Black October for Illegal Immigration to Italy and Fears within the Schengen area

The two successive shipwrecks of African migrants in Lampedusa that occurred on 3rd October 2013, and of Syrian refugees between Sicily and Malta on 11th October are the worst immigration tragedy in Italy for over ten years. Reacting to these new dramas at sea, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, has criticized the countries which most boats come from, namely Libya and Tunisia.

In European public opinion, these two dramas have mostly resulted in putting the issue of migration in Europe in the spotlight. And in the background the link between emerges once again between migration and the revolts of the Arab Spring.

This context puts at risk especially the foundations of the Schengen area, and principles of mutual trust, cooperation, solidarity and shared responsibility, because once admitted to EU territory, citizens in third countries may move freely, and controlling their movements is a concern for all European states.

But what was the true extent of migration following the Arab Spring? Has it really posed a threat to the Schengen area or has it been exploited by Member States to introduce new internal border controls? What was the real impact of the Arab Spring on the Schengen area?

Summary:
- Black October for illegal immigration in Italy P. 1
- Angelique Namaika: an Exemplary Noun P. 2
- Literature: NoViolet Bulawayo, Man Booker Prize finalist P. 3
- Arab Spring: should EU reform Schengen? P. 6

This is the purpose of the note published in Belgium by the Emile Vandervelde Institute, 'Assessing the actual volume of migration flows arising from the Arab Spring revolts and their possible impact on European countries', in order to show to what extent the events of the Arab Spring have been exploited to introduce a reform of the Schengen area and reintroduce internal border controls.
In contrast to these fears and dark shadows, there follow two success stories from two African women, Angelique Namaïka and Violet Bulawayo. On 17th September 2013 the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) awarded the Nansen Award to Sister Angelique Namaïka, 46, for her work on behalf of female victims of violence in the north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). No Violet Bulawayo is Zimbabwe’s first black African woman to be among the finalists of 2013 Man Booker Prize, one of the most prestigious literary awards, according to the official list published Tuesday, September 10, 2013.

Finally, there is an article that aims to reflect on the conditions of life for older persons of foreign origin living in France.

Arthur Yenga

Sister Angelique Namaïka, an Exemplary Nun

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) awarded the Nansen Prize on 17 September, to Sister Namaïka Angelique, 46, for her work on behalf of female victims of violence in the north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The nun was received by Pope Francis on October 2, 2013.

Every year since 1954, UNHCR has awarded the Nansen Prize to a person who has rendered outstanding service to the cause of refugees. This award consists of a commemorative medal and a prize of 75,000 euros offered by Norway and Switzerland. This year, it was given to Sister Angelique Namaïka, who works in the remote north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo with displaced women and survivors of abuse perpetrated by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), an armed group originating from Uganda. This nun of strong character has effectively transformed the lives of more than 2,000 women.

Sister Angelique also pleaded the case for victims of the rebellion up to the UN Security Council. A commitment that UNHCR is now rewarding, through awarding her its Nansen Prize.
Prize, with $100,000 (75,000 euros). A sum whose fate is already decided: "I will give it to develop the activities of women, because that prize is the result of their prayers," said the nun.

TOTAL COMMITMENT
"Sister Angeliqe has worked tirelessly to help women and girls that have been made extremely vulnerable by trauma, poverty and displacement," said António Guterres, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, of the winner. "Sister Angeliqe lets nothing stand in her way."

After the ceremony, Sister Angeliqe will go to Rome, where she will be received by Pope Francis in the Vatican on October 2, before attending other meetings in Paris, Brussels and Oslo.

P.A (with La Croix)

First time Booker Prize finalist for Black African woman finalist

LONDON - The Zimbabwean NoViolet Bulawayo is the first black African woman to be among the finalists for the Man Booker Prize 2013, one of the most prestigious literary awards, according to the official list published Tuesday, 10 September 2013.

NoViolet Bulawayo was selected for his novel We Need New Names, the story of a girl of ten who fled poverty in Zimbabwe to live with her aunt in the United States where she has to face many problems.

The author, whose real name is Elizabeth Zandile Tshele, is also the first Zimbabwean writer among the finalists for the Man Booker Prize. 'It's an incredible feeling to be selected', NoViolet Bulawayo told AFP, 'I think there are so many black women before me that deserve (this honor). I am very lucky and honored, especially since it is my first novel', she added.

If she wins, when the 2013 winner is revealed, she will become the fourth African writer to win the Booker Prize. The South African JM Coetzee had won twice in 1983 (Michael K, his life, his time) and 1999 (Disgrace), while his compatriot Nadine Gordimer was awarded the prize in 1974 for The Curator and Ben Okri from Nigeria in 1991 with his novel the Famished Road.

Among the six other finalists this year are the Irish Colm Toibin with The Testament of Mary, about the journey of a mother after the death of her son, and Jim Crace Columbia with Harvest, a town threatened with death by new arrivals.

