



The European travel document Yet another step to deport by all means

Mid-way in the Valletta processes, and as African and European high officials are meeting in Malta on 8/9 February 2017, the European Union is crossing a step further in its attempts to limit mobility of migrants and imposes its rule on countries where most of migrants originate from through the use of the “European travel document”, a document adopted last October 2016 and almost unnoticed.

The action plan established in Valletta in November 2015 by the EU, its Member States as well as 35 African states aims to “address irregular migration, human trafficking as well as the root causes of forced migration”. Currently under mid-term review, the action plan bases upon “external cooperation” in order to get “third” states’ signature on readmission agreements. Those agreements should facilitate the removal of migrants.

The European travel document (EUTD) marks yet another step in the EU’s strategy to externalise its migration policy for over twenty years. This travel document is issued exclusively by EU Member States and enables the deportation of a person without s/he has been identified by the “third” country h/she suspected of coming from, i.e. without the person being issued a consular travel document regardless of the person’s rights and of the principle of equality between sovereign states (guaranteed in the Vienna Convention).

Despite the strong opposition of African leaders against the European travel document as soon as November 2015, a position reasserted in early 2017 by civil society and the Malian government, the EUTD is already in use, irrespective of substantial shortcomings both in the format and in the content.

Beyond the negative and immediate impact of a removal order on people, it should be stressed that the complete vagueness on the use of the EUTD may lead to serious human rights violations, as illustrated by the number of interrogations and uncertainties (see attached list).

As the deportation apparatus is gaining in strength (cooperation with Turkey, Afghanistan, Libya, as well as Frontex's new prerogatives), it is worth noting that fundamental rights are not even mentioned once in the related regulation published in the EU Official Journal.

The undersigned European and African networks of civil society organisations hereby call on the EU Member States to immediately suspend the use of the EUTD, and call on the EU authorities to provide publicly and with no delay complementary and indispensable information on its use (see attached list of required information).

Mobility is a right, not a tool for diplomacy bargain.

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