

**FLOWS OF RACISM
AND EXPLOITATION.
AGAINST THE
MANAGEMENT OF
MIGRATIONS
WITHIN AND
BEYOND EUROPE.**

**TRANSNATIONAL
MIGRANTS
COORDINATION
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction.....P.4
- *Elections in Turkey - Understanding a Defeat for Future Victories*, Ozan Mirkan Balpetek - Occupied Social Space of Mpeinio (Lesvos, Greece) and Open Assembly Against Border Violence and Pushbacks, Lesvos.....P.9
- *State of freedom of movement on the Balkan Route in 2022*, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Jošt Žagar - Infokolpa.....P.14
- *Notes on migrants' struggle in France: against the Darmanin law and for a transnational organizing of struggle*, Bchira Ben Nia - Sans Papiers Movement, France.....P.18
- *Italian Patriarchal Racism and our Transnational Organization*, Women Assembly of Migrants Coordination, Italy.....P.22
- *The Greek state murders, the EU rub their hands*, Giannis - Athens' antiracist movement, Greece.....P.27
- *The exploitation of migrant labor in Spain and the campaign for the regularization of migrants*, Lamine Sarr - Sindicato popular de vendedores ambulantes de Barcelona, Spain.....P.31
- *Autonomies of Migration against governmental Border crimes. The Central Mediterranean Sea as highly contested Space*, Hagen Kopp - WatchTheMed Alarm Phone.....P.33
- *Externalisation of the EU border regime to the Balkans*, Nidzara Ahmetasevic and Milica Svabic - activists from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.....P.38
- Save the date! TSS transnational meeting in Bologna 27-29 October 2023.....P.42
- Contacts.....P.43

INTRODUCTION

600 migrants, including 100 children, are currently missing, swallowed up in the deep waters separating Libya from Greece.

The Greek Coast Guard seems to have attempted to bring the vessel into Italian waters, so that it would no longer have to take charge, avoiding intervention when the boat – overloaded with men, women, and children searching for freedom from misery, war, poverty, and violence – capsized. The deaths are many, following those in Cutro, on the Calabrian coast, and those in Maltese waters. As the article, within this journal, by Hagen Kopp from WatchTheMed Alarm Phone recalls, the number of deaths in the Mediterranean was 957 since the beginning of 2023, before the shipwreck of June 14th.

These deaths, the Libyan hell they faced, are planned and far from fortuitous aspects of the policies of the European Union, which has now avowedly made racism, deportations, pushbacks, and exploitation the basis of the only possible form of cooperation among its member states. This journal aims to offer an overview of the transformations taking place at the European and non-European levels with respect to migrants' conditions and possibilities of struggle, migration policies, and policies of reception and exploitation of migrants. But it also seeks to show the possible points of attack and connection that can unite migrants crossing the Mediterranean and Eastern borders, with those, within European borders, who are crammed into horrible reception centers and those who work at an unsustainable pace, without protections and often without documents.



ph. Stella Chirido

The agreement reached by the EU in early June on migration and asylum institutionalizes and formalizes longstanding practices and trends. Indeed, it provides for the **speeding up of border procedures** (reduced to 12 weeks) for deciding who to take in and who to send back, it gives member states the **option of not accepting relocations by giving countries of first arrival money to keep migrants**, but most importantly it shows the EU's external projection, which relies on **agreements with third countries to take back migrants who have arrived in Europe**. As the article written by Nidzara Ahmetasevic and Milica Svabic shows, along the EU's Eastern borders and in the Balkans it is possible to observe the tendency to outsource borders or to deport and extradite through bilateral agreements migrants between Balkan countries, as the article by the Infokolpa collective explains.

At the same time, **North Africa, as well as Sub-Saharan Africa, is more and more clearly becoming the fiercest watchdog of European borders**. According to the new EU agreement on migration and asylum, third countries no longer need to be the countries of origin of rejected migrants, nor do they need to have signed the Geneva Convention: it is enough for them to keep migrants on their own territory in special detention centers financed by the EU. This is why Erdogan's victory, which Ozan Mirka discusses in his article, is after all a relief for the EU, and why Tunisia's brutal racism with sub-Saharan migrants can be ignored in the attempt to achieve an agreement, all the more so because the lagers for forced labor in which migrants are held in those countries can be covered up, as the article by the Women's Assembly of the Bologna Migrant Coordination shows, with agreements on creating "sustainable" jobs and promoting renewable energy.



The European dimension of the management of migrant flows makes it clear that it is at the European and transnational level that the racist border regime must be dealt with,

and it is the urgency of this transnational level of communication, connection, and organization of struggles that this journal wants to broaden and support.

Migrant men and women are structurally a transnational force that challenges this racist regime, at the borders and within the States. Indeed, despite the deaths in the Mediterranean, used as a warning with respect to what awaits migrants trying to reach Europe, despite the militarization of borders, the restriction of the right to asylum, artificial intelligence put at the service of migrant surveillance, and violence along the borders, **migrant women and men continue, as Hagen Kopp's article points out, to arrive en masse and autonomously.**



Indeed, the far-right Italian government has proclaimed, albeit with clear propagandistic and racist intentions, a state of emergency because of the «migrant crisis». If the freedom of movement and support for the autonomous movement of migrants must be a pillar of our transnational struggle, we also know, as the Infokolpa collective points out, that **there is also a daily struggle to be fought for the «right to stay, the right to work and access to decent living conditions without the threat of illegalization and deportation».** In fact, what the exclusive focus on what is happening along Europe's internal and external borders tends to hide is that in reality the lack of labor force, the economic difficulties of European countries after the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the energy crisis, make migrant labor extremely necessary.

Thus, as shown by the Women's Assembly of Migrant Coordination, governments make «flow decrees» to bring in migrant quotas required by companies, employers, and factories, or to bring in, as described in Giannis..' article, seasonal workers through agreements with countries like Bangladesh. Therefore, while increasing investments in repatriation hubs, moving reception centers out of urban centers, leaving many migrants in the limbo of bureaucracy to obtain their residence permits, **migrants are employed in the essential but underpaid sectors: logistics, factories, work in the fields, de-skilled labor in services, cleaning, care.**

After migrants have stopped claiming that the EU gave to Ukrainian refugees in regards to special residence permits, accommodations, and services, **the normality to fight against is again for everyone - Ukrainians included - the blackmail of residence permits, exploitation, wages too low to afford housing and healthcare.** Thus, even if the European institutional landscape, where, as recounted by Ozan Mirkan and Giannis far-right parties turn racism in the banner of their governments, makes migrants' struggles more difficult, on a large scale **we continue to see different and widespread forms of resistance and mobilization.** In Greece thousands of people took to the streets in many cities protesting against the murder of 600 migrants off the Greek coast; in Italy, there have been protests against the racist measures of the Meloni government, against the reopening of the Centers of Permanence for Repatriation (CPR), while migrants are rebelling every day against the unlivable conditions of the reception centers, that are by now dorms for the logistic hub where these migrants are exploited.



