

Reclaiming Migration: A Call for Justice, Dignity, and an Anti-Racist Europe

Today, on International Migrants Day, we honour the countless people who move – across borders, cities, and continents – in search of safety, opportunity, family, and freedom. Migration is not an exception, problem, or emergency, nor should it be categorised as such. It is a fundamental and enduring part of what it means to be human. Historically, people have moved and continue to move for countless reasons – to study, to work, to care for loved ones, to escape violence or inequality, or simply to build a better life. Yet across Europe, this basic human reality continues to be distorted to justify racist and inhumane policies, as part of repressive systems of control.

We condemn any policy choice by European countries and institutions that has led to death, misery, and suffering inflicted on migrants in and around Europe. But today we also celebrate people who cross borders for various reasons – especially those who are racialised and marginalised, whose lives, work, and contributions sustain our societies, even as they are systematically excluded, criminalised, and dehumanised by the very institutions and communities that depend on their knowledge, care, and human capital.

Today, we acknowledge those who move through their journeys, with hope, resilience, and a sense of connection beyond borders. In these journeys, we see not a crisis, but a possibility; not a threat, but the beating heart of shared humanity, rooted in life, dignity, and belonging. Their presence is a testament to perseverance; it is also a call for justice – a reminder to Europe to finally honor and defend their rights as a fundamental step toward building a more just and equitable society for all.

Migration Governance as the New Face of Racism in Europe

In recent years, a dangerous political logic has deepened across Europe. Across a growing body of legislation – from the [Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) to the [Schengen Borders Code reform](#), and now the proposed [Deportation Regulation](#) and the Facilitation Directive – migration, (particularly of racialised peoples from the Global South) is increasingly framed as a security threat to be controlled rather than a natural and enduring aspect of human life. This securitised approach has accelerated alongside the rise of authoritarian forces within Europe, reinforcing policies that criminalise movement and undermine fundamental rights.

Across Europe, the same patterns are evident – [large-scale interceptions](#), [violent pushbacks](#), [mass detention](#), and deportations across multiple European countries; the [criminalisation](#) of undocumented and irregularised people; [intensified border controls](#) and [racial profiling](#) at internal borders.

Migrant workers – many of them racialised – labour in agricultural fields under conditions that resemble modern-day servitude sustaining entire food systems while living with [exploitation](#), [unsafe housing](#), lack of access to [healthcare](#) and chronic precarity; house and workplace [raids](#) targeting migrants; and continuous [vilification](#) in media and public discourses.

All of this is reinforced by legal and policy infrastructures that do not simply ‘govern’ migration but actively [produce irregularity](#): restrictive visa regimes, employment rules that tie people to exploitative employers, [endless bureaucratic delays](#), and pathways to residence so narrow that falling out of status becomes almost inevitable. In this [system](#), irregularity and precarity are not accidents – they are the predictable outcome of policies designed to keep certain people vulnerable, deportable, and easily exploited. It is within this machinery that [colonial and racialised](#) hierarchies of mobility persist, determining who can move freely and who cannot; who has access to welfare and assistance; who is able to secure employment, housing, and education; and who is permitted to build a life within European societies.

These dynamics are not confined to asylum seekers or refugees. They shape the experiences of students, [workers](#) – including care workers – seasonal labourers, and families alike. In doing so, racialisation turns migration into a privilege for some and a source of precarity and dispossession for others.

But none of this is new. The racialisation and criminalisation of the movement of particular groups is rooted in centuries of colonial practice and labour exploitation. However, migrants and allies are not staying silent: across Europe, solidarity movements are growing, as communities continue to organise, resist, and build networks of care despite repression.

The Cost of Fortress Europe

Instead of investing into social systems, European governments [channel billions](#) of euros of public money into wars, border militarisation, surveillance technologies, detention camps, deportation machinery, and private contractors that profit from people’s exclusion – while pointing the finger at migrants for the social and economic collapse their policies cause.

[Reports](#) show that securitisation policies do not provide safety; on the contrary, they promote death, fear, [vulnerability](#), and instability. They force people to move regardless of their motives – into irregularity, exploitation, and danger. They divide communities, reinforce racialised hierarchies, further delegitimise the promise of the rule of law, and erode the right to live with dignity for everyone.

Reclaiming Migration: Our Vision for a Just and Caring Europe

Migration is not a problem to be solved by increased securitisation and criminalisation, but a human reality that demands robust systems of social care, meaningful institutional support, and a

sustained political commitment to dismantling deep-rooted structural racism across the legal, social, and economic structures that shape people's lives.

As migrants and as Europeans, we call for a Europe that recognises human mobility as a social, cultural, and economic asset, and that dismantles the systems which criminalise and racialise movement. We demand policies rooted in anti-racism, care, equality, equity, and justice – policies that honour the dignity and rights of all.

Therefore, we envision a Europe that:

- **Ends the criminalisation of all migrants** – regardless of status, pathway, or reason for migration, dismantles the systems that produce irregularity, precarity, and deportability, and delivers accountability for human rights violations and abuses.
- **Redirects public resources away from border militarisation** and punitive migration governance, and toward strengthening social infrastructures such as affordable housing, universal healthcare, education, and community-based support systems.
- **Guarantees secure residence, fair and safe working conditions, and full and equal access to rights** for all people who live in Europe, recognising mobility as a source of social, cultural, and economic vitality.
- **Ensures the meaningful and sustained participation of migrants and racialised communities** in shaping the policies and decisions that affect their lives, including through democratic, accessible, and transparent mechanisms of consultation and governance.
- **Confronts and redresses Europe's colonial past and its enduring legacies**, acknowledging how historical and ongoing racialised power structures shape global inequalities and patterns of movement.
- **Recognises human mobility as a shared global responsibility**, grounded in the structural, economic, and geopolitical conditions – and the international policies and pressures – that compel millions to move, and expands the regular and safe opportunities for people to move.
- **Implements the standards set out in the [UN Joint General Comments on xenophobia and the rights of migrant workers](#)**, ensuring that European laws, policies, and institutions actively prevent discrimination xenophobia and racial discrimination, and uphold the full human rights protections affirmed by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and United Nations Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW).

This International Migrants Day, we call on European institutions, Member States, and societies to reject the politics of fear and division, and to shift the narrative and policy direction from criminalisation to solidarity, and to reaffirm through these actions, the underlying values of Europe – respect for human rights and dignity.

Join us to take action in 2026!

As we work toward building a Europe grounded in justice and equality, we invite you to imagine with us: propose a bold idea for a collective action or campaign that challenges the current racialised and securitised migration policies and centres dignity, solidarity, and rights.

Send it to us – your vision matters: [CLICK HERE!](#)

#ReclaimMigration

#AntiRacistEurope

Signatories

ActionAid International

Amnesty International

Border Violence Monitoring Network

EuroMed Rights

European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

Equinox Initiative for Racial Justice

ILGA-Europe

Legal Centre Lesbos

Médecins du Monde International Network

Platform for the International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)

Collective Aid (CA)

Quaker Council for European Affairs

Safe Passage International – Greece

Science, Integrity, Empowerment, Mobility, Renewable & Educational Projects -

SIEMPRE

Sea-Watch