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States, Migration and Human Rights: Towards an International Confrontational Movement

The initiative consists of a march to Brussels from different European nations to converge there from September 30 to October 1, 2022. The context is the tens of thousands of migrants killed and the absence of rights. Deaths caused by European border policies.



The mobilization model of organizations/movements dedicated exclusively to the defense of the rights of migrants has recently presented demands with a radical horizon. Demands for freedoms and rights, decent living conditions, free transit and equal treatment of gender, no type of confinement, etc., whose eventual execution by the authorities, governments, States and, of course, by the EU would imply a substantial change. Granting these rights, incorporating all migrants – women and men – to the same status of equality in all the countries to which they arrive, would imply a profound change in the social, economic and even political policies of Western states, it would mean a change ... of the

system (Ibarra 2021). This is why the struggle is so hard, so dramatic. To see how over the years the distance between the demands of demands and the political decisions of the States continues and, in some cases, is growing, is discouraging.

However, the mobilizations aimed at ending this panorama persist and are still growing. In this article we offer an overview, some general features about movements and mobilizations. With the warning that we will focus, by limits of space, on the European area of arrival and stay. In the first place, a distinction should be made between movements of support for migrants and support organized and led by the immigrants themselves. We start with the latter.

In general, migrant organizations based in each country act with the aim of achieving better living conditions. They self-organize themselves to, in a dynamic of solidarity and cooperation between them, achieve work, housing, studies, etc. Also, although more occasionally, some of these organizations lead mobilizations directly aimed at the demand for rights, which are usually especially focused on achieving the regularization of their situation in the country. These demands sometimes converge with local organizations dedicated to the support of migrants. Also sometimes, and as is known, groups of migrants mobilize, if only punctually, in a forceful and radical way to achieve the crossing of borders.



In any case, from the perspective of social mobilization aimed at achieving substantial changes in legislation to achieve that full and shared equality in the granting and exercise

of rights, it is usual for this option to be assumed by movements-organizations dedicated to supporting migrants, to fight to achieve all their rights.

In this area of social movements outside the group of migrants, some distinctions should be made. On the one hand, organizations that are generically granted the category of NGO, whose support focuses almost exclusively on reception tasks: search for accommodation, support for regularization of papers, etc. And, on the other hand, organizations defined as social movements without more, which focus their support through mobilizations of anti-institutional confrontation aimed at achieving rights, all rights for migrants.

Already entering these social movements as we have defined them (which comparatively with the host NGOs are a minority), they appear on very different fronts: in radical mobilizations around the concentration camps (the real name that border camps deserve), in the boats of various countries that collect immigrants in the Mediterranean (which, it should be said, regardless of the format they adopt, they are a real, forceful and operational social movement) and, finally, obviously, mobilizations that are taking place in the different countries to claim rights. In this line it should be noted that there is a lot of isolation in the different activities of these local, regional or even national movements. Coordination is poor. And the consequences of this being the case are clearly negative in that today the central migration policy is that established by the European Union.

These movements, defined as radical in confrontation and demands, are spreading throughout Europe.

However, these movements, defined as radical in confrontation and demands, are spreading throughout Europe. Probably, quantitatively they are not the dominant ones, but through their actions they are spreading a message that is penetrating other movements only of welcome and radicalizing their positions. In addition, the coordination between them is growing.

This growing prominence deserves an analysis of this type of movement. We will do so by recounting the experience of a movement that we believe, sincerely, adequately exemplifies this growing trend.

A relevant model and practice: OEE

We chose Ongi Etorri Errefuxiatuak (OEE), a social movement from Euskal Herria, (García Marroquín, 2022) whose objective is the defense of the rights of immigrants. The choice to analyze this movement and its actions is due to the fact that it is aimed at

achieving, without exception, the granting of all rights, the use of strategies of open confrontation and convergence in the struggle with various European organizations. That is, the characteristics of the social movements that we defined as increasingly protagonists in the struggle in favor of immigrants. We will now describe their different activities and most relevant collective mobilizations that have taken place in recent years.

Its incipient and complex process of weaving ties with other groups and organizations at European level began with the caravan to Greece in 2016, and will be reinforced if the march to Brussels in autumn 2022 gets them to participate and involve new European realities.

