



FINAL DÉCLARATION

EUROMED CIVIL FORUM 2008

« *Moving and Living together in the Euromed space* »

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Gathered in Marseille the 31 October, 1 and 2 November 2008, the 250 representatives of civil society organizations from North and South Mediterranean strongly reassert their commitment to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership proclaimed in Barcelona in 1995. The Mediterranean has witnessed the emergence of the most significant hopes of humanity as well as of the worst tragedies. More than a frontier, the Mediterranean has been transformed into a place of exchanges that, since ages, men and women have crossed to circulate in several continents and open to the rest of the world. In this sense civilizations born here offer to Humanity an extraordinary experience, without giving lessons and without denying all the hopes or deceptions they created and are still creating. The history of Mediterranean people concerns the World and World's movements our people. Our associations, working in various fields, are part of this history and, therefore, we recognize our right to be heard.

The creation of « Process of Barcelona: Union for the Mediterranean » aroused several debates and questions that reflected participants' perplexity and concerns regarding the goals, the modalities of governance and the risks that can generate this new Partnership Instrument. Anyway, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, based on the willingness to share a common destiny, respectful of the diversity of each partner country, shall also rely on the respect of values and principles inscribed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 60th anniversary of which we are celebrating this year. These values are universal norms that each people, all men and women, have the right to benefit from. Ignoring or weakening these values, in the North and the South Mediterranean alike, will reinforce dictatorships, the worst injustices and indiscriminate violence.

Among these norms that nobody can ignore, freedom of association, and the existence and recognition of an autonomous and independent civil society are essential conditions for the democratic functioning of societies. Too often, particularly in South Mediterranean, civil society is subject to an unacceptable mistrust and their members to an intolerable suppression. Moreover, the participation of civil society representatives in the institutions of the Partnership is now questioned.

As they have continuously underlined in previous civil fora, men and women participating in Marseille's Civil Forum consider that this region of the world will not enjoy stability and democracy if there is no peace. This implies that each State be recognised within its borders; that all concerned countries renounce to the possession of nuclear weapons or stop to produce them. The colonization and occupation of Palestine and Sheba farms, the annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan, the blockade imposed on Gaza and, more generally, the fate of the Palestinian People, represent a denial of rights. We call on International Community and particularly on the European Union to implement immediately UN resolutions.

Respect and effective promotion of equality between women and men, being part of universal and indivisible rights, is also an obligation. Equality between women and men is the sine qua non condition of democratization and development processes and imply a secularisation of right. No society can keep half of itself under the bushel of sexist discrimination without regressing. Cultural, religious or any other reason must not be used to justify inequality between women and men or violence against women.

In this sense, cohesion and development of societies in the North and South Mediterranean require to put in practice the elimination of all forms of discrimination based on origin, religion, absence of religion, or sexual orientation.

Migrations have always had an important role in this part of the World. They represent a tangible reality since men and women can move and are part of our societies' history. The globalisation of exchanges, the expansion of means of transport and the faster circulation of information increased this phenomenon. The impossibility to access basic social guarantees and a decent employment enhances it too. The traditional route South/North is now paralleled by an equally important route South/South. We notice that millions of persons are under house arrest and prevented from moving while this should be considered and perceived as enrichment.

The European Union and its Member States are thus building a Europe fortress which does not hesitate to lock up men, women and children. They are those dying in the desert or in the sea. They are those deported, even when we know that their return might endanger their lives. The countries of the South Mediterranean are requested to extend EU borders to their own ones and they treat foreigners arriving there in an even more scandalous way that reflects their weak Rule of Law.

In the sum, refugees are denied in the reality of their sufferings and are treated as cheats; migrants don't have the right to a regular work or they are defined as refugees, favouring a legalized arbitrariness; establishing artistic ties, mixing cultures or simply visiting one's family are aleatory practices subject to the supreme will of States.

