

Who is illegal?

No One Is Illegal

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The parent?

Denise McNeil: "The Home Office want to deport me to Jamaica, leaving my children behind in London. I have two sons who are eight and seventeen and I speak to Tre, my youngest, nearly every day. When he visits me, he says "Mum, do I have to go? I want to stay here with you." Tre was born here and my eldest son has grown up in the UK. I cannot take them back to Jamaica because our lives would be in danger. My brother was deported from the UK and he was killed at the start of the year.

I was arrested for possession of cannabis for personal use. When I finished my time in prison, because I am not British they sent me straight to a detention centre. On 9th September 2010, it was two whole years since I had my freedom.

I am fighting my case and believe in justice. In January I went on hunger strike to make changes and make the public see the way we have been treated and the conditions we are kept in. The guards assaulted me, leaving me with back problems which I'll probably have forever. They wanted to stop me talking to the other women and the media so they put me in isolation, and then sent me to Holloway Prison.

I don't regret the hunger strike though. I didn't just do it for me. No one just did it for themselves. We did it for all, for everyone in detention. They shouldn't be detaining mothers and children in detention centres. People suffer so much emotionally. They should close detention down. Everyone should be treated the same, not differently because of nationality or colour."



Tre-Anri: the 8-year-old who will be left behind if his mother is deported

The partner?

As of November the Con Dems are keeping partners and families apart by introducing a pre entry language requirement for people on spousal visas. This was designed under Labour but is being implemented a year early by the coalition government as a sign that it is prepared to be tougher than its predecessor.

Emily Churchill: "My husband and I speak Arabic together, he is learning English and we both think this is very important. But this law is not about enabling new immigrants to learn English. This new rule discriminates against spouses from parts of the world where English tuition is poor or non-existent, not to mention those who cannot afford to pay for English classes. What's more, it doesn't apply to spouses from within the EU who don't speak English. The rule shows complete disregard for the right of married couples and families to be together, and punishes people like me for marrying outside the EU."



Emily and her partner

The worker?

Emilia: "I began working at Fitness First in 2008. Everything was going well until the cleaning company changed. They failed to pay me one month, then two months, then three. They kept saying that the money would soon be in my account until the day arrived when they sacked me. They said that I could not claim anything because I was illegally working here and did not have rights to anything.

The Latin American Workers Association helped me to confront the company. We threatened to publish what they were doing and in four days my money was deposited. However, I received increasingly frequent and menacing threats that they would search for me until I was tracked down in my house by the police. I was detained because my visa had expired.

They told me Yarl's Wood was a detention centre but I began to realize that it was not: it was a prison. Many inside had sentences of many years. There are many suicide attempts. Medical attention is terrible. Immigration never gave us a chance. They did not give us access to our own money. The food is very bad and we chucked it in the bin many times in protest.

I always hoped that I would leave with my freedom, but I was deported as a detainee three months after I was imprisoned. The moment the plane took off was very sad for me."



Latin American Workers demonstration which Emilia joined before she was detained

Immigrants, Benefit scroungers, Single Mums

So-called 'left-wing' Ed Balls steps up to the Labour leader plate outflanking the Con-Dem Government in right-wing reactionary rhetoric about immigration, promising to fight against the free-movement of people in order, he claims, to defend British Workers. And sadly, it is said that he has taken this step in order to appeal to the trade unions. Balls panders to prejudice and plays on people's fears; fears generated by a genuine concern about job security but directed at the wrong target.

Balls also shows himself to be economically illiterate. He argues that whilst the free movement of goods and services is good, free movement of labour is bad. This so-called socialist believes that Capital should be given free rein to move to sites of low wages and poor conditions, whilst workers are shackled to their nation state, unable to move around to improve their opportunities and livelihoods! And just when you thought it was safe to say goodbye to these New Labour ideas, here comes **The ConDem Nation**. When the Coalition

Government first arrived it gave those fighting for migrant rights a little surprise by announcing that they were going to stop the detention of children. More on that later. But beware of Tories and Liberals bearing gifts. In the next breath they talked about putting a cap on the number of people entering the country every year from outside the EU, expressing fear that our borders were "unsafe" in Labour's hands and now they will really control the numbers.

