

## "To the ones whom our mass politics and mass media had dehumanized"



Fabrizio Gatti (links) mit Mohanad Jammo, dessen Söhne die Überfahrt über das Mittelmeer nicht überlebten.

**Am 11. Oktober 2013 ertranken vor Lampedusa 260 vor allem aus Syrien stammende Flüchtlinge, darunter über 100 Kinder. Der italienische Journalist Fabrizio Gatti deckte mit seinen Recherchen auf, dass wohl alle Opfer der Bootskatastrophe hätten gerettet werden können, wenn die italienischen Behörden sofort die Seenotrettung eingeleitet hätten. Ohne seine Dokumentation wären die skandalösen Umstände des tödlichen Flüchtlingsdramas nicht bekannt geworden. Die STIFTUNG PRO ASYL würdigt Fabrizio Gatti daher mit der PRO ASYL-Hand 2014. Fabrizio Gatti's Dankesrede haben wir hier dokumentiert. Ein beeindruckender Appell gegen die Dehumanisierung an Europas Grenzen.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear members from the Pro-Asyl Stiftung, dear friends, thank you very much for such a great opportunity to remember again, here together, the ones who have lost their lives in the October 11 shipwreck and in many other shipwrecks which have occurred between Europe and North Africa, Italy and Libya, Greece and Turkey, Spain and Morocco before and after Autumn 2013. Thank you for such an honourable award and for your extraordinary job in order to protect and enforce human rights in Germany and all over Europe. I set off along the route of immigration from Africa to Europe on November 6th, 2003. I have travelled for four years as an undercover journalist under different fake names, one of which was Bilal. Bilal Ibrahim El Habib.

## **A journalist from the European Union**

As a journalist from the European Union, where the right to information is supposed to be protected by most of our national Constitutions or laws, my aim was to give a name, a surname, an age, an ambition, a personal story, an identity, to the ones whom our mass politics and mass media had dehumanized under the new social label of illegal, illegalen, clandestino, sans papier. They were the same ones who crossed the Sahara desert and the sea and reached Lampedusa island searching for humanitarian protection or simply an economic better future which, in my opinion, are the same story, the same situation, the same needs. They were in the majority males and a minority of girls, held by their traffickers who sexually exploited them. All of us travelled along the so called illegal route as there was no legal way to reach Europe, both for the ones looking for a job, and the refugees escaping warfare and dictatorship.

What sounded strange eleven years ago, in that November 2003, was that should I have given my real name and occupation to the Italian/European authority at the Lampedusa detention camp, I wouldn't have had the possibility to go inside what we detainee called the "cage" and witness the democratic violence under which migrants and asylum seekers were held.

We do expect democracy would react against its deviations. It actually did. An investigation was carried out on those military who were responsible of violence and abuses, and on myself, too. The military immediately quitted the investigation. I went under trial. The prosecutor asked one year of jail for fake declaration to the authority. The court luckily had another opinion and acquitted my position.

## **Agreements with the worst regimes**

In the meantime, Eu democratic ministers and commissioner strenghtened their collaboration with the worst Northern African regimes in order to sign deportation agreements of migrants and refugees and to ask those dictators to protect Eu borders. In the meantime, Spain and Greece (and now even Bulgaria) have built up barbed fences along their borders. In the meantime, Italy mantained its friendship with the Eritrean dictatorship. In the meantime, France carried on exploiting at very cheap prices the uranium from Niger – that uranium cake moves one third of French trains, lights up one third of French light bulbs, nourishes one third of French industries while the 90 per cent of people of Niger cannot afford any kind of electricity. In the meantime, a coalition of European States led by the German government decided to heavily punish Greece, guilty of having failed to reimburse its debit after building a German-style airport in Athens and signing different tender with German companies involved in the 2004 Olimpic games works. In the meantime, Spain allowed Morocco military to enter its border territory and four migrants were clubbed to death. It happened last June. Exactly ten years after my departure as Bilal, in November 2003, Europe was waken up by the death of about 640 refugees from Eritrea and Syria in three different incidents. But the October 11 shipwreck, the reason you kindly invited me here today, was not the last one. On that day about 260 Syrian refugees

have drowned, amongst whom about sixty children. Italian and Maltese Navy and Coast Guard lost five hours before setting off in the attempt of passing the responsibility of the Search and rescue operation. But afterwards, many other shipwrecks occurred between Africa and Europe. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, other 1.800 asylum seekers have died since January 2014 – 1.600 the ones who have drowned between June and August 2014. 108.000 have reached the Italian coast, rescue by the Italian Navy operation “Mare nostrum”. 125.000 is the total amount of refugees who reached European Union from the sea.

### **Racism and fascism of the Islamic state**

Today, eleven years after November 2003, more countries have been undermined by war or poverty due to war, dictatorial regimes, new racist and fascist political groups like the Islamic state, landgrabbing or lack of water – Syria, Israel and Palestine, Egyptian Sinai, Libya, North of Niger, North of Nigeria, Mali and many others.

The war in Syria alone has forced the deployment of more than six million people inside the country, almost one million 200 thousands in Lebanon, hundreds of thousands in Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Libya where a total amount of three million refugees from all over Africa and Middle East are said to be stranded. It is one of the severest humanitarian crises along the Mediterranean Sea since World War Two. But one year after 2013 shipwrecks no humanitarian corridor has been opened toward Europe neither by European Union, nor by the United Nations. European governments are passing the responsibility in assisting the asylum seekers, by exploiting the worst consequences of the Dublin regulation. The Directive 2001/55 about the «minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons» is not implemented at all, even by those countries like Italy which should apply European Union for its implementation.

### **New winds of war in the heart of Europe**

In the meantime, new extremely dangerous winds of war have been blowing in the deepest heart of Europe between Ukraine and Russia. And the European Union governments and NATO members are blowing on the fire instead of supporting real peace talks between the two parties.

Dear friends, after all what we have been witnessing for the last eleven years, I unfortunately believe that Europe is not a democratic Union anymore like it was at the very beginning of our adventure, but rather a kind of cynical technocracy. That is why today we should be honestly aware that we are not here to deal with immigration or refugee issues. On the contrary, we should be aware that in our and your everyday commitment we are coping with the aftermath of European neoliberalism and its colonialism – in Africa, in Middle East, in Ukraine, too.

## **The aftermath of liberism and its colonialism**

Liberism without any mediation of people's balance is a threat to the humanity. Wild liberism in politics and in economy has destroyed the world at least twice already in the past century. As Bilal Ibrahim el Habib I am very pessimist, sorry. But we cannot surrender. Enforcing human rights, fighting racism, campaigning against liberism in favour of human beings and human policy is our main task to prevent the aftermath of the cynical technocracy which is ruling the world today. For this reason, thank you for being here, thank you Pro-Asyl foundation for your committment.

Frankfurt am Main, den 13. September 2014