A flotilla to stop deaths in the Mediterranean (First Appeal: 2011)

Hundreds of thousands of people have fled Libya since the crisis began in February 2011. As of June 14, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), one million refugees had left the country ; more than 500,000 heading to Tunisia, more than 300,000 to Egypt and 70,000 to Niger.

Every day, refugees arrive in Tunisia in already overpopulated camps [1]. The majority are nationals from Sub-Saharan African countries where conflict is ongoing (Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, Ivory Coast…) and it is therefore impossible to repatriate them ; as time goes on, their living conditions are becoming more and more difficult, while the risk that the country hosting them may end up being destabilised, is growing.

These refugees are caught in a vice : Gaddafi's regime is using the migration issue as a weapon by forcing thousands of people to embark on makeshift vessels ; at the same time, many Africans are accused of being mercenaries in the pay of Tripoli and fall prey to armed men in the zones now under the control of the NTC (National Transitional Council) [2]. Meanwhile, the states participating in the coalition forces don't seem to establish a single link between their military intervention and those forced into exile. The European Union still hasn't taken any initiative to host these people [3] or to save those endangered at sea. On the contrary, the EU is reinforcing border surveillance through the deployment of the Frontex agency in the Mediterranean while vessels of the coalition forces do not provide assistance to boat-people. The UNHCR estimates that more than 2,000 people are missing at sea since February.

Numerous organisations are now pressuring the European authorities so that refugees can enter the European Union, for support to be provided to the countries where refugees are forced to stay, and so that measures are taken to stop deaths in the Mediterranean. To no avail.

The lack of hospitality within European policy has reached such an appalling level that it is our duty to act and to show the possibility of a Euro-Mediterranean area based on solidarity and respect for human rights.

Following a meeting in Cecina (Italy), a coalition of Euro-Mediterranean migrants' rights organisations, decided to charter a flotilla which will undertake maritime surveillance so that assistance is finally provided to people in danger. The participatory organisations call on European bodies and governments on both sides of the Mediterranean to establish relations within this common area on the basis of exchange and reciprocity.

This flotilla will embark political figures, journalists, artists, and representatives of the organisations involved in the project.

Such an ambitious operation will not be meaningful unless it achieves large scale mobilisation.

Any organisation, trade-union, political representative, seafarer, journalist, artist or other individual interested in this initiative may join this mailing list : « Mediterranean Intervention » [4].

Notes:

[1] http://www.afrique-europe-interact.net/index.php?article_id=462&clang=2

[2] See the FIDH report "Double tragedy for Sub-Saharan Africans »

http://www.fidh.org/Retour-de-mission-a-la-frontiere-egypto-libyenne

[3] The situation in the refugee camps located in the South of Tunisia may strongly destabilise the country, see the joint report of the Gadem and the Cimade – in French – (2011) « Défis aux frontières de la Tunisie », 50 p. and Human Rights Watch's releases (http://www.hrw.org/fr/middle-eastn-africa/libya)

[4] To subscribe to the mailing list, please send an email to migreurop07@yahoo.it

Stop migrant deaths at sea. For freedom and solidarity in the Mediterranean (Second Appeal: 2012)

MIGRANT DEATHS AT SEA

Today, the Mediterranean acts as a route into Europe for migrants seeking survival and a chance of a better life. Some are rescued at sea in tragic circumstances by agencies of European states, only to meet with detention and deportation. In most cases, migrants in distress at sea are left adrift or are intercepted and "pushed back" to countries in the Southern Mediterranean.

As a result of the conflict in Libya, almost one million African, Asian and Middle Eastern migrants fled to neighbouring Tunisia, Egypt, Chad and Niger. The European Union and member states adopted a repressive approach. The EU border control agency Frontex launched an operation to intercept migrants in the Strait of Sicily. Increasing evidence demonstrates that NATO and states participating in the NATO operation in Libya failed to respond to distress calls from migrants off the Libyan coast. The war in Libya is supposedly over, but the war on migrants continues, each shipwreck adding to the more than 1500 migrants who died in the Mediterranean in 2011 (source: UNHCR).

Kaddafi and Ben Ali may have been overthrown, but so far, the transitional authorities in Libya and Tunisia have not broken with past migration policy. On the contrary, migration agreements are already being concluded with the EU and member states without transparency and emigration continues to be criminalised and migrants in transit continue to be arbitrarily detained. Military boats intercept migrants off the Tunisian and Libyan coasts with the consent of European authorities and camps such as the refugee camp in Choucha, Tunisia are now being used to detain migrants intercepted at sea. Migrants in the Choucha camp and in Italian detention centres are protesting against violations of their rights. Families of missing Tunisian migrants have organized sit-ins in Tunisia and Italy to demand information on the whereabouts of their loved ones. European and African governments continue to violate international agreements concerning unconditional rescue at sea, asylum and international protection, with almost complete impunity.

BOATS 4 PEOPLE

Boats 4 People is an international coalition of organizations from the Mediterranean, Africa and Europe. Established to end deaths at maritime borders and to defend migrants' rights at sea, we advocate freedom of movement for all.

We call upon:

- The EU to end its violent control of maritime borders – Governments of Africa to break with the past and to refuse to sign readmission agreements with European countries and the EU, as

these agreements result in violations of migrants' human rights. – All countries to stop prosecuting those who rescue migrants, in accordance with the law of the sea under which all sailors must “proceed with all possible speed to the rescue of persons in distress” (art. 98 of the United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea).

OUR ACTIONS

Together we aim to: – Build a network of organizations and activists on both shores of the Mediterranean and beyond to fight criminal State policies that violate human rights at sea; – Build a network of sailors to alert violations of migrants' human rights at sea; – Bring charges against State agents, NATO or Frontex for violations of migrants' human rights; – Organize sea missions to document, denounce and prevent violations of migrants' human rights at sea; – Mobilize people in the Mediterranean, Africa and European so that the Mediterranean becomes a place of solidarity and ceases to be a mass grave for migrants.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE?

Boats 4 People will begin activities in July 2012 with a boat rally between Italy and Tunisia. The crew will be composed of activists, parliamentarians, artists and journalists. The planned stops are:

- Cecina-Italy (1-2 July): International Antiracist Meeting – Palermo-Italy (5-7 July): Activists will stage protests against detention and in the harbour and will board the ferry to… – Tunis and Monastir-Tunisia (8-16 July): Protests, conferences and other activities will be organized in parallel to the International preparatory meeting of the World Social Forum Tunisia 2013. – Lampedusa-Italy (July 19th): Symbol of the EU's violent border policy and location of B4P final event coinciding with the launch of the Infestival film fest on migration.

We call on all activists, migrants and supporters of migrants' solidarity networks, to join us!

TAKE ACTION NOW!

DONATE!
Online below or by money transfer to IBAN FR76 1027 8060 1100 0202 6600 255 BIC : CMCIFR2A – Migreurop – 21 ter rue Voltaire – 75011 Paris

SUPPORT!
Organize an event to support B4P
with your local group/organization! For information, posters, flyers…: contact@boats4people.org

TRANSLATE!
B4P needs translators ! To join our international translation team:
contact@boats4people.org

JOIN US!
If you have a boat (or not!) and want to participate to our rally: contact@boats4people.org

This Flyer can be printed here: