

# **TRANSNATIONAL MIGRANTS COORDINATION**

**JOURNAL 2020**

**OUR FREEDOM  
WITHIN AND  
BEYOND THE  
BORDERS OF  
EUROPE**



**17<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER**

**TRANSNATIONAL DAY OF  
MIGRANTS' STRUGGLE**

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**T**his Journal is the first public outcome of the Transnational Migrants Coordination (TMC), born after months of struggles and communication among migrants and non-migrants' collectives from all Europe, Morocco and Turkey, in the first attempt of transnational organization of migrants. The TMC was born out of the struggles and the need to overcome isolation in times of pandemic. After promoting two days of action in May and June, the TMC has launched for the 17th of October a transnational day of migrant struggle. In this day, when hundreds of thousands of migrants and sans-papiers will storm Paris from all over France, we call all migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, collectives, groups and supporters, to demonstrate throughout Europe and beyond. The time has come to take back migrants' lives.

The articles in this journal show that a collective transnational voice is raising in the struggles of these months throughout and against Europe and its borders. Contributions came from France, Morocco, Italy, Turkey and Slovenia. Those places are situated in different positions within **a connected system of institutional racism, where national and EU laws and international agreements concur in creating the conditions of exploitation, confinement and patriarchal violence.** The transnational space is shaped first and foremost by migrants' themselves, who are struggling across borders and against immigration

and asylum laws that the governments use to tame migrants' freedom.

Everywhere in the world, bureaucracy and the law are instruments in the hands of the employers, aimed at guaranteeing the possibility to exploit migrant labour and, with this, to impose harsh conditions upon all workers. But everywhere in the world, migrants are struggling, in their daily life and within their working places, against this racist system. This journal aims at highlighting connections among local struggles and the potentiality of transnational organization. As the articles argue, in fact, **migrants organize in different ways: hunger strikes, demonstrations, strikes and protests inside the workplaces, in the domestic space and in the public one.** However, these struggles are often limited to a single place or localized disputes. But the system that migrants face does not end at national borders and the freedom they fight for can't be confined within a single place or a particular dispute. Even if there are issues that must be faced locally, and governments, institutions and employers must be held responsible for their acts, **what is at stake is the possibility to assert migrants' freedom at the transnational level against a whole system of exploitation and racism.** Our allies are fellow migrants across the borders, and together we can collect the force we need to overcome them.

The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the

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pressure over migrants. Transnational mobility has been restricted; borders have become even more violent, daily bureaucracy has shown how institutional racism informs the behaviour of public administrations against migrants' needs. **Migrants, especially women, continued to conduct the essential works when the world was locked down but institutional racism and violence at the borders did not stop.** In this respect, the Covid-19 emergency showed that migrants' lives were considered "expendable" because while they were doing all the essential work, their lives were not considered essential enough to be protected with the anti-Covid measures or the state aids offered to citizens. The only services and subsidies provided to migrants by the governments were directly proportional to the employer's profit margins.

Some European governments signed bilateral agreements with Eastern European countries to open their "usually" closed borders to let migrant workers in. Some European countries came up with limited regularizations to hire seasonal farmhands and care workers, leaving many more without documents. **Pandemic suspended life during the quarantine; for migrants and asylum seekers, it was not something new.** From the articles clearly emerges that, if migrant labour is essential for the economy, the strike is our essential weapon against exploitation, violence and institutional racism, to claim what we need.

This journal shows that **in all countries, whether inside or outside Europe, migrants face the link between their juridical status, the residence permit, and a series of conditions depending upon work, income, family and their state of origin.** Whether explicitly exploited by contract or trapped within the net of bureaucracy and rules applied arbitrarily against them, all migrants encounter this problem. In this context, racist and patriarchal violence are instrumental to impose the worst

condition to migrants, in particular migrant women, for whom family reunification means dependency on their husbands' documents. **Against all this we demand documents for all migrants, and we claim that these documents should not depend on work, income or family ties. While we claim this as a general claim of all migrants, we also claim a European unconditional residence permit, valid in all Europe, detached from employment contract, income, wage and family.**

This claim is a way to empower and connect all migrants in their daily struggles, within and beyond Europe: it will resonate in the transnational day of migrants' struggle of the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, when migrants will take to the streets of Paris and demonstrations and actions will be organised in many other countries. **A European unconditional residence permit is a powerful way to stop the racist game of state governments and of the European Commission against migrants.** While they keep producing hierarchies, trying to stop migrants at the borders, violently chasing them along the Balkan Route or leaving them to die at sea, dividing arbitrarily economic migrants from asylum seekers and confining them in inhuman camps, we claim the right to enter and move across the EU safely and without black-mails. **A European unconditional residence permit is also aimed at dismantling the Dublin system and any other provision that allow EU governments to treat migrants as parcels to be sorted.** On the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, we will claim our freedom against the new reforms announced by the president of the European Commission: we won't accept any new imposition on our life and future. Finally, the transnational demonstration on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October will be our response to the revolt called by the migrants trapped in Lesbos: after the burning of Moria camp we don't need relocation, we don't want another camp. We want freedom within and beyond the borders of Europe, we want a European unconditional permit for all to be free to move and fight against violence and exploitation.

# Moroccan women workers abroad: between a rock and a hard place

Mosawate Égalité, Morocco

## **T**he reasons for immigration:

There are many forms and different reasons for people to migrate. The recent waves of immigration are due to the economic crisis. Structural adjustment programs and austerity policies have managed to deepen the social crisis, especially in countries subject to the protection of international financial institutions and the control of transcontinental trading companies. Poverty, unemployment and deteriorating individual and collective living conditions are the worst manifestations of this crisis and the most closely linked to recent waves of immigration. Faced with the state's failure to provide minimum living conditions and blocked horizons, there is no other choice but to drive the boats of death in search of life. This is called forced displacement in the dictionary of the security services of asylum countries, illegal immigration.

