



**Failing Readmission:
If sending migrants
back won't work.
A case study of Italy and Tunisia.**

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In recent years, Tunisia and Italy have developed one of the most functional agreements on the readmission of undocumented migrants in the EU. Numbers speak for themselves. In 2015, out of a total of 2,850 repatriations made by the Italian authorities, 35% were Tunisian nationals. In 2016, this proportion grew to 43%.¹ Enquiring on readmission and deportation is not an easy task. If the existence of readmission agreements is widely reported by national media, information on how these agreements are actually operationalized in practice is seldom made public.²

¹ In 2015, 1,002 Tunisians were repatriated from Palermo to Enfidha airport. In 2016, the number grew to 1,268 persons out of 2,899 in total. (See figure 1). Data derived from the 2017 Parliamentary Report of the Guarantor for Detainees Rights (Garante Nazionale dei diritti delle persone detenute o private della libertà personale, Relazione al Parlamento (2017). Available online: http://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/file/repository/commissioni/dirittiumaniXVIII/allegati/Cie_rapporto_aggiornato_2_gennaio_2017.pdf

² It took nearly 18 weeks of full-time research to find the information necessary to back-up the arguments presented in this article. Cooperation from both Italian and Tunisian authorities was scarce and sporadic.

This article will provide an account of how readmission agreements have been working between Italy and Tunisia in the last few years. Considering available data on the matter, as well as three months' worth of personal research and interviews with direct sources in Tunisia, this article will then examine some of the shortcomings of the Italian repatriation system, so as to counter the widely held assumption that Italy and Tunisia are setting a model case for how readmissions are to be operated in Europe.

Figure 1
Readmissions from Italy 2015-2016
(first five nationalities)

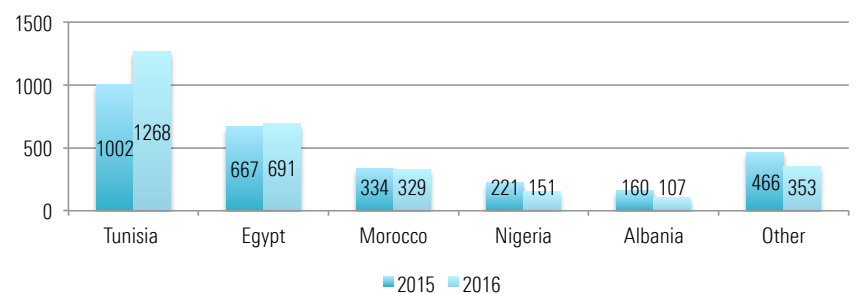


Figure 1: 2015: Tunisia (1.002), Egypt (667), Morocco (334), Nigeria (221), Albania (160), Other* (466) – Total 2.850.

2016: Tunisia (1.268), Egypt (691), Morocco (329), Nigeria (151), Albania (107), Other* (353) – Total 2.899.

* Other: All deportees of other nationalities.

Source: Ministero dell’Interno Direzione centrale dell’immigrazione e della Polizia delle frontiere servizio immigrazione sezione rimpatri. Credit to the ‘2017 Parliamentary Report of the Guarantor for Detainees Rights’.

Italian-Tunisian agreements on readmission prior 2011

Agreements concerning the readmission of undocumented migrants between Italy and Tunisia date back to the 1990s, concomitantly to Italy’s first ever introduction of visa restrictions for non-EU nationals. Before that – hard to believe today – people’s movement between Tunisia and Italy had been unrestricted. It was in August 1998 that the first readmission agreement took form, stipulated in Rome as a pact of cooperation aiming to monitor and restrict unregulated Tunisian migration in exchange

of entry-quotas for Tunisian workers.³ In the words of migration expert Jean-Pierre Cassarino (2010), readmission is to be understood as the “process through which individuals who are not allowed to stay on the territory of a country are expelled or removed, whether in a coercive manner or not.”⁴ Readmission, just like deportation, is simply another form of expulsion, disguised under the fake distinction between being ‘voluntary’, when carried out under threat of forcible removal, or ‘forced’, when actually implemented through state’s active coercion. Starting in 1998 and for the years to come, readmission became part and parcel of policies aiming to securitise Italian and European borders by making migrants irregular.⁵

Readmission being a two-way agreement (between the ‘sending’ and the ‘receiving’ country), North

3 Tunisian ‘seasonal workers’ were to be employed especially in Italy’s most needing labour markets: fishery and agriculture, mainly in Sicily and other southern regions. It is indicative of the counter-effects of visa restrictions that only after this agreement was put in place did the city of Mazara del Vallo, one of Italy’s most important fishing ports, become stable home to the largest Tunisian community in Italy. These fishermen, mostly coming from the region around Mehdiya, not being able to travel back to Tunisia as easily as before, eventually had to establish themselves in the city’s abandoned kasba neighbourhood. (Author’s interviews in Mazara del Vallo, June 2017).

4 Cassarino, J.P., (2010), ‘Dealing With Unbalanced Reciprocities: Cooperation on Readmission and Implications’, *Unbalanced Reciprocities: Cooperation on Readmission in the Euro-Mediterranean Area*, Middle East Institute, Special Edition Viewpoints, pp.

5 Law n.189 (July 30, 2002), also known as the Bossi-Fini Decree, spells out prosecution against irregular migration, sanctioning with a fine whoever found in the country with no legal authorization to stay, and envisaging immediate expulsion of those who cannot sustain the costs of such fine and/or pay for their travel back to their country of origin.

Africa’s regimes grabbed the occasion to sharpen their bargaining tools on the West’s growing focus on security.⁶ As such, agreements on readmission and border securitization were tied to development and military aid, often directly fuelling corruption and rent-distribution, while also legitimizing the region’s despots as ‘partners’ on an international platform. The December 2003 second agreement between Italy and Tunisia, for example, not only promoted the coordination of Tunisian-Italian border controls and the training of Tunisian police on Italian ships.⁷ It also provided the right context the Ben Ali government needed to draft and implement law 2004-06, making illegal all forms of assistance to persons entering or exiting the country. This criminalisation of Tunisian unauthorized migration achieved two aims: tightening the grip of the regime on its own people with yet another punishable sanction, and at the same time paying lip service to Western governments, Italy and France in particular, in showing outright cooperation and commitment against Tunisian undocumented emigration.⁸

6 See the work of Paolo Cuttitta for readmission agreements between Italy and Egypt, Libya, and Morocco. (Cuttitta, (2010), ‘Readmission in the Relations between Italy and North African Mediterranean Countries’ in (ed.) Cassarino (2010), *Unbalanced Reciprocities*).

7 Tazzioli (2011), *Cronologia degli Accordi Italia-Tunisia 1998-2011*, Accessed online: <http://www.storiemigranti.org/spip.php?article1004>

8 Law n. 2004-06 (February 3rd, 2004). Article 38: « Est puni de trois ans d’emprisonnement et d’une amende de huit mille dinars quiconque aura renseigné, conçu, facilité, aidé ou se sera entremis ou aura organisé par un quelconque moyen, même à titre bénévole, l’entrée ou la sortie clandestine d’une personne du territoire tunisien, par voie terrestre, maritime ou aérienne, soit des points de passage soit d’autres points ». This law is still standing today, despite a moratoria being imposed upon it, avoiding prison for most repatriated Tunisians or their family members.

Italian-Tunisian agreements on readmission post 2011

To this day, it has been impossible for this author to retrieve data on the number of deportations between Italy and Tunisia prior to 2011. As it emerges from other accounts however, the readmission system constructed by the above mentioned agreements ended up being quite dysfunctional in the years prior to the revolution.⁹ Coordination between consulates was often inefficient, subject to delays or political calculation, affecting the process of identification and the emission of temporary travelling documents required to operate deportation orders.¹⁰ Italian authorities often resolved to release detained undocumented Tunisians by issuing expulsion orders that nobody followed up on.¹¹ This changed in 2011, when nearly 22,000 Tunisian migrants arrived to the island of Lampedusa in the months following the fall of Ben Ali's rule.¹² Italy and

⁹ Author's interviews with members of the Italian Embassy in Tunis and of the Tunisian Consulate in Palermo (February-June 2017).

¹⁰ Conducting research for this article, this author has heard remarkable accounts of Tunisian refugees who had fled to Italy before 2011. According to some of these, Italian authorities would not grant refugee status to Tunisian asylum seekers fleeing political persecution in order not to compromise the Italian government's economic and business relations with the Ben Ali regime. At the same time however, Italian authorities didn't deport Tunisian asylum seekers, allowing them to stay in Italy (as asylum seekers, not refugees), for years.

