

**Seminar : Turkey's and EU's political ambiguities regarding migrants:
the case of chechen asylum seekers.**

Saturday 3rd of July - 9.30/12.30

(Participants:Convoi Syndical, Kafkasya Forumu, Utopia, Migreurop)

After the European Social Forum in Florence in 2002,our association named "Trade Union Convoy", has been present in all the others European social Forums so as to talk about democracy in Russian Federation with our russian comrades, to talk about solidarity between eastern and western trade unions, to talk about the conflicts in Caucasus and in particular in Chechnya and to talk about ,as well ,the problem of refugees inside Caucasus.

Each time we denounced the unquestionable responsibility of the russian governments, we always tried to create links and a type of solidarity between alterglobalist activists wherever they are coming from - Russia or Europe- because European social Forums are great opportunities to do such a job.

Today, once more and we should say unfortunately one more time, we meet again to talk about the situation of chechen refugees at the frontier of political Europe and about possible conflicts which could exist in Caucasus.

If we make the assessment of all these years, meeting people, well, we could say that the result is not as positive as we would have wished. Russian activists ,as Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Babourova, who where with us during the latest forum in Sweden, have been murdered. Many activists who are fighting for human rights are still murdered, pursued, put in jail in all the parts of Russian Federation, and sometimes we have the feeling that our work does not move forward. And yet, it seems that they are good reasons to be hopeful. First of all, the chechen issue in France is still a concern. The struggle to defend the rights of chechen people goes on and members of different associations don't give up.

The coming in France of a russian president or prime minister still provokes a minimum of reprobation and demonstrations. At last a meeting has been organized thanks to several activists from European Social Forums to protest against murders of personalities from russian civil society in Paris, Moscow and Rome at the same time, and being able to do such a thing, i mean to combine our efforts,is not such an easy thing.

Today a lot of questions are worrying us : it is the situation of chechen refugees living in a gap in the law. This gap recalls the situation of migrants from Africa waiting for to enter Europe in camps in Morocco.

The situation in Caucasus is still not resolved : the north caucasus still stands in an explosive situation with provocations from the Kremlin, attacks to human rights. The south Caucasus with the question around Georgia, Ossetia, Abkhazia are still very

worrying. And we have to see all these topics in the perspective of the Olympic games in Sochi in 2014 and we can imagine that the Kremlin may clean this area so as to give a positive picture of a calm region. This event will create benefits and with no doubt it will create also internal conflicts to share these benefits.

In France we saw the situation of chechen asylum seekers, changing, following the political news. There 's been a time when they received the protection of the state quite often and another period when they were "all suspects". If it is outrageous to see people escorted back to the polish frontier, because it is the first european country through which they entered European Union, it is of course outrageous for other asylum seekers, in other countries, and it's the whole european policy towards migrants that we have to explain here, and against which we have to fight. About the reasons of exile of thousands people from Caucasus, European Union is hypocritical and we saw it during the war between Georgia and Russia.

I have to add that there is also something very worrying : it's the pressure put on chechen refugees in European Union, and even sometimes murders on european soil for political reasons or settling of scores, due to people coming from abroad. Unfortunately we don't hear a lot about these events in mass media, and the states don't strongly condemn them.

There is also something to which we are very attached, as we are attached to the right for a population to decide with whom they want to live and under which political form, this thing is called Fraternity regardless of ethnicity and religion. It is more and more obvious for us that, as french people we saw these days a real atmosphere of xenophobia growing up in France. This is not the willing of people, but it is the consequence of politics. Today french people wondering what being french means. And you can be sure, that when you are searching a strict definition of such a question, you will exclude everything that is not exactly like you. And then, you create even in your own speech, an "us" and a "them". That's why today, maybe much more than before, we want to put the focus on the necessity to live together, to fight together for a real democratic alternative in all the russian federation, because we think that it is quite an illusion to think possible a zone of freedom surrounded by an authoritarian country such as Russia. People are fighting with their lives from every corner of Russia and Caucasus. There is not yet a lot of people, but they exist, and we would like to dedicate to all of them our meeting today.

If we are meeting with all of you today in Istanbul, it's to going on and maintaining that the situation in North Caucasus is still worrying, for us, members of "Trade Union Convoy" and others activists from France and from elsewhere. To maintain our solidarity with activists from all russian Federation who are still fighting for democracy and against the raise of nationalism....

We still maintain, after Florence, Paris, Athens, London and Malmö, and after the two social russian forums that took place in Moscow and St Petersburg where we've been, that European social forum is a real space that can help us to imagine

together peaceful solutions for this part of the world. As trade unionists we maintain that all these questions are not the restricted area for big leaders in politics but as for the economical crisis, as for the pension question the question of self-determination is also our matter. We have things to say about it as citizens or trade unionists. This is the meaning of our coming to this forum. Thank you to all of you.