

Mytilene / Greece: European Border Agency FRONTEX invades place of solidarity

The people of the Greek island Lesbos (Mytilene) are famous for their solidarity to the refugees arriving on the island. In December 2012 the solidarity organized by the network "Village of Alltogether" was in the focus of international media as a seldom example of good practice showing that human rights in reality are a matter of the people and not of politicians and their empty words.

Now, in September 2013, again the local people are offering with the help of the islands' authorities a shelter in PIKPA (a place for youth summer camps) to 70 refugees mainly coming from Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia. The people of the solidarity movement take once more the responsibility to cover all the daily needs like food, clothes e.g. Local people individually pass by practicing the famous Greek hospitality and bring whatever useful they can offer: some apples, loafs of bread, soap or just a welcoming smile.

On one of our solidarity visits we made to support the local structures in their everyday effort, we - some members of the network Welcome to Europe (<http://lesvos.w2eu.net>) - got aware of the fact that the European Border Agency FRONTEX, has prepared themselves to occupy two rooms in the main building with the aim to open an office for their so called "screening". This procedure most of the times results in the wrong registration of refugees' nationalities and/or age. With this involvement they have the power to categorize you in "readmittable", "deportable" or a potential refugee and thus determine the immediate destiny of all new arriving sans papiers. It depends on what they write if a refugee will be send back to Turkey, if he/she will be detained or not and even if he/she will be treated as a an adult or as a child. FRONTEXs screening is part of their "risk research" to improve "border security" in an area known for the inhuman treatment of refugees trying to cross the external borders of the EU. Meanwhile FRONTEX is playing a key role being responsible for the implementation of structures, through know-how, staff and equipment sealing the European borders also in Greece. They are directly and indirectly involved in national and international structures of human rights abuses against refugees who try to enter Greece (i.e. witnessing push-backs) and who already managed to enter Europe (i.e. witnessing the degrading detention conditions in prisons such as the police stations of Lesbos and the new detention center to be built on the island).

On the 6th of September 2013 two FRONTEX-officers from Italy and Sweden expelled a family with small children and a pregnant woman from the rooms they were hosted in order to occupy and re-use these rooms as their offices introducing themselves as European Border Police. It is more than obvious that thereby they abused the solidarity the local people are offering and the trust that has developed among the civilian supporters and the refugees in order to fulfill their task: to militarize Europes' borders instead of building a common space of solidarity.

Mytilene, 9th of September 2013