¹¹ Author's interview with Tunisian deportees during fieldwork in Tunis (February-June 2017).

¹² Very interesting and relevant literature has and is being written on the relation between the 2011 revolution and the Tunisian mass emigration that followed the fall of the Ben Ali's regime. See the work of Martina Tazzioli and Glenda Garelli (2017), *Tunisia as a Revolutionised Space of Migration*, Palgrave MacMillan.

Tunisia's 'exchange of notes' struck the deal by envisaging a temporary six-months permit to those arrived to Lampedusa before April 5th, and the immediate deportation of anyone arriving after such date.¹³ Over the following years, as Tunisia's political transition underwent its many challenges, Italy insisted on pressuring Tunisia's transition and elected governments alike to re-secure the Mediterranean border, actively investing through the donation of sea-patrol vessels and other technical/military equipment.¹⁴ On the other hand, all of Tunisia's new executives have – without exception – committed themselves to cooperate with Italy's push on repatriations.¹⁵

Today, the official rhetoric of both Italian and Tunisian authorities is one of successful re-established control over migration-flows between the two countries, while the April 2011 bilateral agreements signed to foster readmissions are presented as a model for how readmissions could be operated also by other member states.¹⁶ The next section of the article will challenge these last given opinions.

¹³ Paoletti, E., (2012), 'Migration Agreements Between Italy and North Africa: Domestic Imperatives Versus International Norms', Available online: <http://www.mei.edu/content/migration-agreements-between-italy-and-north-africa-domestic-imperatives-versus>

¹⁴ Tazzioli (2011), *Cronologia degli Accordi Italia-Tunisia 1998-2011*.

¹⁵ Paoletti, (2012).

¹⁶ Author's interviews with the representative of the Italian police department at the Italian embassy in Tunis (March 2017); Author's interview with the Secrétaire d'état à l'immigration, Mr. Radhuane Ayara (May 2017).

Identification and detention

Until earlier this year, the Italian readmission system used to be based on the (ill)functioning of Centres for Identification and Expulsion (CIE), recently renamed 'CPR' (Centres of Permanence for Repatriation) in an effort to renew their relevance and remit.¹⁷ These structures were legally envisaged to host undocumented migrants for the time necessary for their consulates to issue temporary travelling documents without which no deportation can legally take place. As these detention centres did not 'perform' very well in their role, only managing to deport an

¹⁷ Italian Law decree n.13 (February 17th, 2017), Disposizioni urgenti per l'accelerazione dei procedimenti in materia di protezione internazionale, nonché per il contrasto dell'emigrazione, vigente al 20.2.2017. (trans: 'Urgent dispositions for the acceleration of proceedings regarding international protection and contrasting illegal migration, valid from 20.2.2017'). Also publicly referred to as the 'Minniti decree', from the name of the present Italian Interior Minister, Marco Minniti, who proposed such decree. For more information on such law decree see: Luigi Manconi (2017), 'Sui CIE Minniti sbaglia', *ABuonDiritto* webpage, Available online: <http://www.abuondiritto.it/privazione-della-libertà/cie/1613-sui-cie-minniti-sbaglia-pensi-alle-falle-dell'intelligence.html>.

average of 50% of its detained population,¹⁸ the mass arrivals of these last years (2013-2016) has pushed the functions of the CIE's to other structures, such as the so called 'hotspots'. Hotspots exist in Italy since September 2015 and were initially intended both as a location (the places where disembarkations takes place), and as a concept (a strategy to tackle migratory pressures by redistributing asylum seekers and migrants through relocation quotas to other EU countries). Today's hotspots exist in the six ports of Lampedusa, Trapani, Pozzallo, Taranto, Porto Empedocle and Augusta, and in the words of the EU Commission's Agenda on Migration, their approach should be based on three pillars: asylum, relocation, and return.¹⁹

Despite the fact that the creation of these hotspots has been justified on the wave of emergency and humanitarian concerns as a result of the 2013 and 2014 mass-drownings in the Mediterranean, concerns have been raised on the actual practices exercised by police and Frontex authorities coordinating these structures. Up to now, the hotspot approach is reported to have been extremely functional in identifying about 95% of the people who transit

¹⁸ The capacity of the whole CIE detention structure on Italian soli was severely reduced in the past years: from 13 detention centres available in 2011, hosting up to 1,900 persons, only four have remained today (in Turin, Rome, Brindisi and Caltanissetta), with a maximum provision of 359 places. Their role in the execution of readmissions thus became progressively marginal, as an average of only half of the persons who were brought to the CIE was eventually deported. In the first nine months of 2016, out of 1,968 people transiting in the CIE, 876 were deported (44%). Most repatriations are in fact being made directly from hotspots. Always in 2016, of 3,737 persons deported, only a fourth came from CIE detention structures. Source: Commissione Straordinaria per la Tutela e la Promozione dei Diritti Umani – Senato della Repubblica XVII Legislatura, *Rapporto sui Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione*, (January 2017).