Such policies build and legitimize walls, literally and figuratively, and more specifically, they lock up societies in a particular attitude that considers Foreigner as the source of evilness. It is not rare to hear politicians addressing speeches expressly xenophobic and even racists, in the name of an identity devoid of any external enrichment. The risk is thus to freeze societies and that their relations become nothing but confrontation. The risk is also to establish, within each society, processes of confrontation between those defined as undesirables or descendants of undesirables and the "nationals".

It is an illusion to imagine that the creation of an economic space could substitute the need for democracy, respect of civil and political liberties and economic, social and cultural rights. The willingness of promoting the development of this region, particularly in the economic field, shall be supported but the mobility of human actors is an essential condition for it.

Migrants and refugees are not a danger. States sovereignty is not threatened by the arrival of persons who have always represented an enrichment at social, economic, cultural and demographic levels. We claim therefore for a different policy that could take into consideration a reality non reducible only to police treatments but integrating circulation of people as the corollary of a common development and exchange between societies. We urge States to make free circulation of people a priority for social progress in this region of the World.



Therefore, we formulate the following proposals:

1. We urge the end of short-stay visas which impede family ties and human exchanges and endanger artistic, scientific and educational exchanges.
2. We claim that all countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership ratify all international conventions, especially Geneva Convention on the right of asylum and the Convention on the Rights of Migrants, allowing the protection and reinforcement of civil and political freedoms as well as economic, social and cultural rights. All reservations, especially those to CEDAW, shall be withdrawn and the protocol added to CEDAW shall be ratified. All States shall respect the Convention on the prevention against torture and the exclusion or expulsion of a foreigner shall be forbidden if he or she risks being subject to mistreatment or torture.
3. We claim that all the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries recognize and respect the freedom of association, the freedom to form syndicates, the independence and autonomy of civil society. We ask for the reinforcement of its means, namely of its role in protecting refugees and migrants. We call for all States members of the Partnership to support civil society in all instances of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, including its new declination represented by the Union for the Mediterranean.
4. We urge the organization in 2009 of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference for the follow-up of the Istanbul Action Plan, the establishment of independent follow-up mechanisms and evaluation indicators to strengthen gender equality in this Plan, as well as in all Euro-Mediterranean Partnership policies and European Neighborhood Policy. We ask for the elimination in bilateral agreements of all provisions that are contrary to gender equality. We ask States to guarantee all universal rights of women migrants, mainly an autonomous juridical status, as well as the right to family reunion and to protection against all forms of violence and trafficking.
5. We claim that all Euro-Mediterranean partner countries implement educational policy acting against discriminations, sexism, xenophobia and racism. We claim that policies in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership integrate, in particular, the mobility of young people, in order to reinforce, according to Millennium Development Goals, educational systems that benefit everybody.
6. We claim that environmental and natural resources preservation in the Mediterranean be considered by States as the highest priority since we believe that degradation of ecosystems impair sustainable development and worsen phenomena of forced migration. In particular, Euro-Mediterranean countries need to invest adequate efforts to prevent and cope with climate change effects that, as a growing body of scientific data show, are important factors for migration through and to the region.
7. While this region of the World is suffering from the current world crisis, we call upon the Euro-Med community to revise the social and economic agenda from an approach that addresses poverty eradication, decent employment, and comprehensive migrations policies based on human rights. Migration should be introduced as one main indicator in assessing the impact of social and economic policy-making in the Euro-Med area including trade agreements. Current negotiations on services and agricultures should take into consideration the recommendation of the EMFTA Sustainability Impact Assessment. Aid within the economic partnership should not be a condition used to promote economic liberalization or security measures on migrations or terrorism. In achieving that, spaces for civil society full participation should be assured and promoted.

8. We call for the support, protection and assistance of independent and alternative Medias in the context of a new regional plan to be created. Nowadays, while the circulation of men and women is being impeded, distorted and biased pictures are circulating freely. However, thanks to alternative Medias and their networks Mediterranean people, in their cultural diversity, will be able to create their own image and writings.

We call upon all civil society organizations, through the recommendations adopted by the Forum, to make of free circulation and mobility of men and women of our countries their working program and a real priority for the coming years.

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