



Abdalmueen returned voluntarily to Iraq and opened a bakery. [Read](#) his story.

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR)

Key Trends

From Belgium

From September to December 2018, IOM facilitated 692 voluntary returns from Belgium, with Romania, Ukraine, Brazil, Iraq and Georgia as main destination countries. From these returns, 176 persons also received reintegration support in their country of origin, with Iraq, the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania as main destination countries. Interested beneficiaries were mainly referred to IOM by Fedasil return desks and reception centers, followed by the NGO partners, Red Cross reception centers and migrants who introduced their file directly at IOM Brussels.

From Luxembourg

IOM facilitated 39 returns from Luxembourg between September and December 2018. The top countries of return during that period were Ukraine (13), Georgia (10) and Kosovo¹ (5). Male returnees represented 77% of the total number of beneficiaries (female 23%). In addition, one was medically escorted to Ukraine.

¹ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Return of Unaccompanied Minor Children (UMC)



Between September and December 2018, IOM assisted 4 Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UMC) and ex-UMC to return voluntarily to their home country from Belgium. This number includes 3 girls, respectively from Albania, Rwanda and El Salvador, and 1 boy from Afghanistan.

Comparing to 2017, this number is relatively low (11 UMC and ex-UMC returned during the same period in 2017). In fact, there is a tendency that can be seen in these last years to have less returns of UMC and ex-UMC during the last months of the year. 2 out of the 4 beneficiaries are currently being assisted by IOM with their reintegration project: one with education support (specialized high school in video) and the other with micro-business support (partnership in a shop selling clothes).

Return of migrants with heavy medical needs

From September to December 2018, 6 migrants with heavy medical needs have been assisted by IOM in Brussels. For migrants with specific needs, IOM makes sure to provide adequate travel assistance by working closely with airline companies and a pool of medical and social escorts. Travel is facilitated until the final destination with adapted onward transportation if needed. Vulnerable migrants can benefit from reintegration assistance under the AVRR programme and 3 out of the 6 migrants also received additional support under the Adapted Medical Assistance After Return (AMAAR) project. This project has been developed by Fedasil, with support of IOM and Caritas, in response of the increasing number of migrant candidates suffering from a significant medical condition and willing to return to their country of origin.

Job placement Caucasus: Job counselling and referral in Armenia, Georgia and the Russian Federation

Within the Belgian AVRR programme, funded by Fedasil, IOM missions in Armenia, Georgia and the Russian Federation have since 2015 developed additional counseling and referral mechanisms to assist returning migrants with training and employment needs. From September to December 2018, 14 persons were supported with additional counseling and referral to a training or job placement programme. IOM missions also organize group trainings for returnees from Belgium.



On 16 October 2018, IOM Armenia organized a group training on Job Placement possibilities for returning migrants. 7 returnees from Belgium participated in the training and could share their stories and challenges in finding a job or starting their own business. Representatives from the State Employment Agency, an important partner from IOM Armenia, presented the state programmes on employment, new online courses for job seekers, how to search job via online sources, how to prepare CV, introduce themselves during the Interviews, etc.



On 18 October, IOM Georgia organized a group training on Job Placement opportunities for returnees from Belgium. Interested candidates were invited and 8 returnees attended the training. The training was organized in cooperation with the Social Service Agency (Employment department) and consisted of an orientation session combined with career development training.



On 6 and 8 November, IOM Moscow organized two micro-business start-up and development trainings in Grozny and Nazran. The training focused on entrepreneurship basics, taxation, budget planning and marketing and is organized by an experienced, local business consultant. 12 persons attended, and the participants received a certificate upon completion of the training.

Job Placement Western Africa: linking reintegration activities to local development cooperation and private sector initiatives in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea and Niger



Upon the request of Fedasil, IOM extended the Job Placement approach to the West African region in 2018. Four IOM missions were identified to participate in this pilot-activity, namely IOM Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea and Niger.

The approach is similar but adapted to the region's and country specific needs and with a clear objective to link the existing AVRR activities from Belgium to local development initiatives set-up by the development cooperation actors (Belgian development cooperation agency Enabel, GiZ, etc.) and the activities developed under the EU-IOM Joint initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration (EU Trust Fund).

In a first phase of the activity, the IOM missions have mapped the training opportunities and relevant development projects and actors in the country, while also identifying the returnees' needs in terms of training and employment (ca. 20 persons). The results show that there is a clear need for additional training on entrepreneurship and technical expertise and for some returnees specific trainings have already been identified.

Job Placement study visit



From 19 to 21 November 2018, IOM Brussels and Fedasil invited the IOM Job Placement Focal Points from the Caucasus and Western Africa region to get a better understanding of the AVRR context in Belgium and Europe. Meetings with Fedasil, Immigration Office and IOM Country and Regional Offices in Brussels, allowed the focal points to get a broader understanding of the Belgian AVRR programme and to exchange on their daily challenges and to seek ways on how to improve the existing AVRR programmes and practices.

The study visit was linked to the annual IOM partner meeting with Belgian stakeholders, which allowed the IOM missions to present their AVRR and Job Placement related activities during thematic workshops.

Administrative Assistance in the Balkans



The 'Administrative Assistance' project is developed under the AVRR programme as an alternative assistance to vulnerable cases that return to Western Balkan countries, i.e. Serbia, Albania, Kosovo², Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and the Republic of North Macedonia. As these returnees cannot benefit from the regular AVRR reintegration assistance programme (due to the visa-free regime of these countries), a specific supporting mechanism has been developed to provide administrative assistance with obtaining personal documents, school enrolment, guidance and referral for job seeking, referral to different local services, housing, etc.

IOM and Fedasil conducted a monitoring mission in Albania from 12 to 16 November. The evaluation showed that the assistance tailored to support returnees in undertaking the first administrative steps after returning home is very beneficial for those gone for a long time, for families with children born abroad or who need to be enrolled in schools, as well as for UMC's or ex-UMC's. That is also a way for the programme partners to stay longer and more punctually in contact with the returnees.

In 2018, 32 families and vulnerable persons have been assisted with the administrative support by local IOM missions in Kosovo³ (7), Albania (13), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2), the Republic of North Macedonia (6) and Serbia (4).

AVR(R) Action in the Western Balkans



Within the Belgian AVRR programme, a specific sub-project 'AVR(R) Action in the Western Balkans: Facilitating Knowledge Transfer from Belgium to the Western Balkan Region' focuses on the support offered to IOM Serbia in the delivery of return and reintegration support to transit and stranded migrants in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of North Macedonia, Kosovo⁴, Montenegro, Serbia) and the development of the AVRR Reception Facilities Network and data collection capacity in the region. The project is financed by Fedasil and allows for direct support to migrants and the organization of trainings and information sessions for AVRR field staff in the Western Balkans.

In October, IOM Brussels and Fedasil contributed to a training for IOM mobile teams in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of North Macedonia, Kosovo⁵, Montenegro, Serbia). The focus of the training was reintegration. These exchanges also allowed for a field visit, amongst others to Bihac, on the border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

A study visit to Belgium was also organized in December and allowed for IOM focal points from each country to exchange best practices with some of IOM Belgium's AVRR partners (Fedasil, IBZ, Caritas International, Pag-Asa, SESO,...) and to get a better overview of the Belgian AVRR referral system, assistance to migrants, and protection mechanisms.

² See footnote no.1.

³ See footnote no.1.

⁴ See footnote no.1.

⁵ See footnote no.1.

Monitoring Missions



From 27 to 30 November, a joint Monitoring and Evaluation mission between IOM Belgium and Luxembourg and their governmental counterparts took place in the cities of Yaoundé, Ebolowa and Duala in the Republic of Cameroon.

The mission combined visits to AVRR beneficiaries in their home towns, meetings with relevant ministries, exchanges with local IOM staff as well as with the Chief of Mission. It provided an invaluable opportunity for the Monitoring delegation to gain insight into on-the-ground realities of return migration to the Republic of Cameroon and reintegration challenges therewith associated. The visit also provided the delegation to gain a better insight into the EU Trust Fund return initiatives and to identify possible synergies with the traditional AVRR programme the IOM Country Office for Belgium and Luxembourg has been implementing.

