

# SEP European Election campaign: Oppose the assault on immigrants and asylum seekers

SEP candidate Danny Dickinson  
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The deportation of 19-year-old student Yashika Bageerathi earlier this month speaks volumes as to the cruel and vindictive treatment meted out against migrants and refugees.

Bageerathi was separated from her family and deported to Mauritius on April 2, just six weeks before her A-levels. Even the parliamentary Home Affairs Committee described this as “needlessly cruel.”

A High Court judge refused to grant a last-minute injunction that would have allowed her to remain pending an appeal. The Home Secretary ignored calls to defer deportation, including an offer by the family to leave voluntarily for a “safe place” after her exams.

Yashika left Mauritius with her mother, brother and sister in 2011 to escape a physically abusive relative. They claimed asylum last summer. Her family face removal, but because of her age Yashika’s case was considered separately. She was returned alone and “petrified.”

Yashika had been held in Yarl’s Wood Detention Centre, Britain’s largest. The week she was deported another detainee, 40-year-old Jamaican Christine Case, died of a pulmonary thrombo-embolism. Yarl’s Wood reportedly turned down offers of help from the local NHS for detainees distressed by witnessing the death.

Christine Case was the 14th person to die in an immigration removal centre in the last 10 years. Last year 84-year-old Alois Dvorzac was refused entry to the UK. He had Alzheimer’s disease and doctors marked him “UNFIT for detention or deportation.” He died in handcuffs in a detention centre two weeks later.

An inquest jury last year found that three G4S security guards unlawfully killed Jimmy Mubenga while he was being deported from Heathrow airport to Angola in 2010.

A petition for Yashika Bageerathi attracted 175,000 signatures, while Christine Case’s death sparked a sit-down protest in Yarl’s Wood, with detainees refusing meals.

The *Observer* reported that an official United Nations inquiry into violence against women in Britain was stopped from investigating conditions inside Yarl’s Wood earlier

this month.

It said that it had been told by representatives of women’s groups that Rashida Manjoo, the UN special rapporteur on violence against women, had wanted to visit Yarl’s Wood. However, the facility was not put on her itinerary, which was organised by the Home Office.

Immigrants and asylum seekers are now routinely vilified and demonised in the media. The anti-immigrant think tank MigrationWatch UK is regularly cited to support claims that immigration is undermining the British economy.

Of course those scapegoating migrants say nothing about the wider economic crisis because they are targeted precisely in order to divert attention from the implications of the banking collapse of 2008 and the bailout of the financial elite. Attacking migrants serves to divide workers while promoting further assaults on living conditions.

The British government has implemented draconian changes to benefits for migrants to facilitate further attacks on welfare, services and wages. Proposed benefit reforms would affect not only new migrants, but also the growing numbers of (particularly young) workers with no prospect of genuine employment due to the deepest economic crisis since the 1930s.

Similar attacks on migrants are seen across Europe. There was an outcry last year against the deportation of 15-year-old Roma student Leonarda Dibrani by the French Socialist Party government of President François Hollande.

Manuel Valls, then interior minister, said that all Roma should leave France and go to Eastern Europe. Valls spearheaded mass deportations of immigrants.

Leonarda rejected Hollande’s offer of the right to return without her family, who had been settled in France for four years, saying, “I’m not the only one who needs to go to school.” An administrative tribunal has rejected the family’s appeal.

Valls is now the prime minister.

Last October more than 400 refugees drowned off the Italian island of Lampedusa. Since 1990, more than 25,000 people have died attempting to reach Europe via the

Mediterranean. As part of its Fortress Europe policy the European Union established the FRONTEX border agency, equipped with advanced surveillance technology. Land borders have been fenced off, leaving refugees facing the dangerous Mediterranean route. After the Lampedusa tragedy FRONTEX simply strengthened borders and escalated its police apparatus.

Working people internationally confront a social catastrophe caused by the crisis of capitalism. Immigrants and refugees are victims twice over. Forced to flee economic devastation at home they are then scapegoated for economic decline where they seek refuge.

This has driven a rightward shift in politics, with the political establishment following the anti-immigrant agenda championed by parties such as the UK Independence Party and the National Front in France. This in turn leads to increased votes for the extreme right.

This is no accident. The EU's elevation of fascist forces in the Ukrainian government must stand as a warning of the measures the ruling class will take and their implications.

In Britain the most disgusting support for chauvinist and nationalist language has come from the Labour Party and its allies in the left-liberal media. Labour has sought to outdo the Conservatives with pledges against excessive immigration.

Labour leader Ed Miliband has said that the last Labour government let immigration get "out of control." He has accused the coalition government of being "half-baked" on immigration, and attacked immigrants as the source of the social crisis confronting working people, writing that "Unless we act to change our economy, low-skill immigration risks making the problems of the cost of living crisis worse for those at the sharp end."

The EU is a vehicle for pro-business European governments, but a pernicious role is played by the pseudo-left parties who channel hostility to the EU's agenda back into national nostrums.

The No2EU campaign, for example, a project of the Stalinist Communist Party and trade union bureaucrats, speaks of "The social dumping of exploited foreign workers in Britain." The tokenistic reference to exploitation is a means of distracting from their sharp rightward orientation towards anti-immigration measures and other forms of national economic protectionism. No2EU justified a "Britons First" line in 2009 as being "not against foreign workers or xenophobic" but "simply defending the fundamental right to work under [national] union agreements."

The same holds true for the Socialist Labour Party of Arthur Scargill, whose president, Andrew Jordan, makes the lack of immigration controls central to his complaints

against the EU.

"The 'free movement of capital and labour' between EU member states has allowed industry to flood out of Britain to chase, and exploit, the lowest wages across Europe and at the same time we have seen the uncontrollable economic migration between EU member states lead to a stagnation of the minimum wage here," he declaims.

Workers are exploited by their relationship to the ownership and control of the means of production, which is monopolised by a wealthy few and organised for profit. The fight for decent jobs, conditions and living standards must therefore proceed in the struggle to abolish these conditions of exploitation, to establish genuine democratic control over the economy and to reorganise it in the interests of the whole of society.

This must be an international struggle and proceed in direct opposition to all attempts to divide working people by nationality or between native citizens and immigrants and asylum seekers. This only sows divisions and pits each against all in the interests of the class enemy and its system of exploitation.

Faced with attacks by globally operating corporations, the working class must above all else unite in defence of its common interests.

Only the Socialist Equality Party opposes the EU on the basis of establishing the United Socialist States of Europe. Only bringing an end to capitalism, forming workers' governments in every country and the unification of Europe on a socialist basis can prevent the decline of Europe into nationalism and war, and create the conditions for utilizing and developing its extensive resources and productive forces in the interests of society as a whole.



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