

## CALAIS 9

**solidarité avec les sans papiers**

**> analyse > action > articles**

**freedom of movement for all**

## **WISH YOU WERE HERE?**

**“Sustainable development has become a necessity the future of human kind.... bringing a new way of thinking, building, conceiving and managing the city....All together, we can put forward things sustainably to future generations a preserved environment and a city pleasant to live in.”**

**-Natasha Bouchart, Maire de Calais Conseillère Regionale.**

In parc Saint Pierre, autumn leaves fall, children play, elderly couples sit by the fountain. A Rodin sculpture stands surrounded by the exhibition 'The Earth from Above' by Yann Arthus-Bertrand. In a corner; some Kurdish migrants sit, anxiously watching the police car as it patrols the park. Opposite them is a large photograph of Goz Amer refugee camp, in Chad, Sudan. Presented as a distant artistic vision, an exotic faraway place described by the UN, most Calaisians will never know that until recently round the corner on Rue de Villars was a small scale version of this place. The Sudanese camp; flanked by train tracks and pine trees, was last week destroyed as part of Besson's clearance of the jungles.

Calais is 100 miles from London. Ferries pass constantly. In the dock there are 910 lanes for freight, and nine loading areas. The port sprawls across the bay, bankrupt bargain booze warehouses surround the outskirts of the town, a factory nearby belches smoke into the landscape, the motorway hums constantly as goods vehicles ('chickens' chased by those trying to cross) move freely across Europe.

**“England is no longer an island.” –Headline from the Daily Mail, 25th July 1909**

This year marks the centenary of Louis Blériot's famous channel crossing. In July 1909 he decided to try for the £1,000 prize offered by the Daily Mail, flying from the cliffs of Sangatte to Dover Castle. In July 2009, the Daily Mail recreated the flight, to commemorate the 'instant hero' and 'exceptional pioneer'. Why is one man a hero, whilst others, risking their lives to cross the channel under trains and lorries, attempting to cross in boats, or swimming out to ferries, are slanderously portrayed as rapists and knife-wielding robbers?

It is easy to find examples of racism within the pages of the Daily Mail, yet the negative rhetoric surrounding migration is extremely pervasive. The policies enforced by Calais council in the name of 'sustainability' are testament to the implementation of social control in the name of environmentalism. With climate change, recession and political turmoil causing social unease, constant vigilance in challenging the rhetoric of nationalism, and waking up to the realities of Fortress Europe is required. England is no longer an island; it's true, with borders in several countries, the impacts of this stretching far beyond the channel.

## **“Calais is finished.....” Abdel Mohammed, Sudanese, 2 months in Calais.**

In 2002 the Red Cross closed Sangatte refugee camp, after pressure from the English and French governments, who used the camp as an electioneering tool, citing its existence as encouraging the 'sans papiers'. In January 2009, the Eric Besson, the Immigration Minister for France announced that he had surpassed the controversial 2008 'target' of 26,000 deportations by nearly four thousand cases. According to CIMADE, a French NGO set up to help victims of war, the number of persons detained per annum in France rose from 28,220 in 2003 to 35,008 in 2007. The maximum length of detention is 32 days. In 2007 92% of all detainees were male, and this trend continues today.

The French state colludes with the UK government to ensure that those without papers are 'locked out' (Phil Woolas, UK Immigration Minister). On the 22nd of September Home Secretary, Alan Johnson, expressed his "delight" at the "swift and decisive" destruction of the Pashtun 'jungle' (from the Pashto 'dzanghal', meaning forest). Woolas further supported this position, arguing that "If they were asylum seekers they would have claimed asylum in France or in the first country they came to." Asylum legislation, intergovernmental agencies such as Frontex, and the police forces across Europe mean these first countries are often no safer than the places people have left, as the articles included here attempt to show.

The French state has transformed simple offers of help into political acts through their use of legislation such as article L-6221, which makes it illegal to help migrants. When we stand together to resist a raid, work together to occupy buildings, create autonomous spaces, stop deportations to 'safe' third countries like Greece or Italy, or challenge charter flights to Iraq or Afghanistan, when we take action or hold demonstrations, this is when we are strong. These are the moments that give me hope, and I am grateful to be involved in this struggle that has taught me so much. Calais is a microcosm of global politics, painfully acted out on its streets. Communities from Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nigeria, Egypt, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Vietnam, Afghanistan, on and on, the list of countries is a testament to the impacts of globalisation and the foreign policies of the West.

When Besson cleared the jungle, destroying the homes of hundreds, leaving only dirt and bulldozer tracks, he did not stop migration. He claimed this most vicious of PR stunts was for the 'protection of the migrants' from the people traffickers and mafia. But as the increased militarization of borders in Mexico has shown, state repression merely plays into the hands of those profiting from the border regime, whether that is in the form of armoured inter-governmental agencies, or ruthless individuals.

Calais is not finished. Many have fled, 'volunteering' to go home, claiming asylum in France and other countries in mainland Europe, or seeking new places from which to cross. But there is a constant flow of new arrivals.

### **"I want England but England doesn't want me" - Ali, Ethiopian, 5 months in Calais.**

On the ground in Calais police enforce this border, but it is at the behest of the UK Border Agency and the British state. Because of this in June activists from the UK No Borders network, together with those from France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands organised a No Borders camp in Calais. Since this, we have had a constant presence here, campaigning to provide practical solidarity, take direct action, and highlight the struggle of those here, linking it to the wider network of borders and organisations which enforce them. The Calais camp was followed by a camp in Lesbos; and in July next year there will be a camp in Brussels. In Copenhagen in December we will connect environmental issues, migration and repression. Calais is one battle in this wider struggle. Bouchart administers the clearance of the city of those without papers in the name of 'sustainable development'. Talk of a 'reconception'; of 'management' of the city obscures the violence which is enacted on individuals here every day. A city pleasant for all? Calais is a war zone.

### **"When I am dead and opened you shall find 'Calais' lying in my heart" – Queen Ann 1532.**

Being involved in the Calais campaign has for me been one of the most painful and inspiring experiences I've ever had. The articles, images and accounts featured here will outline some of the reasons for this. The intention of this work was not to be too much of a personal account, although in Calais, the personal and political are constantly blurred, as we tread the fine line between practical solidarity work and humanitarian aid. Many blogs already exist with people's personal responses to this place of transition. This is more a theoretical analysis of the situation we have found ourselves in, and the beginnings of a dialogue around issues such as privilege, gender, hierarchies, cultural divisions, and many, many more.

We talk of 'safe spaces' of 'transnational organisation' of 'migrants' 'asylum seekers' 'refugees', 'solidarity', but what do these phrases mean, and what are their political implications? Who are the migrants? Who are the activists? What are the limits of solidarity work? How can I acknowledge and work with my privilege in this context? These are massive questions, each one deserving its own piece of research, but hopefully this is a beginning

In permaculture we are taught to "use edges and value the marginal". For permaculture pioneer David Holmgren, this space, where vastly differing systems meet, was a site of

intense productivity and useful connections. For me, the value of edge has never been more apparent than Calais. It is humbling to work with so many communities in resistance. Not to romanticise their struggle or to simplify it, but to value difference whilst looking for common threads enabling us to attack, rebuild and grow.

There are many borders in Calais, physical, political, ideological, linguistic and social. From the armoured jeeps patrolling the Eurotunnel, to the NGO's and reformist agencies that legitimise and implicate these areas of repression and discrimination, these borders are everywhere. With the Stockholm agreement being ratified in December, it's time to see how easily legislation used to control and monitor one group can be transferred across society. The European Data Protection Supervisor uses the concept of "freedom of movement" to legitimise infringements on our privacy. The state and big business profit from the free distribution of information and commerce, whilst calls for genuine freedom of movement are decried as idealistic and unworkable. We ignore the mechanisms drafted in to enforce this at our peril. Total surveillance, an unaccountable EU state apparatus, increased militarisation..... Who will be next?

