Issue 24/11, 20 June

Frontex, Greece, Libya: "systematic" rights violations

Policing by design: the latest EU surveillance plan

Automating the fortress: Europe's digital borders

Video: Border externalisation, racisms and populisms

Frontex: knowledge of pushbacks in Greece, support for pullbacks to Libya

Documents seen by Statewatch show that despite warnings from its own fundamental rights officials, Frontex's senior staff and management board did nothing to halt the agency's operations in Greece. Suspending or terminating operations is a legal obligation when rights violations "are of a serious nature or are likely to persist."

The agency has also been accused of aiding the return of migrants who have fled Libya back to the country, and to possible torture and blackmail. Border guards who have worked for Frontex, speaking to journalists from the Swedish television programme Mission Investigate, by Sveriges Television (SVT), revealed just how close contact with groups in the country is.

Read our report on Frontex's knowledge of Greece's "systematic" policy of violent pushbacks **here**, and on the agency's cooperation with the Libyan coast guard **here**.

Policing by design: the latest EU surveillance plan

The EU should reintroduce mass telecommunications surveillance and create backdoors to encrypted data, a new plan drafted in secret by police and security officials says. To do so, close coordination between the state and industry would be required, to ensure what the plan calls "lawful access by design." The plan repeats demands made many times over the years by officials, and may find a warm reception from the incoming European Commission.

Read the full story **here**.

Automating the fortress: digital technologies and European borders

The fortification of Europe's borders is inherently linked to the use of digital technologies. From the biometric passports and automated gates used at border crossing points to the drones, sensor systems and detection technologies used to prevent and detect unauthorised migrants, digital technologies are crucial to a political project that seeks to give state authorities increased knowledge of – and thus control over – foreign nationals seeking to enter the EU. Vast quantities of public funding have been used to develop and deploy these technologies, and unless there is significant public and political opposition to the project, it is likely that the EU will provide far more money in the years to come. Given the harm caused by the ongoing reinforcement of Fortress Europe, and the myriad more beneficial ways in which those funds could be spent, that opposition is urgently needed.

Read the full article **here**, adapted from our report ***Europe's techno-borders***.

Euro-African racisms and populisms, consequences of the externalisation of migration policies

A Migreurop public conference was due to be held in Tunis on 17 May entitled "Euro-African racisms and populisms, consequences of the externalisation of migration policies", organised in collaboration with FTCR and FTDES. Due to the repression in Tunisia, the conference could not take place, and *Migreurop* and Tunisian members and partners organised a webinar instead.

Watch the recording of the event **here**.

New material

Dutch pair face jail in Latvia after 'helping refugees in act of compassion' ----- Migrants turn to Mauritania as new EU transit route ----- UK: Major BDS victory as anti-boycott bill defeated ----- Northern Ireland: Police made 800+ applications for journalist & lawyer phone data ----- Academic boycotts jeopardise Israel's place in Horizon Europe ----- Man wrongfully arrested in the US warns Ireland against facial recognition tech ----- Growing violence and harsher policies as Cypriot politicians weaponise migration ----- Netherlands: Former intelligence chief to become Dutch PM as part of 'business cabinet' ----- Switzerland to introduce flight passenger database

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Upcoming events

Berlin, 26-27 June
[European Colour of Surveillance 2024: Liberation Practices in times of Fascism](#)

"Equinox Initiative for Racial Justice, International Women* Space and Weaving Liberation look forward to welcoming you at the 2nd European Colour of Surveillance Conference in Berlin.

This year's Colour of Surveillance will focus on liberation practices in times of fascism, with a focus on migrant justice organising.

The conference will bring racial, social, migrant justice and digital rights organisers together to build and share practices of resistance to racialised criminalisation and surveillance in times of fascism. The event will feature a mixture of panel conversations, workshops and spaces dedicated to maintaining connections and coordinated strategies."

