

The False Europe

The Social Forum of External Debt and Development of Honduras (FOSDEH) would like to express its profound repudiation after the passing of the law called “Return Directive” by the European Parliament for the “legal” expulsion of millions of immigrants that currently live in the European Union’s member States. In addition, we would like to point out that this decision is yet another example of the hypocrisy and deceitfulness that Europe actually demonstrates in regard to the development processes that should be fostered in regions like Central America, and especially in countries like Honduras.

In the opinion of FOSDEH, the decision taken by the European authorities confirms the real nature and the kind of relationship the EU wants to establish with Central America and Honduras. As we have stated before, the process of negotiation of an Association Agreement between Central America and the EU aims to create opportunities and incentives for the **European** investors, not to promote a process of equitable development and democracy which will benefit everyone.

We condemn the fact that Europe disregards the important work carried out by thousands of Central American immigrants who have become a key labor stakeholder for the well-being in Europe. Those immigrants mostly perform labor activities that are not being fulfilled by Europeans which are crucial for the prosperity of a developed economy and society, such as bricklaying, waste collection, and housekeeping at hotels and private homes.

Only in 2007, more than 75 billion dollars in remittances were sent to Latin America from Europe by our immigrants (without any conditions or pressure of any kind). These figures might not be substantial for the European bourgeoisie, but they are fundamental for countries like Honduras, where almost half of its population lives with an income of less than two dollars per day. For many Honduran households (of up to 5 people), a remittance of 100 or 150 dollars per month represent a real possibility to survive.

Considering this fact, we regret that Europe and its Return Directive would attempt to overlook the extreme poverty and inequality in Africa, Latin America, Central America, and in countries like Honduras, which is the main cause of immigration. We would like to restate that, as long as these motives exist and the asymmetrical relationships between geographical blocs are not based on human ethics, it will be very difficult for Europe to prevent such immigration flows; and, on the other hand, this situation will increase human rights violations toward immigrants.

Consequently, FOSDEH, along with thousands of civil society organizations from different regions in Honduras, and as a member of several civil society networks in Central America and Latin America, demands:

- That the European Parliament repeals the “Return Directive”

because it is an exaggerated measure that criminalizes immigrants, and thus violates their human rights.

- Suspend the negotiations of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Central America, as long as there is no evidence that the European Parliament will repeal the “Return Directive,” and that such Agreement determines that along with “free trade” it will also ensure a “free movement of people.”
- Strengthen the mechanisms, in the framework of the Association Agreement between the EU and Central America, to ensure a fair and equitable treatment towards the Central American immigrants living in Europe.

For countries like Honduras, it is essential to reassess its international relations and the regional integration processes, employing a series of **inclusive, and not exclusive** conditions as a starting point.

If Europe does not redress its decision, it will send a clear message to Central America that its only priority in the region relates to trade. If the situation of social and economic exclusion continues to aggravate in Central America, it will be a bill that sooner or later Europe will have to pay, with its due interests.

In Honduras, FOSDEH works in favor of an economically sustainable situation in Central America. However, to continue this task, we need partners that understand that the well-being and observance of the rights of all human beings, no matter where they live, should be above any other interest.

FOSDEH