¹⁹ "[T]he Commission will set up a new 'Hotspot' approach, where the European Asylum Support Office, Frontex and Europol will work on the ground with frontline Member States to swiftly identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants (...) Those claiming asylum will be immediately channelled into an asylum procedure (...) For those not in need of protection, Frontex will help Member States by coordinating the return of irregular migrants." European Commission, *A European Agenda on Migration*, 13 May 2015.

in such structures.²⁰ However, this data hides what whistle-blowers and international organisations have already been showing in various occasions, reporting on mismanagement and abuse of office that has led to human rights abuses and mistreatment of asylum seekers and migrants within the hotspots, especially when migrants and asylum seekers, fearing deportation, refuse to provide their identity details voluntarily.²¹ Transferring the role of the ex-CIE to the hotspots is symptomatic of a situation of 'emergency' through which Italy justifies its current policies on migration by increasingly focusing on readmission. Italian and Frontex authorities are using hotspots as spaces of first screening, to differentiate asylum seekers from 'economic migrants'. Such an approach raises questions concerning what was supposed to be the hotspot's initial role, envisaged as a place of first reception and assistance, functional towards relocation of asylum seekers and migrants to other EU countries. Rather, today the link between the Hotspots and the CPR's

20 Procedures of pre-identification and registration are conducted through photo-screening and the gathering of dactylocoscopic data (fingerprints). Source: 2017 Parliamentary Report of the Guarantor for Detainees Rights.

21 Organisations have and are often raising concerns over the mishandling and mistreatment of migrants and asylum seekers in these centres. Taking information from migrants and asylum seekers as soon as they have set foot on land through brief written questionnaires, only few hours after the deeply traumatic experience of the sea crossing, or allowing them to be informed by the limited OIM and UNHCR personnel allowed in the hotspots, who mostly manage to distribute leaflets with information on their rights and asylum, is reported to be contrary to the right of migrants to be informed about the possibility and procedures to be able to request asylum. For Amnesty International's full report see: Hotspot Italy: How EU's Flagship Approach Leads to Violations of Refugees and Migrant Rights'. (2016). Available online: www.amnesty.org.

functions is stronger than ever, as those who are identified as 'economic migrants' are transferred to detention centres for further identification and expulsion, or directly expelled from the hotspot.

The Hotspot of Taranto in the region of Puglia, is a case in point. As outlined in a report commissioned by the Italian Senate,²² between March and October 2016, only 5,048 people were brought to Taranto's hotspot arriving from search and rescue sea-operations. The great majority (9,528) of those who passed by the hotspot of Taranto were instead foreigners who had been stopped by authorities within the Italian territory and brought to Taranto to be identified. Most of these were brought to Taranto after being stopped and detained in the northern provinces of Milan, Como and Ventimiglia, close to the French border, renown areas where migrants have to pass by in order to reach Northern European countries. Most of those who will be recognised as irregular migrants on Italian soil will be issued an expulsion order expressing the necessity to leave the country within seven days.²³ Those who instead will be recognised as being nationals of a country with which Italy has working repatriation agreements (Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria) are instead much more likely to be detained further to be finally deported. (see figures 2 and 3).

22 Commissione Straordinaria per la Tutela e la Promozione dei Diritti Umani – Senato della Repubblica XVII Legislatura, Rapporto sui Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione, (January 2017).

23 For those who are released from the CPR or hotspot with a 7-day expulsion order, most either try again to reach other EU countries, or they end up strengthening the ranks of the huge irregular reserve army of labour currently working in the Italian black-market economy, key workforce for both the Italian agricultural and manufacture sectors.

