



**Steps in the process of externalisation
of border controls to Africa,
from the Valletta Summit to today**

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*ARCI - as part of a monitoring project
of European and Italian externalisation policies,
as well as for the continuous provision of information
on the evolution of both multilateral and bilateral agreements
with the countries of origin and of transit -
has produced this analysis to inform
civil society and governments
on possible abuses of the strategies
that lead to systematic violations
of fundamental human rights
and of International Conventions*



1. The EU's external dimension formula in relation to migration: security services development policies, border controls and readmission policies for returning migrants

While the logic of externalisation of borders control to neighbouring countries, has been an essential feature of EU strategy over the last ten years, as evidenced first by Tony Blair's government's proposal of 2003 to create asylum seekers' camps in transit countries, by the Italy-Libya agreement of 2008, by that between Spain and Morocco of 2012, as well also as the EU-Turkey readmission agreement of 2014, we are now witnessing an acceleration in the agreements and in their effects. This is also due to the considerable funds it has been decided to invest in the criminalisation of migration. Trust funds for Africa, established at the Valletta Summit, have made cash available to facilitate dealings with African countries. This monetisation of the relationship with African countries opens up a trade logic that appears to skate over questions of human rights and the fate of thousands of people on the African continent. It thus become the norm for the situation to arise in which Kenya threatens to close Dadaab¹, the largest refugee camp in the world, which itself is a direct consequence of European strategies, in order to gain its own access to a part of the funds. Dictatorships such as those in Eritrea, Sudan and even Gambia use the partnership status assigned them by the European Union in its fight against immigration, to rehabilitate themselves in the eyes of international public opinion, seeking to sweep the crimes they have committed under the carpet.

The logic that underlies all of the accords that have been signed is the same, that is to say to use principally cooperation funds or public and private investment projects with the dual aim of "helping them at home" and forcing African countries to cooperate by closing their borders and by readmitting their nationals considered undesirable by the member states. The approach is very dangerous on several accounts. Firstly the suggestion that development will eradicate the causes of migration attempts to introduce a structural idea that those who arrive at our shores are only trying to escape hunger, representing to the public that potential asylum seekers are "economic migrants", in denial of the fact that the real causes of most of the movements of these people are due to the actions of dictatorships, totalitarian regimes, conflicts and the persecution of specific groups of the population. There is also an assumption that migration will be prevented if we increase development funds; the fact is nothing could be further from the truth. The point has been well made by the U.N. Migrants' Rights representative François Crépeau²: «All the studies I have seen show that more development leads to increased migration. All the people who have wanted for some

1 - <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/msf/blog/010616/au-kenya-la-fermeture-du-camp-de-dadaab-en-question-0>

2 - <http://www.euractiv.fr/section/aide-au-developpement/news/le-developpement-accentue-les-migrations-af-firme-un-rapporteur-de-l-onu/>

time to leave but lacked the means to do so start to acquire an ability to do so and start to leave their country. This does not mean that developed countries should not help other countries to develop, but if politicians believe that by pouring 500 billion euros into Africa will stop migration over the next five years, they are mistaken». If, moreover, we look in detail at the international cooperation funds used it becomes



evident that many are not even being used for development projects but rather for control and repression at borders, as well as all too often being allocated to countries that systematically infringe fundamental human rights. The strings explicitly attached to recent EU Commission proposals also introduce elements of blackmail by threatening states that refuse to close their borders, while rewarding those which repress their own citizens or refugees in transit in the name of cooperation with Europe. One of the numerous examples that illustrates how development policy is being used for security interests is the frequent reference to article 13 of the Cotonou Agreement when drafting agreements with African countries. The Cotonou Agreement enshrines partnerships between countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific on the one hand and the United States and the EU on the other, with the primary objectives of eliminating poverty, achieving sustainable and long-term development and integrating ACP countries into the world economy³. This document is supposed to sanction the highest values, while its article 13 establishes the obligation of all ACP countries to cooperate in taking back all their citizens that Europe wishes to expel. The use of this clause, accompanied by the legalisation of “European permit”, could

3 - http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/acp/03_01/pdf/mn3012634_fr.pdf

result in mass repatriations with no analysis of the risks being encountered by those sent back on their re-entry in the countries of origin. In many cases help is given to the military and police forces of undemocratic or corrupt Governments, which may result in actually increasing the reasons people have to become migrants or to flee the country.

