



statewatch

News

19 August (Issue 14/22)

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Welcome to the latest edition of Statewatch News, featuring:

- **Italy: Migration policy undermining freedom of information**
- **The “expanding footprint” of Frontex in non-EU states**
- **UK: New campaign to keep Campsfield immigration detention centre closed**

We will be taking a break before the next issue due to staff leave, but will be back in your inboxes on 16 September.

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Italy: Migration policy undermining freedom of information

For decades, *Statewatch* and many other organisations and activists have documented and campaigned against the harm caused to migrants and refugees by the policies of Fortress Europe. In recent years, civil society organisations and activists acting in solidarity with people on the move have also come under threat. Now, government transparency is being increasingly limited in the name of enforcing immigration and asylum policies.

An Italian government decree approved in March by the interior minister, Luciana Lamorgese, excludes vast swathes of interior ministry documents concerning security, international relations and the management of borders and immigration from the scope of freedom of information rules.

Duccio Facchini, an Italian journalist who was informed of the decree after requesting documents from the interior ministry, told *Statewatch* that the new rules are “part of a clear

strategy that aims to nullify any glimmer of transparency on politics of externalisation, confinement and turning away of people who are on the move at Italian and European borders.”

Read our report [here](#).

The “expanding footprint” of Frontex in non-EU states

The EU’s now-notorious border agency, Frontex, expanded its “operational footprint” outside of EU territory in 2021 according to a report produced by the agency and obtained by *Statewatch*. The Western Balkans and ‘Eastern Neighbourhood’ are a key focus, with “EU experts” and members of the Frontex standing corps located at border crossing points in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia and Ukraine.

Frontex’s activities in Africa and the Middle East, meanwhile, focus much more on “dialogue and cooperation”, in contrast to the more technical and operational role it plays in the Western Balkans. The agency has offered training courses to border agencies in multiple north African states, and the deployment of liaison officers in North, West and the Horn of Africa is a priority for 2022. The Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community is providing “secure and instantaneous communication” between Risk Analysis Cell analysts in five African states and Frontex analysts.

Read our summary and access the full report [here](#) – and if you appreciate our work to expose and explain the powers, policies and practices of Frontex, [support us by becoming a Friend of Statewatch](#).

UK: New campaign to keep Campsfield immigration detention centre closed

The Conservative government in the UK is seeking to ramp up immigration detention capacity, reversing moves initiated by the previous (also Conservative) administration. In 2019, Campsfield detention centre near Oxford was closed following the publication of a government review on the treatment of vulnerable people in immigration detention. Local campaigners had staunchly opposed the centre for years. Now, the government intends to reopen it and house up to 400 men there, pending deportation, seemingly as part of the government’s plan to deport asylum-seekers to Rwanda. A new campaign aims to halt the plans.

Find out more about the campaign [here](#).

News and analysis

USA: Attorneys and journalists illegally searched during visits with Julian Assange sue CIA and Michael Pompeo

Frontex celebrates "expanding footprint" beyond the EU in report on third country cooperation

Italy: Migration, borders and freedom of information: decree aims to "nullify any glimmer of transparency"

UK: New campaign to keep Campsfield immigration detention centre closed

Minutes of the EU-USA justice and home affairs ministerial meeting

UK: Deployment of armed forces in support of civilian authorities on the rise

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News

18 August

[USA: Attorneys and journalists illegally searched during visits with Julian Assange sue CIA and Michael Pompeo](#)

Press release from the Don't Extradite Assange campaign: Plaintiffs call on DOJ to drop charges; Members of legal team were illegally surveilled inside Ecuadorian embassy, violating fourth amendment. Indictment against Julian Assange cannot stand as a result of gross government misconduct.

18 August

[Frontex celebrates "expanding footprint" beyond the EU in report on third country cooperation](#)

EU border agency Frontex is obliged to report annually to the European Parliament, European Commission and Council of the EU on its cooperation with non-EU countries. The 2021 report, obtained by *Statewatch* and published here, focuses on an expanding influence in the Western Balkans, information sharing, the expansion of the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) to non-EU states, and deportations.