In France, protests have resumed with Interior Minister Darmanin's immigration law, which foresees securitizing the country and repatriating migrants. Along the Balkans and across the Mediterranean, forms of support and advocacy for those who choose to risk their lives in search of a better one do not cease. All these protests are a sign that the actual weakness of the migrants' movement, due to decades of institutional racism and border violence, calls to be overcome.

This journal, involving collectives, anti-racist activists, and migrants from Greece, the Balkans, Italy, and Turkey as well as transnational infrastructures active on migration, **not only shows the increasingly racist evolution of the European Union and its policies but, more importantly, makes clear the need to address the connections between the different conditions, political, social and material, that migrants are facing aiming to develop a collective force between migrants and anti-racist, feminist collectives which recognize this violence and exploitation as a piece of their own struggle for freedom.**

We need to address the connections between the different conditions, political, social and material, that migrants are facing aiming to develop a collective force!

As Ozan and Women Assembly state here, migrants' conditions affect all, migrants' struggles concern all struggle for justice today. The set of articles collected here shows the **urgency of a transnational perspective of struggle** against a European Union that has now cast aside even the most formal discourse on rights, against the cynicism that considers migrants' lives as second-order lives on which violence can be exercised with impunity. Thus, this journal makes it clear that **now more than ever there is a need to break the isolation, finding the strength to overcome the difficulties that this harsh political phase imposes in the common struggle for freedom of movement, for an unconditional European resident permit, for freedom from exploitation and patriarchal violence, and for access to housing, health, and education for all migrants.**

Elections in Turkey: Understanding a Defeat for Future Victories.

Ozan Mirkan Balpetek – Occupied Social Space of Mpeinio Lesvos, Greece – and Open Assembly Against Border Violence and Pushbacks, Lesvos

Turkey went through elections on the 14th and 28th of May, which resulted in a parliamentary majority for the ruling Republic Alliance, as well as the re-election of Erdogan as the president with 52%. The elections took place where Erdogan utilized every existing state apparatus to his service, from the media to the police force, all harmonized to support his campaign. The devastating earthquake that affected more than a million people's life and a dire economic crisis alone was not enough for the loss of his reign, despite the belief of a significant part of the opposition.

The primary opposition, People's Alliance, has constructed “a positive campaign”; where the leading figures avoided using a language that would only respond to Erdogan's position but instead attempted to bolster arguments such as a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish Question, equal recognition to ethnic and religious minorities, economic stability of the middle-class, women's rights, and coexistence of different ideologies and lifestyles. **However, the campaign never touched on the equality of LGBTQI+ people. And migrants were targeted as unwanted subjects that “will be sent back to their country of origin peacefully”.** Even more, Kilicdaroglu, the leader of the main opposition to People's Republic, stated that the ecological devastation and droughts in the Eastern part of the country will only hasten if Turkey allows more migrants to settle in, pointing out the “impossibility” of fair treatment due to ecological limits.

No strong voice was heard against this racist rhetoric due to the fear of disturbing the harmony of the narrow political field of “the lesser of two evils”. Any criticism towards the opposition was brutally attacked with accusations of “favouring Erdogan secretly”: the campaign wasn't about getting a fairer government. It was about Erdogan's removal. Finally, as the first round resulted in the defeat of the opposition, things drastically shifted. The opposition decided to turn the wheel towards a harsher anti-migrant and “anti-terrorist” right-wing rhetoric in the hopes of appealing to the right-wing voters, at the expense of distancing itself from the Labor and Freedom Alliance, the third alliance where Kurdish Liberation Movement and various socialist parties were involved. Moreover, they claimed that ten million migrants (a number that no statistic points out), but mainly Syrians, would be removed from the country no matter what. **The outcome of this was the re-consolidation of power for Erdogan.**



Recently, a similar loss took place also in Hungary in 2022. Anti-Orban block decided to go for milder candidates with Catholic or centre-right affiliations and did not challenge the existing policies of the establishment head-on but rather promised a peaceful shift towards a “better-than-hell” future. The outcome was exactly the same. When asked about politicians he respects, Orban named Erdogan without hesitation, albeit being an Islamophobe himself. Orban was also the first to congratulate Erdogan after his recent victory, and neither of these elements should be considered a coincidence.

Further examples could also be given about Denmark, where social democrats decided to obtain a more hard-liner policy towards migrants than their conservative counterparts to linger in power. In Sweden, a far-right government has recently been elected that is not only anti-migrant but also stated to “abandon feminism on foreign policy”.

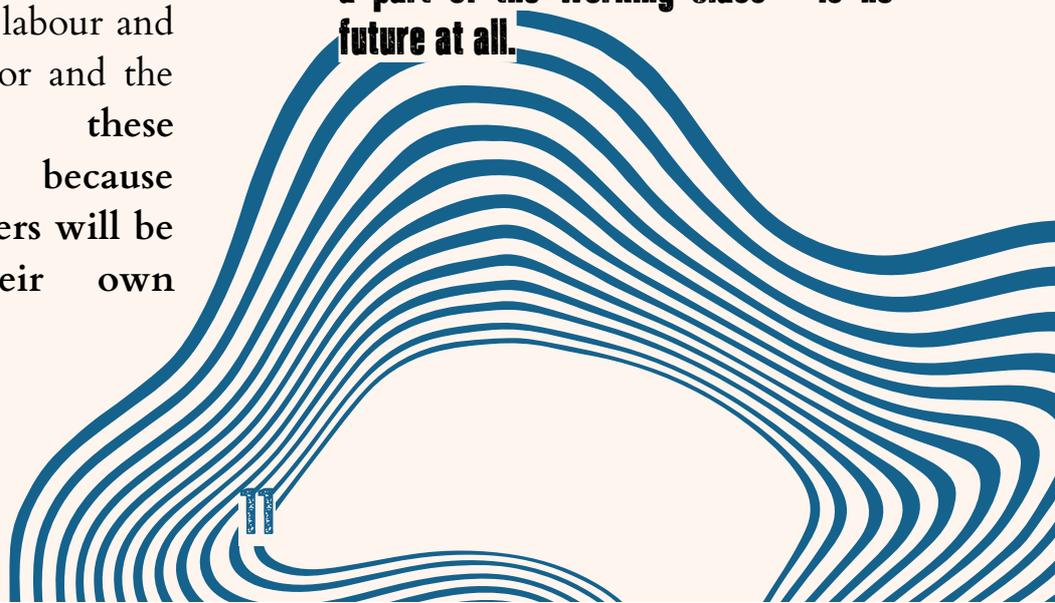
In Italy, Meloni herself accused France of continuing colonial practices in Burkina Faso and pointed to it as the root cause of migrants arriving on the shores of Italy. UK, France, Poland... The list goes on.

The electoral oppositions in these countries are not losing because they are “less racist” nor because they are “less anti-migrant”. They lose because they lack the horizon and the courage to destabilize the social base of the ruling regimes and to reach out and touch the real troubles of the labourers and the oppressed. The so-called “polarisation”, which has been instrumentalized by populist regimes, is being perceived as the separation between identities or cultures within society. However, the only existing separation that should be addressed is the separation between the labour and the capital, the oppressor and the oppressed. Thus, these “oppositions” lose because addressing these matters will be detrimental to their own existence.

