

**Frontex and deportations, 2006-22****No real safeguards for new Europol data powers****250+ groups demand rejection of Rwanda Bill**

And: Tracking the Pact: Texts of the Asylum Procedure and Eurodac Regulations; EU: Council Presidency seeks “common vision” on US database access demands

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**Frontex and deportations, 2006-22**

Data covering 17 years of Frontex’s deportation operations shows the expanding role of the agency. We have produced a series of visualisations to show the number of people deported in Frontex-coordinated operations, the member states involved, the destination states, and the costs.

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**No real safeguards for new Europol data powers, says data protection authority**

A new proposal to enhance the powers of Europol and to strengthen its cooperation with Frontex in the name of fighting migrant smuggling falls short of respecting data protection and fundamental rights standards, according to the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS).

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**UK: More than 250 organisations call for rejection of "legal fiction" of Rwanda Bill**

The Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill received its second reading in the House of Lords earlier this week. A statement signed by 265 civil society organisations and other entities from across the UK, including Statewatch, called for it to be rejected.

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**EU: Tracking the Pact: Texts of the Asylum Procedure and Eurodac Regulations**

The laws making up the EU’s Pact on Migration and Asylum were agreed in feverish secret meetings between the Council, Commission and Parliament at the end of December. However, they only reached “political agreement” - the actual texts of the different pieces of legislation have since been hammered out in “technical discussions”. Statewatch is publishing the consolidated texts of the Asylum Procedure Regulation and the Eurodac Regulation, two of the multiple new laws set to govern asylum and migration in the EU in the years to come.

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## **EU: [Council Presidency seeks “common vision” on US database access demands](#)**

The US wants to vet travellers through direct access to foreign databases, including those of EU member states. Bilateral discussions are ongoing and are at different stages in different states, but it remains unclear whether the agreements are an EU or national competence. The US is organising an “informal information meeting” for EU member states and institutions, after which the Presidency wants to develop a “common vision”.

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### **New material**

UK granted asylum to Rwandan refugees while arguing country was safe ----- Frontex-Morocco outlining the next steps for closer cooperation ----- Top French court scraps large parts of new immigration law ----- Dead from hypothermia in a container truck while Meloni, Saied and von der Leyen celebrate the EU-Tunisia memorandum ----- Italy: Environmental activists continue to face persecution ----- Gender-based violence as a grounds for granting refugee protection ----- EU wants to increase military research budget ----- Airport cops interrogate UK teen over Palestine protests ----- Three French police officers given suspended sentences for assault on young footballer ----- Italy: Fascist salute not a crime unless a risk to public order, top court says ----- U.S. terrorist watchlist grows to 2 million people — nearly doubling in 6 years

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## New material

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### Asylum, immigration and borders

#### [Revealed: UK granted asylum to Rwandan refugees while arguing country was safe](#)

"Four Rwandans were granted refugee status in the UK over "well-founded" fears of persecution at the same time as the government was arguing in court and parliament that the east African country was a safe place to send asylum seekers."

#### [Meloni to unveil plan to expand Italian influence in Africa](#)

"The Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, is poised to announce her grand plan for Italy in Africa as she strives to position her country at the forefront of European cooperation on the African continent in return for curbing illegal migration."

#### [UK and France's small boats pact and doubling in drownings 'directly linked'](#)

Report by Alarm Phone says greater police presence on French beaches and more attempts to stop dinghies increases risks to refugees. The report is available [here](#).

#### **Frontex-Morocco outlining the next steps for closer cooperation**

In December, [Frontex's Director visited Morocco](#) "to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with the country's border management authorities."

The press release appears to be the first time the agency has publicly mentioned "the Frontex-Morocco Comité Mixte," a committee whose existence [we first publicly revealed in a report last year](#).

#### [EU proclaims new 'golden age' in relations with Egypt](#)

"The EU has entered a "golden age" of relations with Egypt, according to the EU's neighbourhood commissioner Olivér Várhelyi — as it deepens cooperation with a repressive state known for widespread human rights abuses."

