



News

7 May (Issue 09/21)

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EU: Detention at the borders to increase “voluntary” removals

As part of its ongoing drive to increase the removal of migrants from EU territory, the European Commission unveiled a new strategy on "voluntary" return and reintegration at the end of April. The document states the use of detention "can increase the uptake of voluntary returns at early stages of the return process." In particular, the proposed introduction of "border return procedures" – which could introduce mandatory detention of up to 10 months – is seen as key.

Under these procedures, the Commission says people will be "available and more willing to cooperate with the authorities." This is perhaps best-translated as 'locked up and out of options'. Read more [here](#).

Search and rescue in the Mediterranean: shedding some light on high-level coordination

Following the publication of our recent article on the transparency failings of the European Commission's Contact Group on Search and Rescue, the Commission has now published the group's terms of reference, the agenda of the first meeting, and the institutions and agencies that are representing member states. The latter information is crucial if national authorities are to be held to account for their action – or inaction – on search and rescue.

You can find an updated version of our article [here](#).

Proposals to increase police data exchange on “civil unrest”

Europol should step up data exchange on "civil unrest", say a set of draft conclusions circulated by Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU, obtained by *Statewatch*. The conclusions express concern for a possible increase in demonstrations by "violent extremists".

Find out more [here](#).

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06 May 2021

[Border surveillance, drones and militarisation of the Mediterranean](#)

The growing use of drones and other long-range, increasingly-automated forms of surveillance and data collection are part of the militarisation of Europe's borders in the Mediterranean, which have led to thousands of unnecessary deaths and push- and pull-backs to Libya, where migrants and refugees face arbitrary detention, violence, mistreatment and torture. This article, by the journalist Antonio Mazzeo, chronicles investments into and tests and deployments of drone technology by EU and national agencies in the Mediterranean.

News

7 May

[Europol should step up data exchange on "civil unrest", Council Presidency proposes](#)

Europol should exchange information with national authorities "regarding the prevention of violent demonstrations and civil unrest," say a draft set of Council conclusions on "lessons learned" from the pandemic for internal security and law enforcement.

6 May

[Frontex and lobbying: Executive Director Decision on the Transparency Register](#)

Frontex is to set up a lobbying transparency register to record details of meetings with representatives from the private sector, in accordance with the 2019 Regulation governing the border agency. Statewatch has obtained the Decision of Executive Director establishing the register.

6 May

[EU: Military Committee plan to ensure input into the "Strategic Compass"](#)

The EU is bolstering its ability to project power abroad. The latest means for doing so is through the adoption of a "Strategic Compass", which is intended to "help strengthen a common European security and defence culture". An internal document obtained by Statewatch shows how the EU Military Committee aims to ensure the views of the "Military Community" are taken into account.

5 May

[EU: Detention at the borders to increase "voluntary" return of migrants](#)

A new strategy on "voluntary" return and reintegration unveiled by the European Commission at the end of last month notes that the use of detention "can increase the uptake of voluntary returns at early stages of the return process."

30 April

[Pushbacks from Greece to Turkey: Ombudsman's report highlights obstruction of investigations](#)

As part of an ongoing investigation into pushbacks of migrants and refugees from Greece to Turkey, the Greek Ombudsman has issued an interim report summarising the cases examined so far and the response - or lack thereof - of the authorities.

27 April

[EU: 'Covid Pass': MEPs must prevent surveillance, discrimination and a never-ending certification scheme](#)

The EU's proposed 'Digital Green Certificate' is intended to allow people to prove that they have been vaccinated, recently recovered from COVID-19, or received a negative test result. The aim is to facilitate the return of free movement within the EU. However, 28 human rights organisations, including Statewatch, have written to the European Parliament to warn that they must fix problems with the proposals that mean the certificates could facilitate surveillance, exacerbate discrimination and potentially become a permanent fixture of everyday life.

Other reports

6 May

[Council of Europe: Anti-torture committee warns against the impact of austerity measures on the conditions of detention in prisons](#)

Alongside the release of its annual report, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture has issued a set of minimum requirements for detention in prisons. The requirements are a response to a deterioration in conditions caused by years of austerity measures - and which may be worsened by future cuts introduced in response to expenditure during the pandemic.

5 May

[Algorithmic discrimination in Europe: Challenges and opportunities for gender equality and non-discrimination law](#)

A study contracted by the European Commission examining how practices of algorithmic discrimination can undermine the rights to equality and non-discrimination, and potential responses.

5 May

[Illegal detention at the French-Italian border: the State Council washes its hands of the issue](#)

A press release from a group of human rights organisations in response to a decision of the French Conseil d'Etat, which has failed to order the closure of illegal detention facilities at the French-Italian border.

4 May

[Khlaifia sentence: Italy still under scrutiny for violations in hotspots](#)

Five years after the Khlaifia ruling handed down by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the effective respect of rights in hotspots in Italy is still not guaranteed and needs to be further examined in December 2021. This was decided by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe following violations and critical events reported by ASGI, A Buon Diritto Onlus and CILD.

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