

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



REFUGEE RIGHTS
EUROPE



Dear friends and supporters,

As 2020 has come to a close, we reflect upon our achievements over the past year. The unprecedented challenges brought on by the global pandemic, which caused such devastation across the globe, also fundamentally changed the way our sector works, interacts and operates. At Refugee Rights Europe, we were thankfully able to quickly adapt our organisational strategy to these new realities and continued our advocacy work calling for the rights of displaced people to be upheld across Europe within this uncertain and unprecedented situation. During this difficult time, we were honoured and grateful to work alongside a worldwide community of committed individuals, organisations and grassroots groups tirelessly working for the rights of refugees and displaced people.

By relentlessly and unequivocally standing up for the rights and dignity of all individuals on European soil, irrespective of their immigration status, we took a clear stance in 2020 for a rights-based European approach to asylum and migration where discrimination, mistreatment and abuse are not accepted. Our work, through our various activities throughout 2020, helped to incrementally pave the way for change; it set the agenda and tone for debates on asylum and migration in the European Union and at the United Nations level, as we anchored our advocacy calls in international and national law, human rights principles and direct evidence from the ground and presented a compelling and intellectually convincing case for change. Our inclusive methodology in itself also contributed to a more just and humane Europe: we continued to gather and amplify the perspectives of refugees and displaced people themselves, as well as activists and grassroots groups working relentlessly on the frontlines. These are voices that are seldom heard in the corridors of power, but which need to take the centre stage.

Globally, 2020 was also characterised by the renewed strength of the Black Lives Matter movement which seeks to bring justice, healing, and freedom to people of colour across the globe. Inspired by this powerful movement, we developed an anti-racism action plan for 2020-2021 which is currently being implemented and mainstreamed across our organisation.

Throughout 2020, it was evident that stakeholders trusted Refugee Rights Europe and took our work to heart. Actors ranging all the way from the European Commission and the office of the Council of Europe's Commissioner for human rights, to grassroots groups on the Greek islands, the French-Italian border, northern France, and the Spanish enclaves in Morocco, all engaged and collaborated with RRE over the course of 2020. In addition, well-established civil society actors and INGOs used our reports and entered into powerful advocacy collaborations with us, while traditional media picked up and disseminated our reports and advocacy statements to the wider public.

2020 was certainly a very active, dynamic and impactful year for our organisation. In this report, we highlight some of our proudest achievements from the past year. We are very conscious that none of this work would have been possible without the incredible support we enjoyed from many individuals, organisations and funding bodies over the course of the year. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made our work possible throughout 2020. We are incredibly grateful to the Beryl Alexander Charity, Christie Foundation, the Evan Cornish Foundation, GlobalGiving, Help Refugees /Choose Love, Lansdowne Partners Ltd, the Lush Foundation, the Open Society Foundations (OSF), and the Treebeard Trust for their invaluable financial support in 2020. Sincerest thanks also to all of our fantastic team members, volunteers, researchers, photographers, designers, advisors, trustees, partner organisations, supporters and individual donors. And of course, our deepest gratitude to the 6,000 incredibly resilient women, men and children who have taken part in our research over the years, making our work possible.

We are now looking forward to a new year, 2021, that is characterised by bold, positive change and a re-commitment to human rights. Our sincerest wishes and hopes for a year of health, wellbeing and peace for everyone. Thank you again.

Sincerely yours,



Marta Welander
Executive Director
marta.welander@refugee-rights.eu





2020 AT A GLANCE



**IN 2020, WE
PLACED AND
KEPT 'UNPOPULAR'
ISSUES ON THE
EU AGENDA.**

Throughout the year, we conducted continuous advocacy work at the EU level and were able to truly carve out a space for our organisation in the Brussels advocacy sphere. We raised critical and progressive arguments in various policy fora through our professional and impactful approach, bridging the knowledge on the ground with the high policy levels.

We kick-started 2020 by mobilising more than 90 organisations in February and March to call for an accelerated relocation of minors from the Greek islands to other European states. Advocacy statements and letters were sent to the European institutions and all EU states' national governments, followed by additional behind-the-scenes advocacy to push for Member States relocation. The campaign also included a webinar co-hosted by Child Circle, Missing Children Europe, Oxfam and Refugee Rights Europe. The webinar had roughly 190 participants including NGOs and civil society, Members of the European Parliament, Member State Representatives and members of European national governments, as well as UN and EU agencies. The webinar provided a platform for refugee-, human- and children's rights experts to share experiences to date and highlight guidance and best practice tools, as well as key recommendations for the range of actors involved in relocation. Interventions focused on the current relocation scheme from the Greek islands, exploring the situation in the countries of departure and arrival, as well as the role of the EU in these processes. In light of the imminent publication of the New Pact on Asylum and Migration, we also explored what lessons can be learned for potential future relocation mechanisms in Europe.

WE HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPACT THAT COVID-19 COULD HAVE ON DISPLACED PEOPLE ACROSS EUROPE, MANY OF WHOM DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO BASIC HEALTHCARE.

As Covid-19 struck, we pushed out an unequivocal narrative asserting that in order to develop a truly effective response to the ongoing and unprecedented global health crisis, countries and societies cannot leave anyone behind. Based on this, we either led or joined advocacy efforts to include displaced people in the Covid-19 response in Greece, France, Italy and the UK. For instance, we highlighted the impact that Covid-19 could have on displaced people across Europe, many of whom do not have access to basic healthcare, in [our analysis](#). We managed to mobilise more than 60 doctors, lawyers, academics, philanthropists, and grassroots and NGO experts to sign an [open letter](#) to EU Member States, calling on them 'to leave no one behind' in their Covid-19 response by upholding the rights and safety of individuals trapped at European borders.

