



GLOBAL NET

STOP THE ARMS TRADE

Murderous Walls – Profiteers of Isolation:

Maghreb-Countries, Egypt, the Sahel and East Africa

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Desert-capable wheeled tanks and frigates for Algeria, electronic border security for Morocco, Tunisia and Libya, patrol boats for Egypt - when it comes to sealing off the countries north of the Mediterranean against people fleeing from African countries, the European Union is generous with the supply of armaments and technology for border security.

Three of Europe's largest arms companies are among the profiteers of this policy of isolation: the Thales Group in Paris, Leonardo S.p.A. in Rome and Rheinmetall in Düsseldorf. In addition, as a specialist in high-resolution, long-range radar systems for border surveillance, the former Airbus subsidiary Hensoldt AG. Some defense companies that supply such compartmentalization technology also earn money by selling weapons to countries that are in a kind of cold war with their neighbors, such as Morocco with Algeria or Algeria with Libya. Or they supply to states that are themselves at war within themselves, such as Morocco in the Western Sahara, Libya, where two governments are fighting for supremacy, and Ethiopia, which is using brute force to prevent the secession of one of its provinces. The supplies thus promise double profit for the companies involved and their shareholders.

Those who suffer are hundreds of thousands of refugees who are picked up by border patrols before reaching the Mediterranean and put into camps or sent back to their countries of origin - with horrific sacrifices of exhaustion, starvation and dying of thirst. The number of people who do not survive the desert crossing is "outrageous," says Vincent Cochetel, UNHCR's special envoy for the Mediterranean and Libya. According to investigations by the IOM, the International Organization for Migration, there were more than 15,600 drownings in the Mediterranean from 2014 to the end of 2017 and another 6,042 deaths on land routes to and in Europe. Between 2014 and 2018, the IOM estimates that more than 30,000 people disappeared while traveling through the Sahara, SPIEGEL reported in 2019. Many of these people are fleeing their countries because war is raging there: in Western Sahara, Libya, Mali, northern Nigeria and Chad, Tigray province in Ethiopia, South Sudan and Somalia.

The European border protection agency Frontex has so far played a particularly inglorious role in the mass flight from North Africa to the EU. According to credible testimonies, boats with refugees who had made their way across the Mediterranean from Turkey or Libya to Spain, Italy or Greece were repeatedly pushed away by Frontex ships and forced to return. Frontex

is also upgrading: The soon-to-be 10,000-strong, previously unarmed police force is to receive handguns. Military drones are also to strengthen surveillance of the African Mediterranean coasts.