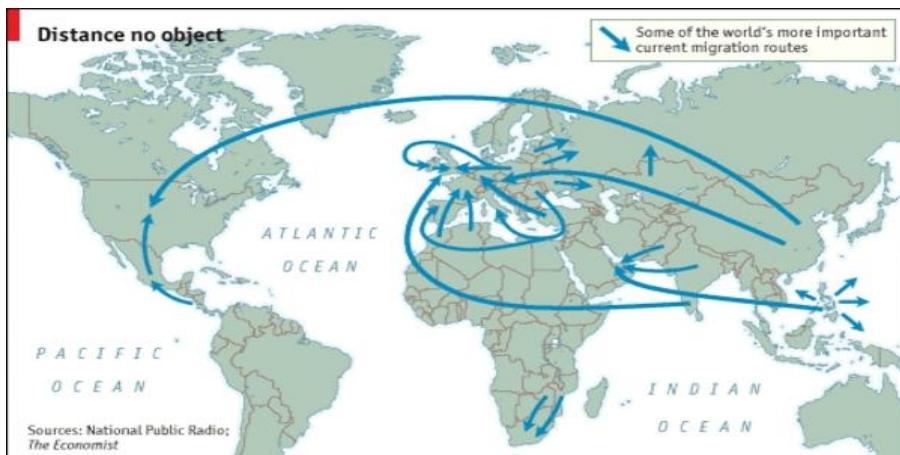
The accounts here aren't mean to invoke sympathy, or guilt. They are intended to provide an overview of the situation to encourage others to participate. Calais is a town of struggle, of fear and most of all resilience and resistance. This zine is a work in progress, a first draft so please contribute, or help with translation or graphics. It's not representative of any group, it's a first sketch to investigate some of the issues around Calais, lessons we've learnt, ideological and practical problems we've faced, and will continue to face. Thanks to all those who have contributed and supported so far.....

**sialac, october 2009 calais9@riseup.net <http://www.calais9.wordpress.com>**



## QUICK FACTS

globaldetentionproject.org



### United Kingdom

Detention sites: **11 (2009)**

Detention capacity: **2,935 (2009)**

Removals and voluntary departures:

**66,275 (2008)**

Asylum seekers: **10,900 (end 2007)**

Irregular residents: **525,000-950,000 (end 2007)**

Max. length of detention: **No limit**

### France

#### Quick Facts

Detention sites (centres de rétention): **24 (2008)**

Detention capacity (centres de rétention): **1,742 (2007)**

Annual number of deportations: **29,799 (2008)**

Undocumented population: **200-400,000 (2006)**

Asylum seekers: **35,160 (2008)**

Max. length of detention: **32 days**

### Coquelles Centre de Rétention

#### Administrative

**Status:** In use (2008)

**Location:** Boulevard du Kent; Coquelles, Pas-de-Calais

**Type:** Migrant detention centre

**Security:** Secure

**Established:** January 2003

**Management:** Police nationale (Police des Ais et Frontières PAF)

**Capacity:** 79 (2007)

**Total no. detained:** 2,391 (during FY 2007)

**Average length of detention:** 10.55 days (2007)

### Dover Immigration Removal Centre

**Status:** In use (2009)

**Location:** The Citadel; Western Heights, Dover, Kent

**Type:** Migrant detention centre

**Security:** Secure

**Established:** 2002 (as a migration detention centre)

**Management:** HM Prison Service

**Capacity:** 314 (2009)

**Reported Population on a Single**

**Day:** 310 (as of 27 December 2008)

## CALAIS STORIES

Calais is a town of stories, vivid journeys, some of which have taken years. People have risked their lives; left behind their families and walked the earth to get here. Everyone has a thousand stories, many too painful to tell...here are a few.

### Benjamin

Benjamin is from Iran. He has been in Calais 40 days. He recently attempted a hunger strike with 8 other Iranians and 2 No Borders activists; to demand the right to make a claim for asylum in England. The hunger strike was called off after the CRS arrested several people and detained them. Like many, Benjamin fears deportation to Greece, a 'safe' third country under the Dublin II convention where Frontex and the state enforce the border regime by assaulting migrants, selling them to smugglers; and even murdering them at sea. Recently someone was beaten to death in the streets.

"I travelled to Calais over a long and painful time. From Iran to Turkey, to Greece then Italy, finally Paris to Calais. I paid 2,000 dollars to people smugglers for the first part of my journey. I bought a fake passport and ID but it was stolen. I ended up in Metilini and Oten (2 prisons often used by the Greek authorities for asylum seekers). In Metilini there were 800 people; in Oten 60. The conditions were terrible; no one was ever taken to hospital no matter how ill they were. On the first night I gave my medication (heart medicine and antibiotics) to the police. They took it but said I was hiding more. They beat me up several times. If I get sent back to Greece, I will kill myself. I never want to be in Metilini again. Last week I tried to swim out to the ferry to jump on it, but the police caught me. Often I try to get on the trains. Some people get across but it's difficult, and dangerous. I want to go to England because it's a safe country; but anywhere would be ok, as long as there are nice people. In Calais I have been arrested 10 times. Every time I get taken to Coquelles (immigration prison). Then I have to walk back across Calais and often get hassled again. Coquelles is smelly and there is no air. I hate it there.

I like No Borders, they treat us with respect. Some of the organisations give us bad food, and they always say "tomorrow, tomorrow" when we need help. No Borders helps us. The police have got worse recently, and I am scared to return to Greece. If I get sent to Iran; I will die. I was in a political group, Jebbeh Mlysi. Before I left, I was in a secret prison for 6 months. I was tortured, with cigarette burns, my head put into a toilet, and beaten. I cannot go back. I went on hunger strike to show these problems, but the police caught us and chased us. They arrested some No Borders people, and at night when we were sleeping, they came and beat us all with their sticks. Calais is bad."

## **Abdel Mahmud**

Abdel has lived in Calais for two weeks. The first Sudanese area was cleared last week. Since then people have been living on the outskirts of the east side of town. On the 14<sup>th</sup> October police came and destroyed their structures. Now Abdel and others are working with us to try to organise their claims for asylum in France. Terrified of deportation, they were served papers stating the intention to send them to Italy, where they would then be returned to Darfur.....

“I came from Sudan to Calais, travelling through Libya, Marseilles and then Calais. I am a Communist and I lived in Darfur but now if I go back I will be killed. Life in Darfur is very bad; I have seen half of my family killed. I want to finish university (I was studying to be an Engineer). The police came to the university and I was afraid. The undercover police in Sudan are a real problem; nowhere is safe; which is why; if I go back, I will die. If they know you have political views, and that you have tried to leave, they will come for you. I want to go to England but it's too difficult. Now I will try to stay here.”

## **Rasheed**

This is the second time Rasheed has tried to move to England, his account makes sobering reading, yet despite this, he continues to smile, happy to talk about his experiences, in the hope that it will improve life for others. Eight hours after I did this interview I watched as the CRS arrested Rasheed for a second day in a row under the bridges. He was released after a couple of hours, a lucky escape as today the first charter flight containing 40 Afghans in the joint operation between UK and France has left from Paris, despite protests from many groups...

“In 2003 I went to England from my home of Afghanistan. I lived in Portsmouth for three and a half years, and then I was deported to Azerbaijan and then Kabul. I left after 4 months to begin my journey back to England. I went to Pakistan, then Iran, through Turkey then Greece. I spent one and a half years in Patras; it is very difficult to cross there with the navy. Then I made it to Albania, but then I was taken back to Greece. I left again, to Macedonia, then Serbia. I spent two and a half months in prison in Serbia. Then I went to Hungary and Austria but on the Swiss border I was caught and spent 1 month in detention there. I went back to Austria and spent another month and a half in a detention centre in Salzburg. I went to Hungary, then back to Austria, then Italy, and finally France. I have been in Calais for 10 days. I want to go back to England because everywhere else there is trouble. 'Asylum' in Italy and France means nothing; you have no shelter, no work. In Calais I am arrested all the time, and then released after 1-2 hours. This morning I was arrested.

I am afraid to return to Afghanistan. The Taliban and America are at battle. If you work with the Taliban, America says you are Al Qaida. If you work with America, the



Taliban say why, you are Muslim? America has some control in Kabul, but in the provinces the Taliban rule. It is very dangerous, at night time the Taliban come. They rule the border with Pakistan, where drug smugglers rule. This is 1,400 kilometres long. If I go back I am in danger. The Taliban sent me a letter before I left accusing me of working with America because I wouldn't help them. In my province there are many CID (Criminal Intelligence Department) agents, everyone hears your words. They come at night. There is no work for me. I am an artist, a designer, but I cannot work in Kabul. I have spent 2 years travelling now, my mind isn't working anymore. I have lost all my family; I spent all my money trying to get to England, so if I am deported I am in trouble. I like no borders because it means no detention, no deportation, no finger prints."



The old ferry port, grafitti in Lille

## RECENT EU LAW AND CALAIS

nimmoi

The **Dublin II Regulation** is an EU law that lays down which EU Member State is responsible for a given asylum application for international protection under the Geneva Convention (usually their point of entry). This single law, adopted in 2003, is the lynchpin of the whole Dublin System, which uses a Europe-wide fingerprint database as the key reference point for dealing with all 'unauthorised entrants' to the EU. Dublin II replaces the **1990 Dublin Convention** which came into force in 1997 for twelve signatory countries, which now includes four additional countries in the EU and several others outside it.