Information sessions

During several training sessions and events, IOM Brussels participated in sharing information on thematic, counseling and country specific reintegration activities. Info sessions were provided to NGO partners via operational meetings, to Fedasil return counselors during SPOC meetings, city level stakeholders during return days and Conex meetings organized by Fedasil and specific workshops on migration, employment, vulnerable cases, migrants with mental health needs, Unaccompanied minors, Victims of Trafficking, etc.



IOM assistance at Brussels Airport © Wouter Van Vaerenbergh – Fedasil 2019.

Assisted Movement Operations

Resettlement Assistance

Between September and December 2018, 166 refugees arrived in Belgium in the framework of the resettlement project. 123 Syrian nationals arrived from Jordan in the month of October. 43 beneficiaries, having the Eritrean and Somalian nationalities, arrived from Niger. The group travelled to Belgium via the Emergency Transit Centre in Timisoara, Romania. IOM further facilitated the selection missions, pre-departure orientation missions and health screenings for around 250 more persons who will travel to Belgium during 2019.

Family Assessment of Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UMC)

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs' Immigration Directorate of Luxembourg expressed its interest in continuing the collaboration with IOM for the family assessment of UMC. The project's implementation has been renewed for an additional year (ending in September 2019) following an AMIF call for proposal to which IOM Luxembourg had responded.

Family Reunification

From September to the end of December 2018, IOM has facilitated the travel of 121 individuals from their country of origin to Belgium through its [Family Reunification programme](#). Among these 121 individuals, 100 are Afghans, 20 are Somalis coming from Kenya, Uganda and Niger, and one is an Iraqi national.

The family reunification programme is a self-payer programme aiming at assisting persons who never travelled before, persons who are illiterate, unaccompanied minors or persons with health needs. IOM provides individual counselling, organises the transfer including airport assistance and can arrange for a medical or non-medical escort whenever needed.



Beneficiaries of the project 'Enhancing Tunisian youth employability', Brussels © IOM 2018.

Labour Migration

IOM Belgium and Luxembourg is piloting and developing projects on labour migration with a number of African countries.

The project “Enhancing Tunisian youth employability through vocational apprenticeships and professional internships in Belgian companies”, funded and supported by the Belgian government, started its implementation in March 2018 and will run until August 2019. The project aims at supporting the efforts of the Tunisian government to reduce the high unemployment rates among young Tunisian nationals by offering six-month internships and apprenticeships in Belgium to a group of 30 selected beneficiaries, to enable them to reinforce their knowledge, acquire new professional competences, and increase their probability of finding a job in the Tunisian labour market upon return. More than 116 companies have been contacted by IOM Belgium, with 15 offering one or more internship positions. The participating companies are located all over the three Belgian regions, and are active in different sectors, such as: IT, tourism, robotics, architecture, water technology, research, construction, bakery industry, and agrobusiness. Currently an overall number of 38 internship offers have been received, and the majority of beneficiaries have already travelled to Belgium for their internship. During their stay, IOM takes in charge their accommodation costs and provides them with a monthly scholarship. Upon return to Tunisia these beneficiaries will receive further support by IOM in finding an appropriate job in the local labour market. The project counts on a network of public and private sector organizations active in Belgium and Tunisia, like VDAB.



Information session with youngsters on entrepreneurship, 'Strengthening Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship in Burkina Faso' project © IOM 2018.

Migration and Development

Strengthening Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship in Burkina Faso

Launched in 2017, this three-year project financed by the Italian and the Belgian Cooperation aims to promote income generating activities and to strengthen the employability and entrepreneurial skills of young people living in the Center-East region.

In 2018 more than 18,250 people were reached by the 3 awareness campaigns on the risks related to irregular migration. Regional actors were involved through the "Maracana" (small-scale football tournament), theatre shows and film screenings followed by a debate. 750 young people from the region (randomly selected among 25,377 applications) followed a training course on business creation and management. The 25 sessions were held in the various municipalities of the region thanks to the collaboration with the NGOs ANPE and CEFORE. Specific tools (trainers' manual and participant's notebook) have been developed for training purposes. A study was drafted on niche markets in the The Central East region. This study was carried out with the aim of making available essential information necessary for the orientation of young people in the choice of their entrepreneurial domain and to encourage investments by other potential stakeholders. The study was conducted in close collaboration with the National Observatory of Employment and Training (ONEF).