What we learn from the Turkish elections is that **we need to fight racism with solidarity: an opposition that promises freedom and equality yet does not extend it to every sphere of society, has nothing to do neither with freedom nor with equality.** No salvation applies only to certain “included” parts of society.

We are not going to be free unless we demand and defend the freedom of the “other”: migrants, LGBTIQIA+ individuals, women, ethnic and religious minorities are the foundational elements of the future that we all should envision.

Any future that does not include and not accept them - not only as a part of society but also as labourers that are a part of the working class - is no future at all.



The same system that deprives people of having a life of dignity pushes migrants to be paperless, illegal, and afraid. **The same system that mercilessly exploits people while exploiting differences in race, origin, and gender, does not care about anything else than profits.** It only pursues the freedom of capital by barring the flow of people and labour. Greece's new bilateral agreements with Pakistan and Bangladesh on accepting seasonal workers from these countries is a great example of how the EU is a centrepiece of this system. The agreements foresee that workers from these countries will come to Greece temporarily and undertake labour-heavy industries such as agriculture and service, yet they will not be able to apply for asylum or will not have the chance to extend their residence in Greece in any condition. Thus, it is not a coincidence that a significant part of the people who lost their lives in the shipwreck in Pylos were also of Pakistani origin. **Labor's movement is being denied by this neo-liberal system as much as the people's movement. Therefore today, the struggle for freedom of movement is inseparable from the struggle for freedom to labor.**

Yet not everything is lost. Yes, indeed, the picture is dark. But it is not final. It never has been, especially for those of us who believe in the history of resistance. It will only be final where there will be no people; cause power is anywhere where there are people. **Good points to be taken into account from Turkey also remain.** Kurds, as the key factor of the election, have voted almost unanimously for the opposition in the presidential campaign. In a country where a 40-year-long civil war and racist rhetoric of terrorism have installed themselves concretely, even a mild statement of “peaceful resolution” from the opposition bore fruit. **The difficult task at hand now is how to extend that to the “excluded” margins, such as migrants, and to the “included” dispossessed, such as the exploited workers and the oppressed. To tell their common story, to establish platforms where both parties are welcome to speak and understand each other.**

We have a lot to learn from Iran as well. The uprising following the murder of Mahsa Amini had important characteristics that involved these mutual acknowledgements, where the Shias marched together with the Sunnis, men with women, Kurds, Belujis and Turks with Persians... Their attempt to reconnect with each other by demolishing the cultural boundaries of their identities, as well as recognizing their already existing connection through labor has a lot to tell, independent from their “success”. They have fully embodied a critical notion: the fact that their freedom is organically connected with the freedom of the “other”.

Like in the Myth of Sisyphus, the boulder yet again fell from the mountain. The will and the power to pick it up again, knowing that it will ultimately fall once more, is where lies our strength. Learning from our shortcomings collectively shouldn't be that difficult, given our shared sentiments and worries. Reiterating the strength of our transnational bounds is a good start. In the end, if any “victory” will emerge on this earth, it will emerge from the soil of defeat.

The same soil gave birth to Gezi Revolt around the same dates 10 years ago today. The famous chant of those days still resonates in the streets around the globe:

This is just the beginning. Keep up the struggle!



State of freedom of movement on the Balkan Route in 2022. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia.

Jošt Žagar – Infokolpa

Pushback practices in the context of Slovenia and Croatia are undergoing a period of transition. Schengen area, the new government and the EU plan to control migration for the Balkans.

The civil initiative Infokolpa published its first report on the involvement of the Slovenian police in the illegal practices of collective expulsion in 2019. Based on several years of active border monitoring we found that 31,680 extraditions were carried out from Slovenia to Croatia through the informal procedure established by the bilateral agreement between 2018 and 2022. The large majority of the readmitted were then immediately forcibly pushed to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The Slovenian police have used the bilateral agreement as a cover to deny the right to asylum to tens of thousands of people.



Compared to previous years, the year 2022 represents a significant change as the number of pushbacks from Slovenia greatly decreased. In 2022, 32,024 irregular border crossings were registered, and 2,169 persons (less than 10%) were returned to Croatia. This year, by the end of April 2023, 11,632 irregular border crossings had been registered and 103 persons were returned to Croatia. One of the reasons for these changes is the fact that Croatian police officers are less willing to take people for readmission. Croatian NGOs report that the Croatian Ministry of the Interior issued instructions that Croatian police officers should refuse readmission if there is any indication that the person has tried to seek asylum in Slovenia but was ignored.

Another important reason is the **change in the leadership of the Slovenian Ministry of the Interior**. In May 2022 the new minister issued **new directives, which instructed the police to individually record expressed intentions to seek asylum**. These instructions were not made public, but **the number of returns in Croatia fell drastically** at that time. It is also important to note that a **successful lawsuit was won by a Cameroonian asylum seeker who was denied asylum in Slovenia and deported to Croatia and then to BiH**. In 2021, the Supreme Court in Slovenia ruled in his favour in a case against the **Slovenian State for violation of his fundamental rights**.

Underneath all these events lies the most important reason, which is the **perseverance of migrant movements and migrants' will to strive for a better life and political freedom**. In the past years, many have succeeded in crossing the former Schengen border after 20 or even 30 tries; some have lost their limbs and fingers in the cold or have died due to drowning or exhaustion.

Since then, the route has become less deadly. In this way, the **tenacity of people on the move forced the shift in policies of nation-states on border management**. Despite these positive changes, many obstacles remain on the path of the struggle for freedom of movement.

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Croatia's entry into the Schengen area

With Croatia's entry into the Schengen area, the Croatian police forces working at the border checkpoints were transferred to units operating in the wider border areas. The use of torture and mass expulsions across the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina has decreased. Instead, the Croatian police began to deport people in large groups under the readmission agreement (up to 100 persons). The documents used in these procedures are not translated and demand payment from detainees for food and accommodation. During the deportation, people are **detained for days or weeks in state facilities**.

During the deportation procedure, people are transferred to the custody of Bosnian officials and IOM staff, who take them to the Lipa transit camp or, in the case of families and minors, to the Borići reception centre in Bihać.

Conclusion

In December 2022, high-level officials from the EU institutions, Member States and the countries of the Western Balkans met in Tirana. The result of this meeting was the Tirana Declaration, part of which is dedicated to irregular migration. In this document, **the European migration policy on the Balkan route is clearly visible**.

Additional EU funds are to be distributed to the countries to strengthen their border management forces and facilities, and the countries are expected to align their visa policies with those of the EU if they wish to maintain the visa-free regime with the EU. An important part of the declaration is the EU's demand that the Western Balkan countries improve their return systems and accept relevant readmission agreements with countries of origin to increase the number of voluntary and involuntary returns.



With the decrease in the number of pushbacks and the bureaucratization of returns, migration management practices on the Balkan route seem to be in a state of transition. It is not clear how state authorities will respond to irregular migration in the future although it seems that new practices of deportation and returns are planned with newly built detention facilities.

