

# **IRISH DEPORTATION: *the brutal reality***

On 15 December, 14 men, 8 women and 13 children—one of them an Irish citizen—were put on a deportation flight at Dublin airport bound for Nigeria. Many of them were taken from home in the early hours of the morning, with no proper opportunity to dress or take personal belongings with them. Children were taken out of school.

Throughout the flight, they were not allowed to move or talk freely. When people were let use the toilet on the plane, they were prevented from closing the door, even women who were menstruating. A mother of two young children was physically restrained, using handcuffs and other methods.

On arrival at Athens airport, where more deportees were to be collected, they remained on the plane for two hours. They were prevented from using the toilet, and immigration gardaí laughed at children forced to urinate in bottles. Finally, they were taken to an airport lounge for a period of 14 hours. Their only refreshment was bread, water and crisps, and a woman was prevented from buying food for her children.

Thankfully, the deportation was then called off, but only because engine trouble prevented the plane from going any further. Back in Dublin, those not detained had to live at a reception centre which had no running water for another four days.

This is the brutal reality of Ireland's deportation machine. Believe it or not, the people on this flight were the lucky ones. Month after month, the state rounds up men, women and children and tries to kick them out of the country, all because of the colour of their skin. Even though the number of people applying for asylum in Ireland has fallen sharply in recent years, the deportation machine has accelerated.

As we all suffer from an economic crisis brought about by the misdeeds of our political and business leaders, those responsible are trying to whip up racism and create scapegoats. Thousands of euros of taxpayers' money, that could be more usefully spent, is wasted on deportation. By portraying people from other countries as a sinister threat that needs to be removed, they hope to divert blame from themselves. Don't let them fool you.

As an election approaches, make sure that the decent treatment of human beings is one of the items on the political agenda. People who have escaped poverty and oppression, who have made their home in Ireland, whose children have grown up here, ask only to live and work here peacefully. The brutality of deportation must come to an end.