WHEN THE TRAGIC FIRE IN THE MORIA CAMP ON THE GREEK ISLAND OF LESVOS LEFT THOUSANDS IN DESTITUTION, RRE PUBLISHED A JOINT STATEMENT WHICH BROUGHT ONBOARD MORE THAN 80 NGOS AND FRONTLINE GROUPS.

The tragic fire in the Moria camp on the Greek island of Lesbos left thousands in destitution. RRE published a [joint statement](#) which brought onboard more than 80 NGOs and frontline groups. In parallel, RRE has joined an unprecedented alliance of organisations to launch a petition calling for the immediate evacuation of Lesbos, and drastic change to EU migration and asylum policies. RRE took on the behind-the-scenes EU level advocacy and 'private diplomacy' work for the coalition. The petition was signed by more than 170,000 people and co-signed by 425 organisations, movements, parliamentarians, Members of the European Parliament and politicians.

WHAT CAN THE EU DO TO SUPPORT RELOCATION OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN?



RRE SENT A LETTER RAISING CONCERNS ABOUT THE NEW EMERGENCY CAMP ON LESVOS AS WELL AS RELATED PACT PROPOSALS.

Ahead of the first Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting since the publication of the new Pact, RRE sent a letter raising concerns about the new emergency camp on Lesbos as well as related Pact proposals. The letter was sent on behalf of the aforementioned NGO coalition that started a recent petition calling for change after the fires on the Greek island of Lesbos. The letter was sent to Commissioner Ylva Johansson, President Ursula von der Leyen and their Cabinets, the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the Head of the Asylum Unit at the European Commission.

We also analysed and responded swiftly to the New Pact by publishing a reaction to its key components. Subsequently, we joined forces with seven other leading NGOs (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Oxfam International, Danish Refugee Council, ECRE, and International Rescue Committee) to issue a fuller response to the European Commission's proposals in the New Pact. Together, we outlined the steps

needed for the proposed independent monitoring mechanism to ensure fundamental rights compliance and accountability.

OUR EVENT ON PUSHBACKS RECEIVED PRAISE FROM A RANGE OF ACTORS AS AN IMPORTANT EU LEVEL DISCUSSION.

We then hosted a large EU advocacy event on pushbacks with Human Rights Watch and the End Pushbacks Partnership. Attended by almost 150 people, the event brought together a range of experts – from policy makers to civil society advocates—to discuss pushbacks and rights violations at Europe's borders, as well as solutions in policy, law and practice. The event received praise from a range of actors as an important EU level discussion and was featured in the EU Fundamental Rights Agency's newsletter and the Council of Europe's newsletter.

At the EU level, we also responded to the European Commission's public consultation on the integration of migrants, highlighting the need to support and safeguard young asylum seekers. We recommended that our UK Youth Welfare Officer should be seen as a model for support and protection across Europe (described on p.22).

HUMAN RIGHTS AT BORDERS

 Edit

PUSHBACKS AND RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AT EUROPEAN BORDERS

A EUROPE-WIDE TREND WHICH MUST BE BROUGHT TO AN END

In response to inward migration and the arrival of prospective asylum seekers, a disconcerting Europe-wide trend has emerged over recent years: the systematic use of 'pushbacks' at internal and external borders. These pushback operations frequently involve serious human rights violations against prospective asylum seekers and multiple breaches of international and European Law.

Pushbacks not a new phenomenon and have been observed and documented across Europe by human rights organisations for several years. The practice can be understood as arising largely from the lack of implementation of the European Union's values and rules and sometimes inconsistency in such implementation. This Europe-wide trend must be brought to an end. We must ensure a rights-compliant, lawful and humane approach to asylum and migration.

EVIDENCE BANK

WEEKLY NEWS ROUND-UP

THE END PUSHBACKS PARTNERSHIP

**“I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO CONTINUE OUR FURTHER
COOPERATION AND I COUNT ON YOUR ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT
AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE ON THE NEW EU
MIGRATION AND ASYLUM POLICIES.”**

YLVA JOHANSSON
European Commissioner for Home Affairs

**“YOUR CALL CERTAINLY REMAINS RELEVANT AND BE
ASSURED THAT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WILL
CONTINUE TO RELAY IT BY FOLLOWING THAT SAME LINE.”**

EP PRESIDENT DAVID MARIA SASSOLI
in response to our call for relocation of children from the Greek islands

**“WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN FOR YOUR
LEADERSHIP ON TODAY’S EXCELLENT EVENT. GREAT WORK
FROM BEGINNING TO END.”**

INGO
commenting on our pushbacks event



**IN 2020, WE
CONTINUED
TO ALERT THE
UNITED NATIONS
REGARDING
EUROPE'S RIGHTS
VIOLATIONS.**

Another key area of work for RRE is to continuously alert the United Nations of rights violations being perpetrated against displaced people in Europe. In 2020, we continued to send communications relating different geographical locations and thematics to targeted UN stakeholders with the aim of mobilising their support for change. The communications were also shared widely on social media and made available on our website for a broader audience.