The justification given for Dublin II is that it works to prevent multiple applications being made to Member States, as well as to cut down the number of 'orbiting' asylum seekers being shifted on from one country to another. However, even basic common sense indicates that this puts incredible legal pressure on border areas (such as Italy and Greece) - where often the least capacity or willingness to accept asylum seekers exists. This means that many people are actively prevented from access to an asylum procedure and are at risk of being returned to vulnerable areas (see for example studies by ECRE –European Council on Refugees and Exiles -and UNHCR –United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). Secondary effects include the delaying of claims; widespread use of detention in order to transfer asylum seekers back to a 'correct' entry point, and the separation of families and minors.

The backwards logic of this regulation is just one symptom of a movement dedicated to the protection of Nation State sovereignty and wealth before the lives or wellbeing of people. Even though it is by moments admitted that the asylum system is seriously flawed, the only solutions offered work by *increasing* the separation between a 'justifiable' asylum claim, and the illicit, undesirable movements of anyone else without papers. We are offered an idea of justice which consists in stronger borders, more State bureaucracy, and the elimination of all 'irregular' movement – but this is just a codeword for economic monopoly. Any other kind of circulation seriously threatens the possibility of preserving fixed regions of privilege, so it is discounted from 'protection'.

The UNHCR idea of refuge is supposedly about making it more possible for those who need to move to do so, but what we have consequently seen over the past decade is the development of a European 'fortress;' a **common European asylum system (CEAS)** which makes security against possible threats (terrorists, economic downturns, 'irregular' entries...) its main concern. This is also the aim of the **Stockholm Programme**, due to be adopted by the European Council in December 2009, which outlines the EU's priorities between 2010 and 2014.

Recent events in Calais only confirm this tendency – even as they open up for us the possibility of joining the dots rather differently. The strategies, policing and excuses used on the 'Jungles' of Calais – which forced them first into existence (by necessitating clandestine movement, and rendering destination countries inaccessible) and then justified their eradication - offer us vital material to expose the capitalistic and discriminatory basis of recent EU policies, and the system of thinking they belong to. We have certainly seen other points in history at which a fascistic desire for a successful nation first created ghettos out of those it perceived as 'threats', then the means to legitimately excuse their eradication. If it is more of a subtle tactic to disperse people into regions where violence, climate change and political instability silence voices of dissent, it is not any less urgent to testify to its violence today.



Banner made by Pashtun migrants working with No Borders for the destruction of the 'jungle'.



Map charting routes of migration in Africa shows that contrary to popular belief, not everyone wants to come to Europe.

Pain, confusion and limbs everywhere! "Pardon, pardon" - a cameraman has landed on top of me. The whole place is swarming with cameras and journalists. It's as if a hundred different televisions have been left on in ten different languages. "And here we are in Calais and it's a veritable media circus". Authoritative – yet compassionate – voices recording history, clutching microphones and adjusting their make-up. A journo quizzes a dazzled Afghan teen next to me. "So how old are you?" I wonder how genuine her furrowed brow really is – something learnt from experience or from a journalism degree? I glare at her bitterly but she's already gone. The star-struck filthy clothed teenager sits confused.

"Can you move just behind the banner please? That's good. All of you behind the banner now. Okay serious faces." The children obediently follow orders as trained professionals choreograph their tragedy. Suddenly there are vans and buses of police pulling up and the journos dash off in search of good shots. And what are WE going to do? It's chaos. The police line up outside the jungle. Ominous yet unsure. Then I hear shouts.

'Freedom of movement is everybody's right. We are here. and we will fight.' I can see V and G and other familiar faces clutching banners, creating a line opposite the police. The Afghan kids don't have a clue what to do. A couple of them peg it. The rest of them stand there dazzled by camera flash. The terrified expressions of children. Rabbits, caught in the headlights of some supernatural force.

The police are closing in. The journos sandwich themselves between activists and Afghans. Some of the journos without cameras even start chanting absurdly for want of something to do. "No borders. No nations. Stop deportations." Things are starting to look nasty. The police are out of their depth. "We are here. and we will fight." I shout in the face of a cameraman who is politely asking me if I can put down my banner a moment so he can walk through the blockade.

A very young Afghan boy begins to wail in terror behind me. A visored riot cop grabs me in a head lock and drags me back. My foot starts screaming with pain as i struggle for breath – he's landed me on the embers of a fire and the media circus follows as my body and face start to contort in agony. I try to choke out a few words of protest. I'm dragged into an enclosure. Disorientated by breathlessness pain and rage, it looks like I'm nicked but in the general panic I quickly de-arrest myself.

But it's too late, we have been separated. I can't bear it. I wander off gradually becoming more aware of the pain in my right foot.

5 cycles past and wraps my foot up in bandage and we share our anger at our cowardly government for paying off the French police to round up a bunch of children, lock them up and drop them in a friendless war zone far away. I feel a sense of deep deep shame.

CALAIS, FRANCE



CALAIS MIGRANT SOLIDARY - Tel. 0677944476

NO ETHNIC CLEANSING  
IN OUR NAME



I Am Screaming  
Darkness Gas  
Police Beating  
Laughing Broken bones  
Hood over your head  
Bent over backwards  
Head hurts Can't breathe  
Electric shocks...

CALAISNOBORDER.EU.ORG

DEFENDILLEGALALIENS.WORDPRESS.COM

LILLE.INDYMEDIA.ORG

NO BORDERS.ORG.UK

Wish you were here?





Bessons 'dignified destruction' of the Pashtun 'jungle' 22.09.09

## **BUILDING MOMENTUM**

**one of nottingham no borders nobordersnottingham.org.uk**

Sometimes it takes a catastrophe to bring about the changes that are needed to start tackling a situation. The ongoing repression and persecution of the migrants in Calais is one such disaster. Whilst the escalation of violence and the hounding out of those desperate to cross the channel and live in the UK has brought about an immense amount of suffering, one small ray of hope is the rallying effect it has had on No Borders activists in the UK and in my home city of Nottingham in particular.

No Borders in Nottingham has had a few incarnations; a few bursts of energy that have then rapidly faded into dormancy. The usual suspects are to blame: people taking on too many different campaigns to be able to sustain them all, new and more exciting projects materialising and the enormity of the task of just sustaining all of the migrants in our locality. The increasingly fascistic rhetoric from the political elite, spurred on by a rabid media all too happy to scapegoat migrants, is too overwhelming for many to battle against, day in and day out. As a result of all of these factors, No Borders Nottingham was not really doing very much at the start of the summer this year.

Then came the Calais No Borders camp, an audacious attempt to show solidarity in a very direct way with the migrants trying to cross our Country's border. A handful of people in Nottingham, most of whom had not been active in No Borders previously, decided to go. The atmosphere at the camp was very different to that which prevailed at the Gatwick No Border camp which was the only previous experience of a No Border camp I'd had.

In Gatwick we felt very remote from the people we claimed to be showing solidarity with. In Calais we were camped a few minutes from one of the jungles where Iranian and Kurdish migrants were engaged in their daily struggle to survive and to cross into the UK. Migrants had a large and visible presence in the camp, eating, sleeping and enjoying themselves.

The breakdown of borders that occurred at the camp did not result in the nightmarish scenes that racists rant about but a liberated space which was exciting and full of potential. We returned home to Nottingham with ideas and energy to further the struggle.

Then came the state's attack. Word filtered through of a planned French assault on the largest of the Calais jungles. Those who had been to the camp, accompanied by new people who'd heard about it, headed back to Calais to contribute to the defence of the migrants. In the end the alarm was a false one but the days we spent there

were useful for setting up communication between different groups and laying the blueprint for patrols of the jungles. We had our first encounters with the CRS, their tear gas and their snatch squads. It was nothing compared with what was to come but an indication of what to expect. We found ourselves more and more enmeshed in the struggles of the migrants, sleeping in the jungles and always talking to so many migrants about their hopes and fears.

I had to return to Nottingham after a few days but many stayed and many more went out later often for weeks at a time. Often they were people who'd had no previous involvement in No Borders but who saw an opportunity to take action where it was so obviously needed, in defence of freedom of movement.

