

Association Malienne des Expulsés



Press conference

Date: 05 April 2016

Place: AME central office

Preliminary Statement:

Since the end of last year (2015), in Mali we are witnessing waves of expulsions, refoulements and repatriations of our migrants from Asia, Europe and even from the African continent. This recurring problem of refoulements, expulsions and repatriations of Malian migrants worsens on a daily basis and is becoming increasingly worrying. Thus, Malians are mainly expelled, refouled or repatriated from Saudi Arabia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Angola, Libya, Spain and now also from Mauritania.

The fight against so-called illegal immigration represents a priority in the policy implemented by the European Union which presents this form of migration as a dangerous scourge which must be combated. This attitude by the European Union is constituted by focussing on the consequences without worrying about the root causes of the migration phenomenon. Thus, the reasons that push our fellow nationals to leave are well known, as they concern a lack of employment for young people, their difficult economic and professional conditions and, most of all, a lack of any prospects which affects their daily life.

The distinction or categorisation of migrants (between economic migrants and asylum seekers) by the EU is an incorrect reading of the situation which does not contribute to reducing the phenomenon of flows towards Europe.

The *Association Malienne des Expulsés* (AME, Malian Association of Expellees) thinks that it is up to the Malian authorities to highlight the need for solutions to the problem of unemployment and to improve citizens' living standards in order to hope to eventually put an end to this form of migration which endangers our compatriots' lives and exposes them to rights violations in transit and destination countries.

We recall that the Malian diaspora contributes significantly to improving living standards by sending considerable remittances to their families, human and financial investments to build infrastructures (used to build schools, health centres, roads, mosques), without overlooking improved access to drinking water through the building of hydraulic facilities.

Hence, the Malian diaspora is a priceless support for the national economy and greatly exceeds the public development aid which Mali is granted by its financial partners. This is for the simple reason that such investment is neither a loan, nor is it meant to be reimbursed.

The La Valletta Summit which was held in November 2015 brought together European and African heads of state or of governments to reinforce cooperation and to tackle the challenges of migration. Thus, the Summit adopted a political declaration and a plan of action in five points, some of which are deployed against the interests of migrants. They include the announced creation of a reception centre, for professional training and guidance for migrants in Agadez in Niger which arouses fear of a calling into question of the principle of free movement in the west African space which is enshrined by the ECOWAS protocols. Further, there is the point about the return, readmission and reintegration of migrants. This point is troubling as well, because it demands that States cooperate in the readmission of the own migrants.

This other concern which AME expresses regards the establishment of reception, information and guidance offices for Malians returning from abroad, initiated by the Malian government. AME questions the suitability of setting up such offices in the proximity of Mali's border posts which risk turning into posts for EU border guards to hinder the free movement of people and their goods, as is already the case in another structure which is referred to as a control facility at the international airport of Modibo Keita in Bamako.

In spite of the security risks linked to the increase in terrorist acts which the AME forcefully condemns, it is convinced that the correct response to migration flows must be found in respect for the rights of all migrant workers and the members of their families, which most European states refuse to ratify.

AME invites African states in general, and particularly those which are ECOWAS members, to take into account the need for respect for the freedom of movement of people and their possessions, in spite of the EU's pressure to implement the plan of action resulting from the La Valletta summit.

Summary chart of the expulsions, refoulements and repatriations from January to March 2016

N°	Country	Number
01	Libya	344
02	Gabon	186
03	Saudi Arabia	140
04	Mauritania	50
05	Spain	48
06	Morocco	31
07	France	19
08	Angola	01
	Total	819

(Source AME)

Unofficial translation by Statewatch. The original (in French) is available in the Association Malienne des Expulsés, at: <http://www.expulsesmaliens.info/Conference-de-presse-des-vagues-d.html>