



## **INTEGRATION MEASURES – NOT OPERATIONS BROOM –** **MIGRANTS ARE NOT TRASH**

Recently we are once again witness to the victimisation of migrants who live in the old part of Nicosia by the police and, unfortunately, by central and local government officials. The problems arising as a result of the religious practices of some migrant groups that led to the Omeriye mosque events, a large part of the responsibility for which belongs to the state and the municipality of Nicosia, have been the starting point for a series of unacceptable statements and impression moves by the police for so-called more and better policing of the old town in order to combat “crime” and “illegal” migration, terminating in today’s operation “broom”.

Migrants are presented as the problematic element in the old town, which “terrorises” residents and passers-by and there should therefore be measures to address it, the most “imaginative” of which is apparently the police operation “broom”. An operation through which people are indiscriminately arrested and taken to police stations in handcuffs on the basis of the colour of their skin. An operation which indiscriminately violates house doors and invades bedrooms while people are asleep in order supposedly to combat “crime”.

We do not know if the above practices restore a sense of “security” among racists; but what we can say with certainty is that they shatter the dignity of migrants and every trace of security and trust they may have had in the state and the authorities.

We call on the Mayor of Nicosia, the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Justice and Public Order and the Chief of Police to explain to us –

- How will the police operations, which are targeted indiscriminately on migrants, with or without papers, solve the housing problem of migrants, who indeed live in appalling conditions in the old part of Nicosia subject to economic exploitation?
- How will the criminalisation of renting to migrants without papers, as provided for in the recent bill of law submitted to the House of Representatives by the Ministry of Interior, solve the already very serious problem of shelter for migrants, which is a basic social right of every person recognised by international law, without discrimination on any ground, including any legal status? Would not such a policy lead to further ghettoisation of migrants as well as to their increased exploitation because landlords, under the threat of criminal sanctions, would raise rents even more?
- How will the persecution, criminalisation and further ghettoisation of migrants living in old Nicosia and elsewhere will lift the huge responsibility off the Nicosia municipality and the Ministry of Interior in relation to lack of policies and measures for the integration of migrants, which have led among other things to the unacceptable living conditions of migrants in old Nicosia and for which the migrants themselves are again punished?

KISA, in the framework of a meeting held recently with all migrant communities for the organisation of the annual multicultural Rainbow Festival, which purports to show the cultural wealth of the migrant communities in Cyprus, has, jointly with the migrant communities decided to call on:

- The Minister of Interior to withdraw the proposed bill for the criminalisation of renting housing to migrants without papers, in respect of the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which secures the right to housing to all without discrimination.
- The Minister of Interior to proceed to a substantial integration policy of migrants and to adopt, among others, a housing policy for migrants, who constitute an especially vulnerable group.
- The Mayor of Nicosia to end her equivocal statements, which instigate racism and xenophobia and, instead of asking strengthening of the policing of the old Nicosia, which leads to operations “broom”, to adopt substantial integration measures at local level, to exercise her competencies as the city planning authority vis-à-vis property owners who exploit migrants, on the basis of the protection of the rights of migrants and not their persecution and criminalisation.
- The Union of Cyprus Municipalities to take up active action for the formulation of policy and measures to solve the housing problem of migrants and refugees.

KISA Steering Committee, 25.09.2009