## **EU Ministers Discuss Home Affairs and Migration**

Press release of the informal Justice and Home Affairs Council last Thursday.

### **In 2024, Europe to hunt for new partners to offload asylum seekers**

"From Ghana to Georgia, Rwanda to Albania, the EU is looking for nations that will hold vulnerable people on its behalf."

### **Tunisia accused of ignoring humanitarian concerns for migrant in favor of EU interests**

Government accused of "orchestrating a campaign of repression against migrants to ensure a steady stream of financial and logistical support from Europe."

### **Greece: Age Assessment Procedures on Lesvos: a Dead Letter**

"Between 2020 and 2023... severe procedural infringements were reported, which inevitably led to violations of the fundamental rights of minors"

### **Frontex threatens to leave Spain**

The Spanish authorities are unwilling to sign a new operational plan with Frontex, according to a report by *El País*. Data protection is a particular sticking point, with Spain unwilling to cede responsibility to Frontex.

### **Top French court scraps large parts of new immigration law**

"Large parts of a new French immigration law, including restrictions on access to welfare benefits for migrants and to citizenship for their children born in France, must be scrapped, the Constitutional Council said on Thursday."

### **Dead from hypothermia in a container truck while Meloni, Saied and von der Leyen celebrate the EU-Tunisia memorandum**

"The news is the kind that should not be circulated, lest it tarnish the 'successes' boasted by Meloni, Saied and Von der Leyen in the collaboration between the EU, Tunisia and Italy to stop the Mediterranean crossings."

### **Spain: Supreme Court considers return of minors to Morocco in 2021 illegal and ratifies the Government's sentence**

Court confirms that the minors were placed in serious danger due to a lack of consideration of their circumstances by the administration.

Despite this ruling, **Minister of Interior Fernando Grande-Marlaska has defended the administration's actions**, claiming that the (illegal) return of the minors was done in compliance with the law and in the best interest of the minors themselves.

## [From Libya to Tunisia: How the EU is extending the push-back regime by proxy in the Central Mediterranean](#)

"On August 21, 2023, the rescue ship Aurora from Sea Watch was detained by the Italian authorities after refusing to disembark survivors in Tunisia as ordered by the Rome MRCC (Maritime Rescue Coordination Center), a country which by no means can be considered a place of safety."

## [ECHOES from the Central Mediterranean, "Borders in Motion", January 2024, by the Civil Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre](#)

"2023, a year marked by a large increase in sea arrivals in comparison to the year before, and not only on the Central Mediterranean route. 2023, a year of intensified attempts by the EU to expand border control in collaboration with its autocratic partners in North Africa. 2023, another year of even tougher racist agitation and deprivation of rights all throughout Europe and beyond."

### [Italy: Open Arms Ship faces administrative detention](#)

The ship was detained "for allegedly getting in the way of a Libyan patrol boat during a rescue operation" despite coordination with Italian authorities.

Meanwhile: [Italian politician Salvini enters Open Arms trial with 'head held high'](#)

He is accused of "kidnapping and neglect of duty" for having refused...the disembarkation... of 147 migrants rescued at sea" by Open Arms.

See the full list of Radio Radicale's recordings of the hearings in the ongoing Salvini 'Open Arms' trial [here](#).

### [Rwanda plan could fail first test in Lords as peers move to thwart Sunak's bill](#)

"Rishi Sunak is facing a possible defeat in the House of Lords this week over his controversial Rwanda deportation plan as peers prepare multiple bids to thwart its progress through parliament."

### [Albanian court to rule on migration deal with Italian government](#)

MSF warns that the deal aims to "actively prevent people from fleeing and those rescued at sea from gaining safe and rapid access to European territory"

In their report, [Amnesty state the deal would negatively impact human rights](#). This includes: "the rights to life and physical integrity of people in distress at sea, and the rights to liberty, to asylum, and to adequate remedy"

### [Analysis: the new EU Commission's smuggling directive proposal](#)

"Stiffer penalties, we fear, will far from reduce the incidence of smuggling, and instead lead to the growth of the numbers of people detained and charged with the crime"

## [Nigerien military convoys provide transport for migrants across the desert towards Libya](#)

"...once the international community turned its back on Niger, the country was forced to 'reopen the valve [of migration].'"