### ◆ Unemployment

**Unemployment increases with the shrinking economy, tightening the screws on vulnerable groups, and through them, the system absorbs the rest of the livelihoods and the continuation of life.** Women and young people constitute the most vulnerable groups with alarming rates among women: 14.7 compared to 10.5 for men in recent years, and the employment rate for women does not exceed 22% compared to 66% for men. This crisis is no longer a secret matter. The king has acknowledged the failure of the development model and the International Monetary Fund has asked to reduce unemployment levels: <October 2017>, but these confessions are not a way out and do not stop at the causes of fail-



ure. The international institutions calling for the reduction of unemployment are what prevent independent development models based on satisfying the needs of the population and first the women most vulnerable to the consequences of subsequent liberal policies.

### ◆ Poverty

**Poverty is not an inevitable fate, but rather a result of the catastrophes of capitalism and a necessity for its continuation.** Poverty is determined from the liberal point of view by several criteria, including food, access to education, health and drinking water and stable income as criteria that liberalism adopts to polish its image, while the Marxist definition defines it by distributing wealth among the various social classes. These results are more serious in Morocco, exceeding four million poor people according to official statistics, and reaching 78th place out of 115 countries in the health rankings: one doctor for every 2,000 citizens, lack of medical equipment and health personnel in hospitals, 75% of child deaths occur in rural areas and every 10 hours a pregnant woman dies. Poverty still has disastrous consequences for women, particularly rural women, as high unemployment, lack of permanent income and deteriorating services are

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factors that have led to the emergence of malnutrition, disease outbreaks, high mortality, and reluctance to marry, high divorce rates, illiteracy, low schooling and violence. In addition to this, successive policies have produced other disasters, to which we can add the Bulalam tragedy (15 dead and 5 injured), the deaths at the Ceuta and Melilla crossings every year and the new slavery of migrant workers, phenomena that have mainly affected women and pushed them to look for work outside the borders.

### **The work of Moroccan women workers in immigration countries**

If poverty and unemployment were factors that pushed women to emigrate, in order to seek a decent life for themselves and their families, then **working conditions within a group of host countries are not outside of forced labour and slavery.**

#### ◆ **Strawberry pickers in Spain.**

Since the beginning of the third millennium, capitalism has been looking for an economic, flexible and malleable workforce that is not qualified for trade unions. To facilitate this task, **it has put in place a new system of temporary immigration with contracts purely for women.** This system brought its program to Morocco in 2006, based on vulnerability as a mechanism to select poorer and illiterate groups of women to ensure their return to Morocco after the expiration of the contract. Since 2006, the program has been valid and Moroccan women work in Spanish strawberry fields, but in recent years this program has had a different effect. Every year, the National Employment Promotion Agency starts to register women who want to work in the Spanish fields between 29 January and 2 February, a tight period of time that does not allow new workers to gather sufficient information about the nature of the work in the Spanish countryside. 2019 saw the benefit of

20,000 women workers, which is a high number compared to previous years. The reason for the increase in this number is the increase in land dedicated to strawberry cultivation (6095 for strawberries and 11,700 hectares for soft fruits), and the fear of losing the harvest. The logic of competition imposes a reduction in the wage bill through wage pressure: Spanish strawberry companies do not deviate from this logic. **Strawberry harvesting requires relying on patriarchal oppression, class exploitation and emigration as a facade of racial discrimination,** to drain violence and domination through seasonal decades, to embody hegemony in its various dimensions and to integrate class exploitation with sexual oppression and racial discrimination. Contracts run from April to June and their conclusion requires conditions, among others:

- \* Professional experience in red fruit harvesting.
- \* Age ranged from 18 to 45 years.
- \* The requirement that a worker has children whose age does not exceed 14 years.
- \* A commitment to return to Morocco after the expiry of the contract.

In addition to these conditions, the Moroccan worker does not enjoy the rights provided by labour law like in her Spanish counterpart, and the Moroccan state paid no attention to these rights at the conclusion of the contract. This explains the work of 10 hours a day instead of six and a half hours for a salary not exceeding 40 euros, the refusal of the old age pension, salary for the hours of work done and decent housing. Despite having entered into the free accommodation contract, that is a deduction of 3 euros per day as rent, the violations did not stop at unfair working conditions and the absence of the law, but rather extended them to include sexual assaults, including


rape, harassment and unjustified disappearances. In this context, a German daily newspaper published a report on the increase in abortion cases in the Spanish region of Huelva, and the newspaper *El País* published another report describing the conditions of Moroccan women workers as hell, which encouraged them to raise complaints and organise stands to report sexual harassment, rape and violation on their bodies. Especially, after the shocking testimony of a six-month-old pregnant woman who had suffered sexual violence, but the agency acted against the mobilization of the women.

#### ◆ **Waitresses in Saudi Arabia**

Under the bilateral agreement between Morocco and Saudi Arabia, the number of Moroccan workers in Saudi Arabia is over 48,000, including 15,000 women. The National Employment Agency is the only institution whose role is recognized as an intermediary, but other individual agencies perform this task in the so-called black market. Labour law in Saudi Arabia is based on the sponsorship system (KAFALA) to regulate the relationship between employer and employee. **This system allows the employer to control the foreign worker, to prevent him from holding or applying for a passport and to prevent movement without the consent of the employer.** It also allows to control the number and level of migrant labour and to consider the worker as a slave rather than a worker, including abstention from paying wages and imprisonment within the home. Conditions under which Moroccan workers work and other darker conditions under which women workers within Saudi Arabia work. Despite Morocco's assertion, there are no agreements providing for employment in domestic services and Saudi newspapers often talk about Moroccan women workers being brought in to do this type of work. In recent years there has been a stir on