16 August

[Italy: Migration, borders and freedom of information: decree aims to "nullify any glimmer of transparency"](#)

The decree, approved quietly in March, provides a blueprint for official opacity – vast swathes of documents are now deemed "inaccessible".

16 August

[UK: New campaign to keep Campsfield immigration detention centre closed](#)

In 2019, Campsfield detention centre near Oxford was closed following the publication of a government review on the treatment of vulnerable people in immigration detention. Local campaigners had staunchly opposed the centre for years. Now, the government intends to reopen it and house up to 400 men there, pending deportation - possibly to Rwanda. A new campaign aims to halt the plans.

16 August

[Minutes of the EU-USA justice and home affairs ministerial meeting](#)

The meeting was held in Paris on 23 June 2022. Cybercrime, ransomware, child sexual abuse, environmental crime and judicial cooperation were all discussed under the heading of "prospects for strengthening transatlantic cooperation".

11 August

[UK: Deployment of armed forces in support of civilian authorities on the rise](#)

The use of the armed forces to support civilian authorities in the UK increased sharply in recent years, peaking during the Covid-19 pandemic emergency. From 2016 to 2019 there were

between 123 and 157 requests per year within the Military Aid to Civilian Authorities (MACA), marked by a slow progressive increase. Requests grew to 550 in 2020 and then fell to 332 in 2021, returning close to pre-pandemic levels in 2022 (with 76 requests received until 26 May).

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The Roundup

Material we have shared on our [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts in the last fortnight, now categorised by theme:

- [Asylum and immigration](#)
- [Civil liberties](#)
- [Law](#)
- [Military](#)
- [Policing](#)
- [Privacy and data protection](#)
- [Racism and discrimination](#)
- [Secrecy and transparency](#)
- [Security and intelligence](#)
- [Surveillance](#)

Asylum and immigration

Byline Times, 17 August

[How the Tabloid Press MISLEADS ON MIGRATION](#)

“Following Byline Times’ report debunking claims that Albanian people make up nearly half of all Channel crossings, this newspaper looked into some of the bizarre inaccuracies and claims made in recent reporting about migration. It didn’t have to look far...”

Matthias Monroy, 14 August

[Sea rescue off Libya: Flight bans by Tripolis violate international law](#)

“The Scientific Services of the German Bundestag consider it against two international conventions that Libya prohibits a private rescue organisation from flying over high seas. The Berlin government agrees, but does not change the problem. Therefore, the International Civil Aviation Organisation cannot intervene either.”

Turkey Purge, 14 August

[Turkish family arrested in Turkey after pushback by Greece](#)

“A Turkish family that was facing imprisonment on trumped-up terrorism charges as part of a crackdown launched by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the aftermath of a coup attempt in 2016 and was pushed back by Greece after they fled across the border have been arrested by Turkish authorities.”

The Guardian, 14 August

[EU border agency accused of exploiting interpreters 'paid under €2.50 an hour'](#)

"The EU border agency Frontex has been accused of exploiting staff by using a contractor who it is claimed offers interpreters an effective wage of less than €2.50 (£2.11) an hour."

IPS, 12 August

[Helping asylum seekers in Northern Cyprus](#)

"Since 2018, Cyprus has become a major destination for refugees. As routes into the European Union via Greece close and refugees' living conditions in countries like Turkey and Lebanon worsen, traffickers are instead offering Syrian refugees a risky crossing to Cyprus. Many arriving on the island live in dire conditions in overcrowded reception centres, while government ministers stoke anti-refugee sentiment. Some land in Northern Cyprus and mistake it for the RoC."

Channel 4 News, 12 August

[Syrian refugees stranded on Greek islet after attempting to enter country](#)

"Dozens of Syrian refugees are stranded on a Greek islet beside a highly militarised border crossing – as they attempted to enter the country from Turkey to seek asylum."

A five-year-old girl is said to have died after being stung by a scorpion – while another child is in a critical condition."

Kathemerini, 10 August

[Dozens missing after migrant boat sinks](#)

"Greek authorities say a major search and rescue operation has been launched east of the island of Karpathos after a boat reportedly carrying dozens of migrants sank during the night."