We submitted six evidence submissions to the UN institutions during the project period, listed below. However, due to the Covid-19 situation, all of the UN Treaty Bodies' (UNTBs) State reviews for 2020 were subsequently postponed, which meant that we did not have the opportunity to submit as many communications as we had hoped. In this context, we co-signed a letter with NGOs around the world to urge UNTBs and the OHCHR to schedule reviews for 2021 and to organise online or hybrid online / in-person reviews to ensure that this important work can continue.

› SUBMISSION REGARDING ITALY

ahead of the review by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

› SUBMISSION REGARDING FRANCE

ahead of the review by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

› SUBMISSION REGARDING BELGIUM

ahead of the review by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

› SUBMISSION REGARDING ITALY

ahead of the review by the Committee on Torture

› SUBMISSION REGARDING BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

ahead of the review by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

› SUBMISSION REGARDING FRANCE

ahead of the review by the Committee on the Rights of the Child



Summary

This briefing is submitted by Refugee Rights Europe in advance of the adoption by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (The Committee) of a list of issues prior to the Committee's consideration of Italy's fifth Periodic Report on its implementation of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereafter the Covenant). This briefing presents several concerns of Refugee Rights Europe (RRE) about Italy's failure to adequately implement Articles 11 and 12 of the Covenant. In particular, RRE is concerned about Italy's failure to provide an adequate standard of living to asylum seekers and displaced people, including adequate housing or reception facilities, sanitation and food. These conditions, combined with Italy's failure to provide asylum seekers and displaced persons with adequate medical care, has a severely negative impact on the safety, physical and mental health of asylum seekers and displaced individuals on Italian territory.

Prior recommendations

In its 2015 Concluding Observations the Committee expressed its continued concern about the 'limited enjoyment of the Covenant rights by migrants, asylum seekers and refugees upon arrival in the State party', and in particular the 'insufficient number of reception centres... and the substandard conditions therein' (para. 18). Moreover, the Committee recommended that Italy 'intensify its efforts to ensure the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by migrants, asylum seekers and refugees' (para. 19). Finally, the Committee recommended that Italy 'take measures to increase the number of reception centres, to improve the living conditions therein and to ensure that everyone in the centres has access to medical care, interpreters, adequate food, clothing and social support' (para. 19).

Italy's current policy & practice

Article 11: Adequate standard of living, including adequate food and housing.

1. Despite the Committee's 2015 recommendation that Italy ensures the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants on its territory, Italy continues to fail to provide access to even the most basic reception conditions to refugees, asylum seekers and displaced individuals on its territory. For example, Ventimiglia, a well-known transit point for refugees and displaced people trying to enter France, has been dubbed the 'Italian Calais', due to its bottle-neck scenario and squalid living conditions for refugees and displaced people. This situation was heightened after France declared a state of emergency and closed its borders in 2015, in addition to its bilateral agreements with the French government facilitating pushbacks at the border.²

2. The closed border means that displaced people are making fewer attempts to reach France by train, instead taking their chances through the so-called 'Pass of Death'³ through

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/17/italy-ventimiglia-migrants-stuck-at-border-crisis-suffering>

² See http://www.cameral.it/_bica_merali/schengen/docinte/ACCITFR.htm

³ See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/16/migrants-trying-to-cross-alps-danger-they-are-unprepared>



BOSNIA – HERZEGOVINA

SUBMISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, 68TH SESSION

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- Deteriorating humanitarian situation in Tuzla*
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- Health risks under Covid19 within the existing accommodation framework*
- Obstructions to grassroots service provision*

2. Recommendations

Executive Summary

This briefing is submitted by Refugee Rights Europe (RRE) to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereafter the Committee). It presents evidence acquired through desk research and interviews with field based organisations. It is a response to the state report by Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) to the Committee which inadequately outlined practical and meaningful measures taken by the government in ensuring adequate reception conditions for people on the move living in temporary reception centres (TRCs) and those living in squats and other unsuitable habitation. Our research shows major gaps, most acutely in Una Sana Canton (USC) and Tuzla. The number of people with no or insufficient accommodation remains high. The government has been reluctant to admit people in certain TRCs, manage overcrowding, the lack of basic service provision outside TRCs is endemic and we see intensified and routine violence and forced transfers. There are no existing or planned government shelter solutions for Tuzla. Vulnerable populations remain particularly affected and Covid-19 continues to present a threat and an additional shelter challenge for displaced people.

About Refugee Rights Europe (RRE)

Refugee Rights Europe (RRE) is a human rights advocacy organisation and registered charity. Founded in 2016, the organisation researches and documents the situation for refugees and displaced people seeking protection in Europe, with a particular focus on human rights violations and inadequate humanitarian conditions experienced. The organisation uses its research findings to advocate for human rights-centred policy development, to ensure the rights of refugees and displaced people are upheld on European soil. In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, RRE is independent of any political ideology, economic interest or religion.

**“WE NEED ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE ONE
YOU REPRESENT TO DISRUPT OUR EXCHANGES
CONSTRUCTIVELY. THANK YOU.”**

Feedback from

A MEMBER OF THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD



Photo credit: Abdul Saboor

**IN 2020, WE
FOSTERED
STRONGER
CIVIL SOCIETY
COLLABORATION
ACROSS EUROPE.**

During times of increasingly narrow space for civil society, as well as widespread disillusionment surrounding the notion of human rights, RRE continuously seeks to play a key role in fostering collaboration, solidarity and mutual support between organisations and grassroots groups within the sector in Europe.

GREECE

In 2020, in the context of Greece, we brought together more than 90 organisations in February and March to call for an accelerated relocation of minors from the Greek islands to other European states, as mentioned above. We were also invited to join the Athens Advocacy Working Group to input on EU level advocacy ideas through that forum. We liaised with our partners at Europe Must Act, who are doing incredible work at mobilising the European public to support refugee rights, about some of their advocacy work and a key field research report. We also collaborated closely with partners around the aforementioned Moria fire and New Pact related advocacy work in Greece.



Photo credit: Abdul Saboor

FRANCE

In France, we continued to collaborate with grassroots groups in northern France. We published a joint report with Human Rights Observers and Help Refugees regarding the Covid-19 situation in Calais and Grande-Synthe, joined an advocacy commission organised by local and national French groups, and joined hands with organisations on various advocacy activities. For instance, we raised concerns about the Covid-19 response in northern France in an [open letter](#) to the European Union, the United Nations and the Council of Europe. Moreover, we worked with larger NGOs (Amnesty International, Doctors of the World, Médecins Sans Frontières, Secours Catholique and others) to collate evidence for a UN committee and to publish a report on the rights violations facing minors in the area. In December, we hosted a landmark discussion forum between UK and French organisations addressing the UK-France border and look forward to continuing this collaboration in 2021. Our work in northern France also involved collaboration with parliamentarians and other influential actors, such as a meeting with Stella Dupont, French parliamentarian, regarding the situation of displaced people in Calais, and a meeting with the delegation of CNCDH (National Consultative Commission on Human Rights) in Calais and Grande-Synthe.



ITALY

In Italy, in the context of our work relating to the French-Italian border, our Italy field officer joined an existing group of organisations and offered our support in case of capacity and time gaps. We joined more than 100 associations in Italy calling for a decisive response to Covid-19 there. We then invited our Italian partners to join the End Pushbacks Partnership in order to continue our collaboration through that forum, as described below.



UK

In the UK, we set up a campaign for safe and legal routes, which attracted the support of several key organisations including Detention Action, Safe Passage and Missing Children Europe. We hope and believe that this time-limited campaign helped shift the narrative towards a space where new and creative solutions to the human rights crisis at the UK's border with France could be addressed in a constructive manner in order to break the current deadlock. Towards the end of the year, we reinvigorated these conversations and started working closely with Detention Action, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Help Refugees and others to identify new policy proposals for safe and legal routes to the UK. Our collaboration in the UK also involved reaching out beyond the NGO sector and creating fruitful partnerships with academics and other subject matter experts. To this end, we co-hosted an expert roundtable with Border Criminologies at Oxford University, which looked at the Home Office's proposals in response to small boat crossings on the English Channel. Drawing on lessons from Australia's parallel context, speakers discussed the impact of the offshoring and deterrence regime in Australia; the legality and viability of the UK government's current proposals relating detention, interdiction and pushbacks at its border with France; as well as opportunities and spaces for resistance.



**“LET ME THANK YOU A LOT FOR GIVING US THIS
OPPORTUNITY TO BE A PART OF THE WIDER PLATFORM OF
ORGANISATIONS AND INITIATIVES HAVING THE GOAL OF
TAKING CARE OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN FROM GREECE.
IT GAVE US AN EXTRA TOOL IN OUR LOCAL CAMPAIGN IN OUR
COUNTRY, SO WE CAN MOVE A BIT FORWARD NOW AGAIN.”**

NGO PARTNER



Photo credit: Refugee Rescue

**IN 2020, WE
PUBLISHED 8
HUMAN RIGHTS
REPORTS FROM
DIFFERENT
EUROPEAN
LOCATIONS.**

THE INVISIBLE ISLANDS

GREECE • JAN 2020

In 2020, we were able to continue producing research reports despite the Covid-19 situation. While there are many reports regarding the difficulties faced by displaced people living in the Reception and Identification Centres (often referred to as hotspots or RICs) of Lesbos, Chios and Samos, the smaller facilities on Kos and Leros are often forgotten. However, on both islands, the hotspots actually make up a large proportion of the islands' entire displaced population and thus require detailed attention. Therefore, we published the report ['The Invisible Islands'](#), which provides first-hand insight into the situation in the hotspots on Kos and Leros in the spring of 2020. It raises serious concerns not only in regard to the material living conditions, but also the impact of Covid-19 related restrictions and detention practices.

LIMITS TO ACCESS TO ASYLUM ALONG THE BALKAN ROUTE

BOSNIA, MONTENEGRO, NORTH MACEDONIA, SERBIA • JUL 2020

The formal closure of the 'Balkan route' in 2016 was part of a strategy to hinder the movement of refugees and displaced people through the Balkans and into Western Europe. Despite this, since 2018, more than 65,000 people entered the region, using alternative and often more dangerous routes, only to frequently be met with negligence, violations of their rights, pushbacks and beatings. We therefore published the report ['Limited access to asylum along the Balkan route'](#) in order to provide an overview of the situation regarding access to asylum in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The report placed particularly strong emphasis on BiH and Serbia, the two countries in the area with the highest number of displaced people present in-country.

