



## **MSSNG**ATTHEBORDERS

### **Missing at the Borders: the website for the project dedicated to the families of migrants deceased, missing or victims of enforced disappearances**

“People not numbers”. This is the fundamental principle that guides *Missing at the Borders*, the project aimed at giving voice to the victims of enforced disappearances and the families of migrants who have become deceased or missing while attempting to reach Europe.

The self-financed initiative is promoted by a network of organizations that works on both sides of the Mediterranean to combine forces with the families of migrants. Ever since the project’s beginning, various actors – such as *Milano senza frontiere*, *Como senza frontiere*, *Palermo senza frontiere*, *Carovane Migranti*, *Association des travailleurs Maghrébins de France*, *Alarm Phone* and *Watch the Med* – have assisted *Missing at the Borders* to raise awareness for the cause.

The network of organizations has created a website ([www.missingattheborders.org](http://www.missingattheborders.org)) to shed light on the sad phenomenon of the “new *desaparecidos*”. Although the website has been online for just a few days, it hosts a collection of stories and testimonies of family members of migrants who have been involved in denouncing European politics on migration that, by denying regular entrance into Europe, force people to risk their lives and violate their right to mobility established by Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The website currently provides detailed information about the migrant phenomenon, as well as information on the present situation in countries such as Tunisia and Algeria. The individual video testimonies of the families of migrants are particularly interesting and touching – their voices tell anecdotes, stories about walks of life, and inform about decisions made in order to truly transform the dramatic “numbers” associated with the phenomenon into real facts and events that these people have experienced.

**Hatem Gheribi** of *Alarmphone* says: “Year after year, thousands of people disappear along the borders in the course of their migratory journey. It has been estimated that the number of victims has exceeded 35,000 since the year 2000. And no one knows exactly how many victims there are along the routes from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East to the southern shores of the Mediterranean. *Missing at the Borders* is asking for justice, truth and dignity for the families; that they may receive concrete answers to questions about what has happened to their disappeared loved ones, that the EU may cease outsourcing border surveillance and that the right to mobility be guaranteed to all”.

*Missing at the Borders* is founded on the idea that the presence of family members of deceased or missing migrants and the victims of forced disappearances as a political entity is essential to denounce and expose the consequences of the criminal migration policies of Europe and its single member states.

**Edda Pando** of *Milano senza Frontiere* concludes: “The family members of migrants met while searching for their children in hospitals, in ministries, in police stations where they went to report disappearances. What is paramount is that all of them have

*made a leap of consciousness and do not accept their tragedy as a necessary consequence, and instead are mobilizing for justice and to ensure that, thanks to their testimonies, these episodes will not reoccur”.*

New videos showing interviews and testimonies of families of migrants will be published monthly, made possible in part by donors. Information on how to contribute to the project is available on the project’s website.

[www.missingattheborders.org](http://www.missingattheborders.org)

Info: [info@missingattheborders.org](mailto:info@missingattheborders.org)

English trailer <https://youtu.be/1P5GW0HRB3Q>

## **WHY “MISSING AT THE BORDERS”**

The idea to create the *Missing at the Borders* website was first conceived in 2012 when activists from various Italian and European associations (which would later make up the page’s operative team) came together after the revolution in Tunisia during a workshop in preparation for the World Social Forum, which was to take place in the country the following year. The workshop was called “Missing: measures to combat death and disappearance at the borders” and included the participation of family members of some of the more than five hundred Tunisian migrants that had disappeared between March and May 2011. It was the first time that the European and African anti-racism movements confronted a new political entity: the families of disappeared migrants. At this workshop the families confirmed that their loved ones had boarded the “boats of death” because European consulates would not grant them visas to enter Europe lawfully – not even for tourism.

Two years later, in 2014, the Maghreb/Mashreq Social Forum on migration took place and the activists of the newly-founded Milan without borders (*Milano senza frontiere*) network learned of another group of Algerian families whose children went missing during their journey to Europe, and that in 2008 this same group of families founded *Collectif des Familles de Harragas d Annaba*. The same year one of the activists from Milan without borders (*Milano senza frontiere*) met with this group.

In 2015, during the course of the World Social Forum (which was held for the second time in Tunis), some of the organizations that would later found *Missing at the Borders* (such as *Milano senza frontiere* and *Carovane Migranti*) helped organize the event called “People not numbers”. During this event, families of missing migrants met for the first time to tell first hand what they had experienced. Participants included a representative from the Algerian families and their lawyer, various representatives of the Tunisian families, a representative of the Eritrean families and a representative of the families of missing migrants from central America who, for the past thirteen years, have been active in helping families find loved ones who have gone missing en route from central America to the United States via Mexico.

In June 2015 the Milan without borders (*Milano senza frontiere*) network began the march of the new *desaparecidos* to raise awareness for the fact that the number of reported victims of shipwreck is increasingly frequent and that these occurrences involve real people, each with their own stories and individual sufferings. At this point, the Palermo without borders (*Palermo senza frontiere*) and Como without borders (*Como senza frontiere*) network was established to put on marches in these cities, as well as in Turin, Rome, Messina, Naples, Strasbourg and Hanover. To this day, the meeting during which participants walk in circles in a certain location at a certain time holding photographs of Tunisian and Algerian migrants who have gone missing while crossing the Mediterranean, or photographs of victims of forced disappearance, is held every first Thursday of the month from 6:30pm to 7:30pm in Piazza della Scala. June 2018 marks the third anniversary of the Milan March.

At the end of 2016 a meeting took place between Milan without borders (*Milano senza frontiere*), ATMF (Association des travailleurs Maghrèbins de France) and Alarm Phone (a Watch the Med project manages a self-organized telephone line for distressed refugees in the Mediterranean Sea and informs the coastguards of vessels in distress and their position. The project "*Missing at the Borders*" stems from this encounter.