A few weeks later we held Beyond Borders, a national gathering of migrants and activists for workshops and networking, in Nottingham. The idea was born from the energy that we'd had on returning from the Calais No Borders camp. Around 30 people attended and some great links were made between campaigns. The involvement of many migrants, who often seemed conspicuously absent at the Gatwick No Borders camp, made Beyond Borders a place where No Borders politics were urgently relevant. The atmosphere was very mutually supportive and brought to my attention the collective power that those of us campaigning against the many repressive aspects of border controls have.

Since then, of course, the situation in Calais has worsened and worsened, with destruction of all of the large cohabitations of migrants, mass arrests and violence. The small numbers of No Borders activists from the UK, France, Belgium and elsewhere have not been enough to stop the French state's attack on the migrants. This, combined with the sickening rhetoric coming from the Home Office about the 'success' of the repression might yet be enough to send some people back into despair and dormancy. However, following on from Beyond Borders and the effort to get people to Calais we have restarted regular planning meetings for the Nottingham No Borders group. We have renewed our contacts with national and international networks and are planning various local and national activities. At every meeting new people turn up with ideas for action and some have come out of 'retirement' to get active again. Earlier this week we held a picket of the Borders Agency offices in Derby and plan to make this a regular event.

As the rise of extreme right wing parties, such as the UK Independence Party, brings anti-immigration politics further and further into the mainstream, those who reject such a politics in favour of freedom of movement are finding ourselves faced with a stark choice: either we look the other way and pretend it's not happening or we fight for what we believe in. Fortunately there are many who are prepared to take action.




A poster with a dark background. At the top, there is a silhouette of a person jumping over a chain-link fence, with another person standing behind it. Below this image, the text reads:

**UN CAMP NO BORDER À**  
**CALAIS**

Discussions  
 Actions  
 Rencontres/Meetings  
 Manifestations/Demonstrations

**NO BORDER CAMP**

**23-29 JUIN/JUNE**

<http://calaisnoborder.eu.org>

La liberté de circulation pour tous et toutes, la fin des frontières et des contrôles migratoires  
 / Freedom of movement for all, an end to borders and to all migration controls

The 'grand manifestation', No Borders Camp, and publicity

## ON CLASS AND MIGRANT SOLIDARITY

**manchester no borders [manchesternoborders.blogspot.com](http://manchesternoborders.blogspot.com)**

This is an article that we wrote after the Calais No Borders camp. It addresses some of the criticisms we received from some anarchists in Britain. The text was published in Black Flag magazine no.230 with the title 'In defence of migrants'.

“Riot police stop anarchist assault on Britain's borders” was the Daily Mail headline about the No Borders camp in Calais. What happened at “Britain’s borders” and what has anarchism got to do with it?

While the quiet camp passed unremarked, newspapers from the Guardian to the Telegraph ran vivid features on what the camp encountered, documenting migrant lives in Calais with varying degrees of sympathy. These were prompted by government talks and the opening of the UN office, but reflected and refracted our experiences. In Calais, the externalisation of the British border to France creates a situation of direct struggle between authoritative oppression and people who do not obey these restrictions. On their way to Britain, thousands camp in the vicinity of Calais restricted in their agency by oppressive state policies.

In solidarity with those enacting their opposition to control and global inequality by moving across borders in search of better lives, the No Borders Camp aimed to demonstrate (and act) against the state’s hegemonic and arrogant claim to control the movement of people. The No Borders position and anarchism share a mutual enemy: borders as institutionalisation of authority.

Alas, upon our return from the Calais No Border camp we noticed a surprising development. While in continental Europe anarchists mobilise in solidarity with migrants facing the xenophobic responses to the recession (at the Calais demonstration there was a large turnout of French anarchist groups and CNT syndicalists), in the UK some anarchists have begun to question the fundamentals of that solidarity. To us it seems like this is the result of a false opposition of class and immigrant solidarity.

The 'English' anarchists – of that identity they seem to be proud – write on blogs and discussion forums that they will stand in defence of the working class when the “liberals” of No Borders abolish immigration controls in favour of capitalist exploitation. There is Matt D., member of the IWW and Liberty & Solidarity who blogs at ‘workers self organisation’. He draws a distinction that could have come straight from a primitivist or gated-communities pamphlet: “no borders... or community control of resources”. The No Borders position for him is “un-anarchist” as it “can only be realised if some large international body enforces it”. Or take 9/11 Cultwatch

writer Paul Stott who finds it hard to believe that anarchists would “travel to another country” in solidarity with migrants rather than staying here in solidarity with workers facing recession. Even Class War founder Ian Bone on his blog defines class struggle in national terms: “it’s our England we will fight for”. Paul Stott again adds to this a typical expression of labour movement nationalism: “Is there anything more likely to drive down existing wages than mass immigration?”

We do welcome discussion and criticism, even and especially of the fundamentals of our theory and practice. We are not shy of debate and hope that in the near future we can continue and exchange with the ‘English’ class struggle anarchists. For now, in the constraints of a short article, we want to briefly respond to four frequent statements from within that movement that we have disagreed with.

### 1. No borders would benefit capitalism

You will have probably observed that, today, movement is increasingly free - *just so long as it is profitable*. To say that capitalism would benefit from no borders is to overlook the role border control has served and continues to serve in the maintenance of an exploitative status quo. It is one of the primary means through which labour-power is disciplined and global divisions of labour, privilege and power are enforced. At the border the abstract logic of profit confronts the lived reality of our lives. Hence the border, like the factory, is both a site of suffering *and* a vector of antagonism.

### 2. No borders is utopian

Yes, but only if you think like a state. ‘But how can you make this work, it’s unmanageable, it’s not practical,’ the anxious statesman will cry. From the perspective of the state, no borders is indeed utopian – a place that could not be. For us, no borders is an axiom of political action, a principle of equality from which concrete, practical consequences must be drawn. It means recognising, on the basis of our equality, solidarity in struggle irrespective of origins. There is nothing less utopian and nothing more immediately practical than this.

### 3. An anarchist society would have community borders

The border traces a threshold of inside and outside. What is outside is perceived as dangerous and a threat to the inside, hence the ‘need’ for a border. The security that the border offers is essentially imposed externally and with reference to this threat. But there is another kind of security, one created internally through cooperation and mutual support. There is nothing in this kind of security which necessitates the

exclusionary and violent practices of bordering. It is this latter kind of cooperative security which we are hoping to create.

#### 4. National culture should be reclaimed

The nation state is a modern/recent form of sovereignty based (not solely) on forms of cultural nationalism which in turn are achieved through the glorification of typically 'English' traditions and stereotypes. We do not aim to undermine or ignore the history and traditions of struggle in the UK. Rather our aim is to undermine static conceptions of culture or community that create imagined divisions between 'us' and 'them'; divisions that have very real consequences for those who find they cannot, or do not want, to fit into these rigidly defined identities.

For us it seems that rather than attempting to transcend notions of class (domination), this new 'English' anarchism appeals to an affirmative cultural identity of class. We feel that we need to abandon such sociological concepts of class for revolutionary perspectives of social struggle. Not everyone sees the distinction between class struggle and migrant solidarity. Let's conclude with a comment by 'Alessio', who defends the no borders position in a reply to Paul Stott: "As the 'English' anarchists ponder on their next move, it seems like every other anarchist movement across Europe strides confidently forward. I see a pattern emerging here, maybe we should be more confident in anarchist politics and how we express them rather than continuously feel that we should pander or apologise to certain sections of the class in the UK."



Many groups united by the no borders message on the grand manifestation, Calais, June 2009

## YOU COULDN'T MAKE IT UP! Reflections on Calais and the media

Like many, I've long despised the gutter press, but my experiences in Calais bought new levels to my hatred. I knew they lied but looking online at the stories and seeing the quiet reality at the same time made me wonder why we were bothering at all!

Tabloids know that if they tell lies about a whole group of people there is little that the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) can or will do – there will be no libel suit to defend – they are free to fabricate. For example, in June of this year The Sun made claims that, *“French riot police stop anarchists with machetes leading swarms of illegal migrants through the Channel Tunnel to Britain.”* It turned out someone had been arrested with a small wood axe in their campervan! Much more perniciously the Daily Mail reported that that migrants living in Calais had been attacking British tourists, who were advised not to roll down their windows in the port town. This was denied -by the French police. A freelancer told us that one Daily Mail scumbag had quipped, *“I'm off to make something up, there's Fuck all happening round here!”* The next day a story about him having a rock thrown at his head through his car window by an 'illegal immigrant' was duly reported. Yet, even when a individual is libelled and it is possible to take the case to the PCC all you can hope for is a begrudging apology from the paper, not exactly a deterrent enough from them doing similar in the future, and (sadly) they're not the ones who are likely to be victim of the violent attacks and bigotry that is stirred up.

