

EU: The Khartoum Process ? holding camps as developmental aid

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On November 28, 2014, representatives from 58 European and African countries met to adopt the "Khartoum Process". This newly initiated project was to intensify cooperation between the European Union and the countries from which refugees originated or through which they passed in their attempts to reach Europe. The countries of origin included Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, South Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya while Libya, Egypt and Tunisia were the principal "transit countries".

The "Khartoum Process", covering the eastern migration route, joined the "Rabat process", for the Western migration route, in the EU's strategic programme to "regulate" the "irregular flow of refugees" from Africa and to prevent human trafficking and smuggling. The "fight against the causes of flight" was much talked about but, in reality, these are more building blocks in fortress Europe's barricade against refugees. The fact that the warmongering AKP government of Turkey was involved in the deal with the EU, and that dictators from Eritrea, South Sudan and Sudan were at the negotiating table, seemed no longer to be a matter of concern.

According to a press release from the European Commission, these "processes" operate at three levels: continental, regional and bilateral. At the "continental level" there is to be a dialogue with the African Union with a view to curbing "irregular migration" and related issues. On the "regional level" it is intended to strengthen the political dialogue between the EU and the participating African states and this is to be underpinned by concrete action programmes and associated funding. Finally, the "bilateral track" provides for all participating countries to initiate programmes and projects to ensure "capacity building" in partner countries.

What lies behind this?

Among the "supported projects" is the construction of refugee camps in North African transit countries like Tunisia or Libya. Refugees will have to wait in these camps while their claims for asylum in the EU are processed. Among other "humanitarian projects", the EU intends to "strengthen" the institutions of the dictatorial government of Eritrea, train Sudanese officials in "migration management" and "improve border management" in southern Sudan. All of this is to be financed by transferring money away from existing funding streams such as Developmental Aid.

The EU-Turkey deal has already shown that the various humanitarian arguments are just smoke and mirrors to obscure the reality of EU migration policy, which is to close the external borders to prevent refugees entering the EU. Detention centres, built far away from Europe's borders, are a way to outsource these "problems" and at the same time to effectively extend the EU's external borders.

Most of the refugees who have reached the EU and submitted applications for asylum are fleeing from

precisely the countries which are participating in the Khartoum Process, such as Sudan or Eritrea. They are escaping from hunger, war, slavery and torture and from authoritarian regimes and their presidents. The Head of State of Sudan, for example, is wanted for genocide and war crimes by the International Criminal Court.

The goal is clear: would-be refugees should, at best, be prevented from escaping and should be kept within the dictatorships. In this way, the flow of refugees can be better managed and controlled so that economically "viable" fugitives can be admitted to the EU while those who are "not needed" should not even be able to begin their journey. This is in keeping with the European Commission's press release which refers only to combating "irregular migration". Migration, in itself, is desirable and to be welcomed, so long as it is "effectively" regulated and controlled.

The Arab Spring and its impact

This EU foreign policy has to be understood in its international context. Previous agreements and cooperation with oppressive regimes, which provided a degree of stability, were disrupted and negated by the Arab Spring as, for example, in Libya. This led to an increased flow of refugees across the Mediterranean as well as an increase in civil war and in the number of refugees in general.

This "instability" was to be offset by extending the application range of FRONTEX which, since the beginning of the "Triton" programme in 2014, can now operate right up to the North African coastline. Then, as now, the public justification for expanding the role of FRONTEX was based on the need to combat illegal trafficking and trafficking gangs rather than curbing increased migration across the Mediterranean.

The Arab Spring, however, did not only have an impact on the sea route. The combination of FRONTEX patrols in the Mediterranean and the ongoing civil wars in, for example, Syria and Mali, boosted the numbers fleeing overland to Europe. The recent deal between the EU and Turkey is a further strengthening of cooperation with African countries through the Khartoum and Rabat Processes to bring "calm" on the land as well as the sea.

What perspective?

Revolutionaries must expose and reject the European Union policy of blockade and deterrence. They should raise the demand for open borders and fight for the right of everyone to live and to work wherever they want. Instead of forcing people to take the risky and life-threatening route across the Mediterranean, or through countries torn by civil war, safe escape routes should be established.

A revolutionary perspective, however, must not stop at these demands. A successful struggle can only be conducted on the basis of clearly identifying the causes of flight and combat, that is, the imperialist system and its power games in the semi-colonial world. It is imperialism that repeatedly produces the causes of flight as the great powers fight for their influence in the world order.

The slogan of revolutionaries in Germany and other imperialist countries can therefore only be, "the main enemy is at home". On the one hand, this means fighting against the imperialist policy of Germany, the EU and the other imperialist and regional powers whose plundering, intervention and warmongering create the conflicts from which millions are forced to flee. On the other, it also means actively showing solidarity with all those who oppose war, exploitation, oppression and dictatorships.

In Germany, the burning need is for the construction of an anti-racist united front, bringing together the organisations of the workers' movement, migrants and refugees. Arbeitermacht therefore supports the

establishment of the "Youth Against Racism" alliance which, in our opinion is a good example of what such an antiracist movement should look like. It has, for example, organised the demonstration against deportation, the Khartoum Declaration and the EU-Turkey deal in Berlin on July 7.

That demonstration, denouncing the EU's inhumane agreements with Turkey and African regimes, provides a positive example of how the radical left in Germany can cooperate with migrant and refugee organisations to oppose the divisive policies of the bourgeois state and the media with an active, internationalist perspective.

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