The Italian caravan

We start with the story of the 2018 caravan. After traveling to Greece in 2016 and Melilla in 2017, that year hundreds of activists made their way from Salt (Girona) to Ventimiglia (French-Italian border), Sicily and Calabria. Once again, the "Caravan Opening Borders", composed of more than 100 collectives from the peninsula, sought to denounce the migration, economic, commercial and environmental policies of the EU. An organization in northern Italy, Carovane Migranti (CM), has been working in part with that perspective for some time. And, without a doubt, this has influenced some of the actions in which Ongi Etorri together with CM has participated and promoted internationally from the moment it begins to collaborate with the caravan from Italy of 2018.



These were the denunciations in all the demonstrations, meetings and in some cases clashes that occurred throughout the trip:

The violation of human rights in the European Union and its 28 Member States is becoming more serious. To the violence and institutional racism is added the increase in xenophobia and fascism that translates into increasingly repressive policies in countries such as Italy, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland.

Return and readmission agreements with third countries that do not respect human rights. The harassment and criminalization of people and organizations in solidarity with migrants.

It should be stressed that this is a feminist caravan, since, as it is literally said in the manifesto:

We want to make visible the presence of women in migration processes and that they are protagonists and political subjects. We will forcefully denounce the sexual violence suffered by women and girls both in countries of origin in contexts of armed conflict and in transit and host countries. We demand that women's rights be guaranteed in host countries by preventing exploitation, abuse, violence and human trafficking.



In July 2018, the "Caravan Opening Borders" participated in a large demonstration in Ventimiglia. Then, in Sicily, together with local networks such as the Forum Antirazzista of Palermo and the Rete Antirazzista of Catania, he demonstrated in the ports of the two cities, scenes of arrivals of thousands of migrants, in front of the graves of 50 migrants in the cemetery of Rotoli in Palermo, in front of the headquarters of Frontex in Catania, at the CARA (Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers) in Mineo, Europe's largest reception centre for migrants from Africa and the Middle East, with more than 4,000 people, and in the city of Niscemi, on whose territory the largest US military control centre in the Mediterranean is housed. The unique experience of welcoming migrants from Africa and Asia in Riace (Calabria) by its mayor Mimmo Lucano was also known. A few days later,

invited by CM, participation as OEE and CAF in an afternoon of reflection and debates in Paraloup, an alpine refuge of the partisans, on migrations of yesterday and today in the Italian-French border areas. There, for the first time, there was a dialogue about the need to weave a small network that through contacts and joint participation in experiences and complaints had a European and international perspective.

An international mobilization. The 5M

With this background, from OEE and the small town of Artea (Bizkaia), with the participation of more than 200 people from groups from the Spanish State, Italy, France and Greece, the European initiative [5M, the Embrace of the Peoples](#), was launched. With three clear objectives: to denounce the criminalization of solidarity, to raise your voice against the advance of neo-fascism and the extreme right in Europe and to defend the rights of migrants and refugees. The hug action was held on May 5, 2019 in 35 European cities with the participation of thousands of people and more than 200 organizations.



5M, The embrace of the peoples

The caravan of Andalusia and Morocco

In July 2019, hundreds of caravaneros approached the spaces of non-right, those war scenarios in which borders have become, where people are left to die, bodies are violated and those who defend life and human rights are criminalized.

For the fourth time, the "Caravan Opening Borders" traveled to meet the people and organizations that inhabit the borders. First it was Greece, then Melilla and Italy, and now it was going back to the southern border of Europe, to Andalusia and Ceuta. On this occasion, a large group of Carovane Migranti (CM) participated along with their witnesses, who contributed their valuable life and death experiences from Mexico, Honduras, Tunisia and Algeria.

And these were the denunciations:

The deaths of more than 45,000 people on their journey to Europe since 1993 (more than 2,500 on the Canarian route since January 2020). The growing violation of the rights and freedoms of migrants and refugees living in Europe.

The detention against their will of thousands of migrants who are on the islands, preventing them from their right to continue the journey. The undignified conditions and violations of the rights suffered by migrants held in the camps and reception resources. With special relevance in the most vulnerable groups, such as minors and women.