For context about recent shift in Niger's migration policy & the EU's response, see [our report](#) in which we discuss Niger's "key role in the EU's attempts to externalise migration controls", and consider the longevity of the Commission's current position.

## [Europe's conservative bloc calls for dropping ban on car engines, tripling border guards](#)

European Peoples Party (EPP) wants to triple #Frontex border guards to 30,000, and increase Europol staff from 650 to 3,000.

## [UK: London mayor & labour politician Sadiq Khan wants to 'Free young people from Brexit work and travel ban'](#)

This comes as a call to "lessen the economic and cultural damage caused by the UK's decision to leave the European Union"

## Civil liberties

### [Open letter: Universities and civil society express concerns about the European Commission's Defence of Democracy Package](#)

"NGOs or academic institutions which receive international funding would be suspected of representing foreign interests"

### [Greece in institutional decline: Civil society tracks persisting rule of law backsliding](#)

Greek civil society organisations on persisting deficiencies and emerging threats to the rule of law in contribution to European Commission's annual monitoring of member states

### [Italy: Environmental activists continue to face persecution](#)

In Bologna, Ultima Generazione activists receive six month sentence, despite the judge recognising the high "moral value" of their actions

The Italian Chamber of Deputies has also [approved a law against eco-activists](#). The law would increase penalties for damages to "imprisonment from two to five years and with fines ranging from 20 thousand to 60 thousand EUR."

Italy is not alone in the targeting environmental defenders. [Five examples in the UK](#) show how the government's "crackdown on climate protesters is chilling, regressive and a restriction on fundamental freedoms"

The [UN special rapporteur on environmental defenders, condemns this](#), explaining: "It is very difficult to understand what could justify denying the jury the opportunity to hear the reason for the defendant's action..."

## **Home Office U-turns on rights of EU citizens who were in UK pre-Brexit**

"It is going to reverse a rule it made in August that barred those who mistakenly applied for permanent residency cards after the referendum to make a late application for EU settled status if they were unaware of the specially created immigration scheme."

## **Why EU and Arab governments are uneasy on Palestine protests**

"Whether European and Arab governments like it or not... their double standards and hypocrisy on human rights are now clearly visible."

## **How tech billionaires are killing the internet for all. Case study: Big Tech's Monopoly Power**

"What unites Big Tech firms is the fact they have built empires by deploying monopolisation strategies"

## **New attack against KISA – Conviction for «interfering» with police work**

"KISA, one week after the bomb attack against its offices, is facing a new one, this time by the prosecuting authorities."

## **Law**

### **Important CJEU judgment: gender-based violence as a grounds for granting refugee protection**

**The EU Court of Justice strengthens women's rights (Case C-621/21 WS)** by Mathias Möschel; **International Law as a Trailblazer for a Gender-Sensitive Refugee System in the EU**: The Court of Justice's ruling in Case C-621/21, Women who are Victims of Domestic Violence.

## **Fight against human trafficking: Council and European Parliament strike deal to strengthen rules**

"Today the Belgian presidency of the Council and representatives of the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement to add forced marriage, illegal adoption and surrogacy as types of exploitation covered by the EU's anti-trafficking law. The update of the directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings will also require EU countries to make sure that people knowingly using services provided by victims of trafficking can face sanctions. Other amendments concern the strengthening of victims' support and assistance as well as prevention measures."

## **Hungary: Legal loopholes enable NGOs supporting the governing party to receive public funds**

A government fund "showed heavy bias to groups that are registered as non-governmental organization, but are led by local officials of Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party."

### **European officials warned of potential criminal liability for support for Israel's bombing of #Palestine**

Austrian, French, German and Dutch government officials have received letters from the Justice and Accountability for Palestine Initiative.

In the UK, [a criminal complaint was filed recently](#) against senior politicians alleging complicity in war crimes in Gaza.