social media, with advertisements for "Moroccan women's resignation in exchange for a sum of money for the benefit of the sponsor, announcing the woman's skills in cooking, caring for the elderly and children, and nursing", and the statement by women workers that they are not prevented from contacting their families. These announcements have provoked a great wave of anger, especially after hearing live testimonies about the horrible violations to which Moroccan workers are subjected within Saudi Arabia. From the insults, that did not stop, to sexual assaults, but went beyond accusations of corruption and the demand to prevent them from bringing this type of labour, for fear that the worker was alone with her husband (the KAFEL). Even a group of Saudi women threatened to resign from their jobs and stay at home to avoid any friction between their husband and the domestic worker in a clear and blatant insult to the Moroccan worker and her explicit accusations of corruption. Some associations in Morocco warned about the consequences of not paying attention to the conditions that the Moroccan domestic worker lives in Saudi Arabian homes and the high incidence of torture, rape and harassment, and the lack of guarantees in the exercise of this type of work. However, media campaigns and the solidarity of feminist movements have forced the Indonesian government to stop workers to go to Saudi Arabia because of a criminal incident involving an Indonesian worker, and the Moroccan government has also been asked to suspend - temporarily - the approval of documents wishing to work at home, until the files relating to the conditions of Moroccan women workers within Saudi Arabia are resolved, after the release of a video of a Moroccan worker screaming that she had been tortured and prevented from returning to Morocco, that the Saudi authorities there have been forced to open an investigation that is still open without results.

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# WHAT IS THE DUBLIN SYSTEM?

The Dublin system establishes that asylum seekers must remain in the EU country of first entry until their application is processed. This forces thousands of migrants to remain stranded in states like Greece or Italy for months, or even years, while waiting. Migrants are often confined in inhuman camps, such as the one in Moria in Lesbos (Greece), near Turkey. After the rebellion that destroyed the Moria camp, the Greek government, with the help of the EU, has built another temporary camp near a military area. Meanwhile, the European Commission is proposing a new system. This new system includes a 'screening' of migrants at the border, which means yet another opportunity for local authorities to impose arbitrary decisions on migrants' life, and European states should cooperate for a speedy return of rejected migrants in their countries of origin. It is clear that this proposal, as well as any form of relocation imposed over migrants from above, are other moves against migrants by European governments. We refuse both the Dublin system and these new proposals, and we claim that in order to put an end to this cage which constrains the movements of migrants, all migrants must receive a residence permit valid throughout Europe and unrelated to their status, work, income or family. This is the only way to dismantle the racist system that produces inhuman conditions inside camps, forces migrants to die at sea while reaching Europe, imposes exploitation upon them when inside the EU and allows other states, such as Turkey, to use migrants as bargaining chips with the EU.



## Against the Blackmail of Documents and Work A Common Struggle for Our Freedom

Women on strike at Hotel Ibis, France



**I**n France, the several companies using subcontracted agencies are mainly based on migrant labour. **We are waitresses at the Hotel Ibis-Batignolles, employed by the cleaning company SNT, and we have been on strike for 14 months. They were imposing unsustainable rhythms and poor wages on us, using the fact that we are women and that we are black.** Our work is invisible to most people: when people arrive in the hotel, they find everything tidy and clean, but they don't know that there are our work, fatigue, exploitation and threats behind it. Therefore, we decided not to accept any longer the deplorable working conditions imposed by subcontracted companies. We want to have the same rights as other workers, we want our work and qualifications to be recognized, we want them to stop leaving us at "grade 1" to pay us less, we want to be internalized.

At first, we tried to find an informal agreement, but our demands were never heard. The Accord group, which owns the Ibis hotel,

did not intend to negotiate, so we understood that if we wanted to achieve something, we had to organize ourselves. First, we turned to CGT-Cleaning, many of us unionized, but we soon realized that this union sided with the bosses: it invited us to be patient; it did not inform us about our rights. The work continued to be exhausting and we worked with constant fear of what could happen. But we wanted to win this battle, so we decided to change unions and went to the CGT-HPE. We discovered that we had rights that we didn't even suspect and we soon decided to go on strike. When the boss called us to negotiate without offering us anything but crumbs, we made it clear to him that it wasn't a game: we were there to go all the way. The boss and the CGT leaders started threatening us to stop the strike. They called our husbands directly to tell them that if we continued to strike they would soon find themselves with one wage less in their family. Several of us chose to go back to work: we were 34 at first, now we are 20, but we are convinced that we want to go on until we get what we want.

The quarantine was a tough time, we had no more money in the strike box, so we were afraid it was over for us. Fortunately, however, the CGT-HPE got us partial unemployment, which will cover us until December, but in the meantime, we will not be able to make the strike pickets we used to make every day before the outbreak of the COVID pandemic. **However, we have no intention of stopping: as soon as we were able to return to the streets, we started again to do symbolic actions in front of the hotels to show the Accord group that we have not stopped fighting.** We sacrificed 14 months of freedom, of wages, of our own lives. When you are fighting, nothing falls from the sky; the management of everyday-life becomes harder. The strike is not easy, but we do not want to give up! We came out of the silence to win, we will not stop and we will not give up the fight.

All of us, waitresses on strike, are regular, but for those of us whose residence permit has expired the contract has not been renewed. One of us also has the nationality, but most of us got our documents working hard and a couple of us got them through family reunion. Many of us have permits expiring in the medium to long term and this has allowed us to go on longer with the strike. Although we had the documents, we did many initiatives with migrant workers without documents: we participated in each other's mobilizations and supported each other. **I believe that the struggle of *sans papiers* to get the documents is not divisible from the struggle to improve working conditions. You do not become free when you get the documents.** The documents only give you partial freedom: once you

get them you must continue to fight for your rights at work. We have the documents, but we are still exploited as workers, women, and blacks. Our residence permit is linked to work: when you go to renew it you not only have to pay 300 euros, but you also have to show your contract and pay slips. If you are unemployed you have to show that you are registered at a job centre and that you are looking for a job, but in these situations they usually grant only very short renewals and if you are not hired in the meantime they stop renewing your documents.