The external dimensions drawn up by the European Union may also turn quickly into dangerous form of interference in the already precarious balance in Africa. By requiring countries such as Niger, Sudan and Cameroon to control and then close their borders violates the principle established for the ECOWAS⁴ area for freedom of movement both of goods and of people. It is a principle that already has many opponents and is likely to be further compromised as a result of these European policies. Another factor dangerously linked to migration targets is security intervention. There are a number of examples of this, such as the use of the anti-terrorism activity in Mali and in Niger, with EucapSahel, involving the regional G5 Sahel project, consisting in the representatives of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, set up to react to threats to peace, security and development. The protection of thousands of refugees could be pushed into the background or simply forgotten about if the migration question is put in the hand of military missions established to fight terrorism in a highly unstable and sensitive region.

ARCI, continuing to stress the importance of increasing national and European development funds, feels that these must in no way be linked to migration control, whether aiming at preventing the departures of people or as blackmail in order to achieve the management of borders and forced repatriations that infringe human rights. ARCI also points out that the claimed aim of the European documents to save lives by means of the strategy of externalisation is pure hypocrisy because recent history has taught us that the closure of one route does not reduce migration but simply results in the opening of another that brings with it an even higher death toll. Criminalising migrants in countries of transit has the effect of increasing the number of people dying, held back in the desert, or in their countries of origin, forced to find even more hostile paths of flight. The European Union will be directly responsible for these deaths, even though the deaths do not take place on its own coasts, as a direct consequence of its policies in Africa. It is our view that developmental aid policies must be bound to requirements of respect for human rights and the feasibility of real democratic processes. The centrality must be stressed of the, hopefully safe and legal, migration processes while favouring development in the countries of origin, coupled with the strengthening of civil society.

4 - ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States. Comunità economica degli Stati dell'Africa dell'Ovest.



2. Principal steps in European strategy for outsourcing in Africa: The Khartoum process, Trust funds for Africa and “Migration Compact”

The Khartoum Process of 28th November 2014

On 28th November in Rome - taking advantage of the Italian presidency of the EU - a ministerial conference was held on the **Khartoum Process** between the EU member states and the countries of the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia and Djibouti) and a number of transit countries (South Sudan, Sudan, Tunisia, Kenya and Egypt). The Khartoum Process has sought to focus, according to the Italian government, on a matter of great urgency, that is to say on people smuggling and trafficking. It subsequently go on to involve other subjects, consistent with EU priorities on lawful migration, illegal migration, development and international protection. Also in this case there is a two-phase policy that offers certainty only in relation to the use of resources and instruments for the monitoring and blocking of flows of people, while on the other hand the question of lawful access remains shrouded in uncertainty both as regards timescales and procedures. The first step seems to be involve financial cooperation and EU funding of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UNHCR, established with the aim of creating and managing migrant camps in the departure and transit countries. Alongside this there is an information campaign, that has already been tried in the past with an obvious lack of success, designed to dissuade people from leaving their countries, telling them of the risks they run. There are also projects in place to finance the training of border guards.

The actual goal of the EU, with the Italian Government in the front line, is to try to draw up our borders in Africa, or even at the countries of departure themselves, blocking at source “economic” migrants and asylum seekers, i.e. those fleeing wars and persecution. This introduces the need for a normalisation of relations with dictatorships, those from which thousands of people are fleeing and who, on arrival in Italy, are then granted refugee status. The EU is even willing to bargain with the Eritrean dictator Isaias Afewerki, who has ruled since 1993 a country from which has emerged one of the largest groups of people seeking protection, for the very reason that there is a complete lack of any semblance of democracy or respect for human rights. All this is in spite of the damning conclusions reached by the UN after its inquiry into the crimes that have been committed in Eritrea⁵. A recent IRIN report makes reference to the Eritrea’s desire to be a reliable part-

5 - <http://ilmanifesto.info/una-scelta-contro-i-migranti/>



ner of the EU, to strengthen controls over its borders and to prevent the flight of its citizens, on the pretext of making the region safe at the time of its 25 years of independence celebrations.

