



News

2 October (Issue 12/20)

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Support the fight for democracy and civil liberties in Europe

At the beginning of this week, we launched a fundraising campaign. **To fund our core services in 2021 we need to raise £40,000.**

Like many charities, we are under severe pressure. **We can continue providing and improving our free resources - but only with your help.**

Donate £

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Tony Bunyan retires as Director of Statewatch after 30 years

Tony Bunyan, the Director of Statewatch since it was founded in 1991, retired on 30 September. The Board of Trustees has unanimously agreed that he take on the advisory role of Director Emeritus. You can read his reflection on the past, present and future of the organisation [here](#).

Deportation Union: revamped return policies and reckless forced removals

On 28 September we held the first of three webinars on our report *Deportation Union: rights, accountability and the EU's push to increase forced removals*. You can now view a recording of the event [here](#). The next event will take place on Monday 26 October, looking at the databases that play a key role in the EU's deportation system – you can sign up [here](#).

Our reports

1. EU: Deportations to Afghanistan: member states want to simplify expulsion of "vulnerable groups"
2. EU: Advice of Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights still falls on deaf ears
3. EU: New Council working party on blanket telecommunications surveillance
4. EU: Tracking the Pact: Secret documents on reception conditions and qualification for international protection
5. UK: Renewal of the Coronavirus Act: Emergency powers need parliamentary scrutiny
6. EU: Head of Europol supervisory group wants to create a "European FBI"
7. EU: No human rights monitoring for 20% of Frontex's deportation flights in 2019
8. Frontex: Report on cooperation with third countries in 2019
9. EU: The new "pact" on migration and asylum - documentation, context and reactions
10. Council of the EU: German Presidency seeking common position on encryption and law enforcement

Other reports

1. EU: European Asylum Support Office study: Border procedures for asylum applications in the EU+ countries
2. Policing the pandemic: EU governments have introduced "unnecessary and disproportionate restrictions on civic space and freedoms"
3. Greece: Police file migrant smuggling cases against 35 people, including 33 NGO workers
4. Netherlands: Amnesty calls for a halt to algorithmic policing experiments
5. MEPs raise concerns on EU plans for police facial recognition database
6. UK: MPs vote to renew coronavirus act but brand government debate 'a disgrace'
7. UK considers imitating Australia's brutal off-shoring of asylum seekers
8. After Moria, EU to try closed asylum camps on Greek islands
9. UK: The Government must urgently consider the human rights implications of COVID-19 measures, says Joint Committee on Human Rights

10. Bulgaria will relocate some refugees from Moria, but racism and xenophobia make it a tough destination
11. Deportations from Europe: individual stories told in new publication
12. Rights groups press European Commission to investigate violations of EU law in Greece over treatment of migrants
13. UK-USA: 161 former heads of state, prime ministers, and ministers demand Assange's freedom
14. IOM: Migration in West and North Africa and across the Mediterranean: Trends, risks, development and governance
15. Greece: Lesvos-Moria nightmare for thousands of refugees
16. France: Legal action against police facial recognition technology
17. UK: Home Office 'has no idea how many people are in the UK illegally'
18. Call for the immediate evacuation of Moria

Our reports

1. 1 October: **EU: Deportations to Afghanistan: member states want to simplify expulsion of "vulnerable groups"**

The EU is moving toward renewal of the 'Joint Way Forward with Afghanistan', an informal agreement that facilitates the deportation of Afghans present in the EU. A secret document from July, published here, sets out the member states' demands to the Commission for the renewed agreement. It includes a call for "the notion of vulnerable groups" to be "limited", which would ease the deportation of people who may otherwise qualify for protection.

[Read more](#)

2. 1 October: **EU: Advice of Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights still falls on deaf ears**

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency's Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights has produced its annual report for 2019, and a number of familiar concerns are again present. The Forum was set up eight years ago to provide Frontex with independent advice on fundamental rights.