While border violence is currently less present in our local context, we see that other forms of state repression remain relevant. The right to cross borders is only part of the struggle for freedom of movement. We witness struggles for the right to stay, the right to work and access to decent living conditions without the threat of illegalization and deportation on a daily basis.

We respect the autonomy of migration and fully support migrants, acknowledging that their struggle is a crucial part of a common struggle for a better world, against exploitation, humiliating patriarchy and hierarchy. Connecting struggles in different fields of political activism, such as worker rights, right to housing or fight for the right to stay will offer proper common tools to resist any possible future policies in border management that would seek to introduce new forms of mass deportations and systemic violation of fundamental rights of people on the move.

Notes on migrants' struggle in France: against the Darmanin law and for a transnational organizing of struggle.

Bchira Ben Nia – Sans Papiers Movement, France



Frontex is in charge of controlling sea and land border crossings, making Europe and France a fortress. But now we are seeing the policy of externalizing borders. What we see in Tunisia is more and more the attempt to keep migrants in the country so that they do not cross the Mediterranean. This is also visible in the UK in regard to the Rwanda plan of forced deportation of undocumented migrants. Many Sub-Saharan migrants who are stuck in Tunisia and Morocco speak French, and if they can cross the Mediterranean, they will go through Italy and then try to get to France or Belgium, where they have a better chance of integrating because of the language. The externalization of borders is now the new tool for rejecting migrants.



The draft bill on asylum and immigration of the French Minister of Interior Darmanin has one part on asylum and one on regularization. First, it talks about massive regularization, but it is impossible because it is regularization through work, but without a residence permit you cannot work. You must have payrolls as proof of work. **This reinforces the categorization and hierarchization of migrants:** there are refugees and asylum seekers, and those who are rejected and become permanently sans papiers (undocumented), among whom there are those who work and are paid and **those who have nothing and have no chance of regularization.** And then there are the “Dubliners”, those who fall within the Dublin regulation system and who are forced to return to the first receiving country. **At the moment, regularization is through work, and this excludes a lot of migrants, also because many employers exploit migrants and do not give paychecks.** In addition, the government wants to create a residence permit for “under pressure jobs,” that is where there is a labor shortage, but the list is based on regional needs, and it is not clear what these jobs are.

What is clear is that there is a utilitarian view of migrants, divided between good migrants and bad migrants.

The good migrants are the asylum seekers who don't lie, the good sans papiers are those who work in the “under pressure jobs” (there is no official list, but it is likely construction, catering, etc.). Those who do not have good health, who are not suitable for sustaining hard work which requires starting early is working long hours, are not good sans papiers.

The new law reinforces the categorization and hierarchization of migrants, divided between bad and good.

In this bill, there will also be a reform of asylum applications in order to make it more and more difficult to obtain the status of asylum seekers. So far, in the courts that adjudicate asylum seekers, there have also been two figures, one representing territorial associations and the other from the High Commissioner for Refugees, to control the decision of the judge. In the new bill, it is proposed to have just a single judge in the territorial commissions, so it will be much more arbitrary. The procedures are to become much quicker. **If the migrant is rejected, they must leave France as soon as possible.** In late November, Darmanin promulgated a decree allowing prefects to expel those who have an OQTF (obligation to leave French territory). So it is a repressive law, which seeks to create more and more “rejected” migrants, actually creating sans papiers (if migrants do not leave France). **The “rejected” will no longer have the right to access health care and reception inside state facilities: that is, the government does everything it can for migrants to leave the country.**

We mobilized against this bill with many sans papiers collectives, but also with many solidarity and migrant hosting associations in France such as Amnesty, Cimade, Doctors without Borders. We started with a sit-in in front of the National Assembly on December 6, with the aim of explaining why we are against this bill on asylum and migration. In December, the UCIJ “United Against Disposable Migration” was born, and together with Solidaires, sans papiers collectives and various organizations, a national mobilization against this utilitarian vision of migrant labor, against the restrictions on asylum claims and the criminalization of foreign people was launched. Now, for July 1st we are preparing what we call the “street parliament” at Hotel de Ville, that is a theater performance in which we want to explain why we are against this law, especially in relation to what concerns labor, asylum, and language. **We want to bring direct testimonies that counter the media propaganda.** Refugees and sans papiers will participate, and we want to present our claims. But there have also been many other demonstrations and marches against this bill in the last months.

European States coordinate with each other: the logic of rejecting migrants and of externalizing borders are common practices shared by the EU. The Eurodac system is to create a system in which to collect all the fingerprints of asylum seekers in Europe. So, if governments organize among themselves to prevent migrants from crossing borders, why not organize ourselves – and our organizations, collectives, and associations – at the European level? In the end, we all face the same European policies, the same racism, and the same lack of respect for the Geneva Convention that is supposed to protect the human rights of refugees. Migrants, whether they are in Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, England, and elsewhere face the same system of exploitation at work: they are just cheap labor. So, we must organize at a larger scale because governments are organizing, and coordinating to wage a war on migrants according to the same logic of structural racism. We have no choice: we have to organize. If each person remains isolated, they cannot understand that their problems are also those of so many others. We must figure out how to organize ourselves. Far-right ideas are spreading throughout Europe with racist positions.

We must organize ourselves to cope with this system that is the same in different European countries.



Italian Patriarchal Racism and our Transnational Organization

Women Assembly of Migrants Coordination, Italy

Since September 2022, Italy is led by the most conservative government after the end of the Second World War. While already during the election campaign prime minister Giorgia Meloni promised a “naval blockade” that would hinder rescues in the Mediterranean Sea, since her election racist and patriarchal measures have followed one another. **Seizing the opportunity to limit migrants’ arrivals in Italy and complying with Von der Leyen’s instructions, Meloni immediately rushed to make agreements with North African countries, but nothing ensures her success as much is at stake. In fact, the other side of EU agreements on gas with countries like Algeria or on funding for the green transition in countries like Tunisia and Morocco is an increase in controls over migrants’ departures and in detention centers in these countries, together with the call for austerity in economic policies. After all, Italy’s tendency to outsource borders is hardly isolated, and it is no coincidence that Ursula Von der Leyen was quick to congratulate Erdogan on his recent re-election, turning a blind eye to his violent authoritarianism in exchange of his promise, paid in billions of euros, to keep migrants out of Europe.**

The Italian funding of countries like Libya and Tunisia, that systematically exercise violence against migrants, goes hand in hand with the revision of national migration policies. After the tragedy in Cutro (Calabria), where 94 migrants – including children – died a hundred meters from the coast, the government rushed to approve a decree tightening the crime of aiding and abetting illegal immigration and damaging not only NGOs but also the family networks that support migrants’ movement.

