



CGIL comment on the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding

On 11th June a summit took place between the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, the Tunisian President Kais Saied and the Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. The Summit decided to draw up a Memorandum of Understanding on partnership, to be approved by Tunisia and the European Union by the end of June. It will cover the following areas: strengthening economic and trade relations; a sustainable and competitive energy partnership; migration; and greater cooperation in research, education and culture, especially for young people.

Tunisia is facing an extremely worrying political, economic and social situation: the Italian government and the European Commission are mainly preoccupied with the "promotion of business opportunities", without expressing any concern or making any proposal to protect social dialogue and the real security of the trade unionists in Tunisia. On migration, the priority is once again to repatriate asylum seekers and people fleeing poverty and despair.

Italy is not just the gateway to Europe for those living on the other side of the Mediterranean. Italy is part of the Mediterranean region and as such it should practice integration and cohesion policies by investing in bilateral and regional agreements to create sustainable development, supporting democratisation processes and promoting universal rights, instead of continuing with the policy of externalising and militarising European borders, by renewing agreements and offering resources in exchange for criminalising migration.

A cynical and inapplicable logic, as demonstrated by the number of actual returns in recent years, but above all in total violation of human rights and the European asylum system. A proposal that comes at a time when Tunisia is facing an institutional, economic and social crisis and a general deterioration in human rights and the rule of law that risks leading the country to financial collapse and social unrest.

Instead, Tunisia and the Mediterranean region need a genuine programme of partnership based on the principles on which the European project is founded: cooperation, solidarity, social justice, respect for universal human rights and civil and trade union freedoms, peace and shared security.

Rome, 14th June 2023