[Read more](#)

3. 1 October: **EU: New Council working party on blanket telecommunications surveillance**

The German Presidency of the Council of the EU is planning a new working party - the ad-hoc Working Party on Data Retention, or ad-hoc WPDR - which will work on policy and legal initiatives aiming to reintroduce EU-wide blanket telecommunication surveillance. Previous EU legislation on telecoms data retention was struck down by the Court of Justice in 2014, but many national laws remain in place and there are ongoing efforts to introduce a new EU-wide regime.

[Read more](#)

4. 1 October: **EU: Tracking the Pact: Secret documents on reception conditions and qualification for international protection**

Last week the European Commission published its Pact on Migration and Asylum. While it includes some new measures, it also calls for the adoption of previous proposals that were the subject of significant disagreement between the Council and the European Parliament. Today we are publishing Council documents that have until now remained secret, including blocked provisional agreements on the rules on reception conditions and the criteria for qualification for international protection.

[**Read more**](#)

5. 29 September: UK: Renewal of the Coronavirus Act: Emergency powers need parliamentary scrutiny

Six months after it was passed into law, the Coronavirus Act is due to come before parliament for a vote on its renewal. However, renewing the act would allow the government to continue passing new laws without any parliamentary scrutiny of individual measures. This would mean the continuation of what one former Supreme Court judge has called government by decree.

[**Read more**](#)

6. 29 September: EU: Head of Europol supervisory group wants to create a "European FBI"

Europol should become "a kind of European FBI", according to Boris Pistorius, the interior minister of the German state of Lower Saxony and one of the co-chairs of Europol's Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group. "In the medium term, it must also have its own executive powers," he has said.

[**Read more**](#)

7. 25 September: EU: No human rights monitoring for 20% of Frontex's deportation flights in 2019

There were no human rights monitors present on 20% of the deportation charter flights coordinated by Frontex in 2019, according to an agency report being published today by Statewatch.

[**Read more**](#)

8. 25 September: Frontex: Report on cooperation with third countries in 2019

The report gives an overview of Frontex's engagement with non-EU states during 2019 on issues such as surveillance, risk analysis and training. It was circulated to the European Commission, Council of the EU and European Parliament in June 2019.

[**Read more**](#)

9. 23 September: EU: The new "pact" on migration and asylum - documentation, context and reactions

The Commission has published its long-awaited 'Pact on Migration and Asylum', along with a host of legislative proposals, guidance and other texts. Parts of the proposals will "abolish the rule of law at the external borders," according to one human rights group.

[**Read more**](#)

10. 22 September: Council of the EU: German Presidency seeking common position on encryption and law enforcement

Efforts are ongoing to establish a common EU position on finding ways around encrypted communications for the purpose of law enforcement. A document circulated by the German Presidency says "the weakening of encryption by any means (including backdoors) is not a desirable option." Instead, the intention is to find "legal and technical solutions" through a dialogue with technology service providers, member states, academic experts and others.

[Read more](#)

Other reports

1. 2 October: **EU: European Asylum Support Office study: Border procedures for asylum applications in the EU+ countries**

A study by EASO looking at how member states have implemented the 2013 Asylum Procedures Directive, which allows for the use of "border procedures" for a rapid assessment of asylum applications. Under measures recently-proposed as part of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, border procedures - and accompanying large-scale detention - would become far more widely-used.

[Read more](#)

2. 2 October: **Policing the pandemic: EU governments have introduced "unnecessary and disproportionate restrictions on civic space and freedoms"**

A report by Greenpeace and Liberties details measures taken by a variety of EU governments in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The report argues that governments have taken "political advantage of the pandemic" by curbing "the right to protest, free speech, access to information and freedom of association."

[Read more](#)

3. 2 October: **Greece: Police file migrant smuggling cases against 35 people, including 33 NGO workers**

The Greek police have handed files to the prosecution authorities alleging the involvement of 35 foreign nationals in migrant smuggling. The files list offences such as "forming and joining a criminal organisation, espionage, violation of state secrets, as well as violations of the Immigration Code".