Having been involved in attempts at getting half decent press coverage for other mobilisations, I had volunteered to be in the press group for Calais No Borders Camp. This was partly because no one else was really up for it and partly because I had been receiving a daily Google News Alert for Calais for several months and I knew that whilst we were busy trying to mobilise people to go to Calais, a viscous campaign about swarms of migrants trying to get into Britain was well underway. However much of an unpleasant task it may be, I thought we had to provide at least some sort of counter to this. A press group formed at one of the later planning meetings and several people volunteered to speak to journalists etc. Of the three of us in the English speaking group, only two travelled to France whilst the third did support from home, sending out emails etc, which worked quite well, but we were too few really. Attempts to try and put over a No Borders positions were largely ignored whilst there were the total hysterical stories about storming the border. Press releases were obviously going out from French or British authorities to whip up fear locally and justify an enormous policing operation. As with any media response from anti-capitalist/anarchist actions, playing the media game in Calais is often a thankless task. Despite weeks of build up, when there was not a riot in Calais, we got hardly any press coverage.

What was particularly unpleasant about doing media work in Calais was that it seemed that journalists used us, the citizen activists, as a way of contacting 'interesting migrants' that we may have some trust with. We were asked to lead journalists to camps etc. For example, one encounter I had with a BBC South reporter. I was later told that he had done some really bad stories about Calais, I had introduced him to people who spoke English and they were there being open about their plans to cross on lorries etc. which could have had a really bad effect on any claim in the UK. How do we balance that with issues about representing the issue on anyone's behalf? Just before the destruction of the Jungle a rumour went around the Pashtun camp at one point that all the Calais Migrant Solidarity/No Borders activists we were all journalists and there was a decision taken by activists on the ground not to take that matchmaking role anymore. At the same time I had a phone call from a woman who has done really good stories in The Independent who had been told to Fuck Off when she rang the Calais office line. Do we treat all journalists as the same?

There was some really good coverage, for example short films for The Guardian. I found that a conversation with a potentially sympathetic journalist before they went to France or when they got there could raise some of the issues more broadly and we did see at least some success in our press releases talking about the wider crisis of EU asylum system, Dublin II etc. Is it all worth it for these moments?

As the situation has deteriorated in Calais there has been a whole lot more interest, some more sympathetic coverage and the usual bile. There has been loads of ongoing media work to do, press releases for actions happening there, responding to stuff as it happens, writing up and putting out more critical perspectives and this work is not really getting done in a very thorough way. As I reflect on the media around this issue in some ways it is no wonder why so few people are up for talking. Fair enough that people reject talking to the mainstream press but often it seems there is very little being reported on written in alternative sources either, putting stuff on Indymedia or on other news blogs etc, or working to foster relationships with journalists that have written good stuff in the past, the Black press or other international outlets etc. Is it a broader question than hating mainstream and just about not being up for putting stuff out there, a lack of clear messages to communicate, not enough support and constructive criticism from our peers or just another thing that drops by the wayside in the mountain of things we are trying to do?

To me, using the media is one important way of creating political space to express our views, experiences and let the world know that we have strong positions and evidence to back up our actions. In Calais many factors make this even harder than usual, but I still think we need to engage in it- in some way -mostly because the only other people that are there are the gutter press. Sharing the load, developing

collective ideas, taking more imaginative angles on our media output and reflecting on what works and what doesn't are a few ways we may move forward. Unless our 'stories' are linked to actions or people doing interesting stuff, they won't get picked up. But are we up for it? Most people seemed happy to leave the same small group to try and do this job, gave very little input or feedback. Do we prefer just to ignore it? Or do we see it as a necessary evil? As a friend always says, "It's horrible talking to the media, but it's worth it for a chance of communicating to the people that read the media!"

At a recent No Borders meeting on combating far right/fascist views we talked about having a big demo specifically against the right wing press. The idea would be for No Borders to call it but for it to be a broad call out which appealed to anti-racist/anti-fascist sentiment. It will be talked about more at the Nottingham gathering in February. A friend has done some research into a demo in 1981 of 10-15000 Black people down Fleet Street in London. A demo sparked by the lack of police response to a likely racist arson attack in which 13 people died, they specifically highlighted editors on Fleet Street for their bullshit portrayal of the story as well as ongoing misrepresentation or invisibility of Black people in the press. She said, "In the 1980s it was the "sus" laws and the SPG that were terrorising Black communities (allowing searches, beatings, arrests etc with suspicion of illegal activity) - in the 1990s and 2000s that has clearly become the profiling of Black people as potential terrorists or potential illegals that has taken its place but allows for exactly the same treatment as what got people rioting back in the 80s." Worth a thought?



Photo: Julie Rebouillat, Building our media centre at the Calais Camp

## PRIVILEGE, PARANOIA AND PERSISTENCE

sialac

"Privilege is a right, advantage, favour or immunity specially granted to one; especially a right held by a certain individual, group or class, and withheld from certain others or all others." -Webster's dictionary.

On the ferry on the return to Calais I am reading about 'privilege'; in the last quiet moments before I arrive knowing that as usual it will be hectic, and steeling myself for the inevitable anger I will feel when I go through passport control. In the background, Tom and Jerry plays on repeat. It seems that whatever language you speak, everyone understands the tale of the cat and the mouse. In Calais, as with this children's cartoon, episodes end, days pass, but the narrative is the same, an endless, violent game of hide and seek.

In 'So you think you're an Anti-racist?' Gorski describes racism as "an institutional structure that provides access and opportunity to some at the expense of others." This means that anyone who has a passport is complicit in maintaining and justifying the border regime. "White people are privileged by racism; even if we aren't consciously contributing to it. Since we reap the benefits, we also hold the responsibility to challenge the system that benefits us."

Many dismiss 'no borders' as an idealistic abstraction. How can this be possible? What would a world without borders look like? How would it be implemented? The struggle in Calais is not just about migration, it is about challenging racism and acknowledging the role of the British government in this situation, and the benefits which those who are 'citizens' reap from this.

Peggy McIntosh used the metaphor of 'an invisible knapsack'; to describe White privilege: "an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious." In the context of Calais, my privilege is less like a package and more like a huge white elephant, one which is painful, oppressive and unjust, and one which must be acknowledged to be deconstructed. Since the clearances, many of those trying to cross do not have knapsacks, physical or metaphorical, merely the clothes on their backs. This is not meant to invoke pity, or sympathy. This is the reality of life on the UK-French border.

Discussions surrounding 'privilege' often disintegrate into guilt, accusative sniping and a lack of constructive awareness. We must move beyond this and create a culture where together we can unpack our privilege and challenge those who create it. Acknowledging unearned power is the first step to attacking the system which confers so much power in the hands of so few.



How can I practically use my position of privilege in this context to offer practical solidarity to those who do not? We can intercept illegal raids, we can monitor police violence, we can blockade, and we can attack. Those who have spent time in Calais have witnessed the staggering shift in policing when the CRS become aware of our presence. When we are standing together we are strong, using and developing networks of resistance and positions of relative power actions to act in solidarity with those who do not have a voice in this context.

Many without papers are too afraid to enter the town centre police violence and detention, and so are often ignored. The state continues to hold tokenistic attempts at dialogue with the associations and NGO's in the interests of the 'migrants'. Measures such as the invasive scabies operation are conducted, a further attempt at control and documentation, making decisions on behalf of others, without thought for their implications. Attempts to second-guess, to assume, to homogenise voices into a single message merely reinforces the attitudes which we are trying to deconstruct, but we can investigate themes, and look for the commonality in our political messages. The No Borders camp was a challenging starting point for this dialogue.

Privilege is a multifaceted web of ideologies, and like Calais it is transient. Unlike many in this town, I can move freely across the border, without having to burn my finger prints, cut them or drink chemicals that supposedly destroy them in attempts to avoid detection. My skin colour means that I am less likely to suffer violence at the hand of the police, and many other less obvious unearned privileges. But I am also sometimes at a disadvantage, my gender, or people's perception of my gender, means that I am often seen as a second class citizen, especially by those who come from heavily patriarchal societies. In Calais I have met many people who have become my friends, but I have also had moments where the inferiority with which people regard me has been all too painfully obvious, talking about me in a derogatory way knowing I cannot understand, following me to my tent during the camp, and refusing to engage with me as an individual because of my gender. The jungle has been described as an 'open prison', made of predominantly men, and because of this I can understand some of the reasons for these behaviours, but it does not make it acceptable.

