

Violence, racism and lies, from Rosarno to Bari

Migreurop publishes a report following the fact-finding mission on 15 January 2010

19 January 2010

Following the serious events that unfolded on 7 and 8 January 2010 in Rosarno (in southern Italy), where some migrant workers were the victims of racist violence and attacks, and in the framework of its campaign “For a right of access to places of detention”, Migreurop organised an international fact-finding mission on Friday 15 January 2010.

This mission made it possible to visit the Identification and Expulsion Centre (CIE) as well as the Asylum Seekers’ Reception Centre (CARA) in Bari.

The delegation was formed by three MEPs: Isabelle Durant (Europe Ecologie in the European Parliament - Belgium), H el ene Flautre (Europe Ecologie in the European Parliament - France) and Rui Tavares (GUE, United Left Group in the European Parliament - Portugal); one Italian MP: Maurizio Turco (Radicali); and three European associations that are Migreurop members: ARCI (Italy), Statewatch (England) and CIR E (Belgium).

The MEPs that participated in the mission organised a press conference in the European Parliament in Strasbourg on Tuesday 19 January at 14:30 about the alarming situation of migrants in Italy.

The testimonies collected during the mission describe the serious conditions of exploitation in the agricultural activities in which the sub-Saharan workers were employed. They also explain the violations of rights that they suffered that, apart from the conditions in which they worked, primarily concern the inhuman and degrading conditions in which they were lodged and the situation of segregation that they faced. With regards to these findings, it follows that rather than being culprits, the migrants of Rosarno are victims who must be protected.

The mission noted that the violence they suffered was added to by the Italian government’s lies: while the interior minister claimed that the injured migrants were granted a status of humanitarian protection, the delegation collected several statements according to which an injured man was detained in the CIE with a view to expulsion procedures being enacted. Moreover, the migrants’ forced evacuation from Rosarno by the police forces, presented to them as a measure to protect them from the autochthonous population’s revenge, turned out to be a round-up for those among them who did not have a residence permit. The latter were taken into a detention camp to await their expulsion.

These events did not happen by chance, it is the government’s responsibility for encouraging racism and violence through legislation and the declarations by some of its representatives, while it ends up being absent in places where conflicts take place. What happened is the outcome of two factors: the criminalisation of migrants and the absence of the State in places where the law of the mafia rules.

Migreurop recommends that the migrant workers from Rosarno who are currently detained must enjoy a specific protection as victims of human and economic exploitation. Likewise, we demand that additional investigations be carried out into the events in Rosarno. There is a need to analyse the political and economic processes that lead to foreigners from Africa who are employed in agricultural businesses in southern Italy and elsewhere in Europe being placed in situations of semi-slavery and subjected to sub-human conditions.

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