[Read more](#)

4. 2 October: **Netherlands: Amnesty calls for a halt to algorithmic policing experiments**

The Dutch police have started employing an array of "predictive policing" technologies, in projects that the police themselves describe as "living labs". Amnesty say that one such project in the city of Roemund treats the population "as 'guinea pigs' under mass surveillance and discriminates against people with Eastern European nationalities."

[Read more](#)

5. 1 October: **MEPs raise concerns on EU plans for police facial recognition database**

The European Commission and Council want to extend the 'Prüm Decisions' - which mandate the interlinking of national DNA, fingerprint and vehicle registration databases - to include facial recognition. At a hearing last week, MEPs and experts raised serious concerns over the idea.

[Read more](#)

6. 1 October: **UK: MPs vote to renew coronavirus act but brand government debate 'a disgrace'**

The Coronavirus Act, which was introduced by the UK government in March and which sets out an extensive and extreme set of emergency powers, has been renewed in a vote by MPs. They were granted just 90 minutes to debate the measures.

[Read more](#)

7. 1 October: **UK considers imitating Australia's brutal off-shoring of asylum seekers**

It has emerged in recent days that the UK government is considering the possibility of housing asylum-seekers in camps outside the country.

[Read more](#)

8. 1 October: **After Moria, EU to try closed asylum camps on Greek islands**

Barbed wire fences and microchipped armbands to control entry await the future residents of a forthcoming "closed camp" for refugees and migrants on the Greek island of Samos.

[Read more](#)

9. 30 September: **UK: The Government must urgently consider the human rights implications of COVID-19 measures, says Joint Committee on Human Rights**

The UK parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights has released a new report on the impact of the government's response to the pandemic on human rights. The report looks at the rights to life, to liberty, to privacy, to education, to a fair trial and others.

[Read more](#)

10. 29 September: **Bulgaria will relocate some refugees from Moria, but racism and xenophobia make it a tough destination**

Bulgaria has agreed to accept 70 unaccompanied minors affected by the fire in the Moria camp on the Greek island of Lesvos. However, conditions for migrants and refugees are problematic - the use of detention is widespread, and racism and xenophobia are deeply rooted in Bulgarian society, argues Milana Nikolova.

[Read more](#)

11. 23 September: **Deportations from Europe: individual stories told in new publication**

The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) has published a booklet of stories of people in Lagos and Benin City, Nigeria, and Bamako, Mali, who have been deported from Europe.

[Read more](#)

12. 23 September: **Rights groups press European Commission to investigate violations of EU law in Greece over treatment of migrants**

Press release published by Oxfam on 22 September 2020.

[Read more](#)

13. 22 September: **UK-USA: 161 former heads of state, prime ministers, and ministers demand Assange's freedom**

Press release published by the Don't Extradite Assange campaign on 21 September 2020.

[Read more](#)

14. 22 September: **IOM: Migration in West and North Africa and across the Mediterranean: Trends, risks, development and governance**

A new 500-page collection of studies published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) examines new developments in migration within North and West Africa, and from there across the Mediterranean.

[Read more](#)

15. 22 September: **Greece: Lesvos-Moria nightmare for thousands of refugees**

Over a week after the fire that gutted the Moria camp on Lesvos, formerly housing some 13,000 refugees, little had been done to address the problem.

[Read more](#)

16. 22 September: **France: Legal action against police facial recognition technology**

La Quadrature du Net are taking the French state to court for allowing the use of facial recognition technology on a database containing more than eight million individual images.

[Read more](#)

17. 21 September: **UK: Home Office 'has no idea how many people are in the UK illegally'**

A report by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee has condemned the Home Office's immigration enforcement activities, saying that the body bases its work on "anecdote, assumption and prejudice" rather than evidence.

[Read more](#)

18. 21 September: **Call for the immediate evacuation of Moria**

In support for exiles living on the island of Lesbos, Migreurop is a signatory of a Tribune initiated by European personalities published in Libération's newspaper of 11 September 2020.

[Read more](#)

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