### **European Parliament (LIBE committee) study: Enforcement of EU law in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice**

"This study, commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the LIBE Committee, provides a quantitative and qualitative analysis of how EU law in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (AFSJ) is currently enforced. It discusses traditional enforcement tools like infringement actions, budgetary conditionalities and other policy-based monitoring and evaluation methods."

### **Namibia Attacks Germany's Defense of Israel on Genocide**

"The German Government is yet to fully atone for the genocide it committed on Namibian soil... President Geingob appeals to the German Government to reconsider its untimely decision to intervene as a third-party in defence and support of the genocidal acts of Israel before the International Court of Justice."

### **Ireland lodges ECtHR case against UK over the Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023**

"The Irish Government argue that certain provisions of the Act are not compatible with the European Convention," relying on Articles 2, 3, 6, 13, and 14

[According to The Guardian](#), "The government said [the Act] would draw a line under a conflict that killed more than 3,600 people from 1969 to 1998 and left thousands of cases unresolved"

## **Military**

### **Israel kills dozens of academics, destroys every university in the Gaza Strip**

The Israeli army has killed 94 university professors, along with hundreds of teachers and thousands of students, explains EuroMed Monitor.

### **EU wants to increase military research budget**

"The Commission has set out proposals to fund more research with military as well as civil applications in Framework Programme 10," the EU's 2028-35 research programme.

### [\*\*London Jewish youth club helps 'teenagers in crisis' join Israeli army\*\*](#)

"Boys Clubhouse, which last week hosted a British man who fought in Gaza, runs project in Jerusalem which supports boys it helps to enlist for Israeli military"

### [\*\*A conditional ceasefire is not sufficient: the EU must call for an unconditional, immediate and permanent ceasefire\*\*](#)

European Parliament approval of resolution on Gaza conflict calling for permanent ceasefire echoes Palestinian and international civil society demand, but does not call for an immediate halt to hostilities.

### [\*\*Cyprus faces backlash over use of British bases to bomb Houthis\*\*](#)

"The Cyprus government is facing growing criticism over British military bases on the island being used by UK and US forces to stage airstrikes on Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen."

## **Policing**

### [\*\*UK: Police widening use of live facial scanning with no clear legal grounds – peers\*\*](#)

"The Lords' Justice and Home Affairs Committee has called into question the lawfulness of the use of live facial recognition."

### [\*\*Forensic Technology: Algorithms Offer Benefits for Criminal Investigations, but a Range of Factors Can Affect Outcomes\*\*](#)

Report by the US Government Accountability Office.

### [\*\*Serbia: Treatment of people deprived of liberty examined in Council of Europe report\*\*](#)

"...persons deprived of their liberty by the police continue to run the risk of ill-treatment, which in some instances might amount to torture."

### [\*\*Proposed UN Cybercrime Convention must be "narrowly focused on tackling cybercrime, and not used as a tool to undermine human rights."\*\*](#)

Statement signed by over 100 organisations, including us, coordinated by epicenter.works.

### [\*\*Predictive policing in France: against opacity and discrimination, the need for a ban\*\*](#)

"After several months of investigation, as part of a European initiative coordinated by British NGO Fair Trials, La Quadrature has released a report on the state of predictive policing in France. In light of the information gathered, and given the dangers these systems carry when they incorporate socio-demographic data as a basis for their recommendations, we call for their ban."

## [Airport cops interrogate UK teen over Palestine protests](#)

"Rights group Liberty 'extremely concerned' as counter-terror police grill family about attending marches in London"

Liberty [\*\*has raised concerns since early in the crisis\*\*](#): "governments in the UK, like others across the world, have used moments of crisis to launch attacks on all of our civil liberties – often starting with those who are already marginalised"

The UK government is not the only one infringing on protest rights. In our analysis of [\*\*a Franco-German-Italian proposal\*\*](#), we discuss the dangerous potential for its vague language to shut down "any manifestation of support for the Palestinian cause."

## **Prisons**

### [UK: New podcast by INQUEST](#)

"Every year hundreds of people die preventable deaths at the hands of police, whilst in prison, or in the care of mental health services in the UK. Some of the names you'll know. Most of them you won't.