New material

[Asylum, immigration and borders](#)

[Civil liberties](#)

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[Racism and discrimination](#)

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Asylum, immigration and borders

[Humanity Overboard](#)

"To mark World Refugee Day 2024, we are publishing our report "Humanity Overboard" with analyses of the ongoing humanitarian emergency in the Mediterranean. The report contains operational data, reports from survivors and a survey conducted on board the Humanity 1. The report highlights the breaches of law by EU member states and the inhumane consequences for people seeking protection."

[UK and Bangladesh sign agreement to tackle illegal migration](#)

"At the first Joint Working Group on Home Affairs in London this week, both countries committed to strengthening their partnership and intensify co-operation on economic, cultural and social issues.

The returns agreement will streamline the returns process by removing a mandatory interview for cases where there is good supporting evidence for removal."

Externalisation: Chaos, corruption and migration control under the guise of European cooperation

"If there is one word that accurately describes our migration model, it is chaos. Europe's borders have become spaces of disorder that barely fulfil, and with undesirable consequences, some of the functions for which they were created. For the public in migration destination countries, the chaos results in a frustrating sense of loss of control and constant border emergencies. For migrants and their families, disorder means vulnerability, death, suffering and disproportionate expense. For the migration industry, legal and illegal, chaos is the source of a fabulous business they are unwilling to give up."

For more on externalisation, see our bulletin: **Outsourcing borders: Monitoring EU externalisation policy**

Bulgaria: the new EU flashpoint for border control vs human rights

"On 21 January, a group of eight people attempted the crossing from Turkey into Bulgaria; a route that has become increasingly popular as violence at Turkey's land and sea borders with Greece has shifted migratory pathways in other directions. The transit group were apprehended shortly after, and were beaten, robbed and pushed back to Turkey through the Tundzha river.

This is not a rare occurrence."

Dutch pair face jail in Latvia after 'helping refugees in act of compassion'

"Two Dutch people are facing prison sentences of up to eight years in Latvia over what they say was an act of compassion to help a group of refugees reach safety, including the sister of one of the pair."

Stuck in Libya, the Sudanese refugee frightened of both Frontex and coast guard

"In Libya's capital city Tripoli, a 29-year old refugee from Sudan is hoping to get smuggled by boat across the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe.

"I don't feel safe being anywhere in Libya," he tells EUobserver, in a video conference call on Friday (31 May)."

New EU Anti-trafficking Directive leaves trafficked people behind

"The EU Council has adopted changes to the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive which fail to address root causes of trafficking and fail to protect and empower trafficked people."

Italy Eyes August Start Date for Albania Asylum Centres

"Italy's right-wing prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, inspected work on two asylum centres being built in Albania under a controversial deal between the two countries."

See also: **Finland and Italy want more military involvement in migration control**

EU Migration and Asylum Pact Will Violate Key Rights, NGOs Warn

"New regulations on the screening of non-EU nationals at the bloc's external borders, which come into force this week, could have major implications for migrants and asylum seekers' privacy rights, campaigners warn."

See also: **The EU Migration Pact: a dangerous regime of migrant surveillance**; **Migration Pact "will engender a proliferation of human rights violations" and must be rejected**

Migrants turn to Mauritania as new EU transit route

"Thousands of Africans continue to try to reach Europe either over the Sahara Desert or by sea, facing inhumane conditions. The EU wants to discourage the trend, but migrants are increasingly going through Mauritania."

See also: **The politics behind the EU-Mauritania migration partnership**

EU cashes in on €130m in rejected visa applications

"EU governments rake in €130m per year in rejected visa application fees, dubbed as 'reverse remittances', according to new analysis shared with EUobserver.

The cost of Schengen visa rejections in 2023 was €130m, up from €105m in 2022, the data compiled by Marta Foresti and Otho Mantegazza at LAGO Collective finds. The total sum is likely to increase in 2024 since the visa application fee to travel to the EU will increase from €80 to €90 for adults on 11 June, following a recent decision by the EU Commission."

