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Belgium

Belgium: For freedom of movement and settlement, against closed centres

- IV Online magazine - 2024 - IV597 - October 2024 -

Publication date: Monday 14 October 2024

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In order to supposedly win back the votes of the Vlaams Belang, the former Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration, Theo Francken (a former far-right activist and leader of the N-VA), had his famous ‘Masterplan for closed centres’ for illegal residents put to the vote in 2017: a major extension of existing return capacity and the creation of three new closed centres in order to exceed 5,000 forced returns. His successors (Mahdi and de Moor) have continued the dirty work, drooling their hollow and hypocritical slogans (‘...firm but humane’ then ‘humane but firm’!) In 2024, there is even talk of ‘outsourcing our borders’: building prisons in countries to the east and south of the world to send back ‘our rejected asylum seekers’.

The outgoing Vivaldi federal government (with Ecolo and the PS) has meekly taken over the construction of three closed centres, including a 200-place closed centre in Jumet by 2028, which would make it the largest detention centre in Belgium, with the support of the Charleroi authorities (PS and Paul Magnette).

The closed centres are veritable transit prisons before detainees are deported by plane from Belgian territory, not for any criminal offences they have committed, but solely for reasons of migration.

These prisons are disgraceful in terms of respect for rights and procedures, as well as in terms of detention conditions: a glaring lack of staff, including carers, an invasion of bedbugs, harassment and recurrent violence, self-mutilation and suicide attempts, disinformation campaigns and incitement to voluntary deportation.

These prisons are the result of a violent migration policy dictated by the extreme right, based on the exploitation, detention and deportation of people dispossessed of their dignity and humanity by a capitalist and neo-colonialist system.

The anti-capitalist left supports the struggle of undocumented migrants for a genuine migration policy that includes :

- **Open borders** (‘Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state’ = Universal Declaration of Human Rights)
- **Freedom of movement and settlement for everyone**, including non-Europeans, with equal rights (no one is illegal)
- **Regularisation of the status of all undocumented migrants**
- **The dismantling of closed centres** (using the money recovered to improve the reception of asylum seekers fleeing our economic, military and climate disorder)

PS:

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