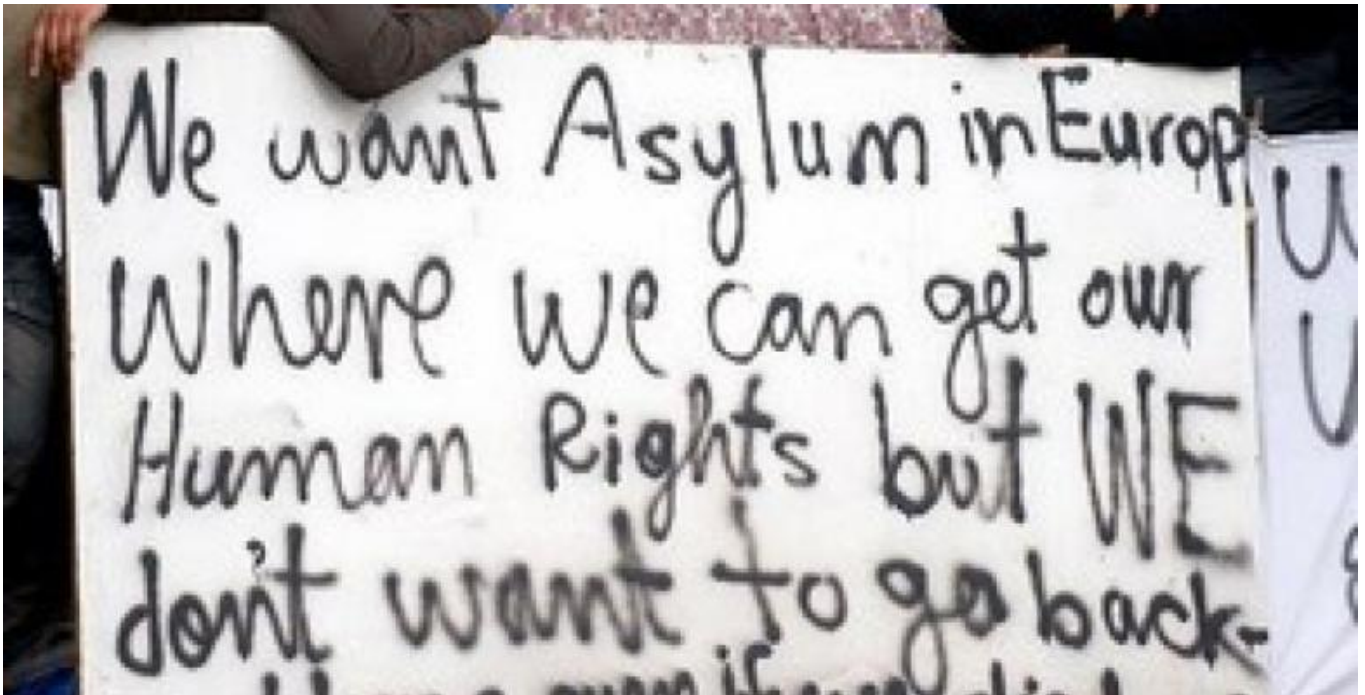

Migration experts slam EU military plan

26/05/2015



The academics' strong condemnation of the plan comes after Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi compared the current migrant crisis to the 18th and 19th century slave trade. In a recent article for the New York Times, he wrote that "human traffickers are the slave traders of the 21st century, and they should be brought to justice".

Writing for the Open Democracy website, the 300 academics argued that attempts to justify military intervention by comparisons with 18th century suppression of the slave trade were "entirely self-serving" and based on "a dangerous perversion of history".

The article said: "As scholarship on the history of slavery makes painfully clear, what is happening in the Mediterranean today does not even remotely resemble the transatlantic slave trade.

"Enslaved Africans did not want to move. They were held in dungeons before being shackled and loaded onto ships. They had to be prevented from choosing suicide over forcible transportation. That transportation led to a single and utterly appalling outcome — slavery."

On May 18, EU ministers held talks in Brussels on the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean Sea and approved a plan to back a proposal for a new naval force to intercept people smugglers before their boats reach Europe.

Recent reports suggested that the EU parliament was drafting a United Nations resolution that would authorise the deployment of troops to the coasts of Libya to "seize" and "destroy" the

smuggling boats.

The 300 critics join others who came out against the EU plan and say such a strategy would not bring an end to the huge wave of migrants fleeing the conflicts in the Middle East and Africa.

Since the 2011 overthrow of the Gaddafi dictatorship, Libya has been ruled by several competing militias. There are two competing governments, but neither has real authority. Both have expressed opposition to the plan, saying that any troop deployment to Libya's waters or shores would be a violation of the country's sovereignty.

The heated debate over the solution to the migrant crisis comes after one of the most devastating migrant boat incidents took place last month in the Mediterranean, when a vessel carrying at least 750 migrants capsized. Only 28 people survived.

The statement by the migration experts said: "There is no moral basis for measures that lead to the death of peaceable women, men and children, including victims of torture, and those fleeing persecution and war.

"We call for the resettlement of many more refugees within Europe and the dismantling of the barriers to movement that have been put in the way of all but the most wealthy."

More than 300 migration experts and academics have condemned the European Union's plan of military intervention against the surge of smuggling boats heading to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea.

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- See more at: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/59108#sthash.CVklG6KQ.dpuf>

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