And: [Δεκάδες αγνοούμενοι σε νέο ναυάγιο με πρόσφυγες στο Αιγαίο](#) (Efysn)

The Guardian, 9 August

[Woman who came to UK as a baby 45 years ago fighting for right to work](#)

"A Spanish-born woman who has lived in England for 45 years is still fighting to secure the right to work in the UK, a year after being sacked from her job in a care home because she was unable to prove she had a valid immigration status."

Irish Times, 9 August

Ireland: [Almost 8,000 undocumented migrants applied for 'life-changing' scheme](#)

"More than 7,800 undocumented migrants have applied to regularise their legal status to live in Ireland under a "life-changing" Government scheme which closed on July 31st."

The programme, which launched in January 2022, was hailed as a "once in a generation" opportunity for Ireland's estimated 17,000 undocumented migrants, including 3,000 children, to apply for Stamp 4 permission to live and work in the State."

Alarm Phone, 9 August

[Update of the interactive map of border crimes](#)

“OUT NOW: 62 reports of #pushbacks & #bordercrimes in the #Aegean. We updated the interactive map at <http://aeg.bordercrimes.net> documenting brutal attacks, pushbacks even from land after arrival & criminalisation of boat drivers.”

Refugee Platform in Egypt, 8 August

[Facts Report: Arbitrary Detention and Forcible Deportation of Eritrean Asylum Seekers from Egypt](#)

“Between October 31, 2021, and the date of publication of this facts report, the Refugees Platform in Egypt (RPE) documented the Egyptian authorities’ violation of the principle of non-refoulement and the forcible deportation of at least 70 Eritrean asylum seekers to Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, including women, children and patients. The authorities deported asylum seekers to Asmara on five separate flights despite the confirmed danger to their lives.”

Middle East Eye, 8 August

[Algeria retrieves bodies of six people after boat capsizes](#)

“Six people were found dead at sea and others were missing after their boat sank on Monday off the coast of Algeria, local television reported, adding six survivors were rescued.”

Matthias Monroy, 6 August

[Secret aerial surveillance: What does an hour’s flight with a Frontex drone cost?](#)

“With a new regulation, the EU border agency has set up its own aerial surveillance with aircraft. With the arrival of drones, migration control with the „Multipurpose Aerial Surveillance“ has become much more effective, but presumably also more expensive.”

Arrested Lawyers, 5 August

[Pushbacks: A Core Element of Policies Against Irregularised Mobility and Asylum](#)

“The EU and member states (MSs hereafter) are consolidating the practice of pushbacks to prevent unauthorised entrants from crossing their borders and/or submitting asylum applications. From Spanish north African enclaves in Ceuta and Melilla to the EU’s Mediterranean and Atlantic Sea borders, as well as at eastern land borders from Greece, Hungary and Croatia all the way to Poland and Lithuania, informal practices have become commonplace. De facto, human rights are being subordinated to strategic migration policy goals, by design.”

MSF, 4 August

[MSF patients report alarming incidence of violence by authorities at the Hungary-Serbia border](#)

“Testimonies and medical data from patients treated by the international medical humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) indicate that an alarming level of violence is being committed against migrants crossing the border between Serbia and Hungary, allegedly at the hands of Hungarian authorities. People have reported

beatings with belts and batons, kicking and punching, various forms of humiliation, and the use of pepper spray and teargas as common deterrence practices before they are denied assistance and pushed back into Serbia.”

The Border Chronicle, 4 August

[The Officer of the Future: Facial Recognition and the Border-Industrial Complex](#)

“The face that God gave you the day you were born will be your passport.”

BBC News, 3 August

[Help house 10,000 Afghan refugees, minister tells councils](#)

“The refugees minister has appealed to councils to help house 10,500 Afghans currently living in UK hotels at a cost to the taxpayer of £1m a day.

Lord Harrington told councils the government had fewer than 100 properties available in June, but expects 500 Afghan arrivals each month.”

Chatham House, 28 July

[Lesvos: How EU asylum policy created a refugee prison in paradise](#)

“The EU asylum and migration policies implemented on the island are failing not only refugees and locals – but also democracy and the rule of law.”