This system of exploitation must end. **It is a racist mechanism, which systematically forces us to do miserable jobs: we cannot refuse underpaid jobs, if we risk losing documents.** The bosses know that we need a paycheck and for this, they pay us 400 euros for a job worth 1000 euros. It is therefore clear that the issue of documents is always related to work. This link is everywhere, even if the laws vary slightly in different countries. That is why I believe that the transnational struggle is very important: the problems we have in Paris, or more generally in France, occur all over Europe. **Every country has different laws handling the regularization of migrants, but everywhere documents are work-related and therefore everywhere we are obliged to accept poor jobs in order to renew our residence permits.** That is why we have to join the struggles of *sans papiers* and of all migrants in Europe to say that, despite the different situations, we are not willing to accept this blackmail.

Immigration affects all Europe, so it is important that the permit is European: you must

be free to move if you find a job elsewhere. The permit must be recognized everywhere and in addition it must be unlimited; it is not possible to renew it every year. Continuous renewal serves to put us in a cage, to keep forcing us to work in bad conditions without being able to say no. Short-term permits are a real slavery: you are required to go to the prefecture continuously, to pay for renewal and often to pay someone to help you with the complicated paperwork you need to do online. The struggle for an unlimited permit can bring migrants together and must be conducted all together to obtain a European permit that allows us to move across national borders.

There is a lot of talk about the European Union, but it is not clear what this union is if each country manages and regulates migrants' lives in its own way. The advantages of the EU, such as free mobility, must apply to everyone, including migrants. However, **the reality is that there are two kinds of Europe: that**

**of the natives who can move to live and work wherever they want and that of the migrants who are constantly hindered.**

That is why the permit must be European, without limits and without borders. It is also important to untie the permit from work: if the prefecture stopped asking for pay slips people would not be forced to accept any work, they would have time to think and haggle over wages. If you have a European residence permit that allows you to move wherever you want, you have the possibility of not accepting heavy, badly paid work.

If we came all the way to Europe, it was to improve the conditions of our lives: we want to be free, and we know that nothing will be for free, we have sacrificed everything and we do not intend to go backwards. **We came out of silence, we have been on strike for 14 months and we will continue to fight until our demands are met, until we win!**

## Ideas on Main Migrants and Refugees Problems in Turkey and Some Ideas on Solutions

HDK Migration Assembly and HDP Commission for Migrants

**M**igrants and refugees are a part of our everyday lives in Turkey. In fact, most of us may be offspring of some migrant or refugee ancestors. Some of us are migrants and some of us have migrant/refugee neighbours. Keeping in mind that the whole globe and the whole of human history is a collection of migrations - mass or individual - the way human beings are treated during the journey or in the lands that they end up, is a matter that concerns each of us. We must bear in mind that being a refugee or a migrant is not an easy decision and it may not be a decision at all in some instances. People fleeing economic poverty, ecological doom, war and atrocities are fleeing for their lives. Especially women,

LGBTI+ and children constitute the most affected group among refugees and migrants.

The particular issues we, as the HDK Migration Assembly and HDP Commission for Migrants and Refugees want to mention, is, first, the combat against the hate crimes committed more easily and repetitively after the covid-19 pandemic outburst. The shrinking resources or shifting priorities of the state leave refugees and migrants, who have already been the most vulnerable part of our society, even more unprotected. The perspective of seeing them as the source of all evil is propagated among people and the state does nothing to stop this propaganda, if it does not fuel it. Almost every day, we read of a neighbourhood's residents attacking a Syrian's shop for alleged misde-

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meanours. Such attacks most often end up as lynching efforts for the whole Syrian community in that neighbourhood. The police merely watches or intervenes when it is too late.

Another vital problem refugees face in Turkey is that the refugee status is granted only to those that enter the country from its western borders or to those of Turkic origin. **The undocumented refugees and migrants who constitute the bulk of the migrants in Turkey have difficulty in every aspect of everyday life: health, education, labour.** They feel more vulnerable as the threat of involuntary return to their country of origin looms at their head like the sword of Damocles. These people have a hard time in opposing to the injustice they face as they are undocumented, so they do not take part in civil life, as they fear deportation. News of forced deportations from the repatriation centres of the Turkish government abound. The workers in migrant and refugee NGO's with which we are in contact in Turkey, repeatedly underline that it is understandable for the refugees in Turkey to abstain from fighting for their rights, as they could be forcefully repatriated.

**The undocumented status of most of the refugees and migrants in Turkey are conveniently used by capitalists as cheap labour.** In fact, this is proposed as a project for herding sheep in Anatolia, as explained by journalist Mr. Ercüment Akdeniz in his article headed "Afghan herdsmen" in Evrensel, dated June 22, 2020 (here: <https://www.evrensel.net/yazi/86595/afganistanli-cobanlar>). In his article he mentions that the rising need for herdsmen in Turkey increased the inflow of Afghan migrants from the eastern border, but the documentation of these people did not increase proportionately. It is more "profitable" to hire an undocumented worker than a resident or a documented migrant. Thus, the government tolerates the illegal trafficking of these "potential cheap labourers."

**Women, LGBTI+ and children are the most vulnerable group among the refugees and migrants.** The Assembly and the Commission focus on these disadvantaged groups more than others. Rape, harassment, child abuse reports come from government repatriation centres and HDP repeatedly issued parliamentary inquiries on such issues to no avail. These crimes may, in our opinion, be covered by the Turkish government. Opposition parliament members or civil NGOs are not granted entry to the government repatriation centres.



A last point we strongly oppose is the fact that the **Turkish government uses millions of refugees in Turkey as a bargaining point against Europe to reach its goals.** What is even worse is that this bargain finds a counterpart in Europe and the stakes for the refugees and migrants are high. We oppose such filthy strategies: the problems refugees and migrants face must be addressed as humanitarian issues.

**We believe it is our duty to legalize each migrant in Turkey. They all must have identity cards.** Otherwise these people cannot reach the basic health, education services. All political organs should demand the legal framework of such a grant of identity for the

migrants and refugees, independent of their origin.

