



# MIGRATION SMA JUSTICE Briefing No 5

“Believers, are called on to heal the evils caused by migration and discover the plan God pursues through it.”  
*Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi.*

**“The Church’s teachings on human rights, freedom of movement and the rights of migrant workers are increasingly violated by the worlds restrictive migration policies and laws against Africans.”**

*African Bishop’s Synod*

## MIGRATION IN CONTEXT

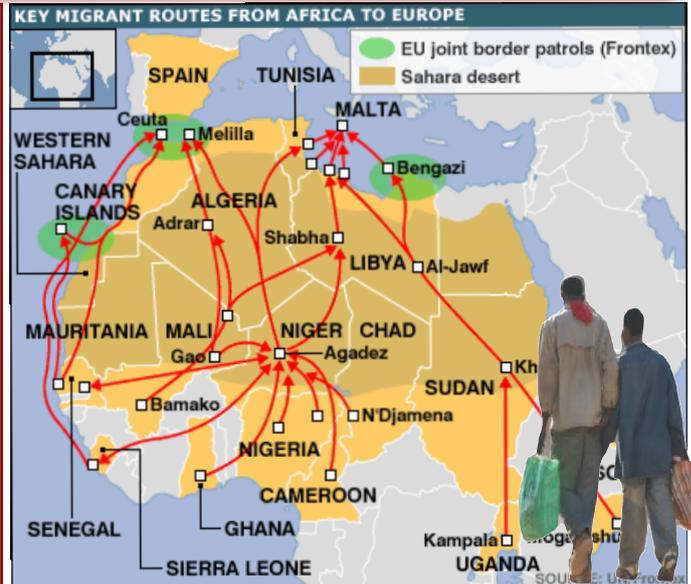
The Migration of Africans continues to be the largest movement of peoples in world. Millions move away from conflicts and poverty seeking a safer future. Most move to neighbouring countries or are displaced within their own borders. Tens of thousands try to move out of Africa. At the same time and as a result of the current economic crisis European States are less willing to receive migrants and many have also cut Development Aid to Africa.

In Africa the knock-on effects of both the recession and the reduction in Aid are yet to bite. Added to this the impact of climate change will cause further tensions and conflict forcing further migration and suffering. Africans will continue to move, they have no other choice.

Public opinion in Europe and in Ireland is becoming more anti-immigrant and particularly anti-African. Overtly right wing and fascist politics is re-emerging in Europe and is gaining ground. Christian and humanitarian values are being screened out as Europeans look inward and seek to protect their own interests. There is a huge gap between the reality expressed in the quotation from the African Synod above and the approach to Migration advocated in the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* summarised below. **While the current world crisis will effect the living standards of Europeans it will cost the lives of Africans.**

**CARITAS IN VERITAE:** *The challenges of migration can best be addressed through close collaboration between the countries of origin and destination and the establishment of international norms to safeguard the rights and needs of migrants, their families and those of receiving countries. Immigrants must not be considered just a commodity or a factor of production, each is a human person with fundamental inalienable rights that must be respected.*

Par 62



## THE ROAD FROM AFRICA

At present most illegal immigrants enter Europe through Greece, Malta and the Canary Islands by crossing from Senegal, Libya, or Mauritania. African migrants travel north overland to reach a crossing point to Europe (see map). These are dangerous journeys that can take months or even years depending on resources and luck.

**Many die or disappear along the way.**

From the North African Coast migrants try to cross by boat to a European country. They work at whatever they can to raise the money to pay the people smugglers fees which can be as high as €5,000. Many drown when un-seaworthy craft sink. Those who do succeed in reaching Europe either continue their journey to the country of their choice or seek asylum where they land. Many travel overland to Calais and then cross to the UK and some then enter Ireland through Northern Ireland. No matter what route is taken all face a long and uncertain future, one made even more so in the current period of recession.

**FORTRESS EUROPE:** In the past decade inward migration to the EU has highlighted differences in the procedures and laws of individual member states that allowed entry “weak points”. This disparity and the need for a mechanism to attract skilled labour prompted efforts to “harmonise” EU immigration law.

As a result EU countries have adopted stricter laws that can only be construed as having the overall aim of keeping certain classes of immigrants out while allowing those with skills in. The passage of Ireland’s new and long awaited Immigration and Residence Protection Bill has been side-tracked by the current economic crisis. However, based on the draft circulated it appears that we will follow the restrictive lead of other EU countries.

At present Southern European countries such as Spain, Greece, Italy and Malta are bearing the brunt of migrant inflows and have repeatedly called on other EU states to share the burden. Some attempts, such as the setting up of FRONTEX (see over), have been made but they fall far short of what these “frontline” states want. Meanwhile States not on the frontline are content with the current practice of processing asylum cases in the country of entry into the EU.

Clearly the level of EU burden sharing offered was not enough for Italy. In spite of an international outcry the Berlusconi

Government went its own way by introducing drastic and controversial measures to stem the flow of migrants. These include criminalizing illegal immigration. A policy of returning boatloads of migrants to Libya before they can claim asylum has also been implemented. These measures have been condemned by both the Vatican and the UN. While the Italian Government reports a drop of 90 percent in landings on Italian coasts since May 2009 its approach does nothing to solve the causes of migration. African migrants will inevitably use other routes into the European Union.