Figure 2
Detainee presence in Italian CIE -
2015-2016
(first five nationalities)

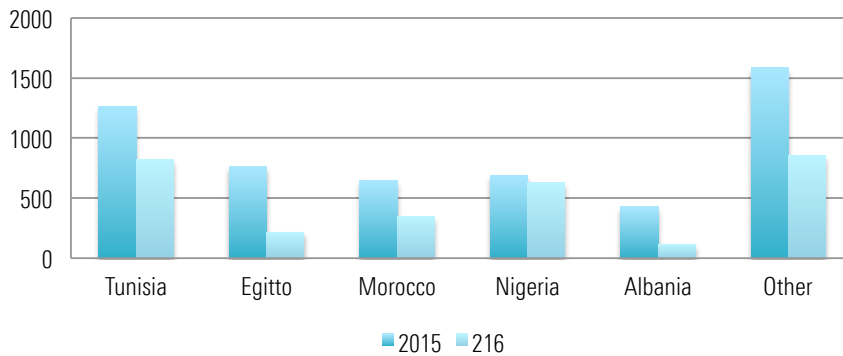


Figure 2: 2015 – Tunisia (1.262), Egypt (760), Morocco (644), Nigeria (691), Albania (429), Other* (1.585) - Total 5.371.

2016 – Tunisia (818), Egypt (217), Morocco (348), Nigeria (631), Albania (118), Other* (852) - Total 2.984.

*Other: All other nationalities detained in the CIE.

Note: These numbers refer only to declared nationalities. There are many detainees whose nationalities remain undeclared.

Source: Ministero dell’Interno Direzione centrale dell’immigrazione e della Polizia delle frontiere servizio immigrazione sezione rimpatri. Credit to the ‘2017 Parliamentary Report of the Guarantor for Detainees Rights’.

Commercial Flights		Charter Flights	
Nationality	Readmissions	Nationality	Readmissions
Morocco	329	Tunisia	1.094 – (43 flights)
Tunisia	174	Egypt	659 – (66 flights)
Albania	107	Nigeria	151 – (6 flights)
Senegal	33	Sudan	40 – (1 flight)
Total*	955	Total	1.944 – (116 flights)

Figure 3: Readmissions according to mode of travel and destination in 2015-2016

* With the adding of other nationalities.

Source: Ministero dell’Interno Direzione centrale dell’immigrazione e della Polizia delle frontiere servizio immigrazione sezione rimpatri. Credit to the ‘2017 Parliamentary Report of the Guarantor for Detainees Rights’.

Deportation

Once identification processes are complete, deportation procedures are initiated against those who do not agree to return 'voluntarily'. The charter flights deporting Tunisian migrants leave from the airport of Palermo, sometimes stopping to embark deportees in Rome or Lampedusa. Italian-Tunisian agreements allow for no more than 30 people per flight.²⁴ This is what emerges from the report issued by the Garante dei Diritti dei Detenuti (Guarantor for Detainees Rights), a very recently (2016) established ministerial commission that has the remit to monitor the condition and treatment of detainees in Italy.²⁵ The Guarantor of Detainees' Rights was present to monitor the operation of repatriation of Tunisians on two occasions (May and July 2016).²⁶ For both flights, the reports testify of 39 and 21 Tunisian adult male citizens being accompanied by respectively 69 and 54 unarmed police agents in plain clothes (on a 2:1 ratio) on a Bulgarian

24 Garante Nazionale dei Diritti delle Persone Detenute o Private della Libertà Personale (May 19, 2016), Rapporto dul monitoraggio di un volo charter per il rimpatrio di cittadini tunisini operato dal Ministero dell'Interno Italiano.

25 The establishment of the National Guarantor's remit to monitor repatriation/deportation operations was the outcome of the Italian government receiving ad admonition of infringement of the 2008/115/CE directive of the European Parliament, (outlining repatriation norms valid for all EU countries) which required for monitoring and reporting of expulsion operations. (Garante, Relazione al Parlamento, 2017).

26 Garante Nazionale dei Diritti delle Persone Detenute o Private della Libertà Personale (May 19, 2016), Rapporto dul monitoraggio di un volo charter per il rimpatrio di cittadini tunisini operato dal Ministero dell'Interno Italiano. ; (July 21, 2016), Rapporto sul monitoraggio di un volo charter per il rimpatrio di cittadini tunisini operato dal Ministero dell'Interno Italiano con il supporto dell'Agenzia Frontex.