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12th November 2015.
EU/AU summit
at Valletta (Malta)
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On the occasion of the EU/UA migration summit of 12th November in Valletta (Malta) -25 EU member states, together with Norway and Switzerland, set up an EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). The main objective of the funds was to support countries of origin and transit for the Central Me-

diterranean route in an effort to block the flow of migrants to Italy, as well as to advance development projects aimed at removing the causes of migration, and to establish an African borders control system to identify transiting migrants. To this end, the Commission made a total of 1.8 billion euros available, primarily from the Development Funds: 77% from the eleventh European Development Fund (EDF) reserve, the rest integrated from special regional funds for Central and West Africa and the Horn of Africa, from the Development and Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). **Italy provides 10 million euros in support Valletta Trust Fund, making it one of the top**

two countries, with Belgium, contributing to the EU externalization policy in Africa.

The Trust Funds focus primarily on the countries involved in the Central Mediterranean route, namely the Sahel region (Libya, Mali and Niger) and the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan). In December 2015, in pursuance of the goals set by the Khartoum process, the Commission allocated a fund of 600 million euros to the countries of the Horn of Africa to be used up to the year 2020. The first country to which the Trust Funds were allocated was Ethiopia that had already during the Summit signed an EU Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility concentrating principally on the promotion of an asylum system in Ethiopia, support for a regional system of border controls in the Horn of Africa using joint patrols and the exchange of information pursuant to the Khartoum process. As part of the same project Ethiopia undertook to apply article 13 of the Cotonou Agreements for the facilitation of readmissions of migrants. The EU's interest in collaboration with Ethiopia is certainly linked to its being the country of origin of many asylum seekers arriving on the coasts of Europe but also because it is a transit country, hosting more than 750,000 Eritrean, Somali and Sudanese refugees. For this purpose Ethiopia was firstly allocated 47 million euros from the EUTF and then another 20 million for a specific migration control project in the north of the country, followed by a further 30 million, and hence a total sum of 125 million euros, for the Horn of Africa. Somalia was allocated the remaining 50 million euros. Many West African countries have also received EUTF monies, with 60 million euros in total going to development projects in Senegal, designed to reduce departures, 30 million to Niger, 27 million to Chad, 21 million to Nigeria, and 20 to Cameroon.

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**April 2016
Migration Compact**

The Italian Government, taking as its example the highly criticised accord between the EU and Turkey, has proposed to establish similar cooperation with the main African countries of migrant origin and transit towards the Central Mediterranean route. It suggests further increases in funding, using EU bonds, to be brought to the negotiating table in exchange for cooperation in migrant control and readmissions. The priority countries indicated by the Italian Government are Tunisia, Senegal, Ghana, Niger, Egypt and the Ivory Coast. In support of its proposal, seeking to convince African countries to cooperate, Italy has organised for May 18, 2016, an Inter-Ministerial Italy - Africa meeting in Rome, inviting leaders of African States as well as representatives of the African Union. The event in question is clearly a response to economic interests; in 2014 Italy was in 7th place among Africa's trading partners, as well as a diplomatic partner, with 54 African States votes enabling Italy to achieve the necessary two-thirds majority of votes of those entitled to its General Assembly for election to a seat as non-permanent member

of the Security Council. It is however the control of migration that remains the principal objective. At this summit Gentiloni proposed to his Libyan counterpart Taher Siyala the reactivation of the 2008 Friendship Treaty. It is proposed therefore to re-establish an accord with a government that is struggling, as is clear from the Vienna meetings, to be recognised by all factions, where the original agreement was one signed between Berlusconi and Gaddafi and which is remembered for the tragic effects that ensued, with the 2009 rejections, condemnation by the ECHR, the Finmeccanica bids for construction of a wall on the southern border of the country and the proliferation of the still existing detention centres⁶.