We must bear in mind and let everyone around us know that leaving one's country is a hard decision. We must work in our organizations and in our cities, since this is almost a matter of life and death. One must consider that a migrant or a refugee is not that different a human than a local person, who is trying to make decent living, fulfilling physical and psy-

chological needs. Both these essential points must be underlined and explained to people who have negative feelings for migrants and refugees around them. These people are not competitors, but fellow human beings whose fortune is very much linked to each one of us. **We will rise together, or sink together. Freedom, safety, prosperity for a limited group does not exist.** This must be our paradigm.

## Unconditional - Unlimited European Residence Permit as our Battlefield

Coordinamento Migranti, Italy



**T**he struggles of migrants and asylum seekers in Italy start from their everyday lives' material conditions. Coordinamento Migranti Bologna (Migrant Coordination Bologna), which comprises migrant/asylum seeker/non-migrant men and women, started the struggle against migrants' exploitation almost twenty years ago. During this process, as Coordinamento Migranti Bologna, we created new battle camps. We have explicitly fought against the

exploitation of care, agricultural and logistic workers. We have struggled against the institutional racism imposed in the reception centres, refugee camps, workplaces. We have been contesting the residence permit as a political tool of institutional racism. **Based on the work contract, salary, income, study, or family reunification the residence permit limits the freedom of movement of migrants and asylum seekers and their access to fundamental rights.** The Covid-19 emer-

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agency showed indeed how urgent and vital it is the struggle for a residence permit, as, without it, migrants do not have access to the healthcare system either.

Pandemic suspended everyday life but not the institutional racism, so we never stopped fighting against it. We fought before, during, and after the pandemic. We took the streets in Bologna on May 30th and on June 20th, right after the end of the Italian lockdown, and we will continue to take the streets within a transnational organization on October 17th. We know that migrants and asylum seekers live the same problems in Europe and beyond. That's why we are involved in the Transna-



tional Migrants Coordination. **As Coordinamento Migranti Bologna, we believe that a transnational struggle renders more decisive our struggle at a general and local level.** We know that we cannot fight against racism if we do not fight against institutional racism.

One of the key elements regarding the migrants and refugees' lives in the European Union, and many other countries in the world is indeed the residence permit. **The residence permit is used as a political tool by the governments and bosses to "subordinate" migrants and refugees and keep them invisible.** In Italy, as in the EU, to apply for a residence permit, migrants need to meet specific requirements such as a certain amount of salary and a labour contract. Another option is

family reunification or study. These conditions required for a residence permit generate other problems in migrants' life. Migrants who left their countries with the hope of improving their lives are "obliged" to accept any inhuman working and living condition in the arrival countries. The inhumane conditions in which migrants and refugees are forced to live constitute a direct consequence of the residence permit conditions. In collaboration with the governments, employers try to keep salaries low using the residence permit conditions as an instrument of blackmail. They think that the migrants and refugees will accept everything not to lose their residence permit and risk deportation.

Women and children often apply for a residence permit for family reunification. People who are married to a European citizen or to a person with legal migration status are more likely to apply for a residence permit through family reunification, which has a longer duration than a residence permit related to work. **In addition, migrant women, as non-migrant ones, earn less than their male peers and partners, which makes family reunification the only viable option to get a residence permit.** Covid-19 emergency rendered more visible that women get lower wages while working more at home. The closure of schools, day-care centres and summer camps has also fed into many couples' decisions for mothers, rather than fathers, to step back during Covid-19 for the very reason of the disparity of salaries perceived by women. This reinforces the sexual division of labour which means that domestic labour and care are still predominantly performed by women and especially migrant ones.

As a consequence, mostly migrant women are forced to stay at home, thus becoming dependent on their partners' residence permits or citizenship to remain in the arrival country. The dependence on a male partner becomes

very problematic when there is male violence in the relationship. In these cases, women are forced to think more than once to finish the violent relationship or denounce the violent partner. The residence permit by family reunification is the "perfect" demonstration of how

different systems of oppression work together. Institutional racism adds to patriarchal violence making migrant women more subjected to subordination, invisibilization, silencing than migrant men.

## No Borders Balkans

Infokolpa - Balkanroute, Slovenia

**I**t is clear that the accounts of struggles are many, the levels of operations and actions are layered, just as the issue we are dealing with: the Regime. The regime in question is one of borders, violence, structural injustice, racism, blackmail, and exploitation. Aware of the necessity to push our struggles forward, beyond and without borders, we have been collaborating with Transbalkan Solidarity, Border Violence Monitoring Network and other local and transnational groups and networks. We hold that only a transnational web of activists and migrant collectives can be effective for our struggles to succeed long-term.

By now it is clear that migrants are striking at the idea of borders, overturning the order of things which puts their lives in danger and precarity. We must understand that a strike is not only against poor working conditions, faced by migrants when finally in the EU, a strike is also aimed against the regime, a political order which produces exploitation, institutional racism, and bloody borders, which reproduce inequalities, fear, and involuntary submission to conditions set by capitalist profits.

1. For the past years, we have been actively reporting pushbacks across the Balkan route, an entryway into the EU, focusing on Slovenia and Croatia from where people are forced

back, usually to Bosnia, a disheartening hotspot on the route. Recently, pushbacks have torrented from Austria and Italy, through Slovenia and Croatia, in the past few months more intensely from Serbia and Macedonia toward Greece, a country that cannot handle the situation well. Moria is a bitter example. Pushbacks and chain pushbacks are done by police, army and paramilitaries: illegally and without due process, often violently. After collecting testimonies via alarm-phone-like mechanisms, **we demand the Slovenian authorities be held responsible for pushbacks and other illegal and criminal wrongdoings against people on the move.** However, the Slovenian authorities hold that Croatia respects human rights laws since "it is a member of the EU" and that Bosnia is a safe country for migrants. We consider this argumentation poor and inadequate. It neglects the conditions in the camps, police brutality, street and sexual violence, hunger, cold, malnutrition, unsanitary living conditions, and lack of shelter. Bosnia is not safe for migrants. The Slovenian authorities' argument also neglects the fact that the EU is funding border surveillance technology, weapons, and disinterested camp policies, which all result in deaths at the borders.

