

Let us Build a Global Pact of Solidarity for the Rights of Migrant and Refugee Peoples

The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, recently presented by the European Commission (EC) in Brussels (September 23), turns human migratory movements into crimes and migrants and refugees into potential criminals who must be identified, and tracked in case of absconding, detained and returned to origin countries, regardless of the circumstances by which they reached EU borders.

Fortress Europe of Borders and Sites without Rights

The Pact was compared by the EC Vice-President Schinas to a “house with three floors”, including:

- 1) The external dimension, focused around strengthened and specific partnerships with countries of origin and transit, designed to keep people in those countries and force the country under “carrot-and-stick” schemes, to readmit those able to reach Europe;
- 2) The management and militarisation of the EU external borders, with a reinforced FRONTEX and quicker “selection” procedures and return mechanisms to prevent people to set foot in Europe and
- 3) A so-called “solidarity” mechanism, which totally distorts the concept, and involves a division of responsibilities between states regarding the implementation of measures for the identification and control of migrants and refugees. These measures include restriction of human rights, repression at borders and prevention of rescue at sea from a humanitarian point of view - but without in any way recognizing the fundamental rights of migrant and refugee peoples and their communities. For them there are no rights and not even solidarity.

The Pact includes more references to the “no right” to enter or stay than to “human rights”, and uses repeatedly the idea of a smooth and seamless procedure leading to return and reinforcing the strategy of a "Fortress Europe" that not only does not improve the current failed situation, but is launched as a warning to prevent and discourage migrants and refugee peoples.

The Europe lived by Migrant & Refugees Peoples and citizens in solidarity

Europe, like other regions of the world is in the life-threatening grip of COVID-19. However, the multiple and inter-related crises – economic, social, environmental and political that the world is living through were evolving a long time before COVID. The devastating extractivism and looting of resources by transnational corporations are enabled by a neo-colonial system of trade and investment integral to EU and European government policies. This extractivism and forest destruction has accelerated the conditions which have given us COVID. These corporate operations have caused destruction of land and livelihoods and led to resource wars resulting in forced displacement of millions of people within and across continents – seen in those migratory journeys. However, these forcibly displaced people are seen by the EU PACT only as criminals or potential criminals.

For us who live in Europe, we are witnessing the worst of times - the callous intensification and rolling out of a necropolitics against migrant and refugee peoples in the name of Europe’s security. The MORIA Camp on Lesbos island was still smouldering from its devastating fire when the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum was published.

We are ourselves part of the migrant and refugee peoples, as well as engaged solidarity organisations who refuse this EU Pact and the politics of racist exclusion which it represents. We are participants in another Europe – a Europe of “We the peoples” – a democratic, inclusive Europe that we strive to create – which cherishes all her peoples equally.

We have therefore been engaged in a process with the Permanent Peoples Tribunal (PPT) where more than 500 movements, networks and organisations have presented evidence on the widespread, sustained and continuing violations of human rights of migrant and refugee peoples – their criminalisation, and the criminalisation of European citizens’ solidarity in claiming a human rights based treatment as human beings.

The PPT, after Hearings (2017-ongoing) in Barcelona, Palermo, Paris, London and Brussels passed a sober judgement demanding the European Commission and the Member States of the European Union to take responsibility for the *“total denial of the fundamental rights of people and migrants and refugees, that are veritable crimes against humanity ...and according to commonly agreed criminal law definitions they must be recognised as “system crimes”*.

As migrants and refugee organisations, and European citizens’ solidarity and human rights organisations, and transnational movements - we place the forced displacement of migrant and refugee peoples within the context of the failed corporate extractivist and industrial agricultural economic model in the global south; climate change and the wars where European governments have participated in the Middle East and North Africa.

Until now, European leaders have pursued a policy of externalisation of borders, and have invested billions (including development funds) in building and arming a militarised complex of walls, fortresses, army, navy and air forces to securitise its frontiers. This also includes a chain of hotspots and Camps (such as MORIA) where people are meant to survive till they die. Combined with a policy of ‘push-backs’ and aggressive “prohibition of sea-rescue”, these combined policies are indeed a systematic denial of the human rights of migrant and refugee peoples having resulted in at least, an estimated 30, 000 deaths and disappearances at sea and in the desert and land journeys.