(...)

Unlawful Killing is a unique new podcast series shining a light on state violence, death, grief and resistance."

### [UK: MoJ changes to indefinite jail sentences do not go far enough, says UN expert](#)

"Changes to imprisonment for public protection scheme in England and Wales 'do not tackle the cases of nearly 1,250 prisoners'."

## **Privacy and data protection**

### [EU: Preserving the confidentiality of communications is essential to fundamental rights](#)

European Data Protection Supervisor press release on the proposed prolongation of a derogation from online privacy rules in the name of combating child sexual abuse.

### [EU-USA: Inside Biden's Secret Surveillance Court](#)

"At an undetermined date, in an undisclosed location, the Biden administration began operating a secretive new court to protect Europeans' privacy rights under U.S. law."

### [Neuroprivacy: safeguarding our cognitive liberty](#)

2023 research "contributed to our growing understanding of how to probe people's innermost thoughts, providing opportunities to improve lives but also raising questions about our right to think freely."

## **EU, US near deal on police access to online data**

"EU justice chief is 'confident' of an agreement, despite 'some major differences' in how to protect civil rights."

The discussions are taking place on the basis of [a 2019 Council Decision](#) on "an agreement between the European Union and the United States of America on cross-border access to electronic evidence for judicial cooperation in criminal matters"

## **Racism and discrimination**

### **Scotland: French Holocaust denier found in Fife loses extradition fight**

"Vincent Reynouard discovered living double life in Scottish village where he worked as a tutor, reports say"

### **Racial profiling, policing and immigration control**

"Migration frameworks all over the world are mechanisms through which racial subordination is achieved." A blog from *PICUM* and *Equinox* summarising a seminar held last year.

### **UK: Government to be challenged in High Court over 'discriminatory' PCSC Act**

"On 23-24 January 2024, a judicial review challenging the new police powers brought in by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (2022) will take place in the High Court."

### **Three French police officers given suspended sentences for assault on young footballer**

"Three police officers have been given suspended jail sentences for assaulting a young footballer during an arrest in 2017 in a case that has thrown the spotlight on police violence and racism in France.

The decision not to send the officers to prison sparked angry protests in Paris on Friday."

### **France: Macron's plan to move right: School uniforms, national service and more babies**

"In an appeal for traditionalist right-wing support, President Emmanuel Macron wants the French to produce more babies, perform mandatory national service and go back to wearing school uniforms."

### **UK: Two men jailed on racist police officer's evidence have convictions overturned**

There was "considerable force" in the arguments that Ridgewell should have been sacked in 1973 and that all of his cases should have been reviewed"

### **Italy: Fascist salute not a crime unless a risk to public order, top court says**

The ruling "comes after a chilling video emerged of hundreds of men making fascist salutes

during an event in Rome" and has "been hailed by neofascists"

UK: [Campaigners speak out against the criminalisation of rap lyrics](#)

"As of June 2023, over 240 people in the UK have been jailed after a court decision that was in part based on their involvement with rap music."

The Art Not Evidence campaign is calling for "legal reform to limit the admissibility of creative expression as evidence in the criminal courts."

You can support the campaign [here](#).

## Surveillance

Italy: [Privacy ruling against city of Trento](#)

Italian ombudsman adopts measures against the city of Trento for testing three AI systems ("Marvel", "Protector" and "Precrisis") involving surveillance in public spaces.

[U.S. terrorist watchlist grows to 2 million people — nearly doubling in 6 years](#)

"...the consolidated database of individuals has not only been quietly expanding in number but also in who it targets."

[EU prepares to push back on private sector carve-out from international AI treaty](#)

"The European Commission is preparing to push back on a US-led attempt to exempt the private sector from the world's first international treaty on Artificial Intelligence while pushing for as much alignment as possible with the EU's AI Act."

[EU set to allow draconian use of facial recognition tech, say lawmakers](#)

"Last-minute tweaks to the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act will allow law enforcement to use facial recognition technology on recorded video footage without a judge's approval"

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