

Thirty-nine migrants found dead in lorry trailer in UK

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The bodies of 39 migrants were found yesterday in the back of a freight lorry parked in Grays, Essex, in the United Kingdom. The deaths have evoked public outrage and revulsion toward the British government's brutal "deterrence" regime against migrants and refugees.

Police were called to the Waterglade Industrial Park in Essex by East of England Ambulance Service at 1.40am. All 39 people—adults and a teenager—were pronounced dead at the scene.

The victims' identities are not known. Police forensic teams last night transported the truck's cabin and trailer to Tilbury Docks to begin the process of formal identification. Deputy Chief Constable Pippa Mills told reporters this would be "a lengthy process".

Details of the truck's movements remain unclear. Police have confirmed only that the trailer arrived via ferry from Zeebrugge, Belgium, docking at Purfleet on the River Thames at 12.30am. The truck cabin and trailer left the port shortly after 1.05am.

It is not known where or at what time the 39 victims entered the truck's freight container. Richard Burnett, chief executive of the Road Haulage Association, told the BBC the container appeared to be a refrigerated unit and that temperatures could reach as low as -25C. Conditions for anyone inside would be "absolutely horrendous". Even if the container was not refrigerated, trucking experts explained that such cabins are sealed tight and lengthy confinement can lead to suffocation.

The truck's cabin is registered in Northern Ireland. The driver, 25-year-old Mo Robinson from a village in County Armagh, was immediately arrested on suspicion of murder.

But the real authors of this immense crime reside in 10 Downing Street, along with the government and opposition parties in Westminster Palace and their

accomplices in every European capital.

Their statements of condolence and crocodile tears are rank hypocrisy. Conservative Party Prime Minister Boris Johnson's statement was issued via Twitter: "I'm appalled by this tragic incident in Essex... My thoughts are with all those who lost their lives & their loved ones."

Home Secretary Priti Patel, whose entire career is built on anti-immigrant xenophobia, told parliament, "I'm shocked and saddened by this utterly tragic incident in Grays. My heart goes out to all those affected."

Only last month, a smirking Patel told the Tory Party conference she was proud to be part of a Brexit government that was "taking back control of our borders" and "ending the free movement of people once and for all." Johnson has described veiled Muslim women as "bank robbers" and "letter boxes", deliberately stoking anti-immigrant racism.

The latest horrifying deaths are the direct outcome of a regime of deterrence that has involved a police-military operation on the English Channel and at key ports including Dover.

The truck allegedly driven by Robinson is believed to have arrived at Purfleet to avoid increased police checks and anti-migrant measures put in place at Dover in the leadup to Brexit. Five people have drowned in the English Channel this year.

Seamus Leheny, Northern Ireland policy manager for the Freight Transport Association, told the press, "People have been saying that security and checks have been increased at places like Dover and Calais, so it might be seen as an easier way to get in by going from Cherbourg or Roscoff, over to Rosslare, then up the road to Dublin. It's a long way around and it'll add an extra day to the journey."

In recent months, migrant rights organisations have warned that the British government's harsh deterrence regime is forcing refugees to resort to riskier methods of entry to the UK, including lorries. In December 2017, a 15-year-old Afghani boy was crushed by a truck he tried to jump on board at Calais, while an Iraqi man's legs were severed by a train near Dunkirk. In June this year, the frozen body of a stowaway from Kenya fell from a plane onto a London garden. An investigation last November by BBC South East found there was a "pre-Brexit rush", with people-smugglers warning migrants to enter now before "the borders shut properly."

In January, former Tory Home Secretary Sajid Javid met with his French counterpart to agree new anti-migrant measures along the English Channel including £3.2 million for drones, radar, night goggles and number plate recognition along with additional border patrol boats.

One year earlier, the Sandhurst Treaty was negotiated by then Prime Minister Theresa May with French President Emmanuel Macron. Signed at Britain's premier military academy, the treaty saw the UK commit an extra £44.5 million for fencing, CCTV and detection technology in Calais and other Channel ports.

The police measures agreed by the French and British governments were aimed at bolstering the European Union's "Fortress Europe" policy against desperate migrants and refugees fleeing wars in the Middle East and North Africa and economic deprivation across large parts of Eastern Europe.

Yesterday's atrocity was the worst in Britain since 2000, when the bodies of 58 Chinese people were found in a sealed airless container at Dover, Kent. An inquest was told the migrants banged frantically on the inside of the container as they suffocated.

More recently, in August 2015, 71 bodies were found decomposing in an abandoned lorry on the A4 motorway in Austria, near Parndorf. This produced a mass outpouring of sympathy for refugees across Europe. Overnight, thousands of ordinary people organised accommodation, transport, food, clothing and medical supplies, turning out to greet and welcome the convoys of refugees arriving from across the Mediterranean, from Turkey and North Africa.

It was this public sentiment which forced Angela Merkel's government to open Germany's borders and

allow refugees right of entry. But the sympathy for refugees cut across the plans of the German ruling class for remilitarisation and for deepening austerity. Powerful forces in the government and intelligence services set about smothering and reversing this social opposition through the promotion of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and manufactured scares such as the Cologne New Year's Eve "sex attacks".

Yesterday's events in Britain are not only a tragedy for the family and loved ones of the 39 people who have perished. They are a crime perpetrated by the capitalist governments of Britain and Europe against the international working class. Over 19,000 people died or went missing in the Mediterranean between 2014 and October this year. A total of 92 migrant deaths were recorded on land in Europe in 2018. The 39 people murdered yesterday brings this year's total to 91.



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