Following the directives of the European Union, which decided at its last summit to allocate new funding to the pushback of migrants, the «Cutro Decree» prolongs detention in the Centers of Permanence for Repatriation (CPR), in a propagandistic attempt to increase migrants' return to their countries of origin. As it was said at the conclusion of the European summit that sealed the basis of the new pact on migration and asylum, "Italy will not be the migrant collection center on behalf of Europe". The decree severely limits special protection for both those who are arriving and those who are already in Italy. As the Minister of the Interior affirmed: special protection should be restricted because it is "an expedient to enter our country". Indeed, the clear message is that the only way to enter and stay in Italy is to agree to work under any conditions, where needed and for as long as needed by the State or enterprises.



ph. Stella Chirido

Although some ministers cry a "European migrant crisis" and denounce an alleged "ethnic substitution" in relation to the low birth rate of Italian women, migrants remain essential in work sectors characterized by conditions of poverty, informality and invisibility, such as agriculture, logistics, domestic and care work because they can be easily blackmailed. Indeed, while the government embellishes its policies with unabashedly racist rhetoric assuring that "Italians will always come first", it is also continuing to adopt a quota system for migrant labor while also reopening or enlarging migrants' detention centers.

In Italy, just like in many other countries, border violence and exploitation in the workplace still constitute the main institutional response to migrants' quest for freedom. After the attacks based on strict familistic criteria against "the citizens' income" (reddito di cittadinanza) – introduced in 2018 to support "working poors", unemployed and low-income people – the flows decree approved by Meloni's government establishes that non-seasonal workers are allowed to enter Italy and be hired by Italian employers only after a check aimed at ensuring that there is no Italian recipient of the citizens' income who is willing to take up that job. This will not apply, however, to caregivers, who have been excluded from this decree, and seasonal workers, who can continue to be exploited without needing documents in the fields, on the beaches, in hotels and in similar places.



ph. Stella Chirido

These measures, then, severely exacerbate the regime of exploitation legalized through the Bossi-Fini law (passed in 2002), which bounds the residence permit to a labor contract, reducing migrants' bargaining power and chances to move in search of better living and working conditions. **Racist policies go together with patriarchal ones, as the government provides specific treatment to migrant caregivers, revealing its conception of the social role of women, especially after their mass arrivals since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.**

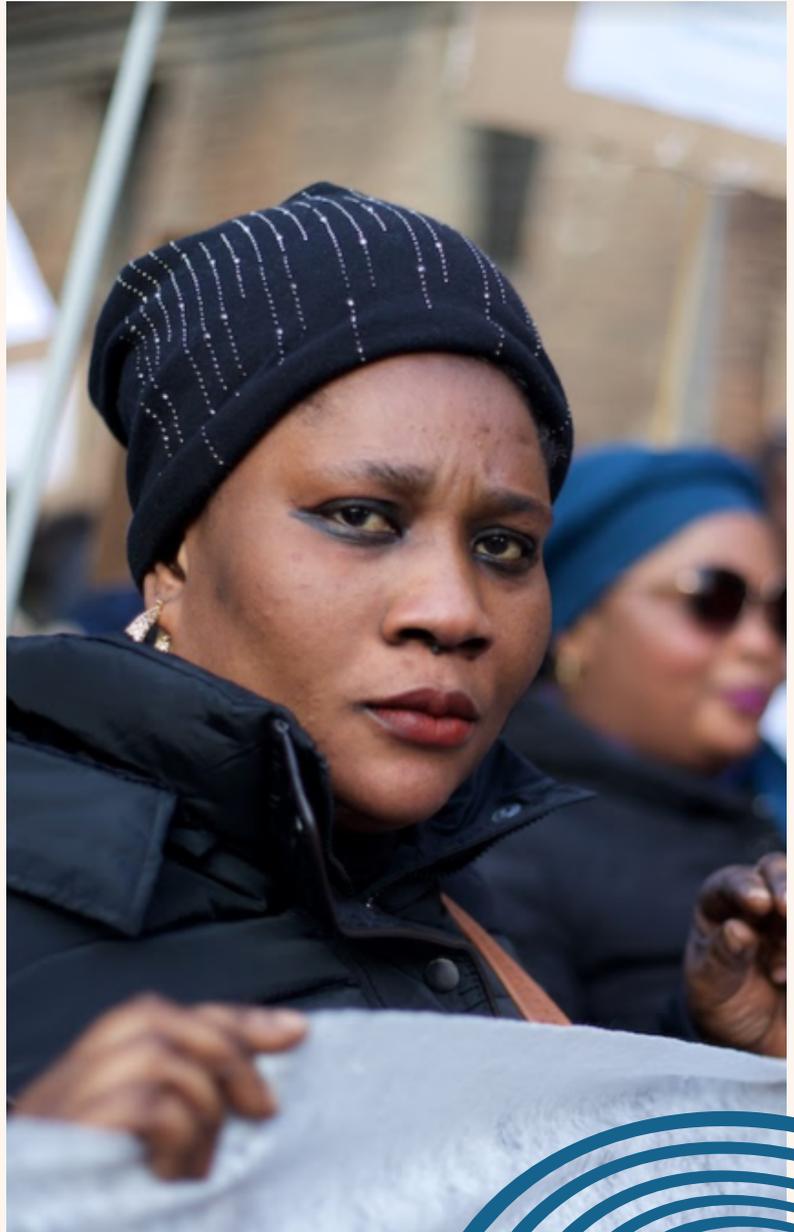
Migrants, however, have not remained silent in the face of the government's brutal racism. In April, several hundreds of migrants took to the streets to protest the alternative between death at sea and exploitation in the workplace, to reject the fate of violence and poverty. In Bologna, many migrants are organizing to denounce the unbearable living conditions of the crammed reception center in which they are supposed to stay. Tents have been set up for many of them, in which they were forced to stay even during the flood that devastated Emilia-Romagna last May. Several assemblies are also trying to connect the different local and regional struggles at the national level while recognizing the importance of transnational coordination.

Migrants, however, have not remained silent, they took to the streets to protest the alternative between death at sea and exploitation in the workplace, to reject the fate of violence and poverty.

As Women Assembly of Migrants Coordination, we are organizing meetings, debates and public events with women, migrants, workers and students from African and Asian countries, from Italy, Iran, Kurdistan, and Turkey to refuse and fight against the divisions that are imposed on us. Conservative and right-wing governments are gaining ground all over Europe and beyond, and racism is the shared flag among governments in Spain as in Turkey, in Greece as in Poland and Hungary. Against the EU's attempt to increase cooperation on migrants' pushbacks, deportations, repatriations and control, a transnational response is needed. In front of the EU rules that do without the Geneva Convention and allow the Member States to decide directly at the borders who has the right to enter and who can be deported, no matter how unsafe the country of origin is, we cannot be silent.

While migrants continue fighting from Athens to the Balkans, from France to England, our transnational political initiative is urgent. While restrictions on the right to asylum, bureaucratic inefficiency in issuing documents, exploitation of undeclared labor, degrading living conditions in reception centers, and violence along the borders are widespread problems on a European and extra-European scale, it is on this scale that we need to organize to address them.

Therefore, now more than ever, we can regain power only by connecting the different struggles for freedom of movement and documents for all, freedom from exploitation and violence, access to healthcare, housing, and better living conditions at a transnational level.



We can regain power only by connecting the different struggles for freedom at a transnational level.

The Greek State murders, the EU rub their hands

Giannis - Athens' antiracist movement, Greece

The greek state has proven its racist establishment over the last years and has sometimes even been used as a model of “successful” anti-migration policies from other European States. Sometimes following the EU agenda, and sometimes creating its own racist policies that other countries, or even the EU, have later supported or embraced as well.

At its borders with Turkey, the main policy of the Greek State is pushback, which involves denial of asylum, abuse, humiliation, robbery of personal belongings, torture and even exposure to death. Although supposedly illegal, pushbacks are being more and more legitimized by the discourses of members of the government, who are using ‘softer’ words for those acts. In reality, pushbacks not only directly lead to State violence, but they also lead to more State crimes such as the one that happened in the sea of Pylos on the 14th of June 2023, when more than 600 migrants lost their lives.

Afraid of getting pushed back from the Greek State, many migrants try to reach Europe following even more dangerous routes such as the one that connects directly Turkey to Italy or the one followed by the boat that got capsized off the coasts of Pylos. Also, the murderous action (towing the boat with a rope towards the rescue sea area of Italy or Malta) of the Greek Coast Guard on the shipwreck of Pylos, which caused the capsizing according to the survivors, was not an accident, but follows a sequence of such actions of the Greek State that undermines migrants’ lives, sometimes causing such results.

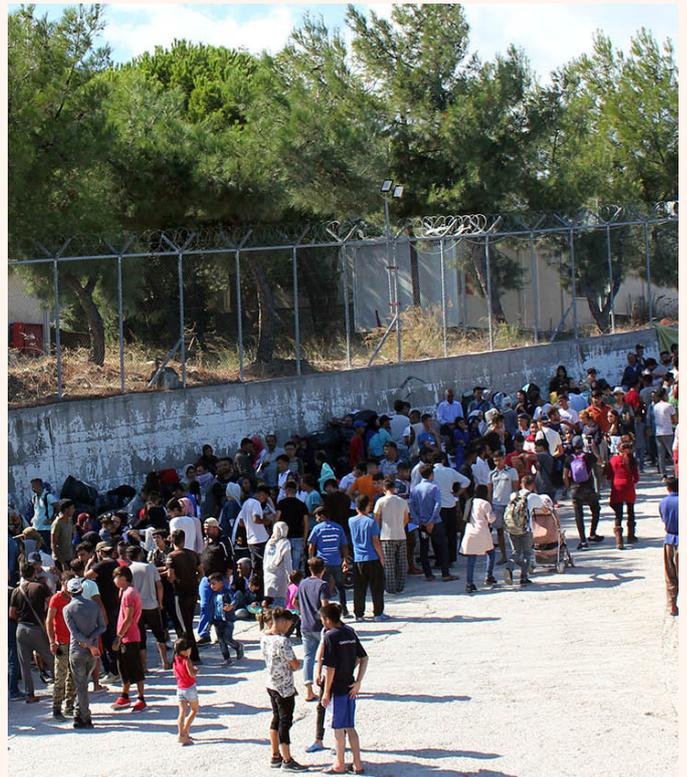
For anyone that enters Greece, the camp system has become even harsher than before. **More and more camps are completely closed with fences all around them, entrance systems based on fingerprints, or even cameras used for continuous monitoring of migrants. Most the asylum applications get rejected.** Even vulnerable people or those that have fled the worst war conditions can get rejected. At the same time, for asylum seekers of several countries of origin, the asylum interviews have turned into move-back-to-Turkey interviews which are supposed to judge whether it is 'safe' for the person to be sent back to Turkey. Deportations happen much more often than during the Covid-19 time. However, as the system which should send migrants back to Turkey does not work in practice, many migrants are left in unstable conditions and without papers. In the last year, this has caused an increase in detentions, since the police have been extremely violent in checking people on the streets and then moving those without papers to detention centers.

At the same time, the only refugee camp that existed in the city of Athens, Eleonas, has been closed (despite the long-lasting struggle of its residents) with migrants being forced to move out of Athens. Simultaneously, the ending of the Estia housing program for asylum seekers has also left hundreds of migrants homeless.

Finally, the Greek State's agreements with countries such as Pakistan or Bangladesh to accept seasonal workers only for certain periods without them having any legal rights to ask for papers and stay more is an indicative example of the State and capital's plans for the exploitation of the migrant labor force. All this has taken place in the background of a long election period in which migration was one of the main topics. The racist government of New Democracy (ND) declared the "protection of the borders" against migrants as one of the main reasons why they should be re-elected, while Syriza and other parties did not differentiate themselves from the core of those policies and racist discourses. In the end, ND seems to settle down for at least another term.

With the decrease in the number of pushbacks and the bureaucratization of returns, migration management practices on the Balkan route seem to be in a state of transition. It is not clear how state authorities will respond to irregular migration in the future although it seems that new practices of deportation and returns are planned with newly built detention facilities.

However, this does not mean that migrant, anti-racist collectives stay silent or are weak. Different forms of migrants' struggles have been taking place in the last years, in the camps and in the cities, while there is more and more cohesion between migrant and anti-racist collectives with others such as feminists, trade unions and local ones. As an example, the role of migrants in the strikes of delivery drivers and in the feminist of the 8th of March has been crucial in the last couple of years. Also, after the recent shipwreck in Pylos, which was the deadliest sea incident in the recent history of the country, many demonstrations and actions have taken place across the country.



Protests in city-centers and in small towns, banners being put out in various places, and different actions taking place against that State crime. In Athens, besides a big and dynamic demonstration with thousands of people, that was eventually hit by the police, we also had a demonstration at the Hellenic Coast Guard & Frontex offices, as well as a protest out of the camp (Malakasa), where the survivors of the shipwreck have been transferred.

In Thessaloniki, there have been two big demonstrations and a huge banner has been hung at the port of Thessaloniki, facing two cruise ships that were going around «Europe's biggest migrants' cemetery», as the banner said.

It is evident that the situation is very similar between different countries, or at least that the State's "attack" against migrants and their movements is not something happening in one country independently from what happens in others. It is more than clear that in such conditions, we need to act beyond the level of the country in which each one of us lives.

We should build our common struggles on the freedom of movement for everyone. This right is not only violently refused at the European borders and beyond them, but it is also often proved non-existent inside Europe too: when migrants are violently blocked from entering from one country to another (i.e., in the Balkans) or when "Dublin" flights take place deporting people back to their 'reception country'. Every person should have the right to move freely and according to their needs and will.

Another part we need to focus on is the struggle for migrants' working rights to be both decent and equal to the ones of the locals. Many countries of the Global North only accept migrants in order to fulfil their working needs.

We need to bring forward common struggles on a transnational level that fight against this logic and make access to rights universal.