Air Charter aircraft. Hands tied by velcro-plastic strips, fully naked body-searches before entering the plane, a rapid identification by members of the Tunisian consulate, the whole operation being monitored in presence of police forces in anti-riot gear, but with no Arabic interpreters. The whole operation is estimated to cost over 100,000 Euros per flight, partly covered by Frontex.²⁷ Once landed at Hammamet's Enfidha airport, their custody is handed to the Tunisian police, and the monitoring operations are over.

What happens after repatriation?

There is a general lack of any official source available from Tunisian authorities on the legal and operational practices enacted by Tunisian police after they have received repatriated Tunisian citizens into their custody. Only by speaking with those who have themselves gone through the deportation process it is possible to understand what happens after Italian authorities hand them over to the Tunisian police. Finding such witnesses in Tunisia is not difficult.²⁸ Upon arrival at the airport of Enfidha, in the governorate of Sousse, Tunisian

27 'In 74 per scortare 29 migranti: così funzionano le espulsioni', V.Polchi, (January 18, 2017,) La Repubblica. Online access: http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/01/18/news/in_74_per_scortare_29_migranti_cosi_funzionano_le_espulsioni-156271202/

Quoting the report made by the Garante Nazionale dei Diritti delle Persone Detenute o Private della Libertà Personale, (July 21, 2016), Rapporto sul monitoraggio di un volo charter per il rimpatrio di cittadini tunisini operato dal Ministero dell'Interno Italiano con il supporto dell'Agenzia Frontex.

28 Interviews and meetings have been conducted over 9 weeks of fieldwork in Tunis, from February to May 2017.

officers register personal details and take fingerprints, separating those with and without a criminal record. What happens at this point is unclear. Reconstructions through direct interviews record inconsistencies in the way deportees are treated, as some are incarcerated whilst others are let free on the very same day of arrival. For all of those with no criminal record the option is simply between climbing on a bus directed south-wards, direction Zarzis, or one to the north-west, directed to Tunis. Most people, eventually, arrive home, where the European readmission policies would want them to stay.

Nonetheless, interviews with some of these 'returnees'²⁹ testify to how short sighted readmission policies can be when neglecting all that happens after deportation. What becomes clear to whoever speaks to those who have been deported, is that few of them intend to stay in Tunisia, even after having gone through the experience of the

29 The concept of 'return' has been consciously avoided in this article. It should be used very carefully in the context of readmission. In today's 'official' migration vocabulary, 'return' is used as a synonym for readmission or removal. As put by Cassarino (2010), this is not only "semantically misleading but also analytically biased. (...) The use of 'readmission' and 'removal' is deliberate; it reflects the need for a critical approach to the current so-called 'return policies' adopted by most EU Member States. These policies are primarily aimed at securing the effective departure of unauthorized aliens. In other words, they do not view return as a stage in the migration cycle. Nor do they consider reintegration. Although these policies are euphemistically named 'return policies', they prioritize the removal of aliens out of the territory of destination countries, with or without explicit coercion, to another country that is not necessarily aliens' country of origin." (Cassarino, 2010, Unbalanced Reciprocities).

dangerous crossing by boat and then readmission to Tunisia. There are two reasons for this. One is geographical, and as such, specific to Tunisia: there are less than six hours of navigation (with a steady engine) separating Tunisia's north coast to Sicily, Pantelleria or Lampedusa. Hence, re-emigration remains, for those who can afford repeating the journey, a highly viable option.³⁰ The other reason is structural: the lack of dignifying and stable employment opportunities upon return. For the great majority of people who are deported back to Tunisia, unemployment is a guarantee. Reintegration schemes put up through Assisted Voluntary Return (AVRR) projects by International organisations (IOM) and European development agencies (CEFA, OFII, GIZ, SDC...)³¹ are offered to only few of those repatriated Tunisians, and are still at a very germinal stage to be considered as a viable option providing means for effective

30 It has been quite surprising hearing how deportees speak about their experiences of migration by boat. If many remember the 2011 crossings as a dangerous experience, given the size and conditions of the boats they travelled on, many today testify how such mass migrations won't happen again, as controls have increased. Thus, travels have become somehow 'safer', being conducted on smaller boats with stronger engines, carrying less people for a 'negotiable' price (prices range around 3,000 Tunisian Dinar, the equivalent of 1,000 Euro, but can be lower than that, or repaid back to the lender upon return).

