

Statement on displaced people and asylum seekers: Internationalism from below against Fortress Europe

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A million people have arrived at European borders in the past year, especially through the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans, fleeing hunger and bombs. This is the largest influx of refugees to Europe since World War II, and the largest number of displaced people and asylum seekers worldwide in decades. About half come from Syria, where five years of conflict have caused 250,000 deaths, five million refugees, and about half the population internally displaced. Others come from Afghanistan, Iraq, and other African and Asian countries. Within them, many women who suffer specific oppression and violences.

The political authorities and hegemonic media depict the current refugee crisis as a flood of people appearing suddenly out of nowhere. It's as though it were a meteorological phenomenon without apparent cause, where the people seeking asylum are characterized as a threat or as victims, and to which there are only two possible responses: violent containment or emergency aid. In both cases, the refugees lose their status as subjects with rights, aspirations, and demands, becoming mere objects to be managed. This approach is not only reductionist, but also serves the interests of some of the political actors involved in the situation.

1. A global crisis of rights. Contrary to the official story, the actual migratory flows constitute not only or essentially a humanitarian crisis, but also and above all a crisis of rights and, therefore, a political crisis. A crisis with concrete causes and responsibilities, which is part of other, broader crises which make up a world and a global capitalist system in crisis. A crisis of rights that is also threefold, as 1) it involves the systematic violations of fundamental rights in countries of origin that motivate emigration; 2) it is a crisis in the international asylum system, lost in successive cuts and minimalist approaches; and 3) it is a crisis in the politics of migration in general, both in transit and in destination.

2. Local terror and imperialist intervention. Beyond the endogenous factors of the armed conflicts that motivate the displacements (in the Syrian case, the genocidal repression of the Assad regime and the totalitarianism of Daesh), the imperialist interventions and the military and economic interests of foreign governments, international institutions, and transnational corporations also have responsibility for the instability of these countries of origin. The plundering of resources and the geostrategic interests of the free trade agreements generate hunger, poverty, war, and exodus. In the case of the EU and its member states, the consequences of their interventions are now knocking at their door in the form of asylum seekers. Erdogan in Turkey and Assad in Syria utilize the refugees as currency and a form of pressure to negotiate their best interests with other powers. Meanwhile, the people are trapped by geopolitical disputes between local and regional elites.

3. The unbearable irresponsibility of Europe. The same European Union that displays nimbly ambitious plans to rescue the private banks, or to punish the governments that try to walk away from neoliberal austerity, responds to this challenge with empty declarations, institutional passivity, and a reinforcement of Fortress Europe, . Meanwhile, the European states pass along the problem as if it were a hot potato and legislate against migrants and refugees. Barely 400 people have been relocated in the different EU member states of the 160,000 that were committed to be placed by the end of 2017. Even if this latter figure is reached, it remains derisory to the real needs (one million arrivals in 2015 and a projected increase in 2016) and a stark contrast to the 4.5 million Syrians welcomed by Libya, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey, countries with lower populations and fewer economic resources than the EU.

4. Down with Fortress Europe and all forms of xenophobia. The European response is focused on building walls, increasing police repression, and practicing systematic deportations and internment in concentration camps for refugees, who are deprived of their most basic rights. These measures also generate huge profits for private companies which have found a new niche in border management. Cutting basic rights, increasing the stigmatization of migrants (sometimes using feminist discourses to this means), and the attempt to create a divide between “refugees with some rights” and “illegal immigrants” constitute a strategy of institutional xenophobia that legitimizes and encourages the growing expressions of racial hatred. Racism, nationalist identity, and closing the borders are old fantasies that are again today knocking at the doors of Europe. In their intent to halt the rise of the radical right and steal the monopoly of fear and hatred, parties and institutions are applying similar repressive policies for all of Europe. And as with so-called counter-terrorist policies, this refugee crisis serves as an excuse to attack rights and liberties for the whole working class.