Jhumpa Lahiri, who was born in London, is nominated for The Lowland, the story of two brothers growing up in Calcutta, India, while
the Japanese-American Buddhist priest and author Ruth Ozeki tells the story of a Japanese family in A Tale for the Time Being. The youngest to be selected is the 27 year-old New Zealander Eleanor Catton, for The Luminaries, a novel about the gold rush in New Zealand in 1860.

The Booker Prize, with a check for 50,000 pounds (80,000 dollars, 62,000 euros) rewards the best work of fiction in English from the Commonwealth and the Republic of Ireland.

Last year, the British novelist Hilary Mantel had entered the prize’s history by becoming the first woman and the first British author to win this literary award twice.

Source: (©AFP/10 septembre 2013)

A dignified old age for the elderly: An Urgent Challenge to Address

Report by Alexis M Bachelay, at the request of Mr. Claude Bartolone, President of the French National Assembly, following the establishment of the Mission for Information on older people in July 2013.

This report responds to the desire of the French Government to intervene in immigration policies to move towards greater respect for republican values, especially with regard to elderly people of foreign origin.

The colonial legacy has had a lasting influence on the way the government has seen their presence in France, thus creating housing and social policies that tend to exclude them from society: foreigners should seek to return home no later than two months after the termination of their employment contract. The permanent settlement of these immigrants in France therefore constituted illegal residence.

But many difficulties and even economic and social abuses have been identified: a lack of recognition of their contribution to France’s economic and social development, low pensions, weak access to rights, undignified housing conditions, poor health and early dependency, loneliness and isolation, bringing into question our integration policies, especially with regard to the reality of their housing and health.

Proof of "racialised" management of home residents has come out, it was from a group of these people in various stages depending on their origin. Workers of migrant background were assigned lower rates of family benefits than French workers with a very pronounced difference, the same was also the case for employment programmes.

The settlement of migrants at the time of their arrival in France thus for a long time translated into a form of spatial segregation, which only encouraged the feeling of exclusion experienced by many of them. The home and the workplace have long constituted the entire universe for immigrants that came to work in France, with the transition to retirement making it even more difficult to integrate into society.

Elderly immigrants received only meager pensions, with rare opportunities for qualifications and accessing property less than the rest of the population, and of course with their social network little extended, reflecting their low economic, social, and cultural capital. Sometimes, the conditions for acquiring French nationality were crystallized by a mistrust towards certain generations of migrants.
Added to these difficulties of integration, language barriers, which often explain the refusal of aging immigrants to call upon social workers, thereby increasing their isolation. Discrimination, which immigrant populations, including the elderly, felt they were the subject of, has accentuated the phenomenon further.

Today, elderly migrant worker residents are ageing more prematurely. There is evidence of excess mortality among foreigners aged sixty to seventy years, in particular women of sub-Saharan origin and men of North African origin has been demonstrated. 37% of immigrant men over fifty years of age suffer from depression due to sometimes dreadful working conditions, and for women, their careers were hit by the arrival of children, resulting in premature retirement.

Inequalities in access to health are also seen, while "growing old gracefully " requires the availability of human support that limits the effects of the progressive loss of autonomy, while elderly immigrants do not or cannot access this. These difficulties experienced by elderly immigrants in France are also experienced by older immigrants settled in nearby states.

This report has therefore decided to put forward a summary of the findings and possible avenues or proposals for thoughts or activities to be implemented to improve this difficult reality and eradicate this this dreadful curse, and thus allow old-aged immigrants to live their retirement in dignity and a certain harmony between work life, family life, cultural life and of course, feeding a better intergenerational dialogue between grandparents, great-grandparents etc … and their children.

It would be a case of upgrading health facilities and the state of buildings, to end overcrowding and increase the size of the rooms for a better and more beneficial treatment plan for these people, to promote social integration, together with a reduction in their rents.

It would also necessitate an overhaul of integration policy by promoting recognition of the role of immigrants in the nation's history, establishing and enhancing knowledge about immigration to achieve these goals, both in terms of integration and in terms of cultural democratization for recognising older people as a cultural and educational tool for the young.

Social and cultural centres should be established and associations should conduct intergenerational exchange activities between residents and school children, and residents of neighborhoods for immigrant seniors. Partnerships between different funds and social outreach should be strengthened to ensure potential beneficiaries are informed, largely involving local communities to plan for the development of social projects and the establishment of steering committees including elected officials from local government. Relaxing the rules on the right of residence as well as access to French nationality for ageing immigrants would be another plus.

Unfortunately, sustainable funding for elderly immigrants from the European Union remains the lever from any action or strategic plan to move from a logic that was to stay, to a service-delivery approach allowing access to all rights. It would be useful to: (a) forge partnerships with the countries from which these migrants come ; and (b) promote the exchange of good practice and mutual training, facilitating life between two countries or the free choice of country of residence in old age in peace.

