

Police attack immigrant camp in Calais, France

Pierre Mabut
29 May 2014

Stepped-up attacks on immigrants are the Socialist Party government's response to the rising vote for the neo-fascists in this week's European elections.

On Wednesday morning at 8am, hundreds of French riot police broke up makeshift immigrant camps in the port city of Calais on the English Channel. Three camps with 800 undocumented immigrants, of all nationalities, but most of whom were Syrians, Afghans and Africans, were torn down by police and the occupants forced to scatter to avoid detention. Most of the immigrants had got wind of the police operation and fled the area before their arrival.

This stepped up attack on immigrants by French authorities is the response of the Socialist Party (PS) government of Prime Minister Manuel Valls to the neo-fascist victory in France of the National Front (FN) in the European elections three days ago. The government, along with traditional opposition parties like the UMP in the National Assembly, are responding by persecuting the immigrants, promoting the FN's program.

The pretext for the raid on immigrant camps was the need to treat a widespread case of scabies among immigrants. However, none of the promised shower units and clean clothing was made available to those forced to flee the police operation. Cécile Bossy of the Doctors of the World charity organisation said, "They didn't offer the showers which were supposed to be in place for the evacuation".

Buses were lined up for the evacuation to an unknown destination, but very few immigrants went aboard, believing this was a ploy to move them away from Calais. Immigrants aided by support groups clashed with police.

The port of Calais has become the last stop for thousands of refugees from war and hunger in their

attempt to reach England across the Channel. The camps in Calais have been destroyed several times, the last being in 2009 by the right wing conservative president Sarkozy, when it was referred to as the "jungle".

At least eight immigrants have died in Calais this year, crushed to death in the attempt to board trucks and buses to cross the channel to England. Three weeks ago, a 23-year-old Afghan, Asif Hussainkhil, was picked up just before hyperthermia set in, drifting in the Channel on a makeshift raft. The raft was composed of wood planks, a floater, a tarpaulin and a table leg for a mast with a bed sheet. He remained undeterred and said he would go again.

The PS is moving along the same reactionary path as the FN and the UMP. The latest move against immigrants comes after the FN leader Marine Le Pen won the North West constituency of France in last Sunday's EU elections with 33.6 percent of the vote—the biggest gain for the FN and well above the 25 percent for the FN throughout France.

The FN also took control of Hénin-Beaumont, near Calais, after decades of corruption at the town hall run by the Socialist Party with the support of the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF).

The city of Calais itself was run for decades the PCF until the right wing Gaullist UMP took over in 2008. These parties' record in running down traditional industries and creating mass unemployment has allowed the neo-fascist FN to demagogically pose as the only opposition.

The treatment meted out to the Calais immigrants by the PS government, which got less than 14 percent in the EU election, is a sharp expression of the rising attacks on immigrant workers taking place throughout France.

The PS government has carried out mass deportations of the Roma and, through its appointment in March of Interior Minister Manuel Valls as prime minister, is making a law-and-order appeal to far-right sentiment.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact