

Report: Tunis 18.12.2011

Migrants Rights Day: Protest of relatives of the missing boatpeople

On Sunday, the 18th. of December 2011, the International Day for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees, about 150 to 200 families of so-called „disparus“ (missed boats people), together with members of many different associations held a Sit-in in front of the Palais de Congres in Tunis, to point to the fate of their missed relatives and friends. They held photographs and banners with the picture of their missed brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, and demanded clearing-up about their whereabouts. They were very angered and emotional, many of them cried, temporarily even blocking the bypassing traffic. Most of these families were residents around the region of Tunis, but some also coming from much further locations. There had been many more people willing to come, but being hindered by bad weather conditions on their way.

Some of these families even know about their relatives having arrived in Italy, some having seen them on T.V. pictures, but never heard of them again since. Together with the Tunisian Forum for the Economic and Social Rights, that initialized the manifestation, they asked the new Tunisian government to put pressure on the Italian government to get the files of the arrested boats people, including their finger prints, and to build an investigative commission on the people that disappeared. To keep emphasizing their demands together with activists of the Forum they also planned to have another Sit-in in front of the constituent assembly in the borough of Bardo next week.

There were four TV stations, including Al-Jazeera, and different radio stations and local press present to report on the event, taking also interviews with the families about their stories and demands. Activists of the African-europe-interact and the boats4people-network also took part at the manifestation carrying the banner „Freedom not Frontex“, and spreading flyers to inform about their work, that were interestedly received (the flyer can be downloaded below).

Last but not least: On the occasion of the manifestation the “Tunisian Forum for the Economic and Social Rights” has published a press release – in can be downloaded here as well.