

Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre
5 Upper Bow
Edinburgh EH1 2JN

Bernard Cazeneuve
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Place Beauvau
75708 Paris
France

18 October 2016

Dear Minister,

We delivered a letter to you last week from the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre and about 80 additional people in Edinburgh asking you to protect the children in the Calais refugee camp.

We understand from media and from Charities working there that France has proceeded with demolition of the Calais Camp placing as many as 1500 children in containers and leaving as many as 200 children to sleep rough amid the burning remains of the camp.

We understand that France has agreed to take the remaining children to Reception Centres today. However we remain vigilant and we are here today to express grave concern about the behaviour of your government in this situation.

We understand that Lady Shaista Sheehan, who has been monitoring the situation in Calais was not permitted into the area where the children were being taken on board coaches. Concerns remain that none of the children will be taken to detention centres from which they might be deported.

We are aware too that many children have fled the area in the past few days, some to Paris, where it appears highly likely that they will have to sleep rough and where they will of course be at greater risk of harm including trafficking.

We are appalled by your reported remarks today that appear to be blaming the UK for this situation.

As we stated in a previous letter we hold the UK equally responsible for its failure to act to take in all those children who have the right to be asylum in the UK having family ties here. And we continue to call on the UK to do everything in its power to insure the protection of these children.

However, in the last instance these children are on French soil, where they have been for a long time and France is therefore directly responsible under the Convention on the Rights of the Child for the protection of these children and for insuring the provision of special care and assistance and guaranteeing their rights to family, shelter and protection.

We understand there are currently at least 113 young people who self-declared as 17 or under in the school at Calais this morning, including 46 aged 17, 33 aged 16, 12 aged 15

and five aged 13. We do not recognise housing them in metal containers as suitable provision.

We seek acknowledgement from you that these children have been failed and assurances that immediate steps will be taken to guarantee transparent protection, especially safe and suitable shelter in the first instance and that Charities working in the area or officials such as Lady Sheehan be allowed to monitor their progress at all times.

Finally we appeal to your sense of humanity. Please open your heart to these most vulnerable people who only seek shelter and a place to live in peace and dignity.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Larkin
Coordinator, Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre

Arthur Chapman, Chair, Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre

Jane Tallents, Howgate

Margaret Ferguson Burns, Edinburgh

Fiona Oliver – Larkin, Edinburgh

Janet Fenton, Secretary, Scottish Womens International League for Peace and Freedom

Anne Scott, Womens International League for Peace and Freedom

Deborah Riley, Edinburgh