



**“Las Desbandás today. Actions to be incorporated into our programme”**

### **Antonia Franco Muñoz**

Forming part of this panel:

Francisco Checa (moderator), Eva Diez Peralta, Spituo Mendy, Mohamed Rida Ben Zaza and Antonia Franco (rapporteur)

Today we assessed and evaluated the European Union's management of borders and migratory flows.

With Eva Diez Peralta, we conducted an analysis of migratory processes during the current pandemic and how they have not prevented recent migratory flows.

We have seen how economic tensions have spawned a human rights crisis, and how the consequences of all these migration-related challenges are magnified by the closure of not only land borders, but also maritime ones, as ports have been closed in places like Malta, Italy and Spain, where the reception of asylum applications was suspended.

Focusing on the Central and Eastern Mediterranean, the situation with migratory processes is very similar, and will not vary much, as border and security control are constant there.

We are seeing changes in migratory flows, as is currently the case with the reopening of the Canarian route, which thus far this year has witnessed an increase in arrivals, all this being due to geopolitical and political strategies.

Regarding the management of the European Union's borders, the violation of fundamental rights in these spaces has become clear, as borders have been redesigned, intercepting and containing people, including immediate rejections of immigrants.

In terms of the preventive dynamics at borders, it was explained how the number of arrivals has been stemmed through the opaque implementation of anti-immigration strategies.

The crucial aspects in European policies:

- People's rights are reduced.
- Rescue and disembarkation operations at safe harbours become obscure. There is inaction on the part of the European States as a consequence of States' acquiescence, and those NGOs that take action are criminalized.
- Cooperation with third countries.

- The militarization of the Mediterranean.

Spitu emphasised that all barriers must be broken and not just borders, calling for real, free movement by everyone, those who have papers and those who do not, in addition to the elimination of barriers in the workplace, and in the educational and social spheres.

Migrants must be made visible, and barriers impeding coexistence must be overcome.

Finally, barriers to coexistence and the concept of identity between the migrant and native populations must be lifted as well.

Reda Ben Zaza transported us to the Rif to learn first-hand about the problems that this region in Northern Morocco suffers, sharing with us how he had to leave everything (work, family) and take off "with nothing but the shirt on his back," - a *desbandá* forced on him by political reasons. He also spoke to us about how the King of Morocco sent some 60,000 police officers to perpetrate repression against the people of the Rif.

He told us how any social demands, such as a university, are denied by the Moroccan authorities.

Finally, he related to us how the police are taking action against the Riffian people, engaging in torture, rape, and constant human rights violations.

Antonia Franco then explained how much the militarization of borders costs the taxpayers of the European Union, how this is carried out, the means it has at its disposal, and the companies to which the tenders are awarded on the Southern Border, specifically in the Western Mediterranean, in addition to the support of the Single Command, which controls this part of the Mediterranean with assistance from Frontex, the European Agency for Border Management.

Regarding militarization, European Union spending between 2006-2017 was 676.4 million euros. From 2010-2019 it was 994.4 million, and from 2020-2027 it was 11.27 billion euros.

All this spending is to contract companies that are financed with money from all taxpayers. Perversely, these companies are also among the main European arms traffickers in the Middle East and North Africa, thus contributing to the conflicts that cause forced migration.

In conclusion, human migration is a global phenomenon and is present throughout history and all over the planet. Today, however, we have focused on the Central and Western Mediterranean, seeing how migrants' rights are undercut, and changes to European legislation governing deportations are being negotiated with the aim of minimising the rights of individuals and increasing the power of States.

The main aim of biometric databases, which we have also talked about today, is to have easily accessible data on all foreigners. These changes subvert key data protection principles and increase the risk of actions based on ethnic profiling.

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) has helped deport more than 50,000 people since 2007 in Spain, and its goal is to continue to do so. The abuses committed during Frontex-coordinated operations are well known. Existing safeguards and oversight mechanisms are weak and lack independence. Various media and human rights organizations have accused Frontex of being an accomplice in maritime operations involving immediate rejections of immigrants and illegal actions that place the lives of refugees trying to reach Europe at risk.

We have gone from an integrative Europe to another dissolving, externalizing and disintegrating one in which rights are disappearing, borders are closed, and the movement of people from non-EU countries is prevented, thereby breaching its founding principles, those underpinning the basic architecture of the European Union's constitutional treaties.

Immediate rejections of immigrants are allowed in Spain, despite the fact that the ECHR has condemned this practice, while certain countries are allowed to install miles of walls along their

borders. It is tolerated that refugees from Syria are met with gases and rejected, without even considering the possibility of providing them with international protection.

All these derelictions mean that Europe is ceasing to be an area governed by law and upholding the protection of human dignity and promoting brotherhood and respect among peoples. Thus, a Europe is emerging that is increasingly closed, less supportive, and further removed from the values upon which it was founded.