



News

23 April (Issue 08/21)

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Biometric databases in Africa to facilitate deportations from Europe

A restricted document obtained by *Statewatch* provides further confirmation that biometric population databases being set up in African states, funded by the EU in the name of facilitating people's rights, will also expedite forced removals from the EU.

The document in question is an overview of the extent of non-EU states' levels of cooperation with readmission proceedings. The plan to use visa policy, and other instruments, is one of the external elements of the EU's plan to massively step up expulsions, the internal side of which was analysed in our report [Deportation Union](#), published last year.

Read our news article [here](#) and an analysis of the plans to use visa policy as "leverage" to step up forced removals [here](#).

Protect human rights defender Helena Maleno

Helena Maleno has saved tens of thousands of lives through her human rights work, but was recently violently deported from Morocco, the latest action in a long-running campaign of state harassment against her. You can read and sign an open letter calling on the Spanish government to uphold her rights [here](#).

A decade later, still no justice for shipwreck victims

On the tenth anniversary of the 'Left-To-Die boat' case, in which 63 people died after being left adrift in the Mediterranean Sea despite multiple authorities and vessels knowing of their location and situation, the survivors still have not obtained justice. A [joint statement](#) calls for that to change.

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[EU moves ahead with plans to use visa policy as "leverage" to increase deportations](#)

Since 2020, the EU has been able to use its visa policy as “leverage to improve cooperation with third countries on return and readmission,” as part of the drive to increase deportations. Non-EU states can be threatened with visa restrictions for their nationals if they are not deemed to cooperate sufficiently with the readmission process. A recent European Commission document, published here, sets out the perceived level of cooperation by those non-EU states. The Council is now considering potential next steps to ensure compliance with EU migration policies.

News

23 April

[Mediterranean: European Contact Group on Search and Rescue failing to meet transparency requirements](#)

In response to ongoing deaths in the Mediterranean Sea, the European Commission set up a ‘Contact Group on Search and Rescue’, made up of EU member state authorities. It aims to establish a “structured framework for cooperation at EU level in order to ensure rapid response in case of events at sea as well as maintaining safety of navigation and ensuring effective migration management.” A month after its first meeting, as avoidable deaths and a lack of assistance to vessels in distress in the Mediterranean continue, it is failing to meet its own transparency requirements.

21 April

[Divestment from the border industrial complex could spur “a politics that protects and upholds the rights of refugees and migrants”](#)

A recent report reveals the largest corporate players in today’s global “border industrial complex” and calls for divestment from the industry, as a way to force states to halt the implementation of harmful border security models.

21 April

[Italy: Interior ministry’s facial recognition system is unlawful](#)

The deployment of facial recognition technology acquired by the interior ministry for deployment in migration and public order contexts was deemed unlawful in a far-reaching decision by the Italian ombudsman on 16 April 2021.

19 April

[EU: Tracking the Pact: North Africa a key focus for new "comprehensive" migration deals](#)

Two documents obtained by Statewatch outline the thinking of the Portuguese Council Presidency and the Spanish authorities on how to step up cooperation on migration (in particular on "border management") with Morocco and other states in the region.

14 April

[Senegal: Biometric population database will facilitate deportations, restricted EU document confirms](#)

The completion of a national biometric population database in Senegal would facilitate the forced removal of more Senegalese citizens from the EU by allowing for a "consolidated" identification procedure, according to a restricted European Commission document obtained by Statewatch.

12 April

[EU: Artificial intelligence: "forecasting and early warning tool for migration" and "data spaces in law enforcement"](#)

Two studies contracted by the European Commission on potential applications of "artificial intelligence" in home affairs were recently published: one concerning "a forecasting and early warning tool for migration"; and the other on "technical requirements for data spaces in law enforcement".

Other reports

13 April

[Europe: Prison population continues to decline, overcrowding remains a serious problem](#)

Imprisonment rates continue to fall, find the latest Council of Europe penal statistics, although the report says this is due to the inability to prosecute cyber-enabled criminal offences rather than a shift away from incarceration as a form of punishment. Drug offences remain the reason for most convictions leading to imprisonment, making up 17.7% of the total prison population. The CoE press release also highlights that overcrowding remains a serious problem in a number of member states.

13 April

[Spain: Government must take action to protect human rights defender Helena Maleno](#)

An open letter is calling on the government of Spain to act to protect Helena Maleno, a human rights defender who has saved tens of thousands of lives and who was recently violently deported from Morocco, where she has lived for 20 years, and separated from her daughter in the process.

12 April

[The 'Left-To-Die boat' : ten years on, it's more urgent than ever to obtain justice for the shipwrecked](#)

A joint statement on the tenth anniversary of the 'Left-To-Die boat' case, in which 63 people died after being left adrift at sea despite multiple authorities and vessels knowing of their location and situation.

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