The secret face of the ConDem Nation is even nastier. They are currently piloting a scheme to forcibly expel European migrants who are destitute and homeless. Under current rules, Europeans are not subject to the same immigration restrictions as non-Europeans, reflecting a familiar racism and also the reality of the European Union. But now the state is seeking the power to treat those European migrants it doesn't like in much the same way. Already people from Bulgaria and Romania – the so called Accession Countries – have less than other European Union countries. They don't have

the same rights to work and have no recourse to public funds. Now the Government is saying 'OK, we've taken away your livelihood now we shall deport you for being homeless and destitute'. Sick or what?

The people most likely to be targeted by these developments are the Roma against whom there is so much prejudice. Whilst in France Sarkowski is evicting and deporting Roma by a very public campaign of raids, the ConDems are approaching it by stealth.

Both the New Labour of Ed Balls and the ConDem government seek to scapegoat migrant workers, blaming the hardship of working-class life on a section of our class. They are trying the same tactic with welfare claimants and single parents. The more obvious cause of this hardship is this slash-and-burn government, the fat cat bosses, the gratuitously minted bankers. We must combat this racist propaganda and their cheerleaders in the press with a united fightback against the cuts.

Challenge the media's lies

Myth: Britain is in danger of being swamped

More people does not mean less wealth or a lower quality of life. Holland has almost twice as high density of population but is a rich country. Albania is half as densely populated but is very poor. There is not a fixed cake of wealth within each nation, with the slices getting thinner each time a new person arrives. Every immigrant is a person who can contribute to society and immigrants are on average younger than the existing population so can help support the old.

Myth: Migrants are a drain on the UK economy

Migrants make a huge contribution to the UK economy, paying £2.5 billion more in tax each year than they take out in services. The taxes and national insurance contributions paid by migrant workers into the UK economy provide more resources to fund our public services.

Myth: Asylum seekers get housing before local people

Asylum seekers do not jump the queue for council housing and cannot choose where they live. They are often housed in 'hard to let' properties and the local council does not pay for it. The truth is, a decrease in the building of public housing and increase in right to buy of council properties over the years has contributed to very long waiting lists for public housing.

Myth: Immigrants only come to Britain to scrounge benefits

Living on benefits isn't easy, but asylum seekers have to manage on even less. They are entitled to only 70% of Income Support, and cannot claim many of the benefits others rely upon, such as Disability Living Allowance. Oxfam and the Refugee Council found that 85% of asylum seekers experience hunger, 95% cannot afford to buy clothes or shoes and 80% are unable to maintain good health. EU citizens who come to Britain to work are not necessarily entitled to benefits when they cannot work, for example if they have a baby or are injured at work.

Myth: Britain is a soft touch for asylum

Britain's asylum system is very tough; it is very difficult to be recognised as a refugee. Of the people fleeing from Iraq, 88% were turned down at the earliest stage in 2006. Many thousands – including children and families - are imprisoned in detention centres not knowing when they will be released or whether they will be deported.



A recent example of the way these myths are propagated

Tube cleaners win the living wage

After strike action and a tremendous organising effort, the tube cleaners, organised through the RMT, finally won their main demand.

Throughout their struggle the cleaners were attacked by the bosses – sacked, deported and harassed. One RMT rep was sacked by ISS at Stonebridge depot where, during the

strike they had seen the strongest pickets and where cleaners are routinely asked to do the work of skilled engineers, without the training, health and safety, and pay to go with it. Last year another rep was sacked for taking and wearing a safety hat out of the "free issue" store. Cleaners work nine hours a day, get no free travel, no pensions, no sickness pay and often have no mess room, forcing them to change and keep their stuff in the same cupboards in which the chemicals are kept. When a cleaner died after using unsafe chemicals in an unventilated space, the conditions remained the same for the worker who took over the shift. One cleaner was found the morning after she had died in a cupboard.



Clara Osagiede, RMT Cleaners' Grade secretary, addresses a demonstration for the Living Wage and better conditions

A major feature of the cleaners' struggle was the way private cleaning companies, ISS, ITS, ICS and GBM, used the immigration status of organisers as a weapon against them, colluding with racist immigration controls to arrange the deportation of key activists. Papers for all is a matter of working class self-defence.

Cleaning on the London Underground is a hard and

hazardous job. It should not be undervalued. The cleaners' remaining demands of free travel, sick pay, pensions and papers are of immediate priority and should be fought for by all grades.