5. Refugee or migrant, no human is illegal. The protection of law and international conventions that permit some migrants to solicit and obtain political asylum cannot be the principal argument wielded to defend their arrival and respect for their rights. The liberal standards of international norms provide limited causes for demanding shelter—excluding social, economic, or climate related reasons—at the same time they restrict the list of “officially recognized” political conflicts. The hunger, the misery, and the shortage of resources kill as many or more than the bombs. The economic wars of transnational capital displace millions of people each year. Economic and climate refugees ought to be considered categories eligible for asylum and, in any case, to migrate is a right independent of any political or economic reasons that motivate it.

6. An international response. There is no binding international convention nor shared responsibility that can substitute for the international duty of solidarity between peoples, and the loyalty between the popular classes toward those fleeing the consequences of terror, the changing climate, and the effects of global capitalism. The dignity and the life of humankind are worth more than any private benefit, than any electoral calculation, than any legislation.

For this reasons, the IC decides at its meeting of 27 February-2 March 2016, to undertake actions and mobilisations, supporting the struggle and self-organisation of refugees and migrants to break the borders, and a social mobilisation in solidarity with them, proposing the following political aims:

- a) Denounce the causes of forced and massive displacement of populations by promoting mobilisations and street actions against imperialism and war;
- b) Promote and participate in all demonstrations of solidarity and for the development of political alternatives against restrictive immigration policies;
- c) Demand more funding for the reception of migrants instead of for repression, especially the militarisation of border controls;

- d) Demand an end to all mechanisms for persecuting immigrants, in particular systems like SIS, CRATE, Rabbit, FAST TRACK, ICONet, VIS, EURODAC and EUROSUR;
- e) Demand the repeal of Dublin III and a review of the Geneva Convention to make it more suitable to the present times and circumstances;
- f) Argue for the end of Frontex and the creation of a rescue and humanitarian aid force;
- g) Argue for the opening of special corridors and the granting of special entry visas for refugees who are stuck in hotspots on the borders and in transit countries;
- h) Advocate the creation of mechanisms of bilateral cooperation between member states to overcome the EU's institutional blocks in the management of migratory flows;
- i) Demand the regularisation of all the undocumented and repeal the Family Reunification Directive;
- j) Integrate the fight against racism and fascism into all political actions;
- k) Make the political, ideological and cultural struggle against the extreme right a central priority. Confront the rise of the extreme right through an agenda of counter-cultural hegemony against conservatism and through intercultural interventions that seek to retake the public space through combined initiatives and mobilisations with the victims of racism;
- l) Fighting for voting rights of immigrants in all elections to make citizenship a reality, because democracy will only be complete when all men and women participate in it and are represented;
- m) Fight for nationality to be based solely on place of birth, abolishing the right of blood as a means of acquiring nationality;
- n) Demand an end to the deportations and the closure of detention centres in Europe and its periphery, in the name of respect for the human rights and human dignity of those who are detained only because of their immigration status;
- o) Fight for repeal of the Directives on Return and Family Reunification, and for changes to the Labour and "race" directives;
- p) Contribute through debate and critical thinking to challenge society in general, and academia in particular, to "decolonize" the production of knowledge and expertise, in particular through post-colonial "decolonial" studies, and above all, to further study and reflection on the semantic forms of racism, especially Roma-phobia, Afrophobia and Islamophobia;
- q) Demand reforms to the school curricula and textbooks, so as to reflect and value cultural diversity, and promote interculturalism and its various contributions in school and academic subjects;
- r) Finally, mobilise in favour of the teaching of the languages of origin, as one of the instruments, not only of linguistic and cultural preservation, but also as a tool for interaction and the socialisation of differences within school communities.

These mobilization must give a central role to the self organization of migrant and refugee people, to reclaim rights, and must be supported by a social mobilization in solidarity with them, as we have already seen in several European countries.

The borders are lowered for goods and capital while ever higher walls are built for people. Market fundamentalism and nationalist xenophobia are allied to reinforce a Fortress Europe full of borders, the true weapon of mass destruction of rights and breeding ground of racial hatred. But in front of her, resistance and solidarity with those below continues, demonstrating once again that only the people can save the people and that another Europe is possible.

International Committee of the Fourth International

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* <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article4396>