



**MINISTERIO DE RELACIONES
EXTERIORES Y CULTO**

**EMBAJADA DE BOLIVIA
EN ITALIA**

ABOUT THE RETURN DIRECTIVE

Up to the end of the Second World War Europe was a Continent of emigrants. Thousands of Europeans departed to America to colonize, escape hunger, financial crisis, persecution, ethnic cleaning, the war or totalitarian governments.

Today, I am following with concerned the process of the “Return Directive”. The text validated the last 5th of June by the Interior Ministers of 27 countries in the European Union, has to be voted on June 18th in the European Parliament. I feel that this is hardening dramatically the detention and deporting conditions for the undocumented immigrants, regardless of the time they have spent in the European Countries, their work situation, their family ties or their ability and achievement to integrate themselves into the local societies.

European citizens arrived to Latin and North America massively, without visas or conditions imposed on them by the authorities. They were simply welcomed, and continue to be, in our Continent Countries, That have been absorbed at that time, the European economic misery and political crisis. They came to our continent to exploit the natural wealth and to transfer it to Europe, with a high cost for the original populations in America. As is the case of our Cerro Rico de Potosi and its fabulous silver mines that gave monetary mass to the European continent from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The people, the wealth and the rights of the migrant Europeans were always respected.

Currently, the European Union is the main destiny for immigrants around the world. This is a consequence of its positive image of space, prosperity and public freedom. The great majority of immigrants go to the European Union to contribute to the prosperity, not to take advantage of it. They are employed in public works, construction, cleaning services, hospitals and domestic work. They take the jobs the Europeans cannot do or refuse to do. They contribute to the demographic dynamics of the European continent, maintaining the relationship between the employed and the retired which provides generous income to the social security system and helps the dynamics of internal markets and social cohesion. The migrant offers a solution to demographic and financial problems in the European Union.



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For us, our emigrants represent help in development that Europeans do not give us – since few countries really reach the minimum objective of 0.7% of its GDP in development assistance. Latin America received, in 2006, a total of 68,000million dollars in remittance (monies sent back), more than the total foreign investment in our countries. On the worldwide level the remittances reached \$300,000 million dollars which is more than US \$104,000 million authorized for the development assistance. My own country, Bolivia, received more than 10% of the GDP in remittances (1,100 million dollars) or a third of our annual Exports of natural gas.

The migratory flows report benefits both for the Europeans and marginally for the third World, but, as well problems, giving the fact that we loose our qualified labour force in which our countries have invested resources.

Unfortunately, the “Return Directive” project is an enormous complication to this reality. We can conceive that each State or group of States can define their migratory policies in sovereignty, what we cannot accept is the infringements to the human rights of our compatriots and brothers of Latin-America. The “Return Directive” foresees the possibility of jailing undocumented immigrants for up to 18 months before their expulsion – or “distancing”, according to the terms of the directive. 18 months! Without a judgment or justice! As it stands today the project text of the directive clearly violates articles 2, 3, 5,6,7,8 and 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

In particular, Article 13 of the Declaration states:

- “1. All persons have a right to move freely and to choose their residence in the territory of a State.
2. All personas have the right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their country.”

And, the worst of all, is that the possibility for the mothers with little children to be arrested, not taking in account the family and school situation. In these detention centres, where we know that depression, hunger strikes, and suicide happens. How can we accept it without reacting? On what side is the duty of humanitarian action? Where are the “freedom of movement” and the protection against arbitrary imprisonment?

In the same time, the European Union is trying to convince the Andean Community of



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Nations (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) to sign an “Association Agreement” that includes the third pillar of the Free Trade Agreement, with similar nature and content of that imposed by the United States. We are under intense pressure from the European Commission to accept conditions of great liberalization of our trade, financial services, intellectual property rights and our public works. In addition under so called “judicial protection” we are being pressured about the nationalization of the water, gas industry and telecommunications that were done on the Worldwide Workers’ Day. I ask, in that case, where is the “judicial protection” for our women, adolescents, children and workers that look for better horizons in Europe?

Under these conditions, if the “Return Directive” wins the votes, we will be ethically unable to deepen the negotiations with the European Union, and we reserve the right to legislate such that the European Citizens have the same obligations for visas that they impose on the Bolivians from the first of April 2007, according to the diplomatic principle of reciprocity. We have not exercised it up until now, precisely because we were awaiting good signs from the European Union.

The world, its continents, its oceans and its poles is going into a process of global difficulties: global warming, pollution, the slower shrink of the energy resources and biodiversity while hunger and poverty increase in every country, weaken our societies. To make migrants the scapegoats of this global problem is not the solution, whether they have documents or not. It doesn’t correspond to any reality. The social cohesion problems that Europe is suffering now are not the fault of the migrants, rather the result of the model of development imposed by the North, which destroys the planet and dismembers human societies.

In the name of the people of Bolivia, of all of my brothers of the Continent and other regions of the world like the Maghreb, and the countries of Africa, I appeal to the consciousness of the European leaders, citizens and activists of Europe, for them not to approve the text of the “Return Directive” as it is today, it is a directive of vengeance. I also challenge the European Union to elaborate, over the next months, a migration policy that should respect the human rights, and allow us to maintain this dynamics that is helpful to both continents. It repairs in certain way, the tremendous historic debt, both economic and ecological that the European countries owe to a large part of the Third World, and close the open veins of Latin America. They cannot fail today in their “policies of integration” as they have failed with their supposed “civilizing mission” from colonial times.



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Receive all of you, authorities, Euro parliamentarians, brothers and sisters, fraternal greetings from Bolivia, particularly our solidarity to all the “Clandestine People”.

Evo Morales Ayma
President of the Republic of Bolivia