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Portugal

Solidarity with Mamadou

#Mamadoumuststay

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"Em carne e osso com Mamadou Ba" (In flesh and blood with Mamadou Ba), to contradict the fake profiles and bots used by the far right on social networks, is the name of a solidarity campaign that in a few days has mobilized hundreds of persons sending videos, texts, songs or other forms of participating in a joint virtual response to racism and the persecution of anti-racist activists in Portugal.

The campaign is a creative way of overcoming the present difficulties imposed by the pandemic (the country is in lockdown since the end of 2020) and is gathering each day contributions from people ranging from anonymous citizens to well known artists, journalists, politicians and activists, see [here](#).

Mamadou Ba is a comrade of the Fourth International in Portugal. He is a Black activist of many decades standing. He was born in Senegal and particularly organizes in that community but has Portuguese nationality. For his role as a spokesperson for the antiracist organization SOS Racismo, Mamadou has frequently been the target of vicious campaigns and threats by the far right, supported by companies fabricating bots and false profiles, video manipulation and false news to target antiracist militants and the first black deputies elected for parliament.

What distinguishes this specific petition is the echo it gained in the headlines of the mass media, once more acritically amplifying the far right narratives, in a moment when the candidate of the far-right party Chega demonstrated its growth potential by obtaining more than 11% of the popular vote in the 24 January presidential elections, (against the 1,29% in the previous legislative elections with which it elected its single deputy in parliament).

This particular attack on Mamadou Ba took place in the context of the death of Marcelino da Mata, the most decorated military officer in the Portuguese Army, who served in more than 2,000 operations in the Colonial War in Guinea, some of which have been classified as war crimes and Portugal has been condemned by the UN for such operations. He was a guinean fighting for the colonial power. Da Mata, who bragged about his acts of torture and was a far-right militant, died on 18 February as a result of a covid related illness at the age of 80. Another right wing opposition party CDS-PP, which is fighting for its survival faced with the rise of Chega, called for a vote of condolence in the Portuguese parliament over his death and called to expell Mamadou Ba from the governmental working group on racism.

Ba is one of a number of public figures who condemned this tribute to a war criminal who collaborated with the fascist regime of Salazar. But as a Black activist he is the target of the sharpest vitriolic campaign.

While the petition to deport him cannot succeed, that does not diminish the need to stand in solidarity with him in particular and to condemn those who are whipping up racist hatred. For the moment, the campaign is only accepting contributions in Portuguese.

Like Mamadou Ba and many others we agree that "Marcelino da Mata is a war criminal who deserves no respect at all".

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Statement by SOS Racismo (Portugal)

The positions of the anti-racist activist Mamadou Ba, based on the full exercise of his democratic rights, have been a frequent target of attacks that go beyond legitimate opposition, to become insults, defamatory attacks and even threats to his person.

This escalation of hatred and intolerance has recently reached a new level following statements by Mamadou Ba regarding the visibility and state honours granted to Marcelino da Mata.

Given that his opinion is far from unique (several people and institutions have condemned the praise for Marcelino da Mata), Mamadou Ba was at the centre of several petitions calling for his expulsion from the country, one of them with about 15,000 signatures.

Even though these petitions have no legal validity, their repercussions in the public domain are not always visible. The positions of the anti-racist activist Mamadou Ba, based on the full exercise of a plural democracy, have been a frequent target of attacks that go beyond the legitimate contradiction, to become an insult, a defamatory attack and even a personal threat.

This escalation of hatred and intolerance has recently reached a new level following the statements by Mamadou Ba regarding the visibility and state honours granted to Marcelino da Mata.

Following an opinion which is not even isolated (several people and institutions have condemned the praise for Marcelino da Mata), Mamadou Ba was at the centre of several petitions calling for his expulsion from the country, one of them with about 15,000 signatures.

Even if the legal validity of these petitions is null and void, their repercussions in the public space and their promotion in social networks and the media merit our greatest concern. They reveal:

- The permeability of the public space not only to slander and impropriety but, above all, to the message that sees deportation as an appropriate punishment for a supposed thought crime;
- The magnetism exercised in certain institutions and parties, from the most recent ones to some that claim to be co-founders of the Portuguese Democracy, by racist impetus, by hate speech, by nationalist fury;
- The way in which this type of petition is rapidly and expressively accepted by the very people who are angry at being accused of racism.

For all these reasons, SOS Racismo condemns the contents of these petitions, appealing to other people and institutions to show solidarity, in the necessary zeal for a democratic, plural and critical society.

PS:

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