

KARAWANE

Für die Rechte der
Flüchtlinge und
MigrantInnen



Self description of the Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants

WHAT IS THE CARAVAN?

1. The Caravan-for the Rights of refugees and Migrants is a network of individuals, groups and organizations of refugees, migrants and Germans based on anti-imperialism and antiracism. We are engaged in the struggle for socio-political justice, equality and respect for the fundamental human rights of everyone.
2. The Caravan maintains a sharp focus on the situation and struggles of refugees and migrants in Germany who are the voices and representatives of the victims of worldwide imperialist globalisation. Basically therefore, the Caravan does not compromise the welfare and respect of refugee and migrant rights in Germany as well as the support of the struggles in the home countries.
3. We struggle against and in the process do away with any form of racism and sexism.
4. The Caravan is a secular and non-party network.
5. The Caravan recognizes the existence of other networks, institutions and groups focusing on or having to do with refugees and migrants. We are open and willing to work with them broadly and specifically based on respect for each other's independence, initiative and mutual support.
6. Uniquely characteristic of the Caravan is its rich components of activists and groups from different countries and nationalities, languages, political movements and cultures. The Caravan is thus endowed with a huge wealth of knowledge and experience of people all over the world. The inner strength of the Caravan is deeply rooted in this rich diversity united by the common aim: the struggle for the fundamental human rights of everyone.
7. Irrespective of the reasons of flight or migration, refugees and migrants are always welcome in the Caravan and we solicit everyone's active participation in our common struggle for the respect of our rights. Keeping this broad alliance together, however, is a tough but an extremely necessary job.

CARAVAN'S STARTING POINT.

8. Consequent upon the large mix that make up the Caravan, there are big differences in the actual social conditions of its members. This is most evident when the status and social condition of an asylum seeker who is basically restricted and isolated from the German society is compared with that of a German who does not face such isolation and restrictions. However, the Germans generally involved at different levels in the Caravan are engaged in

solidarity with the refugee and migrant struggles and not on the basis of paternalistic reasons "to help poor victims". Rather, it is on the conviction that the society is racist and the system unjust as well as the acknowledgement of the role of the German state in the conditions that necessitate refugee and migrant flights from their home countries. Further, we recognize the difference in the social status of an accepted refugee/legal migrant and an asylum seeker/undocumented migrant or so called illegal as mentioned above.

9. However, all these differences are duly subdued and overridden by the unity of purpose based on international solidarity. Practically for us, the concept of international solidarity starts right from where we are. This means that fellow refugees and migrants take the problems, concerns and struggles of refugees and migrants from other countries, cultures and background seriously and support them as much as possible. This practice coupled with the cooperation provided by our German colleagues and friends creates a truly international solidarity that is necessary for the effectiveness of our network. The slogan is more of: "let's fight it together" rather than "let's fight it for them". We therefore strive for a strong and united front of the oppressed in resisting the racist and unjust system that we live in. Together, we can win against the state (however small it may be) and show it as a proof that the state is not invincible and thereby motivate others to join the struggle.

10. One of our principles is to encourage and give opportunity to refugees and migrants to share their experiences themselves and to be more active in the fight against persecution here in Germany as well as fighting against Germany's collaboration with the corrupt, dictatorial and repressive governments in the home countries. Efforts are made for example to translate discussions to every participant in every meeting in a language of his or her understanding, so that all are enabled to make their contribution. Refugees and migrants who are experienced in liberation movements back home are encouraged to take up responsibilities and play leading roles in countering the propaganda against refugees and migrants by the German government.

11. Finally, the bedrock of the Caravan is the support of its members in their fight against state persecution which results in threats of and actual deportations in many cases. When refugees and migrants heed the call to stand up and fight for their rights and against racism in Germany, they are perceived by the state as enemies, for exposing the dark and horrible side of Germany-which in fact, is the reality of our daily lives. Consequently, such activists are intimidated and threatened with fines and imprisonments here in Germany and deportations to countries where they could be tortured and murdered. As a result, the Caravan is duty bound and morally responsible to fight to defend these activists who in spite of state intimidation and at the risk of their own lives, takes a principled stand against racism and oppression in Germany.