Summary prepared by Monique Van Lancker
Position paper

« Arab Spring » : waves of migration as pretext to reform Schengen ?

by Mathilde SABOURET

INTRODUCTION

The revolts that have shaken the Arab world since the end of 2010 gave way both to new opportunities for democratization, and to political and social instability. Firstly in Tunisia, protests based on deep social discontent led to the fall of dictator Ben Ali. Popular protests quickly spread in the Arab world, Egypt and Libya and Syria, where the revolts are still ongoing.

What is commonly called the Arab Spring has generated hopes for democratization and social change in the countries of the southern Mediterranean. But political instability and insecurity have also caused waves of migration, uprooting thousands of people, especially in Tunisia and Libya. During the first nine months of 2011, many North African migrants crossed the Mediterranean and arrived on the island of Lampedusa in Italy.

The Arab revolts quickly raised alarmist comments from some governments and political leaders on the risks of migration for Europe. EU Member States took repressive measures within the Schengen area. After declaring the state of humanitarian emergency on 12th February 2011, Roberto Maroni, Italian Interior Minister at the time, requested the assistance of the European Union and its partners to share the "burden" that represents receiving migrants, saying that a "human tsunami" would sweep from North Africa. European aid was slow to arrive, and the Italian government finally decided in April 2011 to grant residence permits for "humanitarian reasons" to North African migrants.

A few days later, the French Interior Minister at the time, fearing an influx of migrants from the former French colony of Tunisia, retorted by announcing the reintroduction of checkpoints between the two countries, and stopping trains from Italy at Ventimiglia, the last town before the border. Quickly Austrian, German, Belgian, Finnish, Dutch and Slovak ministers supported the French position, alleging infringement of the "Schengen spirit". Finally, the Franco-Italian conflict was swiftly resolved at a bilateral summit at the end of April 2011.

These events reflect no less than a crisis of the principle of mutual trust on immigration within the countries of the Schengen area. In June 2011, EU leaders agreed on the need for a revision of the basic rules of the Schengen area.

This context endangers the foundations of the Schengen area, the principles of mutual trust, cooperation, solidarity and shared responsibility, because once admitted to the territory of the EU, citizens of third countries can move freely and controlling their movements is a concern for all European states.

But what was the true extent of migration following the Arab Spring? Has it really been a threat to the Schengen area or has it been exploited by the Member States to introduce new internal border controls? What was the
real impact of the Arab Spring, and its impact on the Schengen area?

This is the purpose of the article published by the Emile Vandervelde Institute, 'Assessing the actual volume of migratory flows arising from the Arab Spring revolts, and its possible impact on European countries', in order to show how the events of Arab Spring have been exploited to introduce a reform of the Schengen area and reintroduce internal border controls.

**MIGRATION WAVES AFTER THE REVOLTS IN THE ARAB WORLD : A DANGER ?**

A study by the Migration Policy Centre, which compiles statistics on immigration studies carried out by Member States, provides a calculated estimate of migration before and after the Arab Spring uprisings. The report notes that, in general, it would be wrong to think that the uprisings in Arab countries caused a sudden increase in immigration to Europe. This statistical study shows that migration to the Schengen area has not been accelerated by the Arab Spring, with the exception of some short-lived movement from Tunisia, but the immigration figures for 2011 indicate a continuation of already observed trends. However, South-South migration rose sharply, with many migrants and refugees who fled the unrest and violence in Libya and Syria.

Immigration from Arab countries to the north of the Mediterranean began several decades ago. The 2000s were characterized by an intensification of migration from these countries. From 2001 to 2010, migration from the Arab countries of the southern Mediterranean has increased by 42%, and 91% of these migrants have joined the OECD countries, in particular the closest neighbors: Italy, Spain and France. In Spain and Italy, migrants were attracted by the jobs left vacant by Italians and Spaniards and the rapid increase in the standard of living and the economy of these countries before the economic and financial crisis.

In France, the recent increase in immigration from Arab countries is more due to family reunification. Belgium, meanwhile, is one of the few countries where the stock of migrants from Arab countries has decreased.

Libya has long been the country that has hosted the most migrants to the region. Economic downturns, international sanctions, fluctuations in oil prices are all factors that have always made the number of migrants in Libya very unstable.

The question is therefore whether the uprisings in Arab countries in 2011 have caused significant changes in immigration to Europe, or not. Have the revolts generated an increase in immigration, or rather have hopes for change and democratization resulted in a return of migrants to their countries of origin?