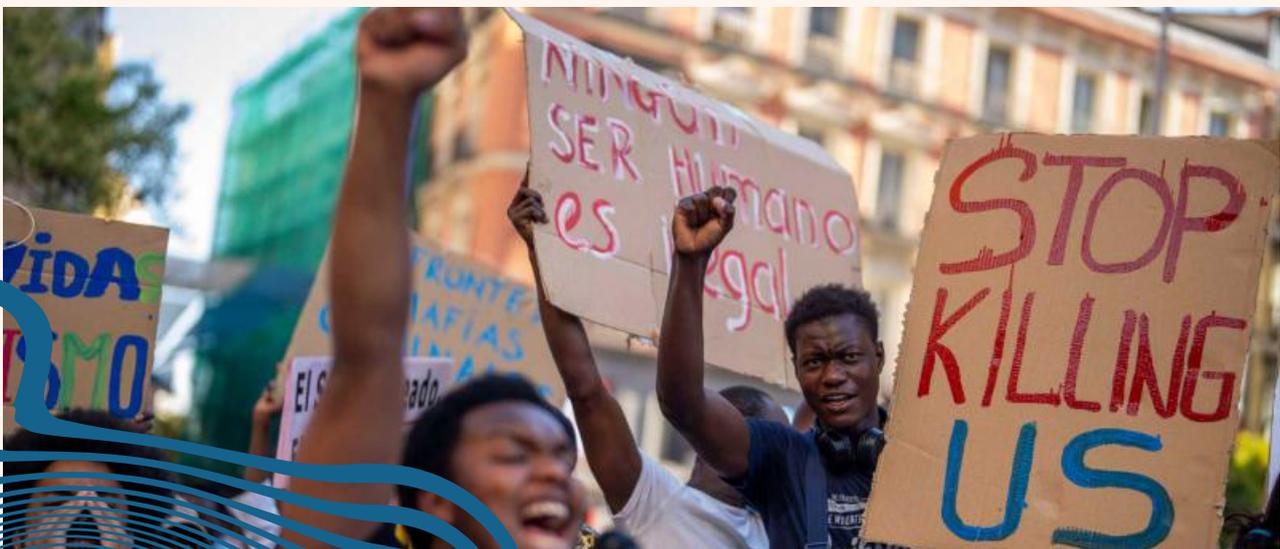


The exploitation of migrant labor in Spain and the campaign for the regularization of migrants.

Lamine Sarr - Sindicato popular de vendedores ambulantes de Barcelona

The European immigration pacts are always racist, the problem is that now they are getting tougher and tougher every day. Spain and Morocco are profiting from this border regime by trading the lives of migrants. That is, Spain is sending back to Morocco many newly arrived migrants, while the EU has paid Morocco 500 million euros to control illegal immigration.

Sanchez is applying measures in line with the EU. We, as social and migrant movements, are demanding an extraordinary and mass regularization for 500,000 migrants who are in Spain and who need documents to work. But the government, in order not to accept this form of regularization, has changed the regulation of the Ley de Extranjeria, trying to meet our requests a bit. But it is insufficient for us. Currently, the most legal and safe way to get documents is through family reunification, but in case you cannot use that way and you arrive here in Spain without documents, the law condemns you to three years of irregularity with all the dangers and exploitation that this entails.



So, we organized two initiatives, one was the “Regularizacion Ya” campaign, promoted during the pandemic with which we presented a “Proposición no de Ley” (PNL) that was voted in Congress and then rejected by the right-wing parties. Then, after one year, with more than 900 migrant and solidarity collectives we collected 700,000 signatures to propose an IPL (Popular Legislative Initiative) on the regularization of “irregular” migrants. The campaign was called “Essentials,” referring to the essential nature of migrants’ work but also to the essential nature of health, justice, and education that is denied to them. Now the initiative is to be discussed in Congress, but because elections are to be held, the bill cannot be debated yet. Now we are waiting to see who wins in the elections to go back and negotiate this mass regularization. With the decrease in the number of pushbacks and the bureaucratization of returns, migration management practices on the Balkan route seem to be in a state of transition.

It is not clear how state authorities will respond to irregular migration in the future although it seems that new practices of deportation and returns are planned with newly built detention facilities.

We believe that we need to unite to fight against these racist laws that are first voted on in Brussels, meaning at the European level. We need to unite and exchange forces, experiences, and strategies in order to be able to stop these racist measures that right-wing deputies continue to vote for everywhere. At the transnational level, the first thing we can do is to organize on the issue of regularization. This initiative we have advanced can be replicated in other countries, although it requires alliances with left-wing parties that can support the proposal and oppose these criminal practices.

In general, if social movements want to gain more strength they must try to organize internationally to curb the advance of the far right since the left-wing parties are afraid to really confront them. So it is us as social movements who can put brakes if we organize internationally.

Autonomies of Migration against governmental Border crimes. The Central Mediterranean Sea as highly contested Space.

Hagen Kopp, WatchTheMed Alarm Phone

Presumably, more than 600 men, women and children who had fled eastern Libya drowned near the Greek island of Pylos on the 14th of June 2023, in one of the biggest shipwrecks in recent years.

The Greek Coast Guard, for a long time notorious for their brutal push-back practices and explicitly praised by European Commission president von der Leyen as the “Shield of Europe”, ignored the distressing case and perhaps even contributed to the capsizing of the boat. A few weeks earlier, on the 23rd of May 2023, 500 people who had already made it to the Maltese search and rescue zone on a boat from Tobruk were dragged back to Benghazi by Libyan militias.

Left-to-die and illegal pushbacks are happening every day and are deliberate elements of a racist EU policy of deterrence, as perpetuated in the so-called Common European Asylum System (CEAS) reform with new agreements that took place at the beginning of June.



While the handling of Ukrainian refugees last year demonstrates that another approach towards free movement and free choice is always possible, the racist policy of externalizing and brutalizing the border regime blatantly continues on the Southern border. Between January 1st and May 14th 2023, according to IOM Libya, 959 people officially died at sea in the Central Mediterranean – 613 bodies and 318 missing. The undocumented figures of drowned people are certainly much higher, and the area remains one of the deadliest borders in the world.

At the same time, nearly 50.000 people have arrived on the Italian shores. In recent weeks the boats mainly arrived from Sfax, Tunisia, to Lampedusa or from Tobruk, Libya, to Sicily. Compared to the last 15 years, it's a new record in numbers if we consider that possibilities of departure were scarce in these first five months of the year because of weather conditions. Only a small part of the boats has been rescued by NGOs or by Italian coastguards in the Italian SAR zone, while the vast majority of people has crossed the sea autonomously.



Autonomous arrivals

In the early morning of 31st of May 2023, Alarm Phone had a phone contact with a boat of 400 people. After a journey of several days from eastern Libya, it was only 20 nautical miles away from Syracuse, in Sicily. Since the day before the boat had been in distress at sea and provided GPS coordinates to Alarm Phone, which were confirmed by the airplane of Sea Watch and afterwards passed on to the responsible authorities in Malta and Italy. **But all these SOS calls had been ignored, as non-assistance has long been the norm in the central Mediterranean Sea.** The boat finally was rescued a few nautical miles from the Italian shore by Italian coastguards. This is only one example of autonomous arrivals, which have drastically increased already in 2022 and again during the last months. They show the tenacity of migrants and their willingness to autonomously overcome Europe's deadly borders.