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, 30 June

[The Lawless Zone: Polish-Belarusian Border Monitoring](#)

“This report summarises the eleven months of the ongoing humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border which began in August 2021. It covers the monitoring activities at the border from autumn 2021 to June 2022. The final part contains recommendations for Polish authorities and the EU.”

Civil liberties

Josoor, 17 August

Greece/Turkey: **[Announcement on the Dissolution of Josoor](#)**

“After two and a half years of supporting survivors of pushbacks and shedding light on the countless human rights violations at the hands of the current EU border regime, we have taken the heartbreaking decision to officially dissolve Josoor. With this statement, we illustrate the reasons, the impact and more.”

The Guardian, 15 August

UK: **[New Cabinet Office rules ban speakers who have criticised government policy](#)**

“Guest speakers at the Cabinet Office will have their social media accounts vetted to check whether they have ever criticised government policy before they can take part in events, according to new rules.”

Law

Deutsche Welle, 17 August

[UK pressures EU over access to science programs](#)

“The United Kingdom has lodged a dispute with the European Union over its exclusion from the bloc's scientific research programs.

The British government said in a statement late on Tuesday that it had had applied to join several programs back in 2020, but had been met with "persistent delays.””

Irish Legal News, 12 August

[Northern Ireland: High Court: Investigation report into 1971 bombing quashed due to investigative bias](#)

“Northern Ireland’s High Court recently quashed a 2014 report into a Belfast bombing where the findings of the report inaccurately detailed potential investigative bias.”

Irish Legal News, 10 August

[England: Criminal barristers vote on escalating to ‘uninterrupted strike’](#)

“Criminal barristers in England and Wales are being balloted on whether their industrial action over the low rates of legal aid should be escalated into an “uninterrupted strike”.”

Military

RFT, 16 August

[French soldiers quit Mali, ending nine-year military mission](#)

“French forces have been supporting Mali against insurgents for nearly a decade, but President Emmanuel Macron decided to pull out after France and the Malian junta fell out in the wake of a military takeover in August 2020.”

Policing

The Guardian, 18 August

[Police abuse stop and search powers to target protesters, suggests data](#)

“Stop and searches in central London increase by more than a fifth on weekends when protests take place, according to civil liberties campaigners who say police are misusing the tactic to deliberately target demonstrators.

Except in special circumstances, stop and search can be used only for a handful of specific reasons, mostly covering drugs, weapons and stolen goods, suggesting, according to activists, that police are stretching the limits of their powers.”

change.org

[Ban Police use of Lethal Tasering of people in Mental Health Crisis](#)

“Tasers Kill and they are being disproportionately used to target people who are experiencing Mental Health Issues and increasingly against racialised communities (who are over represented in mental health cases.) We are demanding that the Police use of these lethal weapons against people in mental health distress be banned.”

Fair Trials, 15 August

[FOI reveals over 12,000 people profiled by flawed Durham police predictive AI tool](#)

“Fair Trials has learned that Durham police used an AI profiling tool, the Harm Assessment Risk Tool (HART), to assess more than 12,000 people between 2016 and 2021. Previous analysis and studies on HART showed the system has many serious flaws, including the deliberate over-estimation of people’s likelihood of re-offending, and the use of racist data profiles. However, until now the extent of its use had not been made public. Fair Trials has called for a ban on predictive policing tools such as HART.”

RFI, 10 August

[French police kill knife-wielding man at Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris](#)

“French police have shot and killed a man who brandished a knife at the Charles de Gaulle airport outside Paris on Wednesday, police and airport sources said.

Officers neutralised a threatening individual in possession of a knife at the Roissy-Charles de Gaulle airport,” the Paris police department said on its Twitter account.”

Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, 10 August

[New report on the UK criminal justice systems](#)

“The latest report from the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies is the essential guide to the main criminal justice agencies across the UK.”

Deutsche Welle, 10 August

[Germany: Protesters rally after police killing of Black youth](#)

“Scores of demonstrators have protested against police violence after a 16-year-old Black youth was fatally shot. Police and witnesses say he had a knife. The victim was said to have been potentially suicidal.”

