support is not available, collective expulsions to Mali and Senegal are carried out (financed by Spain as well).

Senegalese human rights activist Badara Ndiaye pretends that the efforts by the EU have caused an increase of detained migrants. “The European border has been pused back to Senegal. This increase of intimidation actions doesn´t guarantee anything for the refugees that are involved in mixed migration flows”.

More news about the campaign against Frontex and the Caravane Citoyenne Bamako-Dakar: www.noborder.org