31 Interviews carried out between February and June 2017 with the following: CEFA (Comitato Europeo per la Formazione e l'Agricoltura), OFII (Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration), SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit).

reintegration into the workforce.³² This allows for the creation of a situation by which those who have been deported back already know that no other opportunity is left for them but to re-emigrate once again. During the course of this three-month research, this author has met with young Tunisians who have been deported from Italy for three or four times since 2011 already. Their 'return' to Tunisia is seen as only a matter of time before the opportunity for re-migration to Italy presents itself again. Such a cycle of irregular migration is fuelled and itself fuels precarity, irregularity and criminality, as many Tunisian youngsters prefer to sell zatla (hashish) in Italian cities, rather than suffer a condition of invisibility in their own country, working menial jobs earning them just enough for food and clothes.³³

32 Many of these return & reintegration micro-projects are focused on providing job opportunities or supporting the initiation of a small-scale economic activity. Most projects run by OIM, SDC, OFII and CEFA are monitored only for 6 months-/1year, and very few of the organisations approached have been transparent on the rates of failure of these micro-projects. (Interviews have been conducted with the above mentioned organisations in March-June 2017).

33 The Institut National de Statistiques (INS) reports of unemployment rates of 15%, which go beyond 30% for recent graduates. The situation is even worse in the inland and southern regions of the country, historically penalised in comparison to the region of Greater Tunis or of the Sahel coast cities. Source: C. Capelli, (2017), 'Tunisia: le Riforme Economiche non Placano le Rivolte Sociali', ISPI Online, Mediterraneo & Medio Oriente, Available online: <http://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/tunisia-le-riforme-economiche-non-placano-le-rivolte-sociali-16661>

Conclusion

Today's official rhetoric by Tunisian authorities depicts Tunisian migrants as 'victims', deluded by the false hope of 'dreamland Europe', exploited by smugglers who capitalise on their ambitions for a better life.³⁴ This is supposed to be the message necessary to dissuade young Tunisians not to leave the scarce opportunities they face at home. Nowhere can this be farther from reality. It takes a quick conversation with any person who has been deported from the EU to understand that between mass unemployment at home and irregularity abroad, the second option is often perceived to be the better one. Readmission and reintegration policies in Tunisia are creating a system that, rather than curbing irregular migration, is creating the conditions for repeated cycles of irregular migration, by which deportees are still keen to re-emigrate as soon as favourable conditions arise, fully aware of risking further deportation if caught as irregular stayers once back in Europe. Further research on the failures of EU readmission and reintegration policies should continue in Tunisia as well as in other countries where such policies are effectuated, so as to raise awareness of the counter-effects these policies are creating, spending huge budgets on reaffirming an obtuse politics of securitization, driven by the illusion that deporting the 'problem' might work in the long run.

34 Author's interview with the Secrétaire d'état à l'immigration, Mr. Radhuane Ayara (May 2017). Transcript available upon request.

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Tazzioli (2011), Cronologia degli Accordi Italia-Tunisia 1998-2011, Accessed online: <http://www.storiemigranti.org/spip.php?article1004>

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Migration is an issue that dominates political debates in European societies, in parliaments, and in the media. For the European Left, this issue is strongly related to the freedom of movement and mobility rights and putting in place safe ways to entering Europe for migrants and refugees. We focus on the reasons for migration and related responsibilities of European policies, the cruel realities that are hidden behind Europe's human rights speeches. This involves the responsibilities of North African partners of the European Union and its member states as well. At the same time, securing people from forced displacement from their livelihoods needs to be enforced. At the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung we are analyzing destructive effects of climate change as well as economic and "developmental" projects on the livelihoods of communities and societies in North Africa. We focus on the negative impact of European economic, trade, and debt policies, official development cooperation, as well as arms trade. More importantly it involves the constant search for viable and sustainable alternatives.

"The content of this article is the sole responsibility of the author and does not necessarily reflect the position of RLS."

The **Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung** is an independent institute for political education, affiliated with the German Left. Our office in Tunis works with organisations and individuals in North Africa with regards to socio-economic development without oppression and foreign domination. In this respect, analyzing the effects of European politics with regards to North Africa is a focus. Another one is dialogue between societal groups working on social justice in North Africa and Germany/Europe for fostering sovereign, democratic development for all. In this respect, we irregularly publish short analyses and opinions about relevant issues. These don't necessarily represent positions of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, but should be viewed as input into local, regional or international debates.

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