

# France urged by UN experts to take effective measures to bring water and sanitation services to migrants

## [French](#)

GENEVA (4 April 2018) – UN human rights experts\* are urging the Government of France to do more to provide safe drinking water, sanitation services and emergency shelter for migrants and asylum-seekers in Calais, Grande-Synthe, Tatinghem, Dieppe and other areas along the northern French coast.

It is estimated that up to 900 migrants and asylum-seekers in Calais, 350 in Grande-Synthe, and an unidentified number at other sites elsewhere along the northern French coast are living without adequate emergency shelter and proper access to drinking water, toilets or washing facilities.

“Migrants and asylum-seekers along the northern French coast, including those not admitted to the sports centre in Grande-Synthe, are facing an inhumane situation, with some living in tents without toilets and washing themselves in polluted rivers or lakes,” said Léo Heller, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation.

“Some efforts have been made, but not enough. I am concerned that for every step forward, two steps are taken back. The situation along the northern French coast is emblematic of the need for much more attention from national and international authorities on this issue.”

Since last year, the French Government has taken temporary steps to provide access to emergency shelter, drinking water and sanitation for some migrants and asylum seekers. This includes contracting a local organisation to provide access to drinking water and shower facilities to migrants along the northern French coast, and hosting up to 200 migrants in a sports centre in Grande-Synthe.

The UN experts stressed that in the absence of valid alternatives in the provision of adequate housing, including in the Calais area, dismantling the camps was not a long-term solution. “We are concerned about increasingly regressive migration policies and the inhumane and substandard conditions suffered by migrants,” said the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe González Morales.

“Migrants, regardless of their status, are entitled to human rights without discrimination, including access to adequate housing, education, healthcare, water and sanitation as well as access to justice and remedies. By depriving them of their rights or making access increasingly difficult, France is violating its international human rights obligations.”

The experts also called for action to end harassment and intimidation of volunteers and members of NGOs providing humanitarian aid to migrants. They urged France to

fulfil its obligations and promote the crucial work of human rights defenders.

Heller will address the issue of the human rights to water and sanitation of forcibly displaced people in a report to the United Nations General Assembly later this year.

The Special Rapporteurs have already contacted the Government of France to seek clarification about the issues highlighted.

ENDS

*\*The UN experts: **Mr. Léo Heller** Special Rapporteur on the [human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation](#); **Mr. Felipe González Morales** Special Rapporteur on the [human rights of migrants](#); **Mr. Michel Forst** Special Rapporteur on the [situation of human rights defenders](#).*

*Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.*

*UN Human Rights, country page: [France](#)*

*For more information and **media requests**, please contact Ms. Ahreum Lee (+41 22 917 9391 / [ahreumlee@ohchr.org](mailto:ahreumlee@ohchr.org)) Ms. Madoka Saji (+41 22 917 9636 / [msaji@ohchr.org](mailto:msaji@ohchr.org))*

*For **media inquiries** related to other UN independent experts please contact Jeremy Laurence, UN Human Rights – Media Unit (+41 22 917 9383 / [jlaurence@ohchr.org](mailto:jlaurence@ohchr.org))*

*This year, 2018, is the **70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted by the UN on 10 December 1948. The Universal Declaration – translated into a world record 500 languages – is rooted in the principle that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” It remains relevant to everyone, every day. In honour of the 70th anniversary of this extraordinarily influential document, and to prevent its vital principles from being eroded, we are urging people everywhere to **Stand Up for Human Rights**: [www.standup4humanrights.org](http://www.standup4humanrights.org).*