A RELUCTANT WELCOME

ITALY • JUL 2020

At a critical time in Europe's response to migration and asylum with the European Union's New Pact on Migration in the pipeline, our report ['A reluctant welcome'](#) presents several concerns regarding pushbacks, treatment in detention, and living conditions for displaced people in Italy. In particular, the report raises concerns about Italy's failure to uphold the principle of non-refoulement by engaging in summary pushbacks, as well as implementing bilateral readmission agreements without sufficient guarantees as stipulated in international human rights and refugee law. The report is based on a briefing prepared by RRE for the UN Committee Against Torture and is based on desk research as well as substantial contributions from the non-governmental organisations Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration (ASGI), WeWorld, Diaconia Valdese and Befree.

FACING MULTIPLE CRISES

FRANCE • AUG 2020

With the spread of Covid-19, displaced people in northern France are faced with yet another crisis. Their pre-existing poor living conditions have left them in an exceptionally vulnerable position, and the measures taken by the French state during this emergency have not adequately protected them. Therefore, we partnered with Human Rights Observers and Help Refugees to publish the report ['Facing multiple crises'](#) (in English and in French) to highlight the shortcomings in the French state's response to Covid-19 in the context of displacement in Calais and Grande-Synthe. The report draws on data collated by the Human Rights Observers (HRO) over the three-month period of April to June 2020. It sets out the context in northern France, analyses the state response to Covid-19 and makes a number of recommendations to the French state and the EU institutions.

A BRIEF TIMELINE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN NORTHERN FRANCE

FRANCE • SEP 2020

In April 2020, we also partnered with Help Refugees and Human Rights Observers to produce an updated version of the [summary report](#) (in English and in French) originally published to mark the occasion of the two-year milestone since the demolition of the Calais 'Jungle' camp. This report provides an overview of the human rights situation which has been unfolding in northern France over the past few decades, and which continues today, and reaches new depths of crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The report also makes a number of recommendations in its final section, arguing that a different reality can and must be possible.

LES MANQUEMENTS DES AUTORITÉS FRANÇAISES AUX DEVOIRS ÉLÉMENTAIRES DE RESPECTER, PROTÉGER ET METTRE EN ŒUVRE LES DROITS DES MINEUR.E.S ISOLÉ.E.S ÉTRANGER.E.S EN DANGER

EU-WIDE • OCT 2020

Alongside partner organisations, we also reported on the rights violations of children suffered at three French borders (France-Italy, France-Spain and UK-France) in the [joint report regarding unaccompanied minors](#). The report concludes that French authorities must double their efforts and put in place immediate measures to ensure that these children have effective access to child protection, in accordance with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

TIME FOR CHANGE

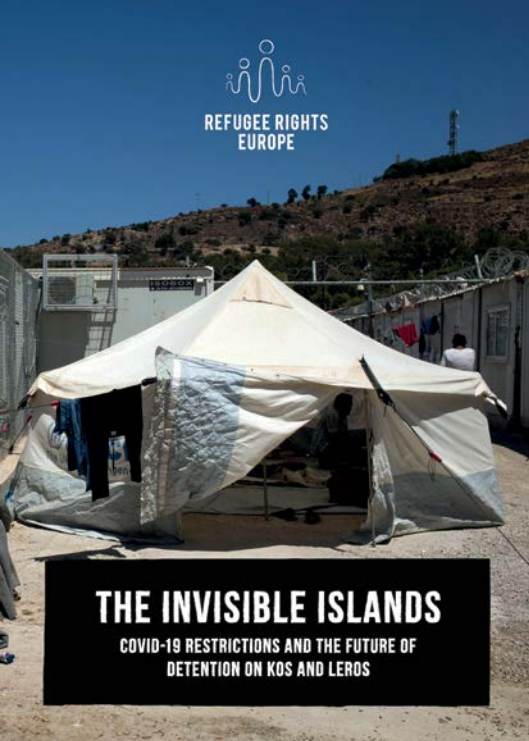
UK • OCT 2020

For too long, the UK's border control policies restricting access to safe and legal routes and to the UK asylum system have directly contributed to a humanitarian crisis in northern France, as well as increased reliance on dangerous and irregular journeys to reach UK soil. This has come at great financial, human and moral cost. Vulnerable individuals trapped in northern France face violence, abuse, inhumane conditions and regular evictions, while tragic and inexcusable deaths on the Channel are becoming more common. We therefore researched and published a [report](#) which makes a succinct case regarding the need for alternatives to the UK Home Office's current approach seeking to further militarise the sea and land border and enforce expedited returns. The report calls on the UK to take a more humane and organised approach to asylum claims and protection responsibilities.

PUSHBACKS AND RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AT EUROPE'S BORDERS

EU-WIDE • NOV 2020

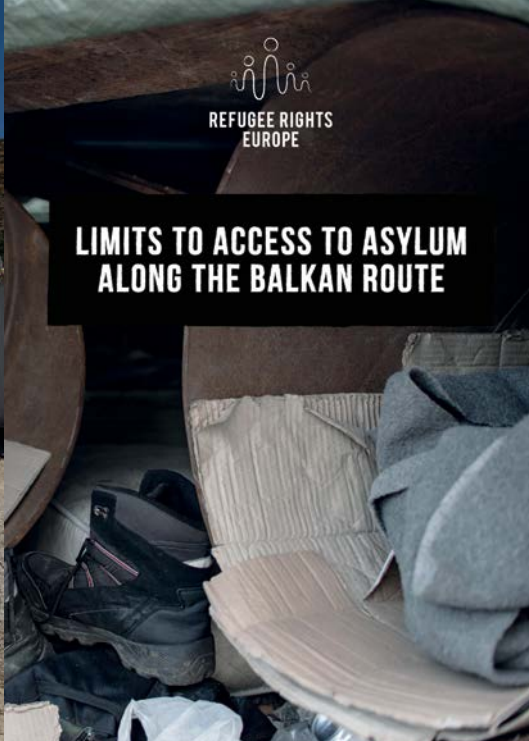
In addition, we co-published a Europe-wide report with the [End Pushbacks Partnership](#) on pushbacks operations. The report, [Pushbacks and Rights Violations at Europe's Borders](#) – the state of play in 2020, collates a wide range of evidence of unlawful pushbacks and severe rights violations at European borders. The evidence clearly indicates that illegal pushback operations are taking place across the EU at both internal and external land and sea borders. This phenomenon, it is argued, increasingly constitutes a systematic Europe-wide approach to migration governance. Moreover, the report calls on European leaders to take action to put an end to these violations and hold perpetrators accountable.



