

Dreaming Europe: Gatekeepers between West Africa and Mediterranean Europe

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Last decade the Europe Union has erected a system to control its external borders, in particular its sea borders. Institutions (e.g. FRONTEX) were created, specific cooperation agreements (e.g. Morocco, Senegal, Mauritania, and Libya) were signed and external borders were equipped with hi-tech equipment (e.g. SIVE) to prevent potential migrants from entering into EU's space.

The European border system envisioned Western Africa as a key player. As the Maghreb states, the states located on the Western Atlantic coast stand for primary gatekeepers. The increasing restrictive measures to prevent from entering into Europe via the Atlantic Ocean caused a diversion of routes, an extension of period of the crossing, higher risks, higher vulnerability to human smugglers and traffickers, and an increase in the costs. In this vein the desert, a prominent trade route between the North and the South of Africa before Colonialism, is a powerful natural gatekeeper for an increasing volume of aspiring migrants. Following the desert, would-be migrants face the challenge to distract the Maghreb gatekeepers. The staying extends for an undetermined period while waiting to cross the Mediterranean or the Atlantic. The potential migrants become clandestine migrants, and easy targets for their hosts.

In this paper, we will discuss the gatekeeper's strategies to prevent Africans from entering Europe, in particular the detention centers as states-of-exception in which human lives are suspended for an undetermined period.