2. Migrants, both in camps and asylum "homes" in the Balkans, refuse to be silenced: they indeed protest in silence, but they also



stand with banners asking for justice. They even self-inflict pain to express and illustrate their stance against torture, inhumane conditions, police violence, political and social neglect of the EU toward their lives. As we write this, on September 15th 2020 at 17:58h, there is an ongoing 48-hour hunger strike in the Centre for Foreigners in Postojna, Slovenia. More than ten people are striking. We demand that the Centre for Foreigners is closed immediately and that all detained persons are released and housed elsewhere.

It is intolerable that people are locked up in containers with harsh restrictions on movement without legal cause. These are not merely prison-like conditions, it is actual, real jail. Three months without respected rights, lacking medical aid, nutrition, and care. And after standing up for themselves, their rights have been denied further, their calls have been ignored by the system, its facilities, government services, and callous politicians who put them there in the first place. Detainees have become sick and tired, as they have become sick and tired of the police using threats and police dogs to contain them, all of this on behalf of the new paragons of ignorance of the Višegrad bloc: safety, security, protection. In 2019 and 2020, there have been protests in the camps in

Bihać and Velika Kladuša, when migrants stood together to show that their lives matter. The detained who are held in inhumane conditions will continue to protest, express their grievances, and demand that their right to liberty and asylum be respected. We stand in protest and solidarity with them.

3. There is no end to the hypocrisy of the Regime. It offers little to no consideration to migrants' and precarious workers' safety and security, even in times of COVID, when they are needed as essential workers to go into the fields, factories, or construction sites. This was evident when Serbian workers had to remain in Slovenia and sleep in their cars during the peak of the COVID pandemic. For some time, the Serbian government made it difficult for their citizens to return to their homes in Serbia, thus proving that documents and citizenship indeed mean different things and have a different value in different parts of the world. Such administrative conditioning of human life cannot be the way we value life. We oppose the way in which the regime's security and safety are selective and exclusive - usually, available only to those with EU documents. And in line with this, claiming asylum should not be the only way to safety for people searching for a less precarious future for



themselves and their families. This is why we demand **papers for all and an unconditional residence permit** while being well aware that we cannot bind the worth of people's lives to a piece of paper. No one is illegal.

Gaining fair access to the labour market for asylum seekers in Slovenia is difficult. For nine months after arrival, the asylum seeker is not allowed to work, restricted by inaccessible work permits. If an asylum seeker gets a negative decision about her case she cannot work for the entire duration of the asylum procedure, which can take years. Thus, asylum seekers lose their skills, are stripped of their dignity and are forced to look for work in the black economy, which is often tied to the criminal underground. We demand that all migrant workers have immediate and fair access to the labour market.

4. There are legal battles to fight as well. The Administrative Court of the Republic of Slovenia recently ruled in the case of a plaintiff from Cameroon that the expulsion of migrants to Croatia by the Slovenian police is a systematic violation of human rights. In the past two and a half years, Slovenia has expelled 19,000 people through an abbreviated procedure and without checking whether in Croatia people are at risk of inhuman treatment. We are waiting for a final epilogue to this case that will, hopefully, take place at the constitutional court in favour of the plaintiff.

The Eritrean case is another story. Eritrea itself, an abuse of power, a country captured and destroyed by a military dictatorship that has incessantly endangered people's lives by ravaging homes, families, and establishing concentration working camps, making escape the only option for many. 80% of Eritrean asylum seekers in Europe get refugee status. However, Slovenia does not allow for this, rejecting Eritrean applications for asylum, phantasmagorically considering Eritrea a safe country.

More negative changes are ahead for the legal sector in Slovenia, especially with the Aliens Act and International Protection Act: in the event of aggravated migration conditions or a so-called "complex crisis", the new law envisages restrictions for entry of foreigners into the country and allows the rejection of asylum applications without individual treatment.

We assert that **it is time to establish a strong and cooperative network of lawyers** which will jointly stand up for human rights and freedoms of people on the move and fight against oppressive, discriminatory and violent systems and regimes.



5. The struggle is not only legal and political, but it is also day-to-day, embedded in the lives of people and their daily needs: clothes, shelter, food, medicines and medical aid, phones, and human care. While many are stranded in camps, many live on the streets in Bihać, Sarajevo and Velika Kladuša, Bosnia, or on the streets in Šid, Serbia, as well as in other cities, in their makeshift camps and squats. Governments throughout the Balkan route are destroying people's shelters, avoiding to register them or enable access to their basic rights and legal aid. Locals are being advised against standing in solidarity with people on the move, sometimes even criminalizing acts of solidarity. **Proper housing policies and decriminali-**

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**sation of solidarity** is our common struggle.

The situation, especially in hotspots is producing bursts of violence, racism and abuse of migrants: some shops already bear signs that migrants are not allowed to buy groceries, while IOM isn't providing people with nutritional food, and while many people are denied access to camps. They are not allowed on buses, so they have to walk for weeks through rough forests in Bosnia. In response, they block the roads in a sign of protest. Some groups of locals are relentlessly working to fight local intolerance and discrimination, offering support to people in need. 400 out of 8000 migrants in Bosnia are trapped between the border entities of the Una-Sana Canton in Bosnia and Republika Srpska.

In times of Covid-19, we have witnessed how important it is to maintain not only local networks but also transborder support to connect local struggles to establish an alternative infrastructure of aid and availability of a response to the needs of the many who rebel against borders and exploitation.

We must strike the European production and funding of violence on the Balkan route and beyond, wherever thermal cameras, dogs' teeth and gunshots reach. Security guards, police, paramilitaries and politicians who hunt people, bring injustice, pain, torture and death must be stopped and held responsible. Sales transactions of guns and other weapons, border fortification equipment, surveillance technology, and policies of disciplining and restriction of movement must be prohibited. Media promoting violence, deception and racist, discriminatory policies should be discontinued and held responsible. The greed and gluttony of the profiteers and capitalists must be put to an end. Exploitation, extortion and systemic torture must cease.

