



## **The European Union must change its immigration and asylum policy.**

***Brussels, April the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009***

### **Leaving the fatal trap set at the European borders is the challenge set by the recent shipwrecked people in the Mediterranean, causing hundreds of deaths.**

The new tragedy that just happened off the coast of Libya shows to the extent that European policies took to prevent immigration which is said to be illegal, are not only inefficient, but daily putting human lives in danger.

On the night of March 30th, there was a boat wreck off the coast of Libya that caused 365 deaths, maybe more according to some assessments. The makeshift boats called haragas, have left for Europe overloaded by migrants whose only hope was to get a better future.

Whether it is off the Canary Islands, at the gates of Ceuta and Melilla or near Lampedusa or Malta, each time the European countries have no other answer than calling for more surveillance, more security measures or more controls. They are trying to prevent all those who attempt to reach the coasts of Spain, Italy, Malta or Greece at peril of their lives. As John Redmond, the spokesman of the UN High Commissioner for refugees said, these boat wrecks “are again an example of the dangers people expose themselves to in these migratory flows which mix economic migrants and refugees, in the Mediterranean Sea and elsewhere, causing several thousands of deaths each year.”

However, now the Italian Minister of Home Affairs, Roberto Maroni, has still only one thing in mind which is promoting the Italy-Libya patrols that will be in place starting on May 15<sup>th</sup>. He counts on these patrols to put an end to migratory flows coming from Libya. No matter the boat wrecks, nor the human cost, or as the IOM spokesman Jean-Philippe Chauzy has declared, the fact that “controls have an unwanted effect of pushing the illegal immigration networks to find other roads which would be even more dangerous”.

When will the European authorities and member States be brought back to their senses and be able to assess the series of measures that couldn't either prevent more than 30,000 people to cross the Mediterranean Sea in 2008, or several thousands among them to die?

Leaving one's country, whatever the reason, is always a painful choice. But it is a choice written in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13. Leaving is a personal choice; no state measure in the world where there is free movement of goods, services and capital, will be able to prevent people from moving. If it is legitimate for a State to regulate entries and departures at its border, it is not legitimate to look upon people who arrive at the border as criminals. Women and men who want to come to Europe have the right to be welcomed, to state the reasons of their arrival. The dangerous myth is to make European citizens believe that control measures at and beyond borders would protect them from immigration, and also that deaths in the Mediterranean

Sea would be the price to pay for crossing borders. Especially when the European Union estimates its migratory balance up to more than one million people.

Europe declares its needs for migrants but wants to choose them according to these needs. Being strict to a double security and market logic, it turns its back to globalization and it denies itself of the future. By nurturing foreigner denial speeches, it participates to an increase of xenophobia within itself and disowns its founding values.

Europe must immediately change its political orientation regarding asylum and immigration; otherwise it will keep plunging into this “fatal trap set at the Europe’s borders”, as the General Secretary of the Council of Europe Terry Davis said. Not only is it a fatal trap for the migrants but it could also be fatal to Europe itself.

The AEDH is calling the MEPs, the European Commission and the Council to implement a new policy starting now. This policy would reflect the new Stockholm program that will follow The Hague program. It is calling the citizens to do the same by reaching out to the candidates of June 2009 European elections.

**Contact :**

**Pierre Barge, president**

AEDH, European Association for the defense of Human Rights

33, rue de la Caserne. B-1000 Bruxelles

Tél : +32(0)25112100 Fax : +32(0)25113200 Email : [aedh@aedh.eu](mailto:aedh@aedh.eu)

**The European Association for the defense of Human Rights (AEDH)** is an umbrella organisation gathering leagues and associations defending Human Rights in EU countries. It is associate member of the International Federation for the défense of Human Rights (FIDH). More information : [www.aedh.eu](http://www.aedh.eu)