

In the name of commitments made to the EU, migrants and refugees are rounded up in Morocco

Sunday 14 January 2007, by [Migreurop](#) (Date first published: 26 December 2006).

More reactions can be found in the French section (to open click on the “translation” button in the left column).

At dawn on 23 December 2006, between two and four hundred migrants were rounded up in several neighbourhoods in Rabat (Morocco), placed in minibuses and taken by force to the Algerian border. On 25 December, round-ups also took place in Nador (in the east of the country). Women and young children were also taken, as were numerous asylum seekers and people with recognised refugee status granted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Little over a year after the events in Ceuta and Melilla in autumn 2005, the scene of mass deportations of sub-Saharan migrants that provoked the indignation of the international community, large-scale round-ups and deportations in the name of the protection of Europe borders are again on the agenda in a country where, on a daily basis, the rights of migrants and of people in need of international protection are scorned.

By deciding to establish a « strict partnership » on migration issues, the States that met in the Euro-African conferences on migration and development in Rabat (July 2006) and Tripoli (November 2006) have asserted the importance of the « protection of the rights of all migrants », paying special attention to vulnerable people, as well as the « respect for an effective protection for refugees and displaced people ». These basic principles thus appear to have a very relative reach compared with the will to prevent migrants from entering Europe, since it is in the name of the commitments made by Morocco in the framework of the Rabat conference that the Moroccan authorities publicly justified the deportations carried out on 23 December !

In fact, in the framework of the cooperation that it has promoted since 2004 to ensure the « external dimension » of its immigration and asylum policy, the European Union uses its southern neighbours, regardless of whether they are migrants' countries of origin or of transit, to delegate the protection of its own borders to them, regardless of the consequences for those people who cannot cross them any longer. Thus Libya, regularly singled out for human rights violations perpetrated on its territory, is becoming one of the main EU subcontractors for the sifting of migrants who have come from southern Africa. Thus, also, Morocco is considered a privileged partner of the EU in the fight against illegal immigration, at a time when the principles contained in the Geneva Convention on refugees, which it has ratified, are not respected on its soil, and when the UNHCR is not in a position to assure the protection of people to whom it has granted the right to international protection in Morocco.

Trapped by the « externalisation » by the EU of its migration policy, the people who died in Ceuta and Melilla, like the ones rounded up in Rabat today, abandoned to their fate in inhuman conditions, are the victims of this irresponsible logic.

P.S.

* English translation by Yasha Maccanico, Statewatch.