Court of Justice of the EU: **International protection: refugee status may be granted to women who identify with the value of equality between women and men**

"Women, including minors, who share as a common characteristic the fact that they genuinely come to identify with the fundamental value of equality between women and men during their stay in a Member State may, depending on the circumstances in the country of origin, be regarded as belonging to a 'particular social group', constituting a 'reason for persecution' capable of leading to the recognition of refugee status.

Italy: **Civil court annulled administrative blocking of Sea-Watch 4**

Reviewing similar cases, **this article** asks why authorities fail to recognise the prevalence of international law over national decrees aimed at obstructing #SAR vessels.

Desert Dumps

"Europe supports, finances and is directly involved in clandestine operations in North African countries to dump tens of thousands of Black people in the desert or remote areas each year to prevent them from coming to the EU.

Funds for these desert dumps have been paid under the guise of "migration management" with the EU claiming that the money doesn't support human rights abuses against sub-Saharan African communities in North Africa. Brussels claims publicly that it closely monitors how this money is spent. But the reality is different."

Czech PM confirms 19 EU countries back externalising migration handling

"Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala and his Italian counterpart and partner in the conservative ECR group, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, showed they were on the same page on key issues on Monday in Italy, where talks focused on migration and "going beyond the EU's migration pact.""

Civil liberties

UK: **Major BDS victory as anti-boycott bill defeated**

"PSC is delighted to announce that the government's toxic anti-boycott bill has been defeated. This repressive piece of planned legislation was a major attack on democratic rights. It threatened to erode local democracy, restrict freedom of expression, and undermine campaigns for social and climate justice. It would have prevented public bodies – such as local councils, universities, and public-sector pension funds – from making ethical choices about spending and investment. The government's stated goal was to shut down campaigns against Israel's violations of Palestinian rights."

Northern Ireland: **Police made 800+ applications for journalist & lawyer phone data**

Barry McAffrey, a surveilled journalist, **said**, "Somebody in authority within the #PSNI authorised & allowed this to happen. The public needs to know who."

The Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) issued **a public statement** to try to counteract what they consider misleading reporting on the topic of police snooping on privileged professions.

The Chief Constable's **report**, which they say was written "to provide further reassurance to the public about the PSNI use of surveillance powers" is below.

Perhaps somewhat unfortunate for the PSNI is that one part of their slogan is "we listen".

Military

Militarisation of Europe at the cost of arms export control

"Many countries in Europe are relaxing their arms export rules, arguing this is necessary to let the arms industry thrive. Different countries – ranging from Norway to Italy – have implemented changes in their arms export policy that all lower arms export standards and make exports to countries at war or with poor human rights records possible."

Academic boycotts jeopardise Israel's place in Horizon Europe, the EU's research and development budget

Universities across Europe are increasingly **pausing or halting cooperation** with Israeli institutions in protest against Israel's bombing and siege of Gaza.

Israel has received "more than €600 million from Horizon Europe, more than many #EU member states"

An Israeli intelligence ministry report warns that the boycotts "could lead to damage to national security & the strength of Israel's economy."

This follow-up article indicates that the European Commission is not planning to change course. It also cites **our publication with IMI** on EU funding for Israeli drones.

The British spy squad assisting Israel as it bombs Gaza

"British ministers could be legally vulnerable as more information comes to light about their supporting role in Israel's war on Gaza.

The New York Times article noted that "intelligence collection and analysis teams from the United States and Britain have been in Israel throughout the war".

It continued that the British personnel were "assisting Israeli intelligence in collecting and analysing information related to the hostages, some of them citizens of both countries"."

Policing

UK: **The security-industrial complex never ceases to amaze**

In the UK, **police may soon be donning electromagnetic weapons** in the form of ghostbuster-style backpacks to "tackle crime linked to newer vehicles such as electric bikes and electric scooters"

Sound ridiculous? It shouldn't. EU security projects have long funded such ideas

In 2013, **we covered a project** given €3.3 million to ensure the "safe control and stopping at a distance of non-cooperative vehicles" through electromagnetic devices.

