

A new police brigade that increases legal apartheid

Although there are already laws, and police bodies, to pursue criminal offences, also when foreign people commit them, yesterday the Secretary of State for Security, Antonio Camacho, announced the creation of a Brigade for the Expulsion of Foreign Offenders, a very explicit name for a measure that, once again, demonstrates the government's choice to criminalise the immigrant population and to consolidate a system of legal apartheid.

It seems as though we are heading back to the days of the popular [party] government, when laws like the "*Ley de seguridad ciudadana, violencia doméstica e integración social de los extranjeros*" (Law of citizens' security, domestic violence and social integration of foreigners) were approved. At that time, we were already criticising the fact that linking the social integration of foreigners with citizens' security and domestic violence was a manoeuvre to criminalise the immigrant population and to foster a culture of fear, which made it possible to cut back rights and liberties with ever-increasing impunity. Now the socialist government draws a direct identification between immigration and criminality, and stresses the dangerous nature of organised gangs, terrorism and gender-based violence, relating these explicitly to the foreign population.

Hence, from SOS Racismo, we denounce:

- That the creation of this Brigade, far from the arguments that are being voiced, does not give out a message of calmness, but rather, it fosters social alarm and xenophobia, turning people with foreign origins into targets for criminals.
- That a demagogic and very dangerous discourse is become increasingly widespread, blaming people who have different origins for our society's own problems (crime, citizens' insecurity, unemployment, chauvinism, sexist violence, terrorism, the economic crisis, insecurity in employment,...), whose causes and possible solutions are complex, and obviously unrelated to the issue of immigration. Immigrants are used to shift the blame elsewhere and create smokescreens, when faced with problems that our politicians do not know how to tackle.
- That this measure consolidates the situation of legal apartheid that we are living under in the Spanish State. A situation which, although it personally affects those whose origins are foreign, also affects us all, as it is the explicit demonstration of the health problems that our democracy is suffering.
- That it increases discretionality in the application of laws for immigrant people, as it does not clearly establish in what situations it will be possible to serve a sentence in this country or when one will be expelled.
- That it contravenes a fundamental principle of criminal law, namely, that nobody can be punished twice for the same facts. And in this case, apart from the discretionality of the application of the law, one must also consider that those who will be expelled will not be able to return to the country for as long as is decreed.
- That measures such as these nourish social racism and rejection of the foreign population, endangering coexistence in our neighbourhoods and cities.

We also demand:

- That the principle that we are all the same before the law be recovered and the rule of law be re-established. Regardless of their origins, it is important for the State to recognise all its citizens as subjects who have rights. Not doing so, is

the first step towards feeding xenophobia and racism in society, in other words, to produce a social fracture.

- Political responsibility. Particularly in times of crisis, it is not acceptable to use the immigrant population as a scapegoat and sell the idea that we will counter all the problems in our society through expulsions. It is a demonstration of the lack of political courage that currently exists. Instead of going to the root of problems and offering solutions for the citizenry, a choice is made to erect smokescreens.

We are experiencing a delicate social and economic period, in which criminalising the immigrant population and proposing more and more expulsions as a solution for every problem, does not resolve anything and may be very detrimental and dangerous. The fact is, although some go to great lengths to deny it, that there are many people who have immigrant origins whose life project is here, and who are undeniably part of our society. Hence, they are citizens, and must be recognised as such. Falling into the temptation to criminalise and blame them, looking for scapegoats, promoting prejudice, suspicion and rejection, will only cause social fracture.



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Federación estatal de asociaciones de SOS Racismo en el Estado español

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