Deportations and returns, cold and hot, from the countries and external borders of the European Union, whether in the Canary Islands, as in Ceuta, Melilla, the Balkans, the central Mediterranean or the Greek islands. Also because of the returns at the internal borders of the EU itself.

The externalization of borders to third countries such as Morocco, Libya, Turkey or Niger, governed by authoritarian regimes that systematically violate human rights. Also for the interference in the sovereignty of the African peoples with the sending of foreign police forces.

The criminalization of solidarity with migrants and refugees and the impediments and obstructions they impose on rescue missions to save lives at sea. The labor exploitation and sexual violence faced by thousands of migrant women during migratory transit and, upon arrival, in the camps of Huelva, Sicily or Apulia. The participation of European and US military forces in open conflicts in the Sahel countries, conflicts that are causing the death of thousands of people and the exodus of hundreds of thousands to neighboring countries and Europe. The business of war and borders, by the production and sale of arms by EU governments to countries involved in conflicts in Africa and the Middle East. Institutional racism and racist and xenophobic discourses, wherever they come from.

As soon as the caravan to Andalusia ended, and with the help of CM, we participated in a small caravan to Tunisia, which despite its size, or perhaps because of it, was very rich in experiences, as was reflected in the meetings with small organizations in the port city of Zarzis, near the Libyan border, and with Eritrean refugees in Medenine and Tunisia, in the visits to the migrant cemeteries in Zarzis, and in the action of denunciation and direct

response by the Italian and local organizations that contributed decisively to rescue a large group of migrants from Côte d'Ivoire abandoned by the Tunisian police in the desert bordering Libya. This showed the importance of weaving these international threads of complicity, denunciation and exchange of experiences and reflections from small and large moments of joint actions.

The Canarian caravan

The next caravan was the Canary Islands 2021, from July 17 to 25. With the presence of more than 100 activists from the peninsula and with the participation of the large group of Carovane Migranti and Rete Antirazzista de Catania, along with witnesses from Mexico, Honduras and Tunisia. The activity on the islands was a continuous rosary of demonstrations, assemblies, sit-ins. As on previous occasions, this caravan and its manifesto of denunciation in the Canary Islands had extensive support from organizations and movements of the State, 145 in this case.

The context is the tens of thousands of migrants killed and the absence of rights



[The Caravan Opening Borders travels to the Canary Islands to denounce the serious situation of migrants](#) / Caravan Opening Borders

In addition to denouncing the denial of rights already mentioned in other caravans, it is relevant to highlight some of the analyses that are made in the manifesto/ denunciation of

this caravan, since it supposes a lucid contribution to what are the causes of this deep and permanent injustice:

481 people disappeared in just two weeks on the Canarian route in the first half of June" (VV AA, 2021). Fifteen people buried, without a name, in the small cemetery of Agüimes on the island of Gran Canaria. The European policy of death unfolds with all its monstrous efficacy in an apparent silence.

The nefarious policies of the European Union generate death everywhere. It is essential to respond to this logic by bringing to light what these European policies would like to keep hidden. Behind these death projects are plans for the violent defense of European borders and the profits of elites.

An increasingly armored Europe has increased the economic endowments for the militarization and externalization of borders with a discourse that criminalizes migrants and those who defend them. This outsourcing does not consist only of physical borders, but forms a complex plot that involves from corporations of security bodies and forces such as Frontex to companies such as Indra, ACS, Telefónica, El Corte Inglés, Sacyr, Air Nostrum and Evelop.

The new European Pact on Migration and Asylum aims to make the Canary Islands open-air prisons, while the Spanish government defends the same anti-immigration policy that the EU plans and develops. It has the power to move people within its territory and prevent them from remaining stranded in temporary camps, but decides not to do so, or to do so arbitrarily, to encourage the imaginary of an avalanche. In this way, the vicious circle formed by large companies that benefit from militarizing the borders and the political class in charge of legitimizing that need for security, which is not so much that of all people as that of the interests of the ruling and business elites, is maintained.

We denounce the looting of African resources by European companies with the complicity of governments, and specifically the neocolonial fisheries agreements imposed by the European Union on 13 African governments, which has meant, specifically in Senegal, the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs in recent years and the exodus of thousands of young people to Europe via the Canary Islands.

