

## **The Mediterranean as an Armed Border.**

*"the mediterranean is not a landscape, but innumerable landscapes. not a sea, but a succession of seas. not a civilization, but a series of civilizations stacked one on top of the other."*

This sea has generated a shared identity, where plurality wove a complex web of relationships. However, today the Mediterranean has been reduced to a fortified border, a stage for pushbacks, humanitarian tragedies, and the militarization of migration routes. Since 2014, more than 30,000 people have lost their lives trying to cross it. In this scenario, [the MED-5 Joint Declaration](#), signed by the Interior Ministers of Italy, Greece, Spain, Malta, and Cyprus at the conference held in Naples on April 11–12, legitimizes and strengthens a vision of the Mediterranean as a barrier, denying its historical vocation as a bridge between worlds.

## **Who are the MED-5?**

The MED-5 group is composed of five southern European countries: Italy, Spain, Greece, Malta, and Cyprus. Born as a "common front" during the migration crises of the 2010s, these countries share a strategic geographical location along the main access routes to Europe through the Mediterranean. The MED-5 format has consolidated to negotiate more strongly within the European Union on issues such as asylum, external borders, and the management of migration flows. Their claim is clear: being on the "front line," they should receive more financial and logistical support, fewer reception obligations, and more tools to contain irregular migration. In recent years, however, the MED-5 has evolved into a compact political alliance in favor of a restrictive and security-driven approach, often at odds with the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility promoted by other EU member states. The declaration signed in Naples on April 12 represents its peak.

## **Legal pathways: the great absentee from the declaration**

One of the most serious aspects of the text is the complete absence of a shared European plan for opening legal and safe entry routes. While there is a generic reference to "legal pathways" to be promoted in countries of origin and transit (point 13), there is no mention of the need to create humanitarian corridors, resettlement programs, or channels for humanitarian or labor visas. This gap undermines the entire architecture of European human rights: without legal alternatives, people fleeing war, persecution, environmental disasters, or extreme poverty are forced to rely on informal or criminal networks. The criminalization of migrants and humanitarian aid is not only ethically unacceptable but also politically short-sighted, as it fuels the very networks it claims to fight.

**The operational core of the declaration is the tightening of border controls and the strengthening of the repressive dimension of migration policy.**

The MED-5 countries explicitly call for strengthening the role of Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, even granting it executive powers in third countries (point 12). This risks generating systemic human rights violations, especially if such operations take place in non-democratic states, where detention conditions and the treatment of migrants are already the subject of serious accusations. Furthermore, the declaration proposes removing the automatic suspensive effect of appeals against deportations (point 21), endangering the fundamental principle of non-refoulement established by the Geneva Convention: no one may be returned to a country where they risk inhumane treatment or persecution. Such a measure weakens legal protections and opens the door to summary deportations, without effective judicial oversight.



## **All men, all interior ministers and the machinery of sovereignism**

The profile of the declaration's signatories is highly symbolic: all men, all interior ministers, all representatives of governments that — to varying degrees — embrace a sovereignist and security-driven view of migration. From Italy, led by Fratelli d'Italia, to Greece under New Democracy, to a Spain which, although governed by a center-left coalition, is showing signs of hardening its stance on migration. This setup highlights a concerning trend: the marginalization of the voices of women and of ministries for solidarity, integration, and cooperation, as if migration were solely a matter of public order. Instead, it is a complex phenomenon that involves social, economic, geopolitical, and cultural dimensions. But the prevailing narrative is one of control, threat, and rejection — a rhetoric that divides instead of uniting.

The MED-5 Declaration transforms Europe into a pact rather than a Union and stands in open contradiction to the fundamental values of the European Union. Solidarity, in this text, is invoked only as financial support for “frontline” countries, but never translates into shared responsibility, redistribution of asylum seekers, or widespread reception. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU is completely ignored, as is the role of NGOs, supportive citizens, and municipalities that have been on the front lines for years to compensate for institutional shortcomings. This marks a true emptying of the European project: no longer a space of rights and freedoms, but a fortress closed in on itself, where each country plays the game of internal political consensus at the expense of migrants.

## **Another route is possible: it must lead us to a Mediterranean of dignity**

The framework outlined by the MED-5 declaration is consistent with the logic behind the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, which is part of a broader political context increasingly shaped by governments that adopt sovereignist and nationalist policies. These political orientations promote closure, border control, and the criminalization of migration, subjugating the entire European community. We reject this exclusionary vision and propose an alternative founded on solidarity, justice, and international cooperation.

[We call for the dismantling of the physical and ideological barriers built in the name of national security, promoting instead freedom of movement and the recognition of fundamental rights for all.](#) While sovereignist governments use borders as tools of power and propaganda and laws as weapons of “war,” we claim a welcoming Europe—one that integrates instead of excludes, protects instead of rejects. Our proposals—from opening legal channels to safeguarding the asylum system, to ending the militarization of borders—are concrete acts of resistance against a closed Europe. We believe that only through community cooperation and respect for rights can a truly humane, just, and inclusive European future be built.

It is a matter of choosing what kind of Mediterranean we want: a closed and threatening sea, or a sea that returns to uniting—as it did for centuries. Because before being a border, it was a shared home.