Empowering Female Diaspora Associations

In May 2018, IOM Belgium launched a small pilot project "Empowering Female Diaspora Associations to Strengthen their Role in the Development of Countries of Origin" with the financial support of the Belgian Cooperation. project targets African diaspora associations led by African diaspora women residing in Belgium as well as young graduates in development cooperation and aims to strengthen their role and capacities as effective actors in the development of their countries of origin. The empowerment of these participants and their associations is done through a training in three areas:

- Organizational capacities and Project Cycle Management based on the development of concrete project proposals and including a specific section on access to funding;
- Multimedia component: Strengthening internal and external communication to enhance visibility towards possible public and private donors;
- Fundraising component: how to access private funding and successfully raise money (through crowdfunding, charity event etc).

While these activities take place in Belgium, the project's overall goal is the development of countries of origin.

Contributing to evidence-based migration and diaspora policies in Rwanda

In March 2018, IOM Belgium started a mapping exercise of the Rwandan diaspora in Belgium, in coordination with IOM Offices in the UK, Germany and The Netherlands. A migration profile for Rwanda was created. The diaspora mapping report contributes to IOM's efforts to build the capacity of the Rwandan Government to develop a diaspora engagement strategy. A study of the diaspora was held to assess their capacity, interest and motivation to participate and engage in the development of Rwanda through the creation of business opportunities, investments and skills transfers. The study was finalized in December 2018 and provided information on the 32,137 Rwandans residing in Belgium, of which many have dual Belgo-Rwandan citizenship. The findings, based on 223 survey responses and key informant interviews, show that the diaspora is skilled, with high-levels of education (Bachelor's/Master's degree). Most of the diaspora members are employed and about 90% of them, are interested in contributing to Rwanda's development. However, 40% state that they lack information about the opportunities to invest in Rwanda, while 76% are not aware of the activities of the Belgian government for the development of Rwanda. Most of the interviewed people send back remittances to the Rwanda on a monthly or quarterly basis, with an amount ranging from 50 to 500 euros. The findings of the report for Belgium will be compiled in one unified migration profile along with the ones from the UK, Germany and The Netherlands, and will guide the Rwandan and Belgian policymakers in their activities with the Rwandan diaspora in Europe.

Other projects

Fostering Across Borders (FAB)



The Fostering Across Borders (FAB) project is funded by the European Commission, DG Justice (European Union's Right, Equality and Citizenship Programme, 2014-2020).

It aims at improving & expanding the quality of Family-Based Care (FBC) of UMC with dedicated foster carers who will be trained and supported to address challenges and specific vulnerabilities UMC face. The project started on 15 January 2018 and is implemented in Austria, Belgium, Greece, Luxembourg, Poland and the United Kingdom.

In Belgium, the project partners are Fedasil, Minor-Ndako and Mentor-Escale. In Luxembourg, IOM works in partnership with the Luxembourgish Red Cross.

Between September and December 2018, IOM Belgium, together with the implementing partners Minor-Ndako and Mentor-Escale, finalized the mapping reports, including the gaps and needs, of existing trainings for professionals and for family based-care (FBC). Those two mapping reports will be shortly available [online](#), as well as the mapping reports of the other implementing countries (namely Austria, Greece, Luxembourg, Poland and the United Kingdom).

Furthermore, the second transnational meeting took place at the beginning of October in Vienna. This meeting served as a kick-off for the revision and adaptation of the training manual to be used during the training of FBC providers. The manual will be further revised and adapted to each implementing country begin of 2019. Potential trainers have also been identified during those last months of 2018 and the train-the-trainers sessions will be organized in the course of 2019, including possible roll-out of the training.

For more information on FBC for UMC in Belgium, please visit [Mentor-Escale](#) and [Minor-Ndako](#)'s websites.

In Luxembourg, a training manual, a training guide and nine supporting handouts were developed for the attention of professionals and family-based care providers fostering UMC. This training toolkit is set to be published in the course of 2019.

