

## **EU-Group Deportations**

(from Karawane Hamburg)

### **Background**

On April 29th, 2004, the European Union Council made a decision responding to initiatives from the Italian Government, "concerning the organization of group deportation flights of citizens from non-EU member countries who are subject to different deportation measures, from the sovereign territory of two or more member countries." (published on August 6, 2004 in the official gazette of the European Union: L261) Deportations shall from now on be treated as an integral component of the measures in the fight against illegal immigration. It has therefore become necessary to arrive at a common concept on joint deportations in order to be able to implement these more rationally and efficiently. Aside from the financial aspects, organizational issues have also been covered by the rules and regulations, for ex. there are guidelines on the number of escorts, on the security measures on board planes and the use of force etc. Information on the group deportations should as a rule only reach the media after these have already successfully pushed through. In May 2004, the Dutch Minister for Alien Affairs and Integration, Verdonk, reported that the European Commission has set aside 30 Million Euros for group deportations in the European Union for the years 2005 and 2006. This money is allocated for the logistical preparations of group deportations and for the flights themselves.

### **Developments in Hamburg**

Two EU-Group Deportations, which have become public took place in Hamburg in 2004. On May 25-26, 2004, eight African refugees from different German states were flown to Amsterdam accompanied by a large police contingent under extremely tight security and secrecy measures. The refugees were then deported to Togo and Cameroon from Amsterdam. Aside from Germany and Holland, Great Britain, France and Belgium also took part in this group deportation. The Aliens Office of Hamburg organized and coordinated the group deportation, which took place on the 13th of September 2004. According to official figures, 17 refugees from Hamburg, other German states, from Belgium and Switzerland were brought to the Hamburg Airport and deported to Burkina Faso. Togo and Benin. Although Switzerland is not an EU-Member, there are good contacts and capabilities for coordination work on the administrative level for joint deportations. The Senator for Internal Affairs of Hamburg, Nagel,

praised the excellent organization of the international charter flights to Africa which were undertaken by the Hamburg Aliens Office and the Federal Border Guard: "Hamburg has proved that it is capable of decisively organizing an international chartered flight. This international and federal cooperation in the fight against criminality and illegal immigration is exemplary and trend-setting." After the group deportations, meetings of different anti-racist and active human rights groups and individuals (the Karawane for example) took place. It was decided in one of the meetings to make an appeal to bring to attention the newest developments on group deportations with the additional objective of building an international network. This appeal was then sent to over the network "Europeans Against Racism." Some groups sent replies to this letter to the effect that a long term and permanent coordination or networking would require too much work and time which the Karawane and others, for ex. the Flüchtlingsrat Hamburg, could ill afford. The meetings on EU-Deportations were also eventually discontinued and it was agreed upon that meetings shall only be held in cases of urgent notices on impending group deportations.

The following questions can be raised for discussion:

1. What is the difference between an individual deportation and a group deportation from the point of view of the deportees? The impression should not be created that individual deportations are okay while group deportations are not.
2. What is the difference between an EU-Group Deportation and a national charter flight which takes place regularly anyway?
3. What can still be done to prevent deportations?
4. How can an international network be built up on a long-term basis and what capacities do we need for it?