

# Migrants from the Middle East, Africa and Asia Facing Inhumane Treatment in Europe

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*Divided continent imperils the future of millions from oppressed nations*

*Hungarian officials have again threatened migrants from the Middle East, Africa and Asia with imprisonment if they continue to cross their borders or refuse to abide by repressive treatment.*

Budapest says that it completed a fence across its border with Serbia to halt the flow of migrants into the country. Hungarian officials also indicated that they would prevent migrants from entering on the trains.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that Budapest was shipping thousands of migrants and refugees to the border with Austria making it appear that they will no longer register them. Hungary spokesman for the UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe, Erno Simon, said, "Our information is that special trains are taking migrants from Roszke (train) station directly without stopping until the Austrian border." (Telegraph, UK, September 14)

Migrants have been horded into makeshift detention areas where they face overcrowding and constant harassment and brutality from the police. These scenes illustrated the horrendous conditions under which tens of thousands are living in search of refuge in Southern, Eastern and Northern Europe over the last few weeks.

A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) article noted that "Footage has emerged of migrants being thrown bags of food at a Hungarian camp near the border with Serbia. An Austrian woman who shot the video said the migrants were being treated like animals". (September 11)

The New York based Human Rights Watch's emergency director said people were being held like "cattle in pens". Officials in Hungary responded by saying they are investigating the recorded incidents at the camp in Roszke.

"The detainees at Roszke are held in filthy, overcrowded conditions, hungry and lacking medical care," noted Peter Bouckaert, HRW Emergencies Director. Bouckaert cited video footage and extensive interviews conducted with people who had journeyed through the camp or were still living there.

Nonetheless, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban lauded the police for responding with restraint against what he called "rebellious migrants" and threatened to take more repressive measures. His country has been one of the most outspoken in opposition to allowing migrants passage through EU countries which was ostensibly guaranteed in a

treaty signed several years ago by member-states.

Orban told journalists “Considering that we are facing a rebellion by illegal migrants, police have done their job in a remarkable way, without using force.” The prime minister said this after conferring with Manfred Weber, who is the chairman of the European People’s Party in the EU Parliament. (star.com, September 11)

He went on to say “They seized railway stations, rejected giving fingerprints, failed to cooperate and are unwilling to go to places where they would get food, water, accommodation and medical care .... They rebelled against Hungary’s legal order. From the 15th, Hungarian authorities cannot be forgiving of illegal border crossing.”

These developments were taking place while the European Union (EU) interior ministers were holding an emergency meeting in Brussels, Belgium in an effort to determine a coordinated policy of processing and integrating the migrants. In response to the influx of hundreds of thousands of people from the Middle East, Africa and Asia, various governments have imposed travel restriction including Austria, Slovakia and the Netherlands.

Even the German government of Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that it would put checks on its border with Austria. This tightening of the borders came following weeks of pronouncements from Germany which appeared to be welcoming migrants.

On September 13 officials in the city of Berlin said that if the flow of migrants was not stopped there would be no place for people to live and they would be sleeping in the streets.

Temporary housing for migrants is planned at a large transportation facility built during the Third Reich in the 1930s where the Telegraph said “Berlin’s famous Nazi-era Tempelhof airport is to become a refugee shelter. The airport, which has been disused since 2008, will house up to 1,200 refugees in two former hangars, the Berlin state government has announced.”

However, on September 14 German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said “The focus will initially lie on the border with Austria. The goal of this measure is to restrict the present inflow of migrants into Germany and return again to an orderly process upon entry.” (CNN)

The German government said it was stopping train transport to and from Austria for thirteen hours on September 13, according to a tweet sent out by the Austrian Federal Railways. Halting train traffic between the two countries extended from 5 p.m. Sunday (September 13) until 6 a.m. Monday.

Spokespersons for the Austrian police reported that 7,000 people had crossed the border from Hungary on September 14. On the day before some 14,000 entered the country.

Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann said military personnel were sent to the entry and gathering points to assist with humanitarian relief. The Vice-Chancellor Reinhold Mitterlehner said “If Germany carries out border controls Austria must put strengthened border controls in place.” (BBC, September 14)

## **EU and the U.S. Fail to Address Real Causes of the Crisis**

Meanwhile, the political and security crisis in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Yemen, Nigeria,

Afghanistan, Turkey and other states are creating the conditions for further dislocation. Rather than deal with the root causes of the crisis, the EU states along with their allies in the United States proceeded by debating over how many refugees to take into their countries.

Some EU leaders have rejected the concept of quotas as proposed by Germany and France creating logistical challenges in the transport of migrants to states which claim officially to be more favorable towards resettlement.

The administration of President Barack Obama issued a statement on September 11 saying that the U.S. would allow 10,000 Syrians to enter the country. Nonetheless, this is only a small fragment of those being forced to leave Syria and other states on two continents due to the foreign policies of Washington and Wall Street.

British Prime Minister David Cameron visited a refugee camp in Lebanon on September 13 saying that his government would open its borders to 20,000 displaced persons. Successive governments in London have supported U.S. military interventions in various states including Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya, among others.

Unrest among migrants in Hungary is an indication that the EU is not prepared for the integration of hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions of new residents. Hungary has said that they want to keep people out to preserve their European "Christian heritage."

Meanwhile, wars initiated by Washington aimed at reshaping the political landscape of large regions of Africa, the Middle East and Asia are continuing. Bombing operations by the Pentagon in Iraq and Syria are displacing hundreds of thousands of people every month.

Other wars that are funded, coordinated and given diplomatic cover by the U.S. in Yemen, Libya, Egypt and other geo-political areas are worsening the plight of tens of millions. UN and other humanitarian agencies are incapable of meeting the needs of refugees and migrants under conditions of armed factional struggles and the total breakdown of state structures involving transportation, food distribution, fuel supplies, medical services and education.

The current situation involving the massive deaths in the Mediterranean of those seeking refuge in Europe and the social restrictions and racist repression they will be subjected to in the EU member-states warrants a response from the anti-war and social justice movements in both Western Europe and North America. With economic crisis still prevalent in several European countries the harsh situations of the migrants can provide a basis for an alliance between the workers and oppressed already in Europe and those who are streaming in as a direct result of the imperialist policies of the U.S. and NATO.

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