CRITICISM, SELF-CRITICISM AND DEEPER MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

12. The presence and solidarity of German activists in virtually every segment of the Caravan network is multi-purposeful. This is particularly evident in terms of language facility, legal knowledge, deeper insight and understanding of the political history of Germany where the Caravan is based. However, owing to the differences in status and social conditions between the Germans and the refugees, it is important that the Germans ensure a deeper understanding of the social conditions and realities of refugee lives in Germany and to critically reflect on them. Not every activity intended to support refugees and migrants are regarded as useful by the refugees especially as we are more limited in our options than Germans. Additionally, it is important for Germans to understand the social conditions in the third world countries in order to understand the political aspirations and activities of refugees and migrants properly.

13. The Caravan is necessarily open to internal and external but constructive criticisms as this constitutes an integral part of a progressive movement. It takes constant reflection of our activities, individual commitment and behaviour to attain a higher political plane. The Caravan is about confronting and fighting the very hard and difficult problems of deportations, apartheid pass law, (Residenzpflicht) imprisonment, social exclusion, racism among others. Our discussions cannot be separated from concrete action.

POLITICS AND SLOGANS OF THE CARAVAN.

14. The politics of the Caravan is drawn, shaped and based on the life experiences and daily realities of our numerous members and colleagues, brothers and sisters both here in Germany and in the home countries. For centuries, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America have been targeted by the colonial and imperialist powers as areas to be conquered, "civilised", oppressed and exploited. The relationships between these powers and the home countries have always been defined by this imperialist motive. From the beginning, through colonial period till date, it has left our countries devastated with incalculable human misery.

15. While formally independent today, our countries remain as client states dictated upon or strongly influenced by these powers. Our politics and economies imposed by international multilateral agencies and institutions (e.g. IMF, World Bank and WTO) as well as multinational and transnational corporations supported by the respective imperialist powers who install brutal dictatorships, impose divide and rule policies, incite conflicts among nations to turn them away from fighting imperialism. They are also able to do so generally with the support of the official armed forces of the local client states and sometimes with paramilitary or private armies within our countries.

16. Our corrupt and despotic leaders are hailed as "world statesmen" for as long as they do the bidding of the big powers and impoverish our countries and people in return for a share in the loot which they stash away in foreign lands, mainly in western countries. When they become useless as puppets and become the target of the people's hatred and rebellion, they are changed for another set of puppets. "Regime change" becomes an excuse for invading and occupying

the country and victimizing the people. Militarization, proxy wars among the big powers, or wars of aggression lead to the mass scale internal and external refugees.

17. When we resist oppression and persecution then we are hunted, imprisoned, tortured and killed. When we flee from this, we expect safety, refuge and to be treated as human beings according to conventional rights in the so-called developed countries who claim and preach the virtues of democracy and human rights.

18. But when refugees arrive in Germany, these expectations are directly blown in our faces as we are further subjected to state persecution, mental and psychological torture, police brutality, lack of freedom of movement and deportations to where we fled from. We refugees find ourselves to be in a similar situation to the one we fled from. We suffer social isolation and a degree of antagonism from some sectors of society. We are confronted with state racism and the special laws that come with it.

19. For most of us who are already very familiar with what persecution is, we have no alternative but to stand up and fight for our rights. When we do this, we are termed as trouble makers and ingrates for daring to speak against the inhuman conditions we are subjected to and the violations of our rights. The state intensifies its efforts to silence us by sending us back to the dictatorial regimes we fled from in the first place.

20. The above is the core of the Caravan politics - resistance to state and societal racism and injustice. These politics develop through our practice and experience. The Caravan places the moral responsibility of caring for the refugees and migrants squarely where it belongs as expressed by our two major slogans:

"We are here because you destroy our countries"

"Asylum is a human right and not a privilege"

Self description paper of the Caravan
decided in 2003