We denounce a migratory model inserted in a broader model that is at war with life, a capitalist model that prioritizes the accumulation of wealth and resources in a few hands at the cost of dispossessing and exploiting the majority, a patriarchal system that destroys

the lives of women and people with dissidences of identities and orientations, a colonial and racist, ecocidal and homicidal system. We denounce the use of borders as a tool to maintain this system (Mbembe, 2011).

Occupy the center

We close this story of collective mobilizations with the description of a mobilization project also originally promoted by OEE. It represents an advance from the point of view of the participation of different movements and organizations in the struggle for the rights of migrants. It is an international protest meeting in the EU capital, Brussels, under the slogan Rights, No deaths, "Rights, no more deaths from migration".

The initiative consists of a march to Brussels from different European nations to converge there from September 30 to October 1, 2022. The context is the tens of thousands of migrants killed and the absence of rights. Deaths caused by European border policies. More than 28,000 people have died since 2014 trying to reach Europe or its internal borders, and about 50,000 since 1993. They come from Africa, Asia and the Middle East and die especially in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and also in the Balkans, in the Alps, in the English Channel, in the Bidasoa River at the foot of the Pyrenees and in other border areas.

At the same time, people who manage to cross these borders work and contribute to the development of European societies, but most of them live for long years without documents, without rights. Not having the documents they need prevents access to their most fundamental rights, such as the right to health or justice.

The recent drama of the Ukrainian exile, provoked by the war, adds to these exoduses of people who are forced to move around the world. And the different response that the EU is giving to this tragedy offers us an extraordinary opportunity to denounce the double standards of the EU in its reception policies (Balanzategui, 2022). We welcome the EU's positive reception of refugees from Ukraine. And we denounce the policies of rejection and death that the EU continues to apply at the moment against the tens of millions of people who have fled and continue to flee countries and wars involving European and Western armies, companies and governments.

Faced with this situation, the Platform Ongi Etorri Errefuxiatuak proposes to carry out actions of denunciation in Brussels between different European organizations that have been defending in different countries the rights of forcibly displaced people.

This initiative aims to consolidate, on a permanent basis, a movement that denounces the responsibility of European governments in these deaths, that proposes alternatives and awakens European consciousness.

Its objectives are:

- Denounce the EU as responsible for the migration policies that cause these deaths. Demand from the European institutions – Commission, Council and Parliament – concrete measures to guarantee the human rights of migrants, including the right to move freely and safely. And that the measures incorporate an intersectional gender perspective.
- Denounce the causes that force people to migrate.
- To make the European population aware of this situation.
- Demand the regularization of all migrants and refugees living in the European Union, as is being done with people arriving from Ukraine.
- Consolidate an international network of denunciation and solidarity with migrants and refugees.

In short, to demand that the EU and its member governments put an end to disappearances and deaths on migration routes, and that they open safe routes and regularise the administrative situation of those who have arrived 1/.

Notes

1/ The convening organisations are: Belgium: CNCN (Centre National de Coopération au Développement), FGTEB-Liège (Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique-école des solidarités), CADTM (Comité pour l'abolition des dettes illégitimes), Bxl Refugees, CBAI (Centre Bruxellois d'Action Interculturelle); Bosnia/Serbia/Greece/Spain: No NameKitchen. Spanish State: Ongi Etorri Errefuxiatuak-MugakZabalduz, IrungoHarreraSarea, Caravana Abriendo Fronteras, Obrim Fronteres-Catalunya, Obrim Fronteres-Valencia, Caravana Abriendo Fronteras- Madrid, Aita Mari- SMH (Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario), Red Mujeres Racializadas, Mujeres de Negro, La Resistencia-Almeria. France: CCFD- Terre Solidaire, CRID (Collectif d'organisations de solidarité internationale et de mobilisation citoyenne), États Généraux de la Migration, Migreurop France. GB/Nederland: Transnational Migrant Platform Europe (TMP-E), Global Economic Justice Programme. Italy:CarovaneMigranti (Torino),

ReteAntirazzistaCatanese, LasciateCIEntrare, Forum AntirazzistaPalermo, CISS-CooperazioneInternazSudSud, La ViaCampesina.

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