Clara Osagiede, Secretary of the Cleaners' Grade, said of the struggle, "It's not just about pay. It is about freedom: freedom to work in a decent working environment; freedom to work in decent conditions and to be given proper conditions of service. How would you feel if you worked in an environment where you could be sacked just like that? We want to be treated with dignity and respect, so there are lots of issues that we still need to take on. It's going to be a long struggle, but we have to take it step by step."

How little is your England?

New atlas shows we're being crowded out by the rich

Britain is tiny if you are poor, but enormous if you are wealthy - and the wealthy like to keep it that way.

In "The Atlas of the Real World", Danny Dorling and Mark Newman reveal that one third of Britain's population now lives in just 3 percent of the land area: a densely-packed belt running from London to Liverpool. If everyone in Britain lived this way (and most of us approximately do) this would indeed be a "tiny, overcrowded island": only slightly larger than Wales. It is even smaller if you are poorer: for the young men interviewed in a Rowntree Foundation study in 2008, Britain was a bleak part of Peterborough measuring just 200 metres square. Beyond that, the world felt hostile and dangerous.

This is partly due to the privatisation of public space. Whole city centres are being handed over to private corporations, like the ones that own Liverpool One and other "shopping cities". Cities have fewer and fewer places where people can even sit down without handing over money. Children, women and the old are confined to their homes as the streets are surrendered to the auto industry.

The cause is a kind of "flooding" Migration Watch never mentions: not by immigrants, but by the likes of Migration Watch founder, Sir Andrew Green, whose Britain includes large, comfortable homes in Oxfordshire and central London and, for some of his allies, truly vast ancestral estates. Since 2007, "smart money" has poured out of Wall Street and into land, driving up prices and restricting access worldwide. Nearly half of Cambodia has been bought and fenced off by foreign speculators. In Britain, the global super-rich drove up the price of agricultural land (doubling it in places) in their search for privacy, golf-courses and grazing for polo ponies.

This is the real face of "flooding" - and it's visible wherever you see a private security firm.

Detention centre resistance

Everyday, detainees assert their humanity and freedom in acts of resistance. Here are a few examples of collective resistance from 2010 alone:

- **Feb** - Over 84 women go on hunger strike at Yarl's Wood, Bedford with many demands including an end to separation of mothers and children, access to medical attention and the abolition of detention for asylum seeker and torture victims.
- **April** - 180 people face riot police in Oakington, Cambridgeshire following the death of a detainee refused medical attention.
- **August** - Over 100 people go on hunger strike at Campsfield House, Oxford. Detainees state they are regularly "tortured, restrained, strapped like animals and beaten to effect removal."

The government's "alternative" to locking up children

In a show of acquiescence to the "liberal" spirit of their junior coalition partners, the Tories initially agreed to end the detention of immigrant children in prison-like centres such as Yarl's Wood, this has now reduced to an intention to "minimise" detention. But given that they have no intention of ending the racist immigration policies which see hundreds of desperate asylum seekers snatched from their homes and expelled from the country, they were confronted with a problem: how to maintain their deportation-happy policies now that they can't just cart kids off to jail while they fill the plane with fuel?

The "idealised process", now piloted in the north-west of England with fourteen families, involved informing families that they could be deported "at some point in the next two weeks" if they refused to leave the UK voluntarily. If the government's aim was to develop a policy that maintains all the demeaning and brutal authoritarianism of detention without involving an actual detention centre, then they may accomplish it with this scheme.

The "idealised process" leaves families due for

deportation in a state of desperate, terrified flux in which any night's sleep could be interrupted by a gang of immigration cops at the door, ready to "remove the family from the property" so that they can be "taken to the airport to board the plane." And, if the government eventually decides that it will provide specific dates for "removal" (rather than "at some point in the next two weeks"), then the family is expected to "remain in the property ready" until that point – in other words, house arrest. In other words, detention.

