

Stop the war on refugees in Europe!

Johannes Stern
20 September 2023

The European Union and its national governments are responding to the arrival of several thousand desperate refugees on Italy's Lampedusa island in recent days by massively stepping up their war on migrants.

During a joint appearance on the Mediterranean island on Sunday, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen expressed solidarity with the fascist Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. The measures planned are reminiscent of the darkest times in European history. They involve the complete closure of "Fortress Europe," mass deportations to war torn countries and disaster zones in North Africa and the establishment of concentration and deportation camps by the military.

Meloni, who boasts of having "a relaxed relationship with fascism" and calls Mussolini a "good politician," threatened to take "extraordinary measures" on Lampedusa. Then, on Monday, her government decided by decree to tighten detention pending deportation and raise the maximum length of detention to 18 months. The Italian Defence Ministry was ordered to create detention centres for migrants who had "entered irregularly." The facilities are to be created "in remote areas, as sparsely populated as possible," which can be easily contained and monitored.

In addition, Meloni repeated her call for a coordinated naval operation against refugees in the Mediterranean. "We have to stop the influx of illegal migrants. We cannot find a solution that serves one country and not the other," she said. If necessary, the navy must be deployed to stop refugee boats on their way to Europe, she said. "The fight against illegal mass immigration and human traffickers is an epochal struggle for Italy and for Europe."

The essentially fascist crackdown on refugees is supported by the entire ruling class in Europe. Von der Leyen presented a 10-point plan for "a coordinated response by the Italian and European authorities" at a

joint press conference with Meloni on Sunday. She said she had "offered support to Italy by the European Commission and the European Union Asylum Agency and Frontex to deal with this immediate crisis."

Von der Leyen left no doubt as to what this "support" consisted of:

- **Mass deportations:** The EU offered the Italian government "the support of Frontex to ensure a swift return of migrants to their country of origin, if they are not eligible for asylum." Persons "who cannot qualify for asylum cannot stay in the European Union."

- **Police-military action against refugees already in Africa—in close coordination with the reactionary regimes on the ground:** What is needed was "a joint-up approach, for example Frontex and Europol engaging with Tunisia and along the [migration] route," explained von der Leyen.

- **Military operation against refugees in the Mediterranean:** "We will step up sea and aerial surveillance." This, too, could be taken over by the notorious border protection agency Frontex. In addition, the EU supports "exploring options to expand existing naval missions in the Mediterranean or to work on new ones." In addition, the EU will "speed up the supply of equipment to the Tunisian coastguard."

The EU's policy is murderous and criminal in more ways than one. After destroying entire countries with their neocolonial wars in Africa and the Middle East, the leading European NATO powers and the US deliberately decided to let refugees drown in order to deter others and keep them away from Europe. According to official figures, more than 20,000 people have drowned in the Mediterranean in the last decade alone.

Despite this, the EU continues to intensify the war against refugees. It is significant that von der Leyen's ten-point plan is aimed exclusively at repulsing refugees and does not include a single concrete

“humanitarian” measure. And this despite the fact that the earthquake in Morocco and the flood disaster in Libya have killed thousands and plunged hundreds of thousands into even greater misery in the past two weeks.

The flooding in the Libyan port city of Derna in particular is not simply a natural disaster, but the direct product of the 2011 NATO bombing campaign that largely destroyed the country. The European governments and political forces that waged the war or justified it as a “humanitarian” intervention have blood on their hands. Now they are escalating the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine with similar propaganda arguments.

In fact, there is a direct link between the terror against refugees and the war offensive. The more aggressively the ruling class pushes its policy of militarism and the accompanying social attacks, the more openly it relies on authoritarianism and fascist methods to suppress the growing social and political opposition at home. The war against refugees is directed against the entire working class. What is being done to refugees and migrants now threatens everyone tomorrow. This course is also supported by the nominally left parties.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democrat, SPD) announced his reactionary “Germany Pact” early this month, in which he explicitly called for an intensified “fight against irregular migration” and an “expansion of detention pending deportation.” These are precisely the measures now being implemented.

In Greece, the pseudo-left Syriza government significantly tightened migration policy between 2015 and 2019 and, in alliance with the far-right Independent Greeks (Anel), introduced essentially the same measures that are now being pushed by Rome and Brussels. These included the detention of refugees in concentration camp-like “hotspots” like Moria, mass deportations and a military operation against migrants in the Aegean.

In Spain, the coalition government of the social-democratic PSOE and pseudo-left Podemos regularly uses the military, special forces and riot police to crack down on migrants fleeing to Spain via Morocco. In Germany, the Left Party, where it is in government, organises brutal deportations in the federal states. At the same time, its Wagenknecht wing in particular is agitating against refugees along the lines of the far-right

Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The fact that all factions of the ruling class advocate terror against refugees underlines that workers and youth are confronted with revolutionary tasks. European capitalism cannot be reformed, it must be overthrown. The defence of democratic rights, like the struggle against war and fascism, requires the revolutionary mobilisation of the working class on the basis of an international socialist programme.

This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and its sister organisations are fighting for across Europe. “Workers must counterpose the perspective of the United Socialist States of Europe to the EU of the banks and corporations, mass death and war,” reads the SGP’s election call for the European elections. “The war cannot be ended, lives cannot be saved and wages cannot be defended without breaking the power of the banks and corporations and putting them under democratic control.”



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