Only Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK have published the official figures of legal immigration into their respective territories. Although migration to these countries from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Syria have increased in 2011, however we cannot see a spike in migration. It is more a continuation of a movement of increased migration that began in the 2000s. In addition, 72% of the increase in immigration in 2011 is due to migration from Morocco, a country where popular uprisings have been very limited. Regular migration from there has not been affected therefore by the events of the Arab Spring.

However, a large proportion of immigrants are, due to their illegality, difficult to quantify. After the start of the revolution, Tunisia and Libya have become the starting points for illegal immigration. Between January and September
2011, 42, 807 people were recorded as entering Italy illegally by sea routes.

By way of comparison, the Italian authorities had counted less than 5,000 in 2010 and less than 10,000 in 2009. Three factors explain this situation. First, illegal immigration has increased as a result of the fall of regimes, police forces were disorganized and control of the coast nonexistent. Then, 47% of illegal immigrants were not Tunisians but Sub-Saharan Africans. Finally, illegal entry into Italy was concomitant with a decrease in entry to Malta and Spain; therefore, the total of illegal entries to these three countries, was higher in 1999, 2006 and 2008 than in 2011.

The increase in immigration should be understood more as the result of opportunity due to the absence of border controls, and as a response to a structural change, the revolutions in North Africa. Other migrants who might have taken a different route in other circumstances have taken advantage of the disorganization of the police. The revolutions of the Arab Spring have less stimulated new migratory flows than they have diverted existing ones.

**THE POLITICAL EXPLOITATION OF THE IMMIGRATION OF THE ARAB SPRING**

The Arab Spring has not really been a break in the evolution of migration towards Europe. Despite the existence of a peak of illegal immigration to the Italian island of Lampedusa, it is not enough to justify the alarmist political discourse that resulted, or to justify vigorously introducing regulatory reform, and even less to excuse violations of the human rights of migrants, in practice interception at sea, detention and forced repatriation of migrants and asylum seekers made in 2011. By way of comparison, Germany alone had been able to manage the hundreds of thousands of migrants from the former Yugoslavia who joined its territory in the 1990s.

As a result, the question arises of why the events of the Arab Spring prompted populist statements from governments of various European states and opened a serious space for reform of the existing agreement?

Electoral competition, government coalitions with Eurosceptic, populist, or nationalist parties, such as the Dutch government of the time that was supported by the Freedom Party, have helped create a context in which immigration can be seen as a danger, adding to the difficulties of the crisis. Thus, on February 28, 2011, François Fillon, the then French Prime Minister, reflected the government’s intention to "demonstrate a great firmness with regard to illegal immigration" feared after the Arab revolts.

Mutual distrust threatens the future of the Schengen area and freedom of movement.
However, the viability of the Schengen system is based on trust and solidarity between the parties that all States are safe countries. There is a constant tension between liberty and security in the governance of the Schengen area.

CONCLUSION

Although the weakening of police checks the coast has caused a peak increase in illegal immigration to the Italian island of Lampedusa, migration flows to Europe have not actually increased with the Arab spring, but followed a trend started in the 2000s. These flows are not sufficient to justify the virulence of political rhetoric and repressive measures that followed.

The issue of immigration from the Arab Spring was widely exploited for political and electoral purposes. Thus, the arrival of illegal migrants has fuelled populist, alarmist discourses about the dangers of immigration to Europe, and generated repressive solutions not in accordance with European Union law.

France and Italy have clearly bypassed or bent rules in the Schengen area: Italy has not complied with the rules for granting permits, and the closure of the French border with Italy could not be justified except through a threat to public policy or internal security.

In conclusion, given the last rather positive health checks of the Commission about the Schengen’s state of operation, it is legitimate to ask whether the Schengen reform passed by the European Parliament on June 12, 2013 was actually justified.

A more cohesive solution is possible. The use of a temporary protection mechanism would have enabled the situation to be managed in accordance with the existing agreements and with migrants’ human rights, but governments have preferred repressive measures and the introduction of regulatory reform. On 6 April 2011, S & D MEPs have called on governments to implement the temporary protection mechanism to ensure shared responsibility.

The major risk of this behaviour is ultimately the erosion of the already undermined principle of mutual trust and solidarity, including financial solidarity, between the Member States in the distribution of migration in Europe.

With mistrust of States towards each other, there lies the real danger, because the principle of mutual trust is what the Schengen area, the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, and European integration more broadly as a whole, are based on.

Source: Institut Emile Vandervelde - www.iev.be - iev@iev.be

Good to know:

Further reading on illegal immigration in relation to the Arab Spring:


Brady Hugo, « La crise de Schengen dans le contexte du printemps arabe », Culture et société, IEMed, 2012

Fargues Philippe, Fandrich Christine, ‘Migration after the Arab Spring’, MPC Research Report 2012/09, Robert
The EADPD Project is funding by the European Commission and co-funding by SDC (Switzerland), Dutchland Ministry of Foreign Affairs and GIZ (Deutschland)