

**Open letter to the French Prime Minister, Manuel Valls
and to the French Minister of the Interior, Bernard Cazeneuve**

**on the migratory situation in Calais and its surroundings,
as well as on the English Channel and the North Sea coasts**

10th of July 2014

M. le Premier ministre
Hôtel de Matignon
57, rue de Varenne
75700 Paris

M. le Ministre de l'Intérieur
Place Beauvau
75800 Paris Cedex 08

Dear Prime Minister, Dear Minister of the Interior,

The policy you are pursuing in relation to the migrants in the region of Calais and on the North Sea coast is in many ways similar to that followed by preceding ministers of the interior, Messers Nicolas Sarkozy, Claude Guéant and Eric Besson.

At the time of the presidential election in May 2012, President François Hollande, you announced that there would be change. But events over the last two years show that nothing has changed. We are obliged to state that:

You lack courage when the French government decides to carry out police operations against vulnerable people – among them women, men, and children who have wandered the roads for months, slept out often in temperatures under 10°C, have been on hunger strike in order to get a hearing. During these police operations, on several occasions brutalities by agents of the forces of order have been witnessed, with the use of tear gas and putting into detention centres people whom the border police cannot deport. These are recurring features of migration policies that have been followed by successive governments since the closure of the Sangatte camp in December 2002. In part, they are linked to the externalisation of British migration controls into French territory.

You lack courage because you know very well that this sort of operation will in no way resolve the situation as regards migration in the Calais region. Earlier arrests have shown this on many occasions. Some of those arrested will return, with other migrants, because their will to travel is more powerful than the measures taken by the British and French authorities. In proof of this, many

people do manage to cross the Channel, albeit at considerable cost. Dozens of migrants have lost their lives trying to make the journey from France to England, to say nothing of those who are wounded and traumatised by their journey through the region.

You lack courage also in being unwilling to accept that the migrants' motives for going to England depend very often on considerations of language, family or community, on the incapacity of those European countries through which they have travelled to establish a real politics of welcome and reception. The inhuman and degrading conditions which the migrants confront in the Calais region, to which the evictions by the forces of order have just added in recent days, simply reinforce the will of the migrants to leave French soil, and that of other Schengen countries, in quest of a country where they hope to lead a better life.

You lack courage in being unwilling to establish a place where French and British authorities, and other parties involved, could help the migrants to take forward their plans be it request for asylum, for family reunion etc., even to go to England. It is true that to move in that direction would necessarily lead to some differences with the British authorities, but the quest for a solution must not be limited to a Franco-British dialogue. The migrant situation in the Calais region, like that which prevails in Greece, involves also the European Union.

You lack courage in being unwilling to draw up a balance-sheet of the twelve years since the destruction of the camp at Sangatte, to find out, for example, how many migrants have been intercepted, on both sides of the Channel crossing, to uncover the cost of the many measures taken, including the permanent presence of one or more units of the *compagnies républicaines de sécurités* (CRS) in Calais, to make the results of this investigation public and, in order then to construct – with the different institutional and NGO parties concerned – an alternative to this migration policy which forces migrants to live in such inhuman and degrading conditions.

Finally, you lack courage in tolerating the demands of some citizens, or representatives of public authorities, of a racist nature, in relation to the migrants which are passing through the region.

All of this simply feeds hatred towards foreigners.

We believe that you are familiar with the different points enumerated above. It remains for you, Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, to hear what is being said to you by local, national¹ and international associations who have been following the migration situation in Calais for nearly twenty years: That strengthening controls on migration is in no way a solution that will resolve the dead-end into which both migrants and the authorities find themselves.

Yours sincerely,

¹ ATD Quart Monde, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, La Cimade, Emmaüs France, Médecins du Monde, Secours Catholique, « A l'égard des exilés à Calais : Les mêmes violences, la même incohérence, les mêmes échecs », Press release of the 2nd of July 2014.

Signatories :

Association networks

- Migreurop
- ELENA (Réseau d'avocats pour le droit d'asile)
- Réseau chrétien - Immigrés (RCI)
- Réseau Education sans frontières (RESF)

Associations

- ATTAC
- Auberge des migrants (Calais)
- Collectif de soutien de l'Ecole des Hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) aux sans-papiers et aux migrant.es
- Collectif de soutien des exilés (Paris)
- Compagnie Naje - Nous n'Abandonnerons Jamais l'Espoir (Antony - 92)
- Environnement Développement Alternatif (Lille)
- Fraternité Migrants Bassin Minier 62
- Groupe d'information et de soutien des immigré.e.s (GISTI)
- Histoire d'eux (Albias, Tarn et Garonne)
- Itinérance (Cherbourg)
- Le Réveil Voyageur (Calais)
- Ligue des droits de l'homme (Fédération du Pas-de-Calais)
- Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (MRAP)
- Ouverture & Humanité (Calais)
- Salam Nord/Pas-de Calais
- Section LDH de l'EHESS (Paris)
- Terre d'Errance Norrent-Fontes
- Terre d'Errance Steenvoorde
- T'OP! Théâtre de l'Opprimé 59/62

Political parties

- Europe Ecologie les Verts
- Parti communiste français (PCF)
- Parti de Gauche (PG)

A copy of this letter has been sent to the Home Office and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to the Council of the European Union, and to the President and Vice-Presidents of the *Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs* committee of the European Parliament.