

# noborder network newsletter

#1 , November/December 07



## Why a newsletter?

After the Gatwick No Borders camp, we want to continue building a strong and active network of No Border groups in the UK. The newsletter would not only (but also) be an outreach tool, with action reports and information on migration and asylum rights. It could also be used by No Border groups to communicate and share information. Importantly, we think some space should be given to have political discussions relevant to the network. Hopefully it would help co-ordinate national actions and campaigns, camps and gatherings, and whatever else comes to mind. We're thinking the newsletter could appear monthly, but that depends on how it is received. We are relying on active contributions from No Border groups, reports on indymedia that can be copied and pasted, and FEEDBACK on the usefulness of the newsletter. Finally we are asking you to print it out and distribute to No Border activists and at your events.

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## No Borders

No Borders does not call for a reform of deportation centres or for 'fairer' immigration controls but for their complete abolition. It is an international network demanding freedom of movement for all and working for this through direct action. From 21-24 September, the first ever UK No Borders camp took place outside Crawley; it included protests against Tinsley House, the deportation centre currently operating in conjunction with Gatwick Airport.

## After the camp

A national No Borders gathering is being talked about for December or early next year. It would be a networking meeting lasting two days, possibly somewhere in the North of England.

## Dover-Calais

Would it be worth having another No Borders camp in Britain, and for that to be held near Dover? Some people at the Gatwick camp thought so. It could be organised simultaneously with a camp near the French port of Calais. Another possibility could be a joint day of action. Dover is a port of entry for migrants and asylum seekers coming from Calais.

## London No Borders and Iraqi Kurds picket UNHCR

The 9th of November was a day of action for Iraqi Kurdish refugees groups. In London a group of about 30 Iraqi Kurds demonstrated along with supporters from London No Borders opposite the UN High Commission for Refugees. There were simultaneous demonstrations of 500 protesters in the Swiss city of Berne, and in Norway and Sweden.

Iraqi Kurdish asylum seekers in Europe are living under the constant anxiety of being forcibly returned to Iraq. Britain has already deported over 100 Kurds back to Iraq and is holding a further 60 in detention awaiting removal. Germany has returned one Kurdish asylum seeker a week from August 2007 – October 2007 and increasingly other European countries have turned down Iraqi Kurdish asylum seekers asking for leave to remain in Europe.

Protestors called on the Kurdistan Regional Government to stop cooperating with European governments to forcibly deport Kurdish and Iraqi asylum seekers.

## Sabotaging Detention

The locks of the Northern Assurance Building in Manchester were super-glued shut in the early hours of Friday, 2 November. This was an act of sabotage against FD Tamesis, housed in this building, intended to highlight the company's involvement in the construction of what will be the UK's largest immigrant deportation centre, Brook House near Gatwick Airport. 2 November was called as a national day of action against Brook House by the No Borders network.

Financial Dynamics, of which FD Tamesis is the Manchester branch, is a 'business and financial communications' consultancy firm which is

managing public relations for Brook House on behalf of the Home Office. Brook House will have 426 beds, making it the largest deportation centre in the country. The problems and poor conditions facing detainees in deportation centres have been well-documented, for example by the BBC documentary "Real Story" (2005), which presented evidence of staff violence and racism. Some detainees will be deported to countries where they face the threat of political and other forms of violence. Many are being deported after living in the UK for very long periods of time; they are being uprooted from the

lives that they have built here.

The group responsible hope that today's action will encourage FD to reconsider its involvement with the Brook House project. They further hope that their prank will inspire FD Tamesis staff to take action within the company. Recognising that the destruction of one lock will not be sufficient, however, the group wish to make it known that similar actions should be expected in future.

## Sheffield-Lindholme

Asylum seekers, refugees, trade unionists and supporters from all over the North marched from the Home Office in Sheffield to Lindholme Detention Centre near Doncaster between 26-28th October. The marchers were demanding "The right to work for asylum seekers" and stating that "Seeking asylum is not a crime." They finished at Lindholme immigration removal centre where asylum seekers are often held without having committed any criminal offence.

Run by the Prison Service, Lindholme "Immigration Removal Centre" near Doncaster holds up to 112 male detainees. An unannounced inspection by HM

Chief Inspector of Prisons in 2004 recommended that the Government "should review whether Lindholme is an appropriate facility for an immigration removal centre due to it being "deficient in all four of our key tests: safety, respect, purposeful activity and preparation for release".

Over 40,000 asylum seekers pass through the UK's 10 prison-like detention centres each year. Unlike prisoners, they have no release date, few legal rights and have often committed no criminal offence.

## Leeds No Borders demo

Around a hundred people turned out on 3 November in support of the 60 families targeted by the Home Office, as part of the Clan Ebor Pilot project for fast track deportation.

30 days to prove otherwise then subjected to a further case conference, after which the Home Office will attempt to deport them.

Under the Clan Ebor scheme 60 families in Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield are having their situation reviewed. They are invited to a 'case conference' where the whole family, children included, are reminded of exactly why they have no right, according to the Home Office, to be in the UK. They are given

Organised by Leeds No Borders the good natured crowd handed out information leaflets, encouraged people to sign a petition, write to their MPs, and engaged passers-by in lively conversation about asylum issues generally and Clan Ebor in particular.

## Harmondsworth 4

In November 2006 detainees at Harmondsworth immigration detention centre protested against conditions inside the centre and their treatment by the guards. The centre was damaged and the detainees were moved to other detention centres and prisons.

Three detainees were charged with criminal damage and a further detainee was charged with conspiracy to cause criminal damage. The trial of these "Harmondsworth 4" is due to start in January.

## Cardiff No Borders pickets

Several pickets have now taken place at the Cardiff offices of the 'Border and Immigration Agency'. As well as being the location where individuals who are seeking asylum are required to sign in at regularly while their claim is being processed, it has been discovered that Immigration "snatch squads" operate from this building.

The purposes of the pickets is show solidarity with the people who attend to sign on and to let them know that they are welcome and to highlight our government's barbaric treatment of people in our own communities.

## US-Mexico

More than 500 people participated in the No Borders Camp at the US/Mexican border during the week of 7-11 November. Actions during the camp included a rally and march on 9 November at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facility in El Centro, CA and a memorial service on November 10 at a cemetery in Holtville, CA where the remains of about 600 migrants who have died crossing the border are buried.

On the evening of 11 November, participants in the first international solidarity action to take place on both sides of a border dismantled the camp and marched west on either side of what has become a 15 foot wall dividing Mexicali (Mexico) and Calexico (United States), converging on the port of entry to protest the militarised border. The demonstration was peaceful until the US Border Patrol, without giving an order to disperse or other warning, brutally attacked those on the US side with point-blank rounds of pepper-spray pellets, batons, and swarm tactics, leaving several badly injured. The Border Patrol made three arrests for impeding a federal officer. This event was the final action of the No Borders Camp, and came after a week of peaceful confrontation and resistance to the border system.