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**6th June 2016
European Commission
notification to the
European Parliament,
to the Council
of Europe and to the
European Investment
Bank on the creation
of a new partnership
framework with third
party countries
in relation
to the European
migration agenda⁷**

Still taking as its cue the infamous EU - Turkey accord, even though it is clear in almost two months of its application that it has produced violations of asylum rights and illegal expulsions, this document establishes a cooperation framework with the main countries of origin and transit both for the central Mediterranean route and the eastern route. The document provides for two-stage cooperation: over the very short term with the release of 3.1 billion euros, to be added to EUTF, of which 2.4 billion to Development funds and 1.6 billion to Facilitation of Investment for Africa. The European logic with regard to the former funds is that they should attract additional private investments to achieve a second milestone of 31 billion euros that could be increased up to 62 billion euros through additional

private and public investments from the Member States. To achieve this objective, the EU sees the European Investment Bank as playing a central role, supported by organisations such as the UNHCR and the IOM, as well also as institutions such as the G7, G20 and G5Sahel in pursuance of the plan's goals. The idea behind the proposal is the adoption of a long term Investment Plan for Africa by investing tens of billions of euros in infrastructure drawing on private investment in Africa, in the way that the Juncker plan set out to do in Europe, helping African countries to become an agent in the international private investment market. In this case too the objectives laid down by the plan's aims are far amounting to real development, focusing only on improving border controls and facilitating re-admissions to the countries of origin and transit. To this end, these countries undertake to go ahead

6 - http://www.huffingtonpost.it/sara-prestianni/luc-e-litalia-accelerano-il-processo-di-esternalizzazione-del-controllo-alle-frontiere-_b_10050658.html

7 - http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_external_aspects_eam_towards_new_migration_ompact_en.pdf

with the production of biometric documents for their nationals as well as using the European permit as a means of accelerating repatriation, thus paving the way for dangerous collective expulsions that put hundreds of people's lives at risk. Sixteen priority countries have been identified, some of which are under dictatorships, and include Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. African countries for which immediate action is expected are Nigeria, Senegal, Ethiopia, Niger and Mali. A long chapter in the document addressed the situation in Libya, central to the Central Mediterranean route, and a country with which the EU, despite the chaos that reigns in the country, intends to establish cooperation and agreements in the area of migration. An aid package of 100 million euros has been worked out for this purpose, in part already paid out, for the protection of migrants in detention centres, improving the border controls system and also the legal framework in force in the country. It is obviously profoundly hypocritical to provide funds to improve living conditions in illegal centres in which torture is systematically practiced. Among the actions provided for is the creation of a Libyan Coast Guard, despite an awareness of the fact that every rescue is followed by the detention of migrants intercepted at sea, while it is hoped that they then move on to the subsequent operation EuNavForMed stage to be able to intervene officially in Libyan waters.

The document put forward by the Commission for the first time formalises the idea of making the provision of development funds subject to cooperation on migration, turning cooperation into a matter of "reward" or "penalty" depending on the commitment to controls and readmissions.



3. The effects of the externalisation policy to the african origin and transit countries in three key countries to the strategies of Italy and Europe, namely the Sudan, Niger and Gambia

The last chapter of this analysis examines the strategy and the effects of the externalisation policy in three key countries for the migration routes, those of the Sudan, Niger and Gambia. While Sudan and Niger are of direct interest to Italian politics, as transit countries for migrants arriving at our shores, it is clear that negotiations are primarily being carried out by the European institutions. The Gambia would however appear to be a good example of how Italian strategy continues to pursue its own interests, especially in relation to those countries from which migrants come into our country.

1. The case of Sudan, when European cooperation leads to the rounding up of people and very dangerous deportations of Eritrean refugees

The Sudan, as country of origin and above all country of transit for refugees from the horn of Africa, is central both to Italian and European externalisation strategy. It seems that it interests Italy and Europe little that in the name of the battle against immigration they have to bargain with one of the worst of Africa's dictatorships, that of Omar al-Bashir, on the fate of Eritrean refugees. The Sudanese president, with whom Italy has been coordinating under the terms of the Khar-

toum process, received an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court, charged with crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide in relation to the Darfur conflict.