The term 'activist' in the context of Calais seems a useless misnomer. This is a town of stories, and the more I hear, of political struggle, of people actions, of continued resilience, I find notions of 'activism' and 'direct action' arrogant and ill thought through. For the hundreds of sans-papiers in Calais, this is just life. There is no choice, no rest. As Andrew X has argued:

“Defining ourselves as activists means defining \*our\* actions as the ones which will bring about social change, thus disregarding the activity of thousands upon thousands of other non-activists. Activism is based on this misconception that it is only activists who do social change--whereas of course class struggle is happening all the time.”

All actions have political implications, and in Calais the combination of pressure from the police, the transient nature of those without papers, and also those seeking to work with them creates a complex climate where trust is difficult to earn, and easy to lose, where actions have many implications, and autonomy is precarious. Attempting to organise ‘transnationally’ can call into question many assumptions, but it is also essential in confronting the border regime.

In December thousands will converge on Copenhagen for the COP15 summit. It has been shown that legislation implemented in the name of sustainability, and also the wider impacts of climate change, have far reaching implications in terms of social control. Copenhagen will be an opportunity for exchange, for analysis and movement building, and a way to connect many border struggles beyond Calais. In order for genuine mutual aid and cooperation need to acknowledge our roles in dominant systems, listen carefully to those who do not often have a voice, and take action together. “We have to work with people who may not know the word 'globalization' but who live globalization.” - Jinee Kim.

In a recent discussion on privilege with participants from across Europe the issue of privilege and guilt was denounced by a participant as “shit they put in us since we are small”. Anyone who has stood up to the state will have experienced those immobilising moments of self-doubt, of inadequacy and disempowerment. Action that does not analyse the underlying causes of these feelings is in danger of replicating the norms that motivate us. We are all oppressors in some way. Another world is possible, but in order to shake off the old we must be aware of the extent of the damage that this one has caused, and our role in this process.



Photographs: Julie Rebouillat...from the No Borders camp and road into the town centre

## **NO BORDERS: THOUGHTS ON SHAME, GUILT AND TRAUMA**

**activist-trauma.net**

Recent events in “the Jungle” in Calais probably give a fair indication of what the future may well look like for increasing numbers of people – both for migrants themselves, and for the activists trying to support them.

Many of the people who have been involved in No Borders work appear to be suffering from a complex mixture of guilt, shame and “low level accumulative” trauma. On top of this, some are also in a state of denial about their own symptoms, and if they do recognise any symptoms they do not think they should be “allowed” to have them. This is all very similar to activists’ experiences in Palestine and other conflict zones.

When the true brutality of the state is unleashed, it is often a traumatising experience for the people on the receiving end – and crucially it can be extremely traumatising to witness someone else's trauma, especially if the person suffering is a child. It does not take much imagination to think the same thing could happen to you – or to your friends. And if your imagination is not too vivid just watch the film “Children of Men”.

Whilst everybody involved is working towards No (National) Borders, there are still personal borders which need to be respected. It seems that many women were sexually harassed during the camp in Calais. This brings up all sorts of difficult issues and internal debates. It is too complex to discuss here, but it is almost certainly something that does need to be addressed openly so experiences and ideas can be shared.

Those returning often had a mixture of guilt or shame for “not having done enough”. For those who felt they had maybe “done enough”, burnout could be a serious danger. Statements such as “how can I have fun and relax when people are being deported/killed/attacked...” highlighted the emotional trauma on people's return.

The guilt and shame of not having done enough is the bane of almost every activist's life and every campaign. This all comes into much sharper focus when it's a person being torn from your arms and dragged away. This might seem obvious, but it needs to be said over and over: IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.

Some people have learned where their limits are and try to work within them. However, in the intense atmosphere of The Jungle, people may be a) tempted to go well beyond their own limits or b) push other people to go beyond what they feel able to do. If this does happen in the heat of the moment, it is essential that you later take the time and/or other steps to recover.

## Coping techniques and personal borders

Acknowledging what you have done, are doing, or intend to do is essential, and even if what you achieve in the short term does not seem to be enough, it should be viewed as part of a much longer struggle. Unfortunately, for the foreseeable future, there will be states to oppress and exploit migrants. You burning out will not change that; neither will it help the people you are trying to assist. We all need to look at ways to avoid burnout and blaming ourselves.

One controversial coping technique is to maintain or develop “professional distance” - not getting too 'emotionally' close to the individuals involved. Whilst this may be impossible for some, others find it enables them to do such support work over a longer time than people who feel every deportation as a personal loss.

“Buddying up”, going out there with someone you trust, or finding someone there that you can work, rest & play must be preferable. Whilst buddying does not work for everybody, many find deep solace in knowing someone is looking out for them.

Whilst talking to people recently, the issue of an office space in Calais was discussed. Some people believe that the office space was needed as a base from which to work and also as a relaxing and safe space away from the frontline. Other people thought that all available space should be used to help migrants directly; for example, allowing them to live in what would otherwise be the office. Whilst the details are not crucial, in the opinion of Activist Trauma Support, the wider point as to whether or not activists should give themselves space, “away from the action”, is that they definitely need to do this. If we do not start to value our own space and our own needs, then most people will burnout and not be able to do anything to help anyone else. Furthermore the burnt out activists will then need to be supported and that will take more resources away from the main struggle. Maybe one question we should ask ourselves is “am I in this for the long haul?” If your answer is yes, then you need to be honest and think whether or not the way you are behaving is likely to help or hinder that.

This is an extract from No Borders: Guilt, shame and Trauma in Calais



Graffiti by the food distribution warehouse and the old dockside area

## BUILDING CROSS CULTURAL RESISTANCE

sabot

Some of the most inspiring aspects of our work in Calais have been the unexpected opportunities for building up cross-cultural and transnational resistance.

### *Fostering understanding*

For one, Calais has many opportunities for cultural exchange. Some of the Pashtun kids taught me about Pashtunwali (an old code of honour), which places great importance on hospitality and the concept of asylum. And everywhere we went, we *were* continually treated with incredible hospitality. Meanwhile, we did not shy away from our politics. To them, it soon became apparent that the No Borders people were kind of weird - often faithless types, with interesting ideas on gender, sexuality etc. But the oppressive environment of Calais is a great opportunity for learning from each other and fostering mutual respect (a personal highlight being getting invited to specially prepared vegan meals!)

### *Fomenting resistance*

As well as engendering understanding, there are also opportunities for fomenting cross-cultural resistance. We talked about anarchism. The concept undoubtedly becomes more tenable and attractive when you have experienced state oppression almost everywhere, and when the only support available is provided by grassroots groups. OK, shameless propagandising, but hey, how else are we going to build an anarchist revolution?! Some migrants openly participate in No Borders activism with demos, hunger strikes or helping No Borders do work on their behalf.

### *Opening up windows of opportunity*

Calais is in some ways a blank canvas. The non-hierarchical nature of the No Borders network gives us the freedom to give whatever support, and form whatever relationships, we deem necessary and appropriate. This has opened up opportunities for more effective resistance. We have maintained contact with migrants now in the UK or elsewhere, strengthening essential links between the movement's relatively privileged majority, and those most on the receiving end of capitalism and State oppression.



Photos Julie Rebouillat: grand manif during No Borders camp, Ethiopian house, Food distribution

## **CALAIS, PERSONAL ACCOUNT**

**anon**

“...allow the bearer to pass freely, without let or hinderance...” (first page of the British Passport)

I have crossed and re-crossed Europe's internal borders more times than I can count. I have sometimes crossed borders without even realizing they were there. Even where the borders are clear, I pass un-molested under the “EU/EEA” sign without a second glance. My white skin and UK passport have (so far) afforded me free passage anywhere I have wanted to go.

I have been through Calais in every imaginable way: on foot, driving, riding buses and trains, hitch-hiking in trucks. For me, it has always been a nowhere place; a way-point between here and there. The almost-ending or just-beginning of a long journey, marked by a brief tedium of queuing vehicles, procedures and formalities.

Of course, there are things wrong with this picture: the barbed-wire corridor that surrounds the channel-tunnel line, continuing miles and miles inland... the dog vans, the security guards, the CO2 and heartbeat checks on all commercial vehicles... But I have never stayed in the port for more than a few hours: I have caught glimpses of these things at the edges of my vision, but I have never really stopped to see. So, this journey to Calais was a strange kind of personal-political pilgrimage, to travel all those miles to this nowhere place and stop here...