We have had enough of divisions between people, and the current state of affairs in

which we are but mere numbers or tools.

Our polyphonic voices are unanimous in this context: we need to make a step from solidarity to transnational political organizing. To reorganize, politicize and build strong transnational infrastructure in all aspects. To damage and dismantle the pillars of the current regime and society which not only allow for but also produce and sponsor exploitation of migrants, workers, women, and nature.

## Local Struggles, Common Struggles

Red Solidaria de Acogida, Spain

**T**he RSA is a nonpartisan, self-managed and feminist citizen network that was born a little over five years ago when a couple of hundred people began to meet in the squares of Madrid, with the aim of finding how to help with the situation of refugees that were coming to Europe. Our struggle since then has been focused on two aspects:

♦ **Denounce the European, national and municipal policies that discriminate against and penalize people in forced movement**, with special attention to the Southern Spanish Border, the reception and immigration laws, the multiple human rights violations that are behind forced migratory movements (wars, climate change and environmental disasters, hunger, capitalism, the persecution of LGTBI people and other manifestations of patriarchy, etc.). All of them through demonstrations, talks, network campaigns, direct action, ...

♦ **To welcome in our city the most unprotected people in transit**, offering them our closeness, advice and legal or financial help.

The RSA has carried out over the last five years a reflection, social mobilization and political advocacy action on what we consider to be the external borders of Europe and their control. In this sense, we have been organizing, together with other related groups, street actions, demonstrations and debates to:

♦ **Make visible the situation of violence and inhumanity experienced by people blocked at these borders** (Greece / Turkey, Libya, Southern Spanish Border)

♦ **Denounce the responsibilities of the EU and its member countries in financing and lo-**

gistical support of countries that systematically violate human rights, in exchange for a tightening of border control

♦ **Call for the opening of safe and legal routes** for these people, as well as the urgent evacuation of the terrible Libyan detention centres and the overcrowded Greek islands.

We believe that all these are struggles common to the majority of European groups that are mobilizing for the rights of migrants and refugees, and that through coordination at a transnational level the strength and incidence of these struggles would be much greater.

Regarding the most recent actions, during the months of confinement due to the pandemic we designed a specific online campaign, "Forgotten by the virus", to keep the focus of attention on what is happening in those territories in times of pandemic.

In addition, in recent times, one of the main activities of our host group has been the aid to refugees returned by the Dublin Regulation. An unjust and inhumane regulation that forces refugees to be returned to the first country where they entered the European Union, without taking into account the years they have been residing, their roots or their family ties in the country where they are. In addition to welcoming them, we have had a successful judicial fight with them to restore their rights and treat them like any other refugee who arrives in our country.

For all these reasons, **we firmly support the fight for an unconditional residence permit for all, valid throughout Europe**, that equates them to other citizens, and we join the marches and actions on October 17 in defence of their rights.

# The National March Of Undocumented Migrants In France

Collective of immigrants in France (CIF), France



**W**e are an association located in Paris whose purpose is to defend the rights of all individuals without distinction of gender, nationality, religious opinion or social status, administrative assistance and assistance to people in difficulty and all similar, related or complementary objects or objects likely to promote their realisation or development.

**On 30 May and during the confinement, thousands of undocumented migrants exploited in the worst conditions defied the ban on demonstrations in Paris and several other cities, then on 20 June, once again, but in greater numbers than the first time, tens of thousands of undocumented migrants and supporters demonstrated in Paris and several other cities, such as (Marseille, Rennes, Montpellier, Strasbourg. ...), but the State did not react, NO WORD for undocumented mi-**

grants who have been on the front line during the whole period of detention, NO WORD for undocumented migrants exploited in the worst conditions of precariousness, NO WORD for undocumented migrants who have lost their jobs and NO WORD for undocumented migrants detained in administrative detention centres.

**On 19 September, several cities started the march to the Elysée Palace and in other cities will start on 3 October. These marches will converge on 17 October in Paris to go to the Elysée Palace. We will demonstrate in homage to all victims of colonialism, racism and police violence, to all victims of anti-migration policies and for the regularisation of all undocumented migrants. We are not all the same under the roof of a society that refuses equal rights on the pretext of nationality, origin and skin colour. We will**



demonstrate in homage to all victims of colonialism, racism and police violence, to all victims of anti-migration policies and for the regularisation of all undocumented migrants. **We are not all the same under the roof of a society that refuses equal rights on the pretext of nationality, origin and skin colour.** We will demonstrate because it is simply a question of equality and dignity. The closure of detention centres, housing for all and regularisation for all. Several hundred of us, undocumented migrants in the lead, will cross this country where we live, coming from the south, the north, the east and the west, supported by the solidarity of the inhabitants on the roundabouts, the roads, the squares of our villages, the neighbourhoods of our cities.

"Mr. President, we are walking. From the four corners of the country, for equality, we are marching".

**This march has gone beyond the borders**, there will be demonstrations, rallies and marches in other countries such as (Italy, Spain, Turkey, Morocco...). This means only one thing: that all women and men who are struggling in each of these countries are in solidarity with undocumented migrants after all they have lived through during the confinement and they continue to live during this

health crisis.

**UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS DESERVE TO GET THEIR PAPERS AND LIVE A LIFE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE!**

# We are equal, nobody is illegal

Collectif des sans papiers de Marseille 13, France



I have been in Marseille for one year and half. I arrived in France from Tunisia and at the beginning I worked in the food service. **Since I didn't have the documents, I lost my job** during the lockdown, like many other migrants working in construction, cleaning services... I spent five months without a job, but I still had to pay the rent and to help my family in my country: it was really tough. I was willing to do any job, but it is complicated without documents. That is why I mobilized myself to look for a solution to all this not only for myself, but for all the sans papiers in my condition. **I know that we can't give up, even if it seems very difficult.**