As some of us now gather in Berlin during October 23-25 and many join in online platforms participating in the PPT Hearing, we reiterate the moral and political bankruptcy of the EU Pact, in abandoning human rights. The PPT Berlin is reviewing the Right to Health and Access to Health on the part of migrant and refugees – those who are part of the ‘essential workers’ in the many dimensions of C-19 “essential work” - agriculture, construction, care, health service, and domestic work. But these workers are not in the view of the EU Pact.

The Europe and the Future we want – Europe of Equality and Solidarity

We have seen Europe’s migration policy of exclusion and death being constructed year after year. We have also seen right-wing populist and racist ideas becoming more and more socially acceptable all over Europe. We constantly hear about the deadly consequences of these policies and of appalling human rights violations.

Now, in the face of the continued closure of European borders, externalisation of migration policies, the restrictions on freedom of movement that cause systematic violations of the human rights of people throughout their migratory journeys - on the roads, in the deserts, on the seas and also within Europe - and in response to the criminalisation of citizens in solidarity, we,

migrant and refugee peoples, social movements and associations of civil society organisations from many parts of Europe say *Enough is Enough!*

We no longer accept these Pacts that dehumanise populations and systematically exclude migrants and refugees – while at the same time relying and benefitting from their their work without rights. Thus, a generalised and comprehensive regularisation of all migrant and refugee peoples in the EU and all European countries is essential and urgent so that they can finally exercise their labour, social and health rights, for their own benefit and that of society as a whole.

We will not tolerate that fellow human beings - asylum seekers and migrant peoples - are hunted, locked up in detention centres and in refugee camps deprived of all rights, subjected to racist brutality, and reduced to non-persons. We demand the same European leaders who delivered this Pact, to implement the immediate release of all migrants from those political prisons and the evacuation and closure of all camps, as well as the urgent transfer to the European cities and towns that have declared themselves ready to receive them.

An alternative migration and asylum policy is possible – but it requires moral courage and a people based genuinely democratic politics. It must also be matched with a new economics and vision that places the wellbeing of people and the planet before profit.

Towards a Global Pact of Solidarity for the Rights of Migrant and Refugee Peoples

We, the affected communities of migrant and refugee peoples, together with the movements, networks and organisations involved in the process of the Permanent Peoples Tribunal (PPT) on the violations with Impunity of the Human Rights of migrant and refugees, propose a Global Pact of Solidarity for the Rights of Migrant and Refugee peoples. We reach out globally, to all those who believe that to Migrate or Seek Asylum is not a Crime – It is a Human Right. Let us build together, this Global Pact of Solidarity.

This People's Global Pact of Solidarity proposes to:

- restore the primacy of the human rights of individuals and peoples, over the benefits and interests of States, oligarchies and transnationals and guaranteeing multilateralism and democracy in the United Nations.
- promote self-determination, democracy and food sovereignty of the peoples, making possible the construction of sustainable, supportive and fair local economies that guarantee the populations their right to live in dignity in their territories without being forced into any kind of displacement.
- guarantee the inalienable right to free movement of all people, promoting regional and international cooperation to establish public policies that ensure it and protect those who have chosen to migrate, from any violation of their rights in any part of the world, especially women, children and refugees for political, economic, climatic and social reasons.

The respect of human rights and the assumption of responsibility by States can prevent the criminalisation, repression or imprisonment of migrant and refugee peoples, both during their migratory journey and in their countries of destination and stay, by also guaranteeing the documentation and regularisation of all persons, as well as the ratification and strict compliance with all international regulations that protect refugees, migrants and workers and all members of their families. Cooperation and solidarity between States could allow for economic policies that guarantee the coverage of basic needs of the entire population, and the fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

This new Global Pact of Solidarity that we promote requires for its implementation the unitary and international effort of movements, organizations, collectives and social forces, and will be built from below, from our families, territories, communities and alliances. Therefore, we call on all people and organizations that confront the Global Pact for the Control of Migration of the States, to support and join this Alternative Pact of Solidarity and unity whose central axis is the defense of the full rights of migrants and refugees around the world.

Let us build a Global Pact of Solidarity!

Berlin, October 25, 2020

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1736