

African states and the EU: The trope and practice of ‘safe, orderly and regular’ migration

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Abstract

Several states in Africa have over the past decade adopted national migration policies ostensibly to ensure safe, orderly, and regular migration. Borrowing from what is known as “best practice” emanating from mainly Western Europe, these policies are often removed from the realities of movement in Africa – historically and in the present. Driven by the European Union’s (EU) objective of keeping African migrants out of its territory, the policies come as part of a campaign package that include images, audio-visuals, and street art to discourage migration to Europe. This campaign that targets mainly young people apparently promotes safe and orderly migration, in a context where States in Africa routinely ignore or even break regional instruments that they have put in place, such as the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement which guarantees the right to move, settle and establish by citizens of the Economic Community of West African States. In direct violation of the ECOWAS Protocol, the State in Ghana leads raids on predominantly Nigerian migrant-owned businesses just as it promotes safe and orderly migration. In the same vein, The South African States which has a raft of legislations to promote “legal” migration creates the conditions for unsafe experience by migrants through practices such as inordinately delayed visa and permitting process that renders many migrants “irregular” with little option but to overstay visas or use “unsafe” means. Safe and orderly becomes a tool to identify people, exclude them and exploit them. Taking the examples of Ghana and South Africa, this presentation contrasts the rhetoric of safe, orderly, and regular migration, with the experience of unsafe and precarious conditions that States place on mobile populations.

Biography

Faisal Garba is a senior lecturer of Sociology at the University of Cape Town (UCT), and a research associate at the Institute of Sociology, University of Freiburg. He convenes the Global Studies programme and leads the UCT Migration and Mobility research cluster.