

Come to Calais to protest against the destruction of camps and squats of migrants!

International solidarity actions in front of all French embassies in Europe!

The French government, no doubt under British pressure, has proposed a definitive 'solution to the 'problem' of the migrants in Calais. **We call on all people concerned for the welfare of the migrants in Calais to mobilise and oppose the 'solution' which will, according to the Minister of Immigration and National Identity Eric Besson, be carried out this week by the French riot police to eradicate the jungle.** We denounce this act of aggression against migrants who have already suffered greatly and endured much in the journeys to Calais.

Besson said in May that he wanted to make the Calais region a migrant free zone. Since then, squats and camps in Calais have been destroyed on multiple occasions. It is now the turn of the Calais jungle.

We do not regard migrants as the 'problem', and our solidarity is the only possible response to the situation they have been put in.

We reject the normalisation and abusive misuse of the words 'clandestine' and 'illegal', and support the spirit of Article 14 of the 1951 Geneva Convention that stipulates the right of each individual to claim asylum anywhere they choose.

However, we go further than this narrow conception of asylum, which excludes people fleeing non-state violence, rape and also ignores those forced to leave through the violence of a poverty imposed on them by the trade rules fixed in Washington and Geneva. The wars that capitalism is waging against people, to secure and exploit their resources and labour, create these forms of violence.

We believe that all people ought to have the freedom to move and to settle, and that this freedom should not be reserved for a minority, because we believe in equal rights for all, rights which should not be given or bestowed by governments but which should be guaranteed to any human being.

For migrants, leaving their homes, families and lives, perhaps forever, is never an easy choice, but often a necessary one. It is an act of survival for the migrants' families, a great sacrifice with unknown rewards or failures. People are prepared to risk their lives because it represents a chance of a better future. Failure is not an option, and governments, despite all their efforts, will not be able to stop them.

The 'choices' in Calais: voluntary returns and the European asylum system

With Besson's plan there are only two choices left open for migrants in Calais. The first is the so-called 'voluntary' return, which is clearly no such thing. The approach taken in Calais, and increasingly across the jungles of Northern France, is to grind down the resolve of the migrants by subjecting them to extreme levels of police violence and intimidation. The solution of 'voluntary return' is proposed by the IOM and now by the UNHCR, recently present in Calais, to give its 'blessing' to this operation.

The second option is to claim asylum in France. Most of the migrants are rightly very afraid since this is a potential trap for them. They are likely to have been fingerprinted and recorded on the Eurodac database, and according to the Dublin II agreements, if they claim asylum in France or anywhere else in Europe and have had their fingerprints previously in a so called 'safe' country, usually Greece or Italy, they are likely to be sent back. Greece receives money from the EU commission for each Dublin case it receives back there.

In Greece, Iraqis and Afghans have a 0% success rate of asylum, yet for most European countries Greece is still regarded as 'safe' to send people back to. Norway and more and more courts have started to rule that it's dangerous to send people back to Greece, now other European governments should follow suit.

The British and French governments, as well as the mainstream media, claim that the migrants are not 'genuine' refugees, as they are not claiming asylum in these countries. But who would when it potentially adds up to an act of suicide? Through these arrangements, the European states have created a system that is destroying peoples' chances of asylum and obtaining refugee status.

The consequence of Franco-British agreements

One could regard the 'problem' of the migrants in Calais as having been entirely created by the British refusal to join the Schengen space, and the French government's compliance to this. In fact, it is the result of a sort of anomaly created by the 'special' bilateral arrangements between France and Britain. The problem also relates more generally to the closure of Europe's borders to migrants, coordinated through the European pact on Immigration and Asylum.

The bilateral agreements between France and Britain after the closure of Sangatte camp have led to the seemingly endless implementation of more and more expensive and sophisticated borders controls, and to the movement of British border controls onto French soil. As the French government has ceded to the British and accepted to implement its politics of border closure and reinforcement, the obvious consequences are that people are blocked for longer at the border.

So as tighter immigration controls cause the build up of people behind the border, the 'solution' taken is destruction of the jungles. The migrants are thus dispersed and deported as a means of making the problem 'disappear'. Besides the barbarity of these methods, these policies remain fundamentally ineffective, as they force people to become even more dependent on smugglers.

A very important aspect of the Geneva Convention recognises that failure to carry a valid passport is not in itself an illegal act. The migrants in Calais have had no choice but to become 'clandestine', there are no legal avenues for them to get to Europe or the UK overland, all legal routes are closed off, which is why they are forced into hands of smugglers and all the dangers and expense that incurs.

When Sangatte was shut down in 2002, we were told that Sarkozy had solved the 'problem' in Calais. Of course the migrants have kept on coming, and the aim has since then been to try to make their presence invisible. Until now the governments had several options to make the migrants disappear:

- 1) Let people pass when there are too many.
- 2) Subject them to levels of intimidation and violence, so that they leave and try to pass from somewhere else
- 3) Destroy their living spaces and belongings

Now the government pretends to resolve the situation, justifying its actions with talks of networks of smugglers, shameless lies claiming that local people are being attacked every day and of the need to protect migrants as well as local businesses.

Such lies have always been expedient for politicians wishing to create a scape-goat, the consequences of such irresponsibility are well known and are very well recorded. To cover his policies with a humane veneer, Besson talks of the 170 migrants who were given asylum in Calais in the run up to the closure of the jungle, a fact which turns out to be a complete fiction: according to associations in Calais precisely none have been given asylum.

Today, we are about to witness a "clearance" of migrants beneath claims of humanitarian concerns. Besson pretends under the bright lights of the media that he has found a dignified 'solution' for them, but this is clearly not the case.

The real problems that so often force migrants to leave their homes will never be resolved unless all governments, and particularly the British, American and French governments, examine and change their own warmongering approaches and their economic, political, and ecological foreign policy aims throughout the so called 'developing' and 'undeveloped' world.

Migrants will not stop coming and they are welcome here. Freedom of movement is everybody's right!

We call on people everywhere to come to Calais this week to show solidarity and to denounce current migrant politics!

We call for the end of Dublin II, selective migration policies and any other rule that stops people migrating where they choose to or need to!

We call for solidarity actions outside French embassies and consulates, to protest against the destruction of refugee and migrant camps by this country that likes to call itself the home of human rights.