The central role of Italy in Sudan began with the Khartoum process, vigorously promoted during the period of the Italian Presidency of the EU. The first meeting was held in October 2014 by way of preparation for the official conference held in Rome in November of 2014. A meeting was held in Sudan, on 17th February 2016, attended by a joint mission of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, headed by the Undersecretary of the Interior Domenico Manzione. Migratory issues were at the centre of the entire mission. On the day of arrival, on February 15, the whole delegation, accompanied by the Italian Ambassador in Khartoum, Fabrizio Lobasso, met the Sudanese authorities and the relevant international organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration - IOM - and the 'United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees-UNHCR. Among the priorities for Sudan to emerge were the shoring up of

border management and controls and the establishment of special bodies to carry these processes out. The delegation also visited the Migrant Resource and Response Centre (MRRC), a pilot centre that the IOM recently opened in Khartoum, with financial support from the Italian Cooperation similar to that in Agadez (Niger) where actions are carried out that include the diffusion of information, dissuading departing migrants and promoting voluntary repatriation.

On 23rd March 2016 the German newspaper Der Spiegel revealed a classified EU document that detailed the use of trust funds for the Sudan, relating to the sending of identification and border control material to the Sudanese dictatorship, border control police force training and the construction of closed centres in Kadaref and Kassala. Although a weak denial was forthcoming from the EU, the commitment of Sudan in the last two months to turn itself into a true gendarme for Europe suggests that negotiations are in fact very advanced. The Human Rights Watch organization, Democratic Eritrea and the IRIN all denounced in May the systematic roundups in Khartoum and the north of the country towards Libya, which was followed by deportations to Eritrea. It appears that 900 Eritreans were arrested in the neighbourhoods with the highest concentrations of refugees (Al Giref and Ad Dem, Bahri and Djumbahri) with 400 being arrested in the north of the country while trying to reach Libya. The arrests were followed by deportations to Eritrea, endangering the lives of more than 1,300 people. Knowing that refugees have to leave Eritrea “illegally”, with the dictatorship of Afewerki making such departure an offense punishable by life imprisonment, there is good reason to be concerned about the fate of the deportees of which there is no news. In addition to the arrests, it also seems that since relations with the EU have accelerated controls on the southern border of the country have increased, making it particularly difficult for Eritreans to flee their country. In the light of UN findings on Eritrea, which it has described as a totalitarian state responsible for systematic and widespread violations of human rights, the practice of the Sudanese government is all the more worrying.



2. The accord between Niger and the EU on readmission and security

A centre for one of the main routes used by Sub-Saharan migrants travelling through Libya and bound for the European coasts, Niger is a high priority country for Italian and European diplomatic efforts. According to the IOM, between February and April of 2016, more than 60,000 people passed through the city of Agadez, of which 45,000 in the direction of neighbouring Libya. Negotiations between the EU and Italy with Niger are long-standing. Back in 2014 Agadez was already a centre of the hotspot policy of export to transit countries, where here the IOM carries out its information, deterrence and voluntary returns work. Negotiations with Niger ended May 4, 2016, a few days from the re-election of Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger as President, with EU as represented by the German Minister of Foreign Affairs Steinmeier and his French counterpart Ayrault, concluding with this Sahel 5 country various projects in the areas of migration and development. Niger is the latest of many European diplomat excursions relating to the distribution of nearly two billion euros of the African Trust Fund established at the meeting of Valletta in November 2015, which is now focusing on the Sahel. For just 75 million euros Niger undertakes to control its borders to prevent migrants from reaching Libya, as well also to accept the readmission of people who have passed through Niger and are then found in Europe. It is quite obvious that this European agreement is of particular interest to Italy if the readmission clause regarding those just transiting Nigeria permits expulsions to Nigeria directly without have to sign specific agreements with the countries of origin. No concern has been raised as to what happens if Niger in turn expels migrants returned to it from Italy to its own neighbouring countries in a chain of violence and inhumanity. In addition to this, the border control commitment would enable Italy to block arrivals without having to deal with unstable Libya, thus forcing migrants to find even more dangerous, costly and time consuming access routes. As well as the dangerous linkage between development and migration that characterises all the projects funded under the Valletta meeting, the agreement with Niger also has a strict linkage between security and migration that emerges the from central role given to the EUCAP Sahel mission in the area of migration. Eucap Sahel, promoted and funded by the EU started out in 2012 as a support mission to fight terrorism, and organised crime, and to promote the security in uranium deposits areas, but it is clearly turning itself into an immigration mission. An agreement along the same lines was also signed with neighbouring Mali, in April of 2016, for 43.5 million euros with provides for the central role of the Eucap Sahel mission Mali⁸.