At the beginning there were only two of us but we wanted to be able to organise **the May 30th event called by Paris**. So, we talked to many collectives and associations. Two different events took place on May 30th: we were still divided and the demonstrations have been

poorly attended. That's when we understood we couldn't do anything on our own and that it was necessary to create a single collective that would bring together all the groups of sans papiers, asylum seekers and refugees from Marseille. El mamba and Cimade are two collectives which really helped us, providing the contacts of groups and associations that mobilise with migrants and refugees. Then, we had a first meeting at Solidaires headquarters with 50 people and over 15 associations (in Marseille each arrondissement has its own association or collective). **That was the first time that these associations met and tried to organize and coordinate themselves.** The idea was to create a collective that had all the associations within it, that could take the decisions together. We decided to organize the event on June 20th together and we started to work on it, holding meetings every week, involving more and more social actors, not only sans papiers: there were also CGT, Solidaires, CNT and

especially El Mamba. **5.000 people took to the streets:** it was a huge event for Marseille. **We claimed documents for all the sans papiers, the closure of the CRA, accommodation for all. We want a regularisation without exceptions, independent from work.** We lead our lives like everyone else, but we need the permits to move, to return to our country when we want to, to be able to work.

After the first meeting of this new network **we started a collective with some students, to defend their rights as sans papier students.** Most of us ignore the possibility to resume our studies, but we want to study and finish our academic career like everyone else because otherwise we have no future. Some associations, such as Resf (Reseau Education Sans Frontières), and also some lawyers helped us: we started to have meetings with sans-papiers, asylum seekers, families in difficulty. For sans-papier students, everything is very complicated because after graduation, if you start university – especially professionalizing ones – you have to do internships alternating with studies, but they don't let you work if you don't have documents and you must quit studying. Without the permit, it is always a vicious circle. I have a diploma and a master's degree, but they're not recognised in France. I have to work doing everything I can to survive: in catering, in construction with no chance of progress nor a good salary, even though I have the skills to do something else. **Without a permit we are immediately disqualified and paid much less than any other.** That's why we engage ourselves to fight for residence permits. We can't lose hope. **This is a political problem, denying us documents is a tool to divide us:** if you are black or Arab, you can't work, you cannot live with others, you are different! You are always controlled by the police. If you are Arab, you are badly paid, if you are black and strong, you are ex-

ploited. **This is a racist policy that prevents us from being free.** After the demonstration on June 20th, we continued to hold meetings with this collective that brought together the whole city of Marseille, we worked hard to finance ourselves, we did many actions and events, sometimes small but significant ones: in front of the Prefecture, in front of the CRA of Marseille (which is one of the largest in France). The associations helped us spontaneously, for example printing flyers, posters and banners. But we really managed to create something new, we organised ourselves to show that we are here and that we are fighting for our lives. The struggle in Marseille will not die out, we are very motivated.

At the beginning the idea of doing a **march of sans papiers** from Marseille to Paris seemed crazy to us because in winter it is important to make sure we have places to sleep, to eat, to rest at every stage. As spokespersons from Marseille, we came to Paris to understand how to organize the march and then we started to find funding, contacts in all the cities we were going to go through, ensuring coverage at each step. Now the sans papiers are on the march. **The international dimension of the migrants' struggle is very important to us.** The struggle cannot be limited to just one country, the more we will be defending our cause the more successful we will be. **It's a necessary struggle not only in France, but throughout Europe and beyond.** Even in the Arab countries there is the problem of racism, there are African migrants who come to improve their lives, but who find themselves in the same situation we're living here: they cannot study, they can't work, and even if they work they are exploited, the bosses take advantage of them. **This happens everywhere: in France, in Europe, in Africa. That's why a coordination of collectives that can fight together is so essential.**

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### **Mosawate Égalité - Feminist Collective, Morocco**

Moroccan feminist group (men and women) fighting for radical social, democratic and ecological change. Our project is nourished by the struggles of workers, women from indigenous and cultural communities, ecologists and anti-colonialists. Our magazine Mosawat (Equality) and our Facebook page is a tool for training, information and building solidarity.

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### **Infokolpa - Balkanroute, Slovenia**

It operates in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on EU borders, as an informal collective of self-organized migrants, locals, asylum seekers, refugees, activists, associations, individuals, and groups.

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### **Coordinamento Migranti, Italy**

A collective of migrants and Italians, women and men that opposes the Italian migration law and EU regulations which, thanks to the link between residence permit and employment contract, make migrants a specific workforce destined to be exploited or expelled according to market needs. We oppose any kind of racism and affirm the political role of migrants in their struggles in EU and non-EU countries.

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### **HDK Migration Assembly and HDP Commission for Migrants, Turkey**

Peoples' Democratic Congress (HDK) is a union of left-wing political movements, organisations and parties in Turkey that since 2011 aims to fundamentally recreate Turkish politics and represent oppressed, exploited people who face ethnic, religious or gender discrimination. Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) is the third biggest party in the Parliament of Turkey. HDP Commission for Migrants is one of the different commissions.

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### **Women on strike at Hotel Ibis, France**

Cleaning workers at the Hotel Ibis Batignolles, on strike for 14 months against the exploitation of subcontracted workers and against racism.

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### **Collective of Immigrants in France (CIF), France**

It is an association located in Paris whose purpose is to defend the rights of all individuals without distinction of gender, nationality, religious opinion or social status, administrative assistance and assistance to people in difficulty and all similar, related or complementary objects or objects likely to promote their realisation or development.

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### **Collectif des sans papiers de Marseille 13, France**

Collective of sans papiers, refugees, asylum seekers bringing together different groups, associations and collectives in Marseille.

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### **Red Solidaria de Acogida, Spain**

It is a nonpartisan, self-managed and feminist citizen network that was born a little over five years ago when a couple of hundred people began to meet in the squares of Madrid, with the aim of finding how to help with the situation of refugees that were coming to Europe.

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**Facebook: TRANSNATIONAL MIGRANTS COORDINATION**

**[transmigrcoordination@gmail.com](mailto:transmigrcoordination@gmail.com)**

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MIGRANTS  
COORDINATION  
#170**



**Refuse institutional  
blackmail,  
refuse racist violence:  
European residence permit  
for all!**