



Sunday, March 19, 2017, in Venice: Side by Side, marching for humanity

*A day dedicated to those who refuse a present characterised by hatred and savagery,
in Veneto and everywhere else.*

Sunday, March 19, we will meet in front of the railway station Santa Lucia in Venice at 2pm. The march will conclude with an event in Campo Sant'Angelo.

Like "Veneto Accoglie" on Facebook
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In August 2015, we departed from Italy's north-east towards Hungary, where one of the first material walls was being erected in Europe to stem the flow of migrants fleeing their countries of origin. That journey launched the #Overthefortress campaign: many people, from all over Italy, retraced the Balkan route. From Wien, through Idomeni, to the Greek islands, we confronted with and narrated the reality first-hand, we looked thousands of travelling women, men, children and elders in the eyes and shook their hands.

We mingled with these people and listened the many reasons that move them in this desperate journey. We understood their needs and hopes, trying to provide active support in the refugee camp of Idomeni. We've been at the gates of Fortress Europe, such as Calais and Brenner, to leave again for an investigative journey from to the camps of Salonicco, through southern Italy and the central Mediterranean route. We've visited the inhuman reception centres, ghettos made of shacks where migrants are over-exploited, but we've also come across an incredible network of initiatives and solidarity originated from the cooperation between "Italians" and "migrants".

Borders discriminating and repelling migrants are not just those we see in reports and news. We find erect and tangible borders even inside our territories: in isolated and inhuman reception centres, they are made of rejection, violence and racism taking over our societies. They take form at the anti-migrants rallies organised by the xenophobic right, which, in many places, finds precious allies in those municipalities refusing to receive migrants, thereby making it impossible to empty the overcrowded centres.

Other barriers, tangible or not, are about to be erected: these are in the promises made by the Government of Gentiloni about opening Centres for Identification and Expulsion (CIE) in every Italian region, signing new repatriation agreements with migrants' countries of origin in order to speed up forced returns, and restricting the right of asylum by preventing the applicant to appeal to the court of second instance. These promises are in line with those same EU policies providing for

the adoption of an Hotspot approach, the forced identification of migrants in the first Member State of arrival, and the signature of the shameful EU-Turkey deal on March 18 2016, which transformed Turkey in the Policeman of Europe in exchange for €6 billion. In the meantime, we turn a blind eye towards the deaths in the Mediterranean: in the last 13 months, the death toll rose up to 5,000 victims of the lack of safe humanitarian corridors.

These policies of closure and contraction of fundamental rights contribute to legitimise intolerance and hatred emerging all over the country. In particular, the Veneto region has become a national case: terrible reception centres where people are clumped together, picket lines against the right of asylum, banners promising “hell for migrants”, fire-bomb attacks against reception centres, the refusal of 250 mayors to host asylum-seekers, even citizens’ committee gathering against small-scale reception solutions, and instigation to suicide.

“In the Veneto region, we are crossing the insurmountable border between humanity and savagery.”

We need to react against words and acts of violence, against the war on migrants that is draining our territories. We don’t have just to passively and personally reject this, but, most importantly, we need to promote solidarity together with that social network made of citizens, organisations, entities, and operators working every day to improve the system of reception and the respect for human rights.

For this reason, we want to start from Veneto to embrace the international call launched by the City Plaza Hotel in Athens which invites to mobilisation on March 18th during the anniversary of the EU-Turkey deal.

We believe that Sunday March 19th can be the right occasion to leave the stage to a welcoming and open Veneto region, as the 1,000 feet march in Montello has already demonstrated.

Let’s meet in a spirit of confrontation and regional mobilisation to promote migrants’ rights and call for a better, widespread reception system.

Let’s do it all together, through assemblies and open confrontations in every city, through tangible and inclusive paths with all the people who believe that building a society where humanity prevails over savagery is possible.

The March 19 protest in Venice constitutes an open challenge: the possibility to open a public space in which many people can find themselves recognised, for those who believe that it is possible to build a society where humanity prevails over savagery.

We will face this challenge only by convincing as many people as possible to march with us, by our side, side by side.

#Overthefortress campaign