



The destruction of migrants' housing in Nijar, Spain

Nijar near Almeria is a site in southern Spain with a booming production of winter vegetables sent by trucks to all parts of Europe. The environmental impact is known: Overexploitation of soil and water, plastic contamination on large scale, losses of biodiversity etc.

In Nijar, intensive agriculture has reached a peak in negative impacts which has been matched only in a few other regions in the world. Local authorities and exporters (represented by the main exporter's association COEXPHAL) try desperately, but do definitely not succeed in hiding the truth about environmental and social results of the agriculture system: For example, that the majority of the vegetables are produced by migrants from Morocco, Sub-Saharan or Eastern countries (Ukraine, Romania etc.), whose working conditions are based on precariousness, salaries under the legal minimum, lack of workers representation, daily contracts - or lack of contracts, so that farmers and managers can hire and fire workers at will.

It is very difficult for the migrants to find affordable habitations. Precarious working conditions and a lack of cheap habitations affordable for the workers is provoking the proliferation of the so-called "Chabolas", slums made of pallets, cardboard and plastic sheets. It would be no big problems, given the huge incomes generated by the vegetable exports, to build cheap flats for migrant workers, but this doesn't happen or only as an exception.

While in general "Chabolas" are small and well hidden, the "Chabola" in Nijar grew wide, reaching about 500 inhabitants. It had a mosque, several shops, cafeterias, bakers, clothing shops, taxi service... but this settlement was disturbing not only the local authorities and the exporters organization, but also the tourism organizations: because one could see the "Chabola" from the street when driving around, for instance as a tourist visiting the National Park of Cabo de Gata not far from Nijar! In addition, there is a growing support in the region for the neo-fascist "VOX" party and the Social democratic PSOE is treating to gain the sympathies of voters who may drift away to "VOX".

So, the mafia-like Trio of local authorities, exporters associations and tourism organizations decided to destroy the "Chabola" of Nijar. They were confronted by various NGOs, organizations of the church and the SOC-SAT Trade-Union, united in the frame of the "Derecho a Techo" (Right to a Roof) Association. Officially, the authorities pretended to offer compensation building cheap flats to relocate the 500 inhabitants of the Nijar "Chabola", in facts these flats are not finished and far not enough to relocate all inhabitants of this "Chabola": Once more, it was a lie!

So, in the morning of Monday 30, a huge army of various police corps, encircled the "Chabola" and started destructing all houses and installations, setting some of them on fire (see pictures). What happened with the inhabitants is not clear and for sure many could not find a dwelling.

What happened in the Nijar Chabola is a shame for Spain, a shame for Andalucia, a shame for an agricultural system based on the exploitation of migrants and accumulating unbearable negative social and environmental impacts all around the world.

We ask the companies to pay a dignified salary to the workers, to ensure workers have a decent place for living, we ask the supermarkets and distributors to monitor the origin of the products, and we ask consumers to favour local food produced by peasant farmers of the communities.

La Via Campesina expresses its solidarity with all migrants expelled for the settling in Nijar and requires immediate measures to provide all inhabitants of the former “Chabola” in Nijar with decent and affordable habitations!

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