**The UN estimates that 150 million people will lose their homes and become climate-related refugees or Internally Displaced Persons by the year 2050.**

## 67 MILLION FORCED TO

**MIGRATE:** According to the United Nations the number of people uprooted by conflict and persecution at the end of 2008 stood at 42 million. This includes 16 million Refugees who have fled to another country and 26 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs). In addition it is also estimated that there are up to 25 million more IDPs in the world due to natural disasters. **This gives a total of sixty seven million people forced to leave their homes.**

At the start of 2009 the UNHCR reported that it had concern for 10.4 million people in Africa, 2.3 million were registered as Refugees and 6.3 million categorised as Internally Displaced Persons. The remaining 1.8 million are made up of Asylum Seekers, Stateless Persons and returned Refugees. These figures do not include those displaced due to natural disasters, climate change or those who have left Africa.

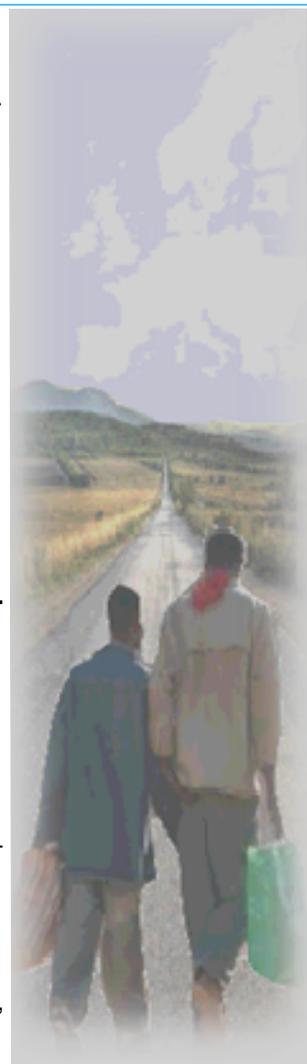
**FRONTEX:** *Is a European Union agency created to coordinate Member States in the field of border security. One of the agency's main tasks is to fight people smuggling operations. It also organises deportations. For example in 2009 deportation flights to Nigeria were organised by Frontex. Aircraft landed in a number of EU countries, including Ireland, to pick up deportees before flying on to Lagos. This arrangement allows costs to be shared between countries. This year 193 Deportations from Ireland, mostly to Nigeria, were made up to September 2009.*

## MIGRATION AND THE AFRICAN SYNOD

The precarious situation of millions of African migrants ought to win the solidarity of everyone. Instead many consider them a burden, view them with suspicion and indeed consider them a danger and a threat. **This often gives rise to expressions of intolerance, xenophobia and racism.** Among worrisome developments are: legislation which penalizes all clandestine entries into foreign countries and border police discriminating against Africans. Migration within and outside the continent is a multi-dimensional drama, which affects all countries, causing destabilization, the destruction of families and a waste of Africa's human capital. The Synod Fathers believe that ... **the Church's teachings on human rights, freedom of movement and the rights of migrant workers are increasingly violated by the world's restrictive migration policies and laws against Africans.** Therefore, the Synod is convinced that it is necessary and urgent to:

1. Demand that governments apply international migratory law evenly and fairly without discriminating against African travellers.
2. Provide special pastoral care for African migrants in a joint-effort between the Churches-of-origin and host-Churches to extend pastoral care to migrants.
3. Advocate for a just treatment of refugees at all levels of the Church.
4. Establish offices or Commissions for the Movement of People in the secretariats of Episcopal Conferences, charged with the task of working together and with Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant Peoples.
5. Develop programmes of pastoral care for migrants and their families.

The Synod also calls on African Governments to create a climate of security and freedom, to implement programmes of development and job creation, to dissuade their citizens from leaving home and becoming refugees, and to undertake initiatives encouraging refugees to return with a programme to welcome them. (Synod proposal no 28)



## IRISH BISHOP'S INITIATIVE FOR PASTORAL SUPPORT

Chaired by Most Rev. Bishop Eamonn Walsh, the Irish Episcopal Council for Immigrants (IECI) was formed in September 2009. The Council serves diocesan and parish personnel who minister to immigrants. It is tasked with increasing pastoral awareness, cultural sensitivity, and the dynamics of outreach, welcome and support in our communities. Inherent in its mission is the promotion and development of mutual respect and incorporation of the gifts and talents offered by diverse cultures into our parish lives. To fulfil this mission, the Council aims to develop and foster initiatives in relation to the pastoral care and outreach of immigrants.

**IRELAND - Immigrant Numbers Decline:** For first time since 1995 the number of people leaving Ireland is higher than those entering. Of the 65,100 people who emigrated in the year to April 2009, EU nationals were the largest group at 30,100, with Irish nationals being the second largest at 18,400. A further 16,600 non EU nationals also left Ireland.

The number of Asylum Seekers entering Ireland also continues to decline. Figures to September 2009 indicate that the total for this year will be below three thousand, the lowest figure in twelve years.