See also: **NeoConOpticon: The EU Security-Industrial Complex** (2009); **Market Forces: the development of the EU security-industrial complex** (2017)

Finland and Sweden to intensify police cooperation in border area

"The agreement on police cooperation in the border area between Finland and Sweden will further improve the maintenance of security in the northern border area. The President of the Republic is to approve the agreement and the relevant bills on Friday."

Man wrongfully arrested in the US warns Ireland against facial recognition tech

"A man who was wrongfully arrested and detained in the US based on facial recognition technology (FRT) has called on Helen McEntee not to introduce the technology into Irish policing."

Racism and discrimination

Euro-African racisms and populisms, consequences of the externalisation of migration policies

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In agreement with its Tunisian members and partners, the Migreurop network has decided to maintain this event in the form of a webinar on Tuesday 4 June 2024, while several trials are currently taking place, including that of the activist Saadia Mosbah, founder and president of the Mnemty association, which fights against racial discrimination in Tunisia. This webinar has been an opportunity, by reflecting from different regions, to adopt a comparative approach to better understand and fight against what is happening in Tunisia and elsewhere.

Together, let's maintain spaces for collective reflection and solidarity, in support of Tunisian civil society, which is bearing the full brunt of the authorities' criminalisation.

Watch the full webinar video."

Growing violence and harsher policies as Cypriot politicians weaponise migration

"After years of simmering anti-migrant sentiment and far-right agitation, violence against asylum seekers and migrants is spiking in EU member state Cyprus, even as civil society groups on the Mediterranean island rally to try and lend them a helping hand."

Q&A: 'I don't sense a general far-right surge' - top EU official

"Margaritis Schinas, the Vice President of the European Commission, tells TRT World in an exclusive interview that far-right gains in the recent EU elections can not change Brussels's course."

UK: **The racialised harm of police strip searches: a response from the Runnymede Trust to a Home Office consultation**

"Runnymede Trust analysis of new Home Office strip search data shows that Black people are disproportionately strip searched by nearly all police forces in England and Wales. Black children are 6.5 times more likely than white children, and Black adults 4.7 times more likely than white adults, to be strip searched by police."

Security and intelligence

Netherlands: **Former intelligence chief to become Dutch PM as part of 'business cabinet'**

"A top justice ministry official and former intelligence chief is to be the new Dutch prime minister, five months after Geert Wilders' far-right Freedom party (PVV) finished first in parliamentary elections.

(…)

Schoof, 67, formerly a national counterterrorism coordinator and director of the AIVD intelligence and IND immigration services, will head a "business" or "extra-parliamentary" cabinet of equal numbers of political appointees and experts."

Ireland: **Who bombed Dublin? The 50 year cover up must end**

"Fifty years ago today, four car bombs exploded in Dublin and the Irish border town of Monaghan.

They took 34 lives, including an unborn baby. It was the greatest loss of life in any single day of the Troubles.

No one has ever been charged, although the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) claimed responsibility.

A retired Irish police officer, John O'Brien, has now published a book about the bombings.

In The Great Deception, he claims British security agencies and politicians are misleading the bereaved relatives – as well as the people of both Ireland and Britain."

Surveillance

Switzerland to introduce flight passenger database

"Switzerland plans to introduce a flight passenger database from 2026 to collect and process personal data in a bid to combat terrorism and serious crime. The government has sent a related bill to parliament."

See also: **UN travel surveillance system needs "pause and urgent review", says Special Rapporteur**

Africa: **False Promise of Biometrics**

"Three-country investigation shows digital IDs in Africa failing to deliver promised democratic and development boost, while making fortunes for tech vendors"

Poland: **European Court of Human Rights finds violations of the right to privacy due to insufficient safeguards for Polish legislation on secret surveillance and data retention**

This includes the retention of telecommunications, postal and digital communications data.

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