LINK-IT



IOM's [LINK IT](#), which started in January 2018, is an innovative new project managed by IOM London, providing resettled refugees with the building blocks to start their new life in Europe. LINK IT takes a holistic approach working with refugees and host communities to share information, facilitate integration and strengthen cohesion among the community. The project is co-funded by the European Commission and partners with the Refugee Council (UK), ICMC Europe, Jesuit Refugee Services Romania, Caritas Friedland and the Portuguese Refugee Council. The LINK IT mid-term meeting took place in Lisbon on 3-4 October. The mid-term meeting presented an opportunity for all project partners to discuss the progress of their activities in each implementing country. The meeting included presentations on the EU Integration Policy and Skills Profile Priorities, an update on the LINK IT project work plan, information on the mid-term data on skills profiling and an overview on post arrival activities supporting resettled refugees and receiving host communities in the United Kingdom, Romania and Germany. The project will end in 2019 with a final conference in Brussels.

Other initiatives and events

'I am a Migrant' Day, Hendrik Conscience Primary School



On 23 October, IOM organized an awareness-raising day on migration at Hendrik Conscience primary school in Schaerbeek. This day was part of an exchange week with 4 other European schools participating in the Erasmus + project 'Inside' (Include Students In a Diversified Education), funded by the European Commission. 61 students and teachers took part in the initiative.

IOM organized 3 workshops in light of the global campaign '[I am a Migrant](#)', namely the [Migrants' Game](#), a migrant story and concert by [Hussein Rassim](#) - an Iraqi musician now living in Belgium - and a 'write a postcard' activity. The afternoon was the opportunity for the group to have a presentation on the Fedasil reception centre in Sint-Pieters-Woluwe, an observation and orientation center for unaccompanied minors in Belgium.

IOM Member State Forum on a Comprehensive Approach to Resettlement and Complementary Pathways to Europe



This three-day interactive forum was held in Brussels from 12 to 14 November and was jointly organized by IOM and the government of Belgium. At the forum, a series of presentations and panel discussions were held, with a focus on the resettlement process and the interdependencies of case management, movement, health and integration. A highly interactive exhibition was set up and showcased the close cooperation with partners and the comprehensive set of activities in support of safe and dignified migration that IOM has developed. Visit our [two-minute exhibition tour](#).

Annual IOM partner meeting



On 20 November, IOM Belgium organized its annual partner meeting. While traditionally this meeting is organized for the Belgian AVRR partners, the meeting broadened its scope and reached a broad network of stakeholders, including government, NGO partners, asylum agencies, embassies, private sector, etc.

The morning sessions allowed participants to get a broad overview on the main migration topics by covering the migration and return trends in Europe (IOM Regional Office), AVRR trends from Belgium (Fedasil), Asylum trends in Belgium and the EU (CGVS/CGRA), Resettlement and Family Reunification in Belgium (Fedasil, Myria, IOM) and Labour Market Integration and Circular Migration in Belgium (IOM CO).

During the afternoon, IOM colleagues from Armenia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Georgia, Guinea, Niger and the Russian Federation presented their AVRR and Job Placement related activities during thematic workshops with a focus on skills development, entrepreneurship, community-based initiatives and working with vulnerable migrants. New, innovative approaches on the individual (needs assessment, psychosocial counseling, etc.), community (mentorship schemes, cash for work, etc.) and structural level (reintegration steering committees, migration working groups, etc.) have been discussed and gave new insights to participants.

International Migrants Day and Global Migration Film Festival

This year, IOM Belgium and Luxembourg celebrated the [International Migrants Day](#) with two thematic events on children and migration.



On 12 December, schools, families and youth associations were invited at the [Children's Museum](#) in Brussels, where IOM and the Museum jointly organized an interactive day on migration in the brand new exhibition 'Wings to Grow Up'. During the day, kids have been encouraged to think about the topic of migration and diversity, in an interactive manner. Various workshops were provided on the migration theme. The public particularly enjoyed the cooking workshop led by Abdul, a Syrian refugee cook.