I was only there for one week, part of the first-aid team at the No Border camp in June 2009. When we first arrived, it was early evening, and there were migrants at the camp. Kurdish, Afghani and Iraqi guys sat around the field, chatting to the campers. But by 11pm they had almost all disappeared. Eerie processions of silhouettes tramped along the motorway that ran beside the camp, heading for rendezvous with traffickers or trucks, back-lit by the last fading rays of the sun, the glow from the industrial estate and the headlights of the speeding cars and convoys of police vans passing them on the road.

A few of us went for a walk along that road, a six lane highway, littered with signs of human habitation: abandoned blankets and shoes, and narrow tracks along the roadside. We met groups of men going in both directions, and they looked at us with unmasked surprise, wondering who were these strange white-folk, who were not the police, but were out walking their sunset trails.

Grim destitution: pockets of cardboard cities, huddled up against old industrial warehouses, and hundreds of people queuing for food (given out daily by local aid

organisations). What we found looked a lot like the kind of humanitarian refugee crisis that you usually only see in TV pictures sent from far away.

There were a lot of people with wounds: burns, cuts, sprains... so we started to change people's dressings. We are "street-medic" first-aiders, accustomed to providing autonomous emergency care cover for camps, demos and actions.

We had queues of people wanting us to check them over, and scores of others who just came to watch the show. In the chaos of trying to communicate across languages to organise and treat people, we did everything we could. It was horrible finding myself in a position of power over people who had undoubtedly more life experience and understanding of their own situation than me, without the communications tools to be able to work with them, so just trying to keep the lines clear and be as effective as we could providing aid...

The bottom line was that we could do nothing about the situation itself. I have often heard aid work described as "putting a sticking plaster on a gaping wound". However I did not understand that it could be that literal! Nevertheless, aid work is basically what we did for the remaining five days of the camp.

Of course, despite our best efforts, we were still utterly overwhelmed by the things we could not treat... Top of this list was scabies and impetigo infections. We tried to have information to give people. We gave 5 or 6 "scabies workshops" to groups of 10-20 people.

We investigated the state healthcare available to them... Basically the PASS clinic, in the middle of no-where in what seems to be a reused gatehouse at the entrance to some industrial complex. Many people refused to seek state medical attention, because they were afraid they would be handed in to the police.

Living conditions in the jungle seriously complicate the healing of quite minor injuries. People's social backgrounds and levels of physical and psychological health vary greatly, and this affects how much care people take of themselves. They are mentally not where they are, but constantly looking for the chance to be somewhere else, so their attitude is "this is just temporary" (even if the situation has gone on for months). I quickly learnt that what we were doing was not just about treating wounds, but also about providing care. Many people come with something very small, just to have someone give a shit and put a plaster on the wound. Some of them laughed while you did it, but often they brought sadness with them too, and some really distressing experiences or stories, which filled my dreams for days afterwards.

On the fourth day we were invited, by some of the people we met doing first-aid, to

take our mobile clinic into the jungle, where we were taken into people's homes and given strong, sweet tea, biscuits and cake.

Although it never ceases to surprise me how resourceful people are, how they can adapt and live under absolutely any circumstances, more than anything else, the jungle put me in mind of an open prison. (So open that, when it rains, it comes through the plastic sacking on the roof!) Like most prisons, the population is basically all men, and social and economic life is defined by hierarchies, ethnic alliances, mafias and the black and grey markets. From my position as white, female outsider, these dynamics were more or less impossible to penetrate or understand, but it was clear they were there. Like a prison, the movements of the people who live there are constantly limited. The reality of being without papers in an advanced capitalist state means that they are trapped between the persecution they flee, the border they cannot cross and the economic constraints that close in around them.

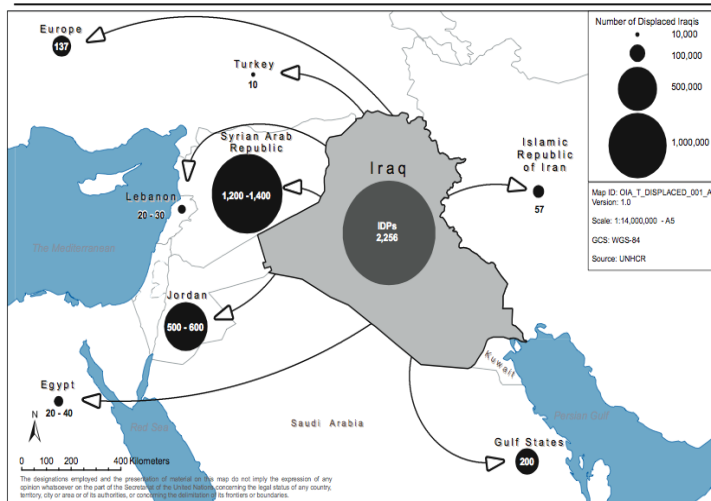
Now the camp is over and I don't know what to think. I am left with cameos of conversations... The group of children, aged between 8 and 16 who had just arrived back after a sleepless night. They had got in the wrong truck this time. Ended up in Belgium and had to make their slow way back to try again tonight. They stopped by the camp, which was almost deserted because everyone was at the demo, and they asked me, wide eyed and excited "when your government sees this demonstration, will they open the border controls?" ...

The sad eyed man who asked if he could sleep in my tent, and told me he had not slept a night through in two years. He wanted documents. He wanted to be legal. Anywhere. He feared for his life in Afghanistan and could not go back. He asked me what I did for work. We talked about our lives. I asked him what he did for work back home, before he had to leave. He said he was a border guard...

I would like to write with proposals and arguments, but right now all I have is this hollow feeling: angry, frustrated and slightly raw. The sadness and anger are like a strange kind of fever, the discomfort and unpleasantness that is subjective and real, and leaves you unprotected by distance or argument or discourse, is the difference between hearing rumours about a situation, and really knowing things that you cannot unknow...

Edited extract, full version <http://www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com>





Map charting migration routes from Iraq.

## ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN FOR MIGRANTS (AVRIM) sialac

“An intergovernmental organization established in 1951, IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society.” IOM website

By the Africa house a man in a cheap suit hovered. He systematically worked his way around the clusters of people who sit eating their lunch in the sunshine, pausing occasionally laugh, or to check for police vans. His plastic bag reveals he is from the 'IOM'. I tell my friends not to talk to him.

The IOM is a service agency that answers to its 125 or so member states. The government drives ‘undesired’ migrants into destitution, disperses them across the country, bans them from taking up a job, locks them up in detention centres, and threatens them with dawn raids and forced deportation. The IOM’s role is to blackmail migrants to return ‘voluntarily’ with a little sum of money to the countries they left. If forced removals are so costly and cause a lot of fuss, the logic goes, why not do it another way, while pretending to be compassionate and humane. In the current border regime, no return can be deemed voluntary.

In May 2009 France the IOM, funded by Britain's Returns and Reintegration Fund launched the ‘Global Calais Project’ to help provide “comprehensive voluntary return

and reintegration assistance" to hundreds of undocumented migrants in the Calais area.

"The 14-month programme carried out in close cooperation with France's OFII and in coordination with the UK Border Agency, includes the provision of impartial information on the risks and realities of irregular migration to the United Kingdom, as well as counselling and referral for voluntary return assistance for stranded irregular migrants." This programme has "assisted" more than 200 stranded migrants around the Calais area, offering free travel assistance home, a cash grant and "in-kind reintegration assistance".

"This reintegration assistance will help migrants who have suffered in the hands of unscrupulous smugglers return with the prospect of resuming gainful employment at home," says Florian Forster, IOM's Chief of Mission in Paris. "This new funding will allow IOM to help all those desperate migrants who regularly call upon us to help them to return home in dignity and with enough resources to make their return sustainable."

The right wing press hysterically report on the 'Global Calais Project' outraged at its cost to the tax payer and its fuelling of the journeys of what the Mail has labelled 'Britain obsessed' asylum seekers who are trying to sneak into England. Mr de Bosquet, State prefect for the Pas-de-Calais said: "We're trying to open their eyes to the illusion of their wish to go to Great Britain. The United Kingdom isn't the Eldorado they believe. The solution that we advocate is voluntary repatriation."

A recurring theme in the discussions I have had in Calais is not the idea of an 'Eldorado'. It is the chance to make a claim to work and to live without fear of state violence: "We don't want to stay, let us go to England! I want to go to England to make a claim. Maybe they deport us, maybe we stay, but it is about England, not France. Papers in Greece and Italy don't mean anything. No help with houses or jobs, it means you sleep on the streets." Zabi, Pashtun. "We want to find somewhere to be safe; not disturbed and taken to the police station." Sayeed, Iran

Last week, several of the Iraqis living under the bridges 'volunteered' to go back to Baghdad, tired of the daily realities of Calais, as part of the 'Assisted Voluntary Return' programme. The flight, carrying about 40 asylum seekers, landed in Baghdad on Thursday. Ten were admitted but the rest were turned away by the Iraqi government and are now held in Brook House detention centre near Gatwick airport.