THE INVISIBLE ISLANDS

COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS AND THE FUTURE OF
DETENTION ON KOS AND LEROS

LIMITS TO ACCESS TO ASYLUM ALONG THE BALKAN ROUTE



A RELUCTANT WELCOME

EXPLORING ISSUES OF PUSHBACKS, TREATMENT IN DETENTION,
AND LIVING CONDITIONS FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE IN ITALY



FACING MULTIPLE CRISES

On the treatment of refugees and
displaced people in northern France
during the Covid-19 pandemic.



CONFRONTÉ.E.S A UNE CRISE MULTIPLE

Le traitement des personnes
exilées dans le nord de la France
durant l'épidémie de la Covid-19.



A BRIEF TIMELINE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN NORTHERN FRANCE



LES MANQUEMENTS DES AUTORITÉS FRANÇAISES AUX DEVOIRS ÉLÉMENTAIRES DE RESPECTER, PROTÉGER ET METTRE EN ŒUVRE LES DROITS DES MINEUR.E.S ISOLÉ.E.S ÉTRANGER.E.S EN DANGER

aux frontières intérieures terrestres de la France
(frontières franco-italienne, franco-espagnole et
franco-britannique)



TIME FOR CHANGE

On the need for safe and legal pathways to the UK



PUSHBACKS AND RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AT EUROPE'S BORDERS

THE STATE OF PLAY IN 2020





**IN 2020, WE
CO-CREATED THE
END PUSHBACKS
PARTNERSHIP.**

WE GATHERED EXISTING EVIDENCE IN THE SECTOR, STARTED TRACKING NEWS COVERAGE, AND SHARED OUR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS WITH PARTNERS IN FIVE LANGUAGES.

In July, we started a new campaign against pushbacks, which represent a growing trend across Europe in recent years and which lead to serious human rights violations against prospective asylum seekers, as well as breach multiple international and European laws. We gathered existing evidence in the sector, started tracking news coverage, and shared our policy recommendations with partners in five languages so that we can collectively make the case for an end to pushbacks. The resource centre we compiled is available [on our website](#).

**END
PUSHBACKS** PARTNERSHIP

MEET THE MEMBERS

#ENDPUSHBACKS

OUR REPORT

OUR ADVOCACY DEMANDS

We are a **collective** of independent **organisations and groups** working across *Europe* to support displaced individuals and **uphold the rights** of people on the move.

#ENDPUSHBACKS

**THE END PUSHBACKS
PARTNERSHIP IS A COLLECTIVE
OF TEN INDEPENDENT
GRASSROOTS GROUPS AND NON-
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS.**

CHAPTER TWO

PUSHBACKS EVIDENCE ACROSS EUROPE



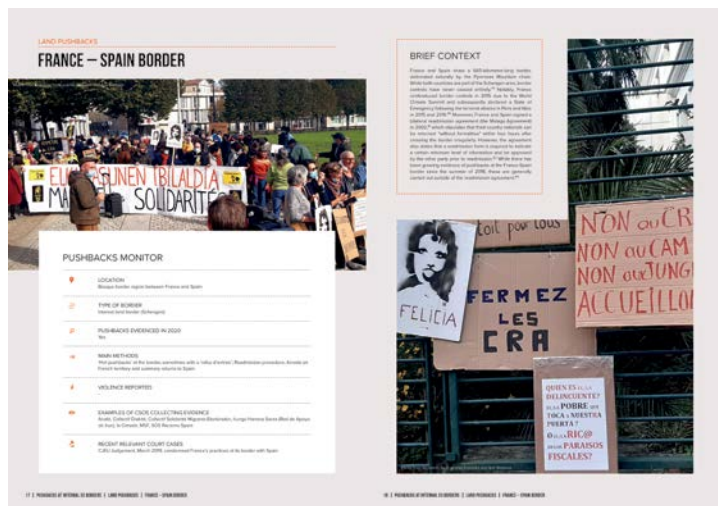
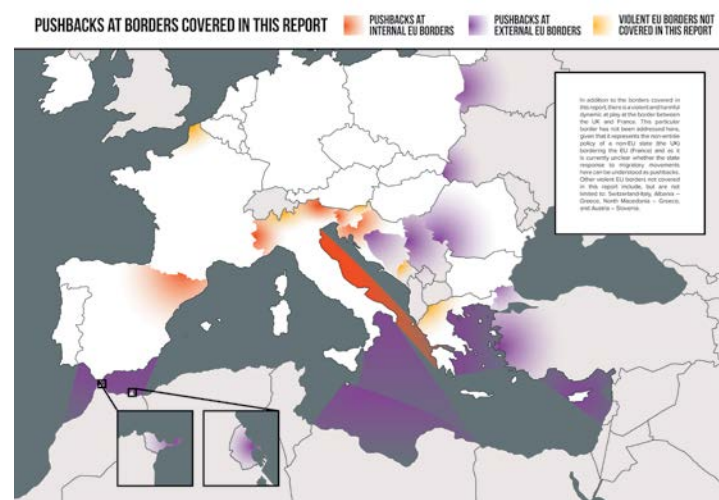
A large-scale photograph showing a yellow forklift operating in a vast landfill of plastic waste. In the foreground, a body of water reflects the scene, with several orange life jackets floating in it. The background shows a hillside covered in more plastic debris under a cloudy sky.

