

## Lesvos/ Greece the new European cage for migrants

The recent tragedies in Lampedusa have highlighted, once again, the prevailing indifference of the EU toward the fate of migrants. At the gates of Europe, in Italy as well as on the Greek islands, migrants are subjected to arbitrary and dangerous border controls and security measures that put their lives at risk.

In the last days more than 80 migrants succeeded in reaching the island of Lesvos despite the numerous illegal push backs that take place in the Aegean Sea. These women, children, and men, fleeing war-torn countries, dictatorial regimes or unsustainable socio-economic conditions, are subjected to violence and the indifference of the Greek and European authorities. In absence of any clear regulation, police and coast guard authorities keep the migrants who survive the dangerous sea crossing in a legal limbo, without any form of protection, care, and information.

Migrants who arrive on the island of Lesvos have to be registered in order to be able to leave the island. However, this registration is currently only happening after having been arrested and detained in a newly constructed detention facility near the village of Moria. Opened on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2013, the detention centre is officially described as a “first reception centre” but is *de facto* a closed camp, surrounded by fences and barbed wire. In the end it shall provide also about 600 places for longterm detention. The local police, assisted by the European agency Frontex, is responsible for identifying migrants, trying to obtain information concerning migration patterns. These procedures are not meant to offer protection for migrants but instead constitute strategies for further control, surveillance and deterrence. Applying for asylum is currently impossible.

In 2009, people from Lesvos, migrants and international activist networks succeeded in closing the old detention centre of the island, in the industrial area of Pagani. Pagani had become the symbol of inhuman conditions of detention, a Guantanamo in the Aegean. A few months later local activists themselves opened “Pikpa”, a self-organised village of solidarity where hundreds of refugees were welcomed. This experience of real hospitality shows that no detention is necessary.

Those who have lost their lives in the Aegean Sea as well as in other parts of the Mediterranean Sea and those who are detained in cages remind us of the violence of the European border regime. Its practices, however, cannot stop people from moving; they only create more dangerous migration paths.

We do not tolerate this situation. The example of a selforganised reception center in Pikpa on Lesvos, where local people provided hospitality to those arriving proves that there are alternatives to militarised border controls, push backs, and detention centers. This alternative is based on solidarity.

Together we will not accept any detention of people who are urgently searching for safety. We want to welcome them in Europe. Their freedom of movement concerns all of us. We will never accept another Pagani.

*Welcome to Europe, Youth without Borders (Jugendliche ohne Grenzen – JOG) and their afghan friends and members, who had been detained in the hell of Pagani in 2009 and before as minors and returned to Lesvos these days, Migreurop.*