Coventry Telegraph, 28 July

UK: **[Darren Cumberbatch: Watchdog to reinvestigate Coventry man's death after police contact](#)**

“The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has announced it is to reinvestigate the use of force by officers from Warwickshire Police in connection with the death of Coventry man Darren Cumberbatch. The watchdog said the move was prompted by “significant new information” emerging and the conclusion that the original investigation was “materially flawed”.”

Privacy and data protection

Privacy International, 22 July

[Privacy and Sexual and Reproductive Health in the Post-Roe world](#)

“Concerning news from the US about the restriction of the right to abortion have made many reconsider their engagement with platforms processing health data. Here, we provide an overview of our research findings on the intersection of privacy and sexual and reproductive health.”

EU Law Analysis, 13 August

[To Use or Not to Use the European Digital Identity Wallet: Data Protection issues in the ongoing legislative debate](#)

“On 3 June 2021, in the context of the review of the eIDAS Regulation, the Commission proposed to establish a framework for a European Digital Identity, including a ‘European Digital Identity Wallet’ (the EUDI Wallet, or simply Wallet). Considered as the main innovation of the Proposal, the Wallet intends to respond to the growing digitisation of cross-border public and private services and remove barriers for citizens, residents and businesses when using online services across the EU. The evaluation of the eIDAS Regulation, in fact, had revealed a number of shortcomings (e.g., non-coverage of electronic attributes, such as medical certificates or professional qualifications, which makes cross-border legal recognition of such e-credentials difficult; data protection concerns as regards identity solutions offered by social media providers and financial institutions, which fall outside the scope of the Regulation; no possibility to limit the sharing of identity data to what is strictly necessary for the provision of a service), which the proposed EUDI Wallet seeks to address.”

Racism and discrimination

Bellingcat, 10 August

[Why Did a Major European Security Firm Train White Supremacists \(Again\)?](#)

“It’s a world-leading security training organisation headquartered in Wrocław, Poland, that instructs police officers, members of armed forces and even private bodyguards from around the globe.

These images were posted to a public Instagram account in May 2020. As other social media imagery can show, beneath this man’s camouflage are multiple far-right tattoos, including a Black Sun and the words “White Devil”. His companion, wearing the baseball cap, has similar tattoos and wears a T-shirt bearing an image of a Second World War German soldier.”

Secrecy and transparency

Access Info Europe, 17 August

[Spain and State Secrets: Civil Society condemns mid-August consultation on first new secrecy law in over 50 years!](#)

“Access Info is one of 15 civil society organisations which today condemned in the strongest terms an incredibly short, mid-August, public consultation on a Spain’s new secrecy law, proposed to replace the 1968 Franco-era law still in force.

The new draft law was made public by the Spanish government on 3 August 2022 with a deadline of 12 August for public comments, right in the heart of the holiday period when very few academics, legal experts, or NGO representatives are working.”

Drone Wars UK, 9 August

[EU borders agency must improve information access arrangements following complaint by Drone Wars UK](#)

“The European Ombudsman has ruled that the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex, should reform its access to information arrangements following complaints about difficulties in obtaining information made by Drone Wars UK and German open government platform FragDenStaat.”

Security and intelligence

EUobserver, 8 August

[Greek PM embroiled in spyware scandal](#)

“Greece has become embroiled in a wiretapping scandal that led to the resignation of its intelligence chief.

The resignation follows revelations the state intelligence service EYP, which reports to the office of Greek prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, had allegedly tapped Mitsotakis' political opponent.”

Matthias Monroy, 5 August

[Resignations over „Predator“ spyware scandal in Greece](#)

“The Greek secret service spied on at least one journalist, today its head resigned. In addition, the prime minister’s secretary-general quit his post. The affair reaches the EU level after a current MEP was also spied on.”

Surveillance

The Guardian, 5 August

[Facial recognition smartwatches to be used to monitor foreign offenders in UK](#)

“Migrants who have been convicted of a criminal offence will be required to scan their faces up to five times a day using smartwatches installed with facial recognition technology under plans from the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice.”

Support the fight for civil liberties in Europe

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