

# **The European migration policy and the Moroccan regime are both responsible for the drama in Ceuta**

Via [CADTM](#)

Since Monday, May 17, more than 8,000 migrants have crossed the border between Morocco and the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, and almost half of them have already been turned back in the chaos. In the context of a diplomatic crisis, this new tragedy is the symbol of the violence of a system of neocolonial dependencies imposed by the European powers with the connivance of those who govern in Morocco.

## **The military repression against the youth is exploited**

Since May 17, thousands of young people have arrived on the beaches of the Spanish enclave of Ceuta on the African coast, an unusual influx of migrants who have come swimming. Never had the territories of Ceuta and Melilla seen so many men, women and children arrive in such a short time. This reminds us of the events of 2005, when several hundred migrants, mainly of sub-Saharan origin, tried, some at the risk of their lives, to cross Ceuta by force.

Most of them were Moroccan citizens, but there were also hundreds of sub-Saharan migrants waiting in the region for the opportunity to cross into European territory. Many of them are young people who come from marginalized regions and impoverished neighborhoods. Moroccan youth are being exploited by the Moroccan regime, which has long accepted to play the role of the European Union policeman for the readmission of unaccompanied minors who have arrived in Spain irregularly. The Spanish state, in turn, has mobilized its army to forcibly

return these indigent youngsters trying to escape poverty (in contravention of international treaties on migration).

### **The tricks of European policies: the outsourcing of asylum and immigration in Ceuta**

It is also essential to remember the outsourcing of migration controls to non-European countries since the late 1990s. The European agency Frontex (officially the “European Border and Coast Guard Agency”) has invested particularly in turning Ceuta into an anti-immigration fortress, a border city between Africa and Europe and, as such, a place of passage for illegal immigration. Frontex has a budget equivalent to 460 million euros in 2020, and 5.6 billion euros planned through 2027 for managing the surveillance operations (not rescue operations) it conducts at the external borders of the European Union (Push Back in the Mediterranean). Ceuta is protected by cameras, watchtowers and a double fence with barbed wire, which can reach a height of 10 meters.

If the European Union has its borders controlled by neighboring countries, migration is also becoming a kind of negotiating lever for some of these countries. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan or former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, at different times, did not hesitate to play the migration weapon in the Mediterranean to put pressure on Europe and obtain material advantages. But here, it is Morocco that holds the keys to migration and seems to be loosening border controls on the Moroccan side and even, it seems, encouraging young people from faraway towns like Agadir to cross into Ceuta to show their discontent with Madrid. The Spanish government’s response to ease the situation is also significant, having sent 30 million euros (while the crisis was still ongoing), for Moroccan gendarmes to resume border surveillance.

### **Migratory pressure aggravated by an economic and social crisis**

The migratory pressure is aggravated by the economic and social crisis that is hitting the populations of North Africa and the Middle East very hard. This massive arrival of migrants can also be explained by the complete closure of Morocco's external borders over the past fifteen months under the pretext of imposing a state of health emergency, leaving many people who were living informally without resources.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Moroccan government has taken austerity measures under the guise of fighting the Coronavirus pandemic. The Moroccan government has entered a new circle of debt to mitigate the effects of the covid-19 economic and health crisis. On the other hand, the average budget allocated to health in the financial laws over the last six years has not exceeded 14 billion dirhams per year (1 euro = 10.8 dirhams), while debt servicing has reached more than 140 billion dirhams per year, more than 10 times the health budget.

This diplomatic and migration crisis, in which Europe's historical and current responsibility must be denounced, is taking place in a context of exacerbating social problems that are a direct consequence of the application of neoliberal economic reform policies. As such, the current crisis cannot be resolved only bilaterally. These events, like those in 2005, have highlighted the inhumane and cowardly way in which the European Union delegates the management of its asylum and immigration policy. The European Pact on Migration presented in September 2020 by the European Commission cannot work within the framework of the relations of dependency imposed on the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean through free trade agreements and relying on the debt system.

With this press release, we want to express our solidarity with the sub-Saharan and Moroccan migrants who for so many years have suffered the consequences of a murderous European migration policy that is now reaching its climax.

## **Alternatives proposed by the CADTM**

Criminalizing migrants will not eliminate illegal immigration. On the contrary, these approaches lead to the exacerbation of illegal immigration and the catastrophic deaths that accompany it. Young Africans, fleeing death, poverty and destitution, will continue to risk leaving their countries.

The CADTM believes that it is necessary:

Close the detention centers for migrants, which are truly prisons.

Put an end to criminalization and laws that categorize migrants as “illegal”; put an end to moralistic distinctions between good migrants (those with access to asylum, those with access to the labor market) and bad (“illegal”) migrants.

Establish genuine reception facilities for migrants that guarantee access to public services.

Establish safe channels (both physical and legal) for people to migrate. This would also include making full use of the consular and diplomatic facilities of the countries concerned and abandoning the outsourced “Schengen visa” management system.

Defend free movement in and out of the Schengen area.

In countries that are located on Europe’s borders, do away with military devices such as walls and fences, surveillance systems, etc.

Do not apply the Dublin Regulation, and let migrants who wish to seek asylum in a country other than the one in which they entered the European Union.

We need to relax the legal and administrative structures necessary to ensure the safe movement of people, so that we can make migration a choice, not a deadly necessity. Neither

immigration policies nor development aid will be able to compensate African populations for centuries of plunder of their natural and human resources, a plunder that has resulted in an enormous ecological debt and plunged them into underdevelopment and violence, which in turn leads to forced displacement and asylum-seeking. The natural and human wealth that the continent possesses today is capable of guaranteeing the peoples of Africa true development and a secure life that will not force them to be displaced, if these peoples can exercise their sovereignty over the wealth of their countries. The guarantee of a dignified and secure life for the peoples of the continent is linked to their control over decision making, which must escape neoliberal policies and neocolonial mechanisms (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization). These alternatives will necessarily be linked to the establishment of democratic regimes, as well as to the strengthening of the self-organization of these peoples against their current regimes and for their sovereignty. Migration will have to be a priority in their struggle, since its causes are linked to neoliberal policies.

In addition, there must be a policy of reparations for the plundering and exploitation of wealth operated by the ruling classes and large corporations for centuries.