A central role could also be played by the Agadez multipurpose centre that now

8 - http://ec.europa.eu/statements-ec/2016/160415_02_fr.htm

performs the role of deterring departures and fostering voluntary returns. It threatens however to become an operating hotspot for the implementation of readmissions procedures and controlling migratory flows if it proceeds with the identification of those who have transited through. Another key role in the implementation of the European plan is played by the IOM, which in Mauritania and Mali organises security and border control training funded by the Japanese Government, while in Niger, also funded by Italy, the focus is on voluntary returns and a departure dissuasion policy.

3. Bilateral accord between Italy and Gambia for cooperation to facilitate expulsions

Alongside the central role Italy plays in the promotion of European Migration Compact, our country is particularly active in the area of bilateral cooperation with key countries of origin and transit of migrants arriving on our shores with a view to facilitating return procedures and to blocking departures. The Gambia is certainly a key country to Italian strategy, with Gambians

being the third most numerous nationals arriving in the first half of 2016, while just over 8,500 asylum applications were submitted from there in 2015. Despite the numerous reports denouncing systematic violations of human rights by the dictator Yahya Jammeh, Italy has through its hotspot approach insisted on considering the Gambians as economic migrants, as evidenced by the many deferred rejection decrees issued to them from in the early hours after their alighting here⁹. The title of the Human Rights Watch report of 2015¹⁰ on Gambia was “A State of Fear” denouncing arbitrary arrests, torture and murder. A recent European Parliament motion¹¹ denounces disproportionate and violent reactions against peaceful demonstrations and concedes that during the 22 years of President Yahya Jammeh’s regime, in power since 1994, there have been cases of activists who have gone missing or been executed for political and non-judicial reasons. The paper reports that the Gambian security forces and paramilitary groups have repeatedly and systematically violated human rights with impunity. The very days the European Parliament published a motion against the Gambian regime, on May 10th, a delegation of representatives of the Italian scientific police and Italian Cooperation bodies were in Banjul. As part of the Migration Compact, the meeting’s main objective was to make deals with Yahya Jammeh’s dictatorship to facilitate the expulsion of Gambian migrants in Italy and to block further arrivals.

This is not the first time that Italy has signed agreements with this country, other

9 - <http://ilmanifesto.info/le-associazioni-illegali-gli-hot-spot-e-i-respingimenti-differiti/>

10 - <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/16/state-fear/arbitrary-arrests-torture-and-killings>

11 - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B8-2016-0591&language=EN>

memoranda were signed in 2011 and 2013. A recent Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Chief of Police and his Gambian counterpart, as reported in the Road Map on immigration, with which, in exchange for various forms of co-operation and police training, the Gambia undertakes to issue the permit required for repatriation within 48 hours of recognition of nationality by Gambian police present in Italy. The risk, as has been the experience with Egyptians expelled just a few hours after their arrival, is that where deportation agreements are in place it is all too easy to proceed with the rejection of those who would be entitled to asylum. To convince the Gambian dictatorship to cooperate, Italy has promised to send 50 vehicles for controlling the border with Senegal from which asylum seekers pass through to get to Mali, Algeria, Libya and Italy. As a special 'gift' to help persuade acceptance of Gambians deported from our country and for effective policing of its borders, Italy has also pledged 250 computers, 250 printers and 250 scanners.

This visit would seem to be all the more serious when we consider that in 2015 Italy recognised 2,546 humanitarian protections, 194 subsidiaries and 250 refugee statuses to Gambians. If the agreement becomes operational, people who could obtain refugee status or some form of protection, would be sent straight back or blocked before leaving, so that they are abandoned to the mercies of the very undemocratic regime they are trying to flee from. It is a clear example of externalisation of borders and controls that abandons any semblance of interest in human rights, sending people who have the right to stay away, at little expense, from our country and from the EU. In the case of Gambia it must also be emphasised that there is a real danger associated with criminalisation on return, which means that as is usually the case with dictatorial regimes, those who emigrate are considered as deserters and likely find prison and other forms of persecution awaiting them on return.

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