There is no dignity in the border regime.

## HUNGER STRIKE

*agirlandherthumb.wordpress.com*

The evening after the commemoration demo [commemorating Calais triumph over fascism in 1945], I found myself facilitating possibly the trickiest yet most exciting meeting I have ever taken part in. It took place in several different languages, with translations and sub-translations happening simultaneously. Fortunately two English girls had turned up the night before, one who could speak Arabic and one Urdu, which she discovered by chance meant that she could speak with the Pashtun – so we were able to communicate between Iranians, Africans, Afghans, English and French activists.

The meeting was called to gather all those interested in taking part in political actions in Calais. As soon as we sat down, Benjamin, one of our Iranian friends, told me he wanted to do a hunger strike. It was clear from speaking with him that he had experience of this form of protest and that he was very serious about it. Ali, a close friend of his also wanted to join him in this and has experience of going without food or water for a week. After many translations and sub-translations, eleven people said they would join in with the hunger-strike and would also speak to others living in their squats and Jungles. The following day, Tuesday 29th September, we all went down to the docks to meet with the hunger-strikers. A police car was creeping around watching us, but this was nothing unusual. But then more cars and vans began appearing and we grew nervous. We warned the migrants to leave, but they needn't have worried on this occasion as the police only took all of the white activists.

Some of us had passports with us, some, like me, did not – intending to stand in solidarity without papers with our sans-papiers friends. Regardless, we were all taken to the police station, our questions about why were ignored like before. We were made to sit in the hall of the station and wait for around two hours, presumably enough time for them to try to fabricate an excuse for taking us. Those of us without our passports decided not to state our nationality, which they did not like, saying it made checking our identity more difficult, despite the fact that most gave our names and dates of birth.

The rigmarole eventually over, the last of our party was released four and a half hours, a fact the police tried to obscure by getting them to sign a piece of paper with the incorrect time on it. Those who spoke French were not allowed to read the paper. The translator had mysteriously disappeared. They refused to sign something they were not allowed to read and were eventually released them. We are now collectively pursuing legal action against the French police. Unlike in England, individual officers are not accountable for their actions and you cannot press charges against them.

After later exchanging stories, we discovered that only two of our party were told we were there because of the “illegal” demo on Sunday, the others were simply told they were there for not having papers. All of us were questioned about No Borders and all refused to give information. On returning to the flat we discovered that police had visited us there also with summons for ten people present on the Sunday demo. The people in the flat told them they did not know how to get hold of some of the people as they had now left Calais. They were told that this was ok and that those people could just not attend. It seemed to me that they only came with the summons to show us that they know who we are and where we are staying in Calais. Because of all of this kerfuffle, the hunger-strike was postponed.



The bridges

## CONCLUSIONS?



The Africa house (before and after)

Earlier this week, I stood on a patch of grass overlooking the bridges. On my left, the police were in the process of destroying the shelters made under the bridges by some Pashtun and Iraqi migrants. What they didn't break, they sprayed with heavy duty chemicals, rendering them useless, and the noxious fumes were thick in the air. To the right, the bulldozers continued their destruction of what was the Africa house, a terrace of three houses, home at its busiest to around 70 people from Eritrea. The bleeping of the vehicles as they ploughed into the foundations filled me with rage as I remembered the laughter, language lessons, meals and games we had shared, and the raids, the violence I had witnessed there. I thought of all my friends who had got across, and those who were not so lucky.

On my final patrol of this visit, I cycled to what was the Iranian camp in the woods, looking around at the site of the old No Borders camp, feeling sad but also a sense of grim determination. I am glad of the nights I spent around the fire, drinking tea, flavoured with the mint we planted in a herb garden, now overgrown, abandoned. One day the fire was deemed too big, and the CRS appeared with dogs, and destroyed the camp.

Next to the camp, the motorway is filled with large trucks travelling across Europe in a relentless stream. This camp maybe destroyed, but around the corner, others are forming. As long as globalisation and the aggressive foreign policies of the West continue, and countries impose repressive political regimes on their inhabitants, whilst climate change looms and battles over natural resources are waged, people will come to here.

Today, Calais is full of ghosts, burnt out remains of structures, odd shoes, blankets, broken pallets revealing the violence that is a reality in this place. The sunshine that blazed during the camp in June seems far away now in the morning rain. There is a

chill in the air; the nights are drawing in ahead of the clocks changing. Abnormally large numbers of ducks have been migrating, apparently an omen of a particularly cold winter. Charter flights are leaving in a joint Franco-British deportation project and clearances are happening everyday, but despite this, resistance continues. You can clear the jungle, but you won't stop people migrating.....see you in Calais.

-sialac



Birds migrating over Lille, the dunes near the old Hazara 'jungle'

## LINKS AND RESOURCES

### CALAIS SPECIFIC

<http://www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com>  
[http:// www.calaisnoborder.eu.org/](http://www.calaisnoborder.eu.org/)  
[http:// www.contre-faits.org/](http://www.contre-faits.org/)  
[http:// www.twitter.com/calaisolidarity](http://www.twitter.com/calaisolidarity)  
[http:// www.calaiswitnesses.wordpress.com/](http://www.calaiswitnesses.wordpress.com/)  
<http://www.calaishungerstrike.wordpress.com>

### INDYMEDIA

[http:// www.lille.indymedia.org/](http://www.lille.indymedia.org/)  
[http:// www.indymedia.org.uk](http://www.indymedia.org.uk)

### NO BORDERS

[http:// www.noborders.org.uk/](http://www.noborders.org.uk/)  
(links to regional groups)  
[http:// www.lesvos09.antira.info/](http://www.lesvos09.antira.info/)  
[http:// www.noborder.org](http://www.noborder.org)

### STOCKHOLM

<http://www.ecln.org/ECLN-statement-on-Stockholm-Programme-April-2009-eng.pdf>  
<http://www.spunk.org/texts/places/germany/sp001630/peter.html>  
[http:// www.stockholm.noblogs.org](http://www.stockholm.noblogs.org)

### DETENTION/DEPORTATION

<http://www.migreurop.org/?lang=en>  
<http://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/europe/france/introduction.html#c1939>  
<http://stopdeportation.net/>  
<http://caic.org.uk>  
[http:// www.noii.org.uk/](http://www.noii.org.uk/)  
[http:// www.antilager.entodaspertes.net/](http://www.antilager.entodaspertes.net/)

### PRIVILEGE

<http://www.cwsworkshop.org/index.html>  
<http://www.case.edu/president/aaction/UnpackingTheKnapsack.pdf>  
[http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/resources/paradigmshifts\\_race.html](http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/resources/paradigmshifts_race.html)  
<http://www.synecdochic.dreamwidth.org/313918.html>  
<http://www.guerrillamamamedicine.wordpress.com/2009/03/17/we-dont-need-another-anti-racism-101/>  
<http://www.girlarmy.org/reader/Three%20Pillars.pdf>  
[http:// www.colours.mahost.org/](http://www.colours.mahost.org/)

<http://www.raceprivilegeidentity.wordpress.com/>  
<http://www.carolmoore.net/sfm/vs-dominance.html>

### COP15

[http:// www.nevertrustacop.org](http://www.nevertrustacop.org)  
<http://www.wombles.org.uk/article2009105666.php>

### BLOGS

[http:// www.defendillealaliens.wordpress.com](http://www.defendillealaliens.wordpress.com)  
[http:// www.agirlandherthumb.wordpress.com](http://www.agirlandherthumb.wordpress.com)  
<http://www.alongwayfromeden.blogspot.com/>

### OTHERS

<http://www.activist-trauma.net/>  
[http:// www.shiftmag.co.uk/](http://www.shiftmag.co.uk/)  
<http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/>  
<http://www.blackcrosscollective.org/>  
<http://www.actionmedics.org.uk>  
<http://www.mailwatch.co.uk/category/immigration/>  
[http://www.networkforclimateaction.org.uk/toolkits/press\\_and\\_media.html](http://www.networkforclimateaction.org.uk/toolkits/press_and_media.html)  
<http://www.fraw.org.uk/gs/handbook/media.htm>



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**£1/€1**suggested donation all proceeds to  
Calais Migrant Solidarity