



Links & contacts



No Borders groups

London www.london.noborders.org.uk
Bristol www.bristolnoborders.wordpress.com
Manchester www.nobordersmanchester.blogspot.com
Nottingham www.nobordersnottingham.org.uk
North East www.nobordersnortheast.wordpress.com
Brighton www.nobordersbrighton.blogspot.com
South Wales www.noborderswales.org.uk
Scotland www.nobordersscotland.org.uk
Calais www.calaisnoborder.eu.org
Lesvos/Greece www.noborderslesvos09.gr

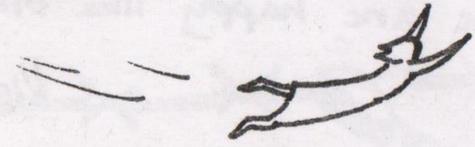
Indymedia (Migration) www.indymedia.org.uk/en/topics/migration
National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns www.ncadc.org.uk
No-One Is Illegal www.noii.org.uk
Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees www.aviddetention.org.uk
'Let Them Work' campaign (Refugee Council) www.refugeecouncil.org.uk
'Still Human, Still Here' campaign www.stillhumanstillhere.wordpress.com
Legal support/women refugees rights www.asylumaid.org.uk
Refugee Council (refugee support & mythbusting) www.refugeecouncil.org.uk
Manchester women refugee group www.ourlivesonline.org.uk

Calais Migrant Solidarity www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com
(if coming to Calais, for info and contacts, call 00 33 634810710)
Calais Witnesses www.calaiswitnesses.wordpress.com

Suggested donation for this booklet: £1.

All money raised goes to directly supporting migrants at Calais. You can also donate to a No Borders group near you.

(The images in this booklet are copyleft and can be found at www.blackbirdtree.co.uk
Click on 'Images4Activists'. Feedback welcomed!)



11867
K

Kiahuan

(a tale of migration)