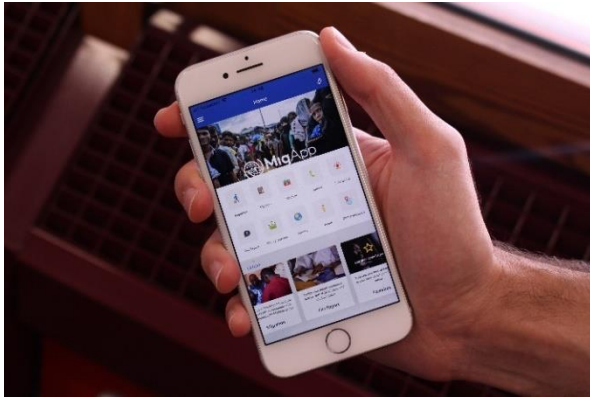


On 18 December, in celebration of [International Migrants Day](#) (IMD), and as part of the [Global Migration Film Festival](#) (GMFF), IOM organized a special event in partnership with [Cinema Vendôme](#) and the [UN Human Rights Office](#), and with the support of [Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles](#), [Centre du cinema et de l'audiovisuel](#) and [Europa Cinemas](#).

Starting with a presentation of [Cinemaximiliaan](#), the movie Abu Adnan – Adnan's father was screened, as part of the official GMFF selection. It was followed by a debate moderated by the [UN Human Rights Office](#). Cristella an unaccompanied minor from Rwanda living in a host family in Belgium, shared her migration compelling story.

The [Nawaris Trio band group](#) closed the debate and opened the doors to a networking cocktail, enriched with Syrian flavours, thanks to [Take Home Chef](#).

MigApp



IOM's Migapp is an application that migrants can download into their mobile devices and which responds to the need to help migrants make informed decisions throughout their migration process.

On 13 November, the redesigned MigApp was launched. The app's interface has been reconfigured to include a dropdown menu and more user-accessible icons. Additionally, MigApp 3.0 comes in four more languages – Chinese, Italian, Russian and Portuguese – bringing the total number of available languages to eight, including the original English, Arabic, French and Spanish.

Thanks to the support of the Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development Cooperation, [Mr Alexander De Croo](#), MigApp also includes the [14 partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation](#) in the comparison tool. This allows people in Belgium having access to the cheapest and fastest possible money transfer exchange rates to these countries and 132 others that are already in MigApp.

Click [here](#) for more information.

Study Visits

Ukraine

During the week of the 26 September, IOM Belgium and Luxembourg facilitated the organization of a study visit from Ukrainian officials. The delegation included the State Migration Service, the State Border Guard Service and the National Police of Ukraine. The visit was organized within the EU-funded project "Support for Migration and Asylum Management in Ukraine (IMMIS)". During the visit several meetings were organized with the European Commission, PwC amongst others. Furthermore, an interactive visit was organized to the border police at Brussels Airport which was very appreciated by the delegation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 5 and 6 December, IOM Belgium and Luxembourg assisted in the facilitation of a study visit from IOM colleagues and governmental representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The visit was conducted in the frame of a bigger approach that is currently being implemented in BiH: "Community based approach to support youth in targeted municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina".

The delegation spent the two days visit in the City of Mechelen, as it is internally known for its good practices on prevention of violent extremism. The main message of the visit consisted of the idea that key to violent extremism is prevention, which in Mechelen is done from a variety of angles. Aside from exchanges with social workers and youth workers, the delegation visited a number of facilities that are all together key in the prevention of violent extremism. These were, for instance, a visit to the social house, the local Police, a boxing club and many others.

Interesting IOM publication

Europe - Mixed Migration Flows



According to the compilation of available data from national authorities and IOM offices, a total of 144,166 migrants and refugees arrived in Europe between January and December 2018, 23 per cent less than the 186,788 recorded in 2017.

Read [here](#) the full report.

Contact

For more information, please contact the Communications team [here](#)

“QUOTE OF THE day”

‘On International Migrants Day, we reaffirm that treating all migrants with dignity is the fundamental requirement we face before anything else we attempt on migration, because our future depends on it.’ – Antonio Vitorino, IOM Director General, 18 December 2018.

Read IOM’s DG OpEd published in [MO* magazine](#) and in [La Libre](#).

Watch [here](#) his message in English, together with migrant stories.

#WithDignity