Photo credit: Gettyimages.com

- **REGULAR SOLIDARITY CALLS TO FIND OUT ABOUT POLICY UPDATES AND TO SHARE GROUND UPDATES**

- **JOINT RESEARCH REPORT ON PUSHBACKS AS A EUROPE-WIDE TREND**

- **JOINT ADVOCACY EVENT IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**



In the context of the EPP, we also created and delivered a three-module training programme for RRE's grassroots partners across European locations: Italy, Spain, Greece, Central Europe and the wider Balkan region. The training programme consisted of the following modules:

ADVOCACY & CAMPAIGNS

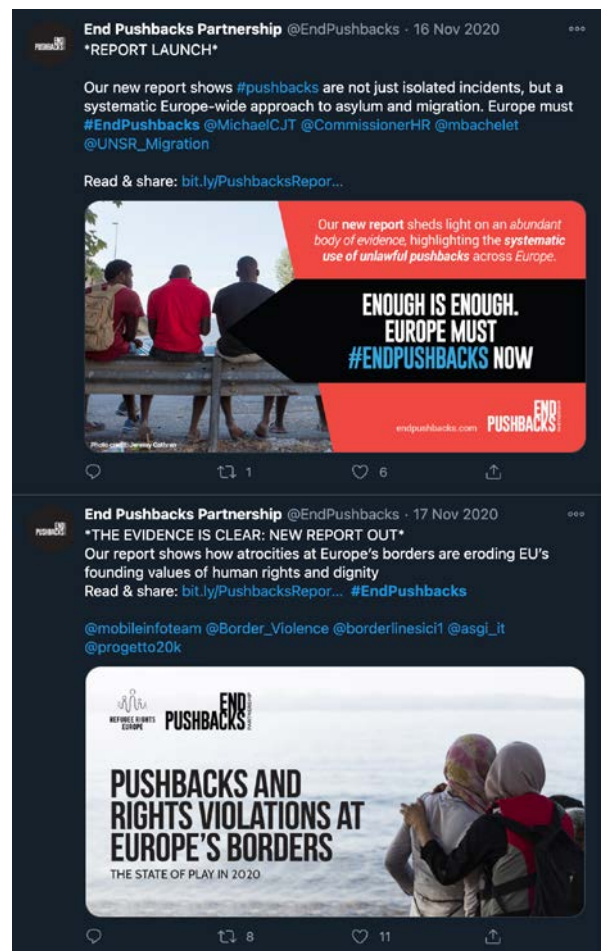
Foundational training on how to develop an advocacy and campaigning strategy.

EU ADVOCACY

Focusing on how to engage in relevant fora at the EU-level.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

This session would look at effective tools to reach wider audiences through media engagement.



EU ADVOCACY DEMANDS

NOVEMBER 2020

END
PUSHBACKS
PARTNERSHIP

In light of ever-growing and undeniable evidence that pushbacks and border violence constitute a disconcerting Europe-wide approach to asylum and migration, the End Pushbacks Partnership calls on the European Union to take urgent and decisive action.

1. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION MUST HOLD MEMBER STATES TO ACCOUNT, TO:

- Ensure the effective access to asylum registration at both external and internal borders. Moreover, every asylum application needs to be thoroughly assessed, and all safeguards upheld – including the adequate assessment and protection of vulnerable cases.
- Provide dignified and adequate reception conditions in open facilities, moving away from the ‘hotspot’ approach and preventing the further deterioration of the existing human bottlenecks in frontline member states.
- Ensure respect for the Schengen Border Code, especially with regards to the systematic renewal of temporary border controls at certain internal borders (for instance by France).
- Ensure that illegal detention practices as part of pushbacks come to an urgent end.
- Urgently call on Member States to end racial profiling both inside the territory of Member States and at border points and investigate civil society reports that evidence discriminatory practices.

2. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION MUST HOLD EUROPEAN AGENCIES TO ACCOUNT, IN PARTICULAR FRONTEX, IN ORDER TO:

- Ensure that all FRONTEX interventions are fully in line with the Member States’ and EU’s human rights obligations and are executed in a transparent and accountable way.
- Improve internal and external reporting mechanisms to ensure independence, accessibility and capacity to conduct comprehensive investigations and monitoring.
- Immediately suspend ongoing operations in Member States which are insufficiently addressing human rights violations at borders.

3. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION MUST DEVELOP AN AMBITIOUS EU-WIDE MONITORING MECHANISM TO OVERSEE RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AT EUROPE’S BORDERS.

- This should be done in line with the [recommendations](#) put forward by a coalition of NGOs, as shared with EU and national stakeholders.

4. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION MUST STOP TYING BORDER MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION OF INWARD MIGRATION TO DEVELOPMENT AID, VISA LIBERALISATION SCHEMES AND OTHER INCENTIVES, INCLUDING IN RELATION TO EU ACCESSION COUNTRIES.

5. SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) MISSIONS ARE VITAL TO ENSURE RESPECT FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND MARITIME LAW. AS SUCH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IS URGED TO:

- Introduce EU-funded Search and Rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea.
- Cease the funding of the Libyan Coast Guard which, with the support of the EU, conducts pullbacks in the Mediterranean and violates human rights.
- Ensure that Member States operate in full respect of their Search and Rescue obligations, and pushbacks to third countries such as Libya, and cease long stand-offs at sea which lead to protracted uncertainty for persons rescued by private Search and Rescue organisations.
- Support NGOs and private vessels conducting SAR operations, including by avoiding describing these activities as constituting a ‘pull factor’, and by calling on Member States to stop the arbitrary disruption and criminalisation of Search and Rescue organisations.

6. EU MONEY MUST UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES FUND RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AT ITS BORDERS. IN ITS NEGOTIATION WITH THE COUNCIL ON THE MULTIANNUL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK 2021-2027, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MUST DEMAND A SHIFT IN EU FUNDING FOCUS:

- Instead of increasing funding for border guards and technologies as well as for cooperation with third countries on “fighting irregular migration”, there should be a shift to support resettlement from third countries and other legal pathways to the EU (i.e. humanitarian corridors), relocation processes from frontline Member States, dignified and open reception centres in transit points and across the EU, asylum procedures aligned with international and European laws and standards, as well as the implementation of EU-funded Search and Rescue operations (see point 5).
- Member States’ access to migration and border management funding must be conditional upon ongoing compliance to human rights at borders, respect of the right to asylum, and the undertaking of veritable investigations of allegations of rights violations. Similarly, third countries who consistently violate human rights must not receive EU funding, especially not for migration and border management purposes.

7. IN VIEW OF THE UPCOMING PACT NEGOTIATIONS, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL MUST CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING COMMISSIONS’ PROPOSALS TO AVOID ENDING UP WITH MORE RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AT EU BORDERS:

- Improve safeguards within the Pact’s pre-entry screening procedure to make sure vulnerabilities are properly assessed and detected, followed by prompt action to ensure rights and proper services are provided.
- Prevent the adoption of truncated border procedures, an extended detention regime, and limited access to asylum, by rejecting the proposed border regulation.
- Rethink the Pact’s proposed solidarity mechanism which does not present a sustainable solution to the pressure on frontline states and might encourage further dangerous pushback practices. The consequences of non-compliance must also be clarified, alongside clear solutions to a potential scenario where most Member States show preference for ‘return sponsorship’ over relocation.



Photo credit: Refugee Youth Service

**IN 2020, WE
CONTINUED
CALLING FOR
YOUTH WELFARE
OFFICERS IN
UK ASYLUM
ACCOMMODATION.**



Photo credit: Refugee Youth Service

In 2020, we were able to continue, and ramp up, our work relating to Youth Welfare Officers in UK asylum accommodation. By way of background, we know from our prior research and community engagement that young adult asylum seekers aged 18-25 in the UK have survived unimaginable experiences within their countries of origin, and/or during their long and treacherous journeys. Many left their homes as children and spent their formative years in traumatic or exploitative situations. However, once they reach the UK, many are left isolated and alone without adequate guidance and support in asylum accommodation. This compounds existing trauma, and many suffer from severe mental health issues. We introduced Youth Welfare Officers to meet this need.

evaluate the impact of the YWO pilot scheme to develop a replicable model of best practice; (c) develop strategic communications and advocacy around the pilot model in order to encourage relevant stakeholders to commit to a scaled-up programme over time.

We also participated in a large conference organised by EuroChild as part of its CarePath project aimed at calling for adequate support for careleavers. During this event, we highlighted the UK Youth Welfare Officer model and proposed it as a potential solution in other European countries as well. Within the very challenging context of Covid-19, we also asked other participants whether they had any useful advice to share on how to best combine online and in-person support, specifically in the context of trauma-informed work with asylum-seeking care leavers.

OUR ORGANISATION, ALONGSIDE THE REFUGEE COUNCIL, YOUNG ROOTS AND MIGRANT HELP ALSO FORMED A STEERING COMMITTEE WHICH MET THROUGHOUT 2020.



In 2020, we saw a breakthrough moment of this campaign with the first YWO role being rolled out in Birmingham, hosted by the Refugee Council. Our organisation, alongside the Refugee Council, Young Roots and Migrant Help also formed a steering committee which met throughout 2020 to oversee the work of the YWO and to plan for the implementation of the second role in London, to be hosted by Young Roots. Broadly, the steering committee's aims are to: (a) ensure that the programme remains true to the original vision of the YWO, which was born out of a veritable need identified by groups working directly with young people on the 'frontlines' of UK's asylum system; (b) monitor and

In December, our work on Youth Welfare Officers was recognised through the shortlisting for the Equality, Access Rights category of the Community Integration Awards. Being shortlisted for this award is extremely helpful to raise the profile of the Youth Welfare Officer project, showing the UK Government that the idea is widely supported and much-needed. The project is a step in the right direction to ensure that the right to equality, justice and wellbeing for young newcomers in UK society is safeguarded. Indeed, we hope that this is just the beginning of a wider YWO scheme which can start to erode some of the most harmful effects of the 'hostile environment'.