Desperate Attempts of Externalization

The violent externalization of the management of the EU borders remains the leading approach of the Italian and the Maltese governments, backed up by other member states and the EU institutions. General Haftar, the most powerful person in eastern Libya, was invited by Prime Minister Meloni in Rome on the 4th of May, while the Minister of Domestic Affairs Piantedosi visited President Saïed in Tunis on the 15th of May. On the 11th of June Meloni and von der Leyen went to Tunisia, a week after the visit of the German Minister of Interior Faeser. **A frenetic diplomatic and police activity is underway to strengthen and extend the externalization of border control to eastern Libya and Tunisia.** The same was done in 2017 with the militias connected to the Tripoli government. Money and material were delivered, logistical support and training were given, boats spotted – mainly by Frontex airplanes and drones –, all to prevent departures and to establish a more effective push- and pull-back regime in the central Mediterranean.

Thousands of migrants, who tried to escape from Libya, were intercepted and sent back into torture camps and lager for forced labor. At the same time, the Italian government uses various kinds of administrative repression and criminalization against the ships of NGOs, starting with the tactic of “distant ports” and temporary seizures of boats.

Civil Maritime Rescue Coordination Center civil MRCC

“This is not a future idea or a long-term vision. No, it is already a daily practice!” With this introductory sentence, in summer 2022, a first issue of “Echoes from the Central Med” was spread, and the two-monthly publication includes a diary of civil rescue operations. After the end of Mare Nostrum, the Maltese and Italian MRCCs and Coastguards became increasingly dysfunctional and unavailable for people in distress departing from Libya or Tunisia. Migrants regularly experience non-assistance or even pushbacks as direct consequences of Europe’s racist migration policies.

Civil fleet actors had to try and fill the rescue gap left by authorities in the international areas of Libyan and Maltese search and rescue zones. Since 2019, Alarm Phone – contacted directly by more and more people at sea – has found itself increasingly in the role of a communication center for rescue coordination. In 2020, individual members of various sea rescue organizations intensified their efforts to build a coordination and documentation platform for people in distress. They eventually named it “civil MRCC”, which functions as a catalyst for improved communication between the various actors involved in civil sea rescue. In the meanwhile, the collaboration between Alarm Phone, the assets in the air – operated by Sea Watch and Pilote Volontaire – and the civil fleet of NGOs at sea has been routinised. Since the summer of 2022, the civil SAR community has been organizing their own rescues nearly every day and night. This occurs independently from the official MRCCs or even in a sort of ‘race’ against them and Frontex, who try to organize interceptions and pullbacks by the so-called Libyan coastguard.

Towards a hot Summer of Migration?

The mentioned publication “Echoes” documents this cooperation between civil actors. Clearly, this collective work makes a significant difference with thousands of people rescued, partly in last-minute rescues before drowning. The daily work in the distress areas also constitutes a form of counter-monitoring, highlighting severe human rights violations carried out by the EU and its Libyan and Tunisian allies, and drawing public attention to them. Twitter became a tool of public outrage, mobilizing civil actors such as journalists, parliamentarians and the Church, thus pressuring responsible authorities. **Despite and against the post-fascist Meloni government, which is fully backed up by EU policies, by money and Frontex operations, migrants exercise their right to move against all risks, obstacles and state-led border crimes.** Italian Coastguards are forced to coordinate rescues in international waters, while the civil fleet operates with even more rescue ships than last year.

The civil MRCC builds an active pole of solidarity for migrants in a heavily contested space. **We have to expect a “hot” summer in the central med and the future is still unwritten.**

WatchTheMed Alarm Phone*

In October 2014 this project started as a hotline for people in distress at sea. Since then, the shift teams are available 24/7 and have assisted about 6.000 boats in distress along the different maritime routes to Europe – in the Mediterranean Sea, in the Atlantic towards the Canary Islands, and since 2022 also across the Channel, from France to the UK. The transnational network is composed of around 300 members, coming from many cities and realities in the North and the South of the Mediterranean Sea. Its perspective follows the idea to build and extend infrastructures for freedom of movement.

<https://alarmphone.org/en/>

<https://civilmrcc.eu/echoes-from-the-central-mediterranean/>



Externalisation of the EU border regime to the Balkans.

Nidzara Ahmetasevic and Milica Svabic, activists from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina



The EU continues to put pressure on the countries in the Balkans to align their visa policies with the one of the European Union. This became a precondition for a possible future membership, which is in any case far away.

However, the countries have started to look into this possibility, which is making it harder for nationals of some countries to arrive in the region. For example, over the past year, Serbia imposed visa requirements for citizens of Cuba, India and Tunisia, although the previous visa-free regime with these countries had existed for decades. In April 2023, when Montenegro announced the introduction of a visa-free regime with several countries from the Middle East and South Africa, it immediately caused a backlash from the EU.



In addition, the EU pushes the countries in the region to establish and formalize bilateral cooperation and agreements with third countries in order to be able to deport migrants. Another approach is using readmission agreements. The best example is Croatia, which through the readmission agreements sent back to Bosnia over 800 people in the last years. Some of them were previously returned to Croatia from other EU countries. Bosnia is now supposed to find a way to deport these people to their countries of origin, according to the announcements from the local authorities. However, most of the migrants who have arrived in Bosnia this way, leave Bosnia soon and they go back to the EU. However, it will be hard for them to obtain status due to the expulsion notes they received before being sent to BiH. In addition, according to German media, some Russian nationals were deported to Serbia, which still has connections with Moscow.

Something similar is happening in Serbia, where Romania and Hungary are also using the readmission agreement to return third-country nationals back to Serbia, without allowing them to apply for asylum. Even people who were returned from other EU countries to Romania, as a result of the Dublin regulation, were then subsequently returned to Serbia because of this readmission agreement. Instead of deciding on their asylum claim, Romanian authorities deported people directly to Serbia. On the other side, Serbian authorities also denied them access to asylum by issuing them a decision of return (expulsion order) ordering them to leave Serbian territory.

This leaves people on the move with no other choice but to turn back to smuggling networks and try to reach the EU again.



Over the past year, Serbian authorities also changed their policy when it comes to administrative detention of asylum seekers, which is now being used much more frequently compared to the past. Two new detention centers have been built, which has significantly increased the capacity for detention, as previously only one detention center was operating. People are being detained for the purpose of deportation (back to their home countries or back to Bulgaria/North Macedonia depending on the readmission agreement), but also a vast majority of them are being detained for the maximum legal period of 180 days just to be released afterwards.

Due to the extremely difficult situation in the region, and its dependency on the EU, there is little to no possibility of organizing and reacting. There is, however, an attempt to raise awareness about the deportations that the EU and its Member States are carrying out through the Balkans, with the aim to send migrants back to their countries of origin.

We need to show and discuss the ongoing transformations at the transnational scale and their relationship with migration policies and imagine together possible points of attack.

TMC JUNE 2023 JOURNAL



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More info coming soon,
check TSS' website, ig and fb



**The Transnational Migrants
Coordination involves migrants,
refugees, asylum seekers,
collectives and groups from France,
Italy, Spain, Germany, Slovenia,
Macedonia, Greece, Turkey, Morocco
and Lebanon.**

**The time has come to take
back migrants' lives!**



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