

PRO ASYL

APPEAL Against the creation of camps at European borders

The idea of creating asylum processing centres outside European borders, put on hold at the European Summit of Thessalonica in 2003, seems to have gained support at the European Union Interior Ministers' meeting on the 1 October 2004.

Diplomatically called "assistance centres", the aim is in fact to create camps in countries bordering the European Union. Foreigners who attempt to reach Europe to claim asylum or for other motives, seeking protection or a better life, would be detained or sent to these centres. A significant amount of funding appears to have been approved in principle.

According to European Union leaders, this procedure of off-shore processing is in response to humanitarian concerns : in order to save the lives of people who every week try to reach the European coasts, it is preferable to detain them in camps on the other side of the Mediterranean.

If this proposal becomes reality, it would endorse an unprecedented regression in the way in which Europe intends to assume its responsibilities towards those who are fleeing conflicts, human rights abuses and poverty. It is the extension of a cynical logic, which far from addressing the root causes of forced migration, has sought to protect Europe over the past ten years from these victims of world disorder. It is taking the risk of creating refugee camps which will bring back dark memories of those dating back to the 1930s, or more recently during the war in Bosnia.

On the 5 November 2004, the 25 Heads of European States will have to take decisions on the future of European migration and asylum policy. We are all affected by their decisions. The Europe which we want cannot abandon its responsibilities, since it has ratified different international conventions and treaties (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Geneva Convention, European Convention on Human Rights). The Europe which we want must put an end to this senseless approach in its treatment of asylum seekers and migrants.

We reject the concept of camps at the European borders. We urge heads of governments and parliamentarians to oppose it firmly. We demand that following fundamental principles based on international law, the European Union improves access to protection rather than shifting the responsibility for refugee protection on other countries.

First Signatories : **CCME** (Churches Committee for Migrants in Europe), the **FIDH-AE** (European Association for the Defence of Human Rights), Germany : **Pro-Asyl**, Belgium : **MRAX** (Mouvement contre le Racisme l'Antisémitisme et la Xénophobie), Great Britain : **JCWI** (Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants), Spain : **SOS-Racismo**, **APDHA** (Asociacion Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucia), France : **Cimade**, **Gisti**, **LDH** (Human rights League and Italian), Italy : **ARCI**, **FCEI** (Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia), some of them **participating to the MIGREUROP network**.

This appeal is supported by : Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Greens), Hélène Flautre (Greens), Adeline Hazan (ESP).