Not surprisingly none of the fourteen pilot families were keen to be voluntarily removed. One family did come forward (because they thought they had to) and went to the IMO (International Organisation for Migration), who refused to help them because they did not believe the deportation to be voluntary. It did not go ahead. Most recently the child targeted under the scheme is Child M. In August Child M's mother attended an interview in which she was asked to voluntarily return to Iran otherwise she would be forcibly removed. She refused and was informed that she would be issued with removal orders within 2 weeks. Last week, the family's solicitor received a message that the family are to be deported to Iran on September 14th. It seems this family are being included in the Coalition Governments' trial of chartering flights to return asylum seekers with

children to their countries of origin as quickly as possible. All attempts to gain asylum in the UK have been unsuccessful despite expert witness statements which authenticate the arrest warrant for Child M's mother and sister. At the point of going to print we do not know what will happen.

What is clear though is that we need trade unionists to get more involved in these fights and we need to ensure that this policy is fought not only on the basis of case-by-case lobbying to save individuals from deportation, but through a concerted trade-union campaign that asserts the right of workers to have the same freedom of movement across borders that capital does.



A child's hand waves from behind bars at Yarl's Wood detention centre as he shouts "Freedom!" in unison with the solidarity demonstrators outside.

(Article Adapted from *Solidarity*)

A victory against forced deportations

The Home Office has now admitted what those freedom loving people in Kurdistan have known since April: the Kurdistan Regional Government that administers the northern part of Iraq is refusing to accept forcible deportations from Europe. More than 1000 Iraqi Kurds were deported from the UK between 2005 and 2009, causing needless human suffering for the British Government's immigration agenda.

The Home Office's admission comes after a two year campaign in Kurdistan organised by the International Federation of Iraqi Refugees, in which people deported there, their families, politicians, writers, journalists and others demonstrated, petitioned, held press conferences and wrote letters to shame the Government. We were supported by people here in Britain and elsewhere in Europe who demonstrated, wrote letters and blockaded detention centres.

Together, this made the inhuman deportation policy, and the agreement between the KRG and the European Governments that legitimised it, into a big issue in Kurdistan and it forced the government into committing to stop accepting any more deportations by force.

This is a victory for our movement against the barbarism of forcible deportations and shows the strength we have when acting together.

However, our struggle continues. The British Government has found a new tactic and is now deporting people direct to Baghdad. There have been three mass deportations there this year. This is a great crime and we must again stand together

with the progressive forces and the working class in Iraq to jointly campaign against both the British and Iraqi Governments' inhuman policy. In addition, we must continue to keep the pressure on the Kurdistan Regional Government so they do not go back on their commitment.

We ask you to join us and build a strong movement across Europe to fight for equality and humanity for all.



Solidarity activists blockade Colnbrook detention centre to stop a mass deportation flight to Iraqi Kurdistan, May 2009.

"They'll cheer your eviction too" – the persecution of travellers

Pikies, gypos, call them what you will. The Nazis tried to exterminate them on an industrial scale and they have been persecuted ever since. At the same time as the Nazi genocide "our" government effectively banned their main source of income with the 1936 scrap metal laws. It has been making

life worse for them ever since. In the early 90s it told them to buy their own land. They did as told. Needless to say 9 times out of 10 planning permission was refused. They need to park somewhere. They've carried on regardless. Now the new government is planning to make evictions from unlicensed sites instant. Again and again families are violently evicted from their homes; a ruthless ethnic cleansing hurtling towards the mass expulsion of hundreds of travellers from Dale Farm (a traveller site in Basildon), itself a desperate refuge from earlier brutal evictions.

The UK is not alone in its racist scapegoating. In France 128 camps have recently been destroyed and 977 Gypsies deported. Sarkozy talks of shipping back residents to their "homelands"; the same term used by Pro Nazi Vichy to describe the herding of Roma and Jews into concentration camps. "Homelands" like Hungary, where the BNP's mates in Jobbik routinely attack Roma settlements. Slovakia, where the National Party demand a "final solution for the Gypsy problem". Where Roma frequently face violent attack- shootings, beatings, abuse (including of kids) in police custody. A nightmare repeated in Romania and Bulgaria. Those Romanian gypsies didn't come here to live off the fat of the land. They came here to stay alive.

In France, thousands furiously took to the streets to protest at the mass deportations. In the UK only a handful of sturdy sympathisers showed solidarity. Perhaps for the French the memory of their Vichy collaboration with the Nazi genocide is raw enough. Here we stand back while rich property owners cheer the evictions. When you get sacked or your home repossessed they'll be cheering the scum who do that too.

No borders in the workplace

Have any of your workmates been taken away to be detained and deported? It happens all the time. And things are going to get worse unless workers unite to stop these things happening.

The workplace is increasingly becoming a border post. Immigration controls are used to divide and discipline workers, to stop you from organising for better conditions.

On the one hand "rogue bosses" take advantage of "illegality" to treat people like slaves. On the other hand "good bosses" check on employees' papers and bring Immigration Officers on to the site.

When unions try to organise amongst the low paid, bosses often call in the Home Office to organise raids for "illegal

immigrants" or migrants without the right work papers and so on.

Employers are now obliged to regularly check their workforce. Black people and people whose first language isn't English are regularly singled out to be asked for their papers.

Caring professions

Do you work in a caring profession – nurse, health visitor, doctor, teacher, social worker? You are being asked to spy on your clients, check their immigration status is in order, report them to the Home Office, cut off their service and so on. That is not why you went into this work. Several unions have adopted a "Don't ask. Don't tell." position. Talk to colleagues about this, and encourage them to do so too!

Airport staff

Perhaps you work at the airport or on an aeroplane. You will be

expected to help deport people but you don't have to. Several deportations have been successfully stopped when airline staff have refused to take part.

Migrant workers

Get in touch with No One Is Illegal or with the organisations listed below for support with organising.

Trade Unions

Are you in a union? Ask what they are doing to support migrant workers threatened with deportation, ask them what they are going to do about checks on people's papers, what they are going to do to support workers who refuse to be immigration police. The fight for migrant rights will be led by migrants, but whether you are of migrant status or not, this is everyone's struggle. Solidarity can be shown by supporting disputes and by holding the unions to account.

No One Is Illegal

There can be no such thing as "fair" or "just" or "reasonable" or "non racist" immigration controls. No One Is Illegal makes no distinction between "economic migrants" and "refugees", between the "legal" and the "illegal". These are political categories invented by politicians. By dividing us, they distract our attention from the attacks being made on all of us.

No One Is Illegal exists to put an alternative vision forward: that our interests lie in supporting each other, that organised labour is stronger if it fights with migrant workers and that a society free of divisive and oppressive immigration controls is possible.

Find out more and take action

- Practise saying it out loud: "Immigration controls are by definition racist. I believe no one is illegal." Then say it to lots of other people!
- Read our series of pamphlets, including "Building An Anti-deportation Campaign", "Workers' Control not Immigration Controls", "Right To Come and Stay For All Not Amnesty For Some", "A Voice From the Aliens". Order printed pamphlets or download them at noii.org.uk.
- Check out other groups who oppose immigration controls and deportations: stopdeportation.net, noborders.org.uk, ncadc.org.uk, www.lawas.org.uk, Fight Racism Fight Imperialism
- Raise the issue where you live: book a No One Is Illegal speaker or workshop.
- Challenge immigration controls in your workplace: order a copy of our trade union pack and ask us to come and speak to your branch.
- Start a No One Is Illegal group: get in touch for ideas and advice!



The Resistance

Resistance to immigration controls goes back a long way. Here are just a few examples.

- Self organisation of Jewish migrant workers in the Voice for the Aliens turned around the TUC's appalling position of support for immigration controls.
- Some unions have moved on from there. NALGO (the predecessor of UNISON) conference demanded the abolition of controls as did NAQPO – the probation workers union and then UCU – the union of college lecturers.
- In Germany an organisation known as Deportation Class has campaigned against Lufthansa Airlines to prevent deportations, Deportation Class carrier bags produced by the organisation can be seen all over Germany. The German pilot's association 'Cockpit' have declared that it is illegal to deport human beings against their will.
- When the supermarket chain ASDA started calling Asian employees to produce their passports over the trolley, the GMB union woke up to the need to fight against employer sanctions
- There has been resistance to the implementation of Section 10 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 which makes "hard case support" conditional on performance of community work. In Liverpool the YMCA tendered for the scheme. But after outrage was expressed by the undocumented and their supporters the tender was withdrawn.
- The National Union of Journalists and UCATT, the building workers union, have taken industrial action and campaigned successfully to stop their members being deported.
- In 2005 UNISON successfully organised to support social workers refusing to implement Section 9 of the Children's Act, whereby the Government was trying to give parents the choice of agreeing with deportation or having their children taken into care. The Government backed down although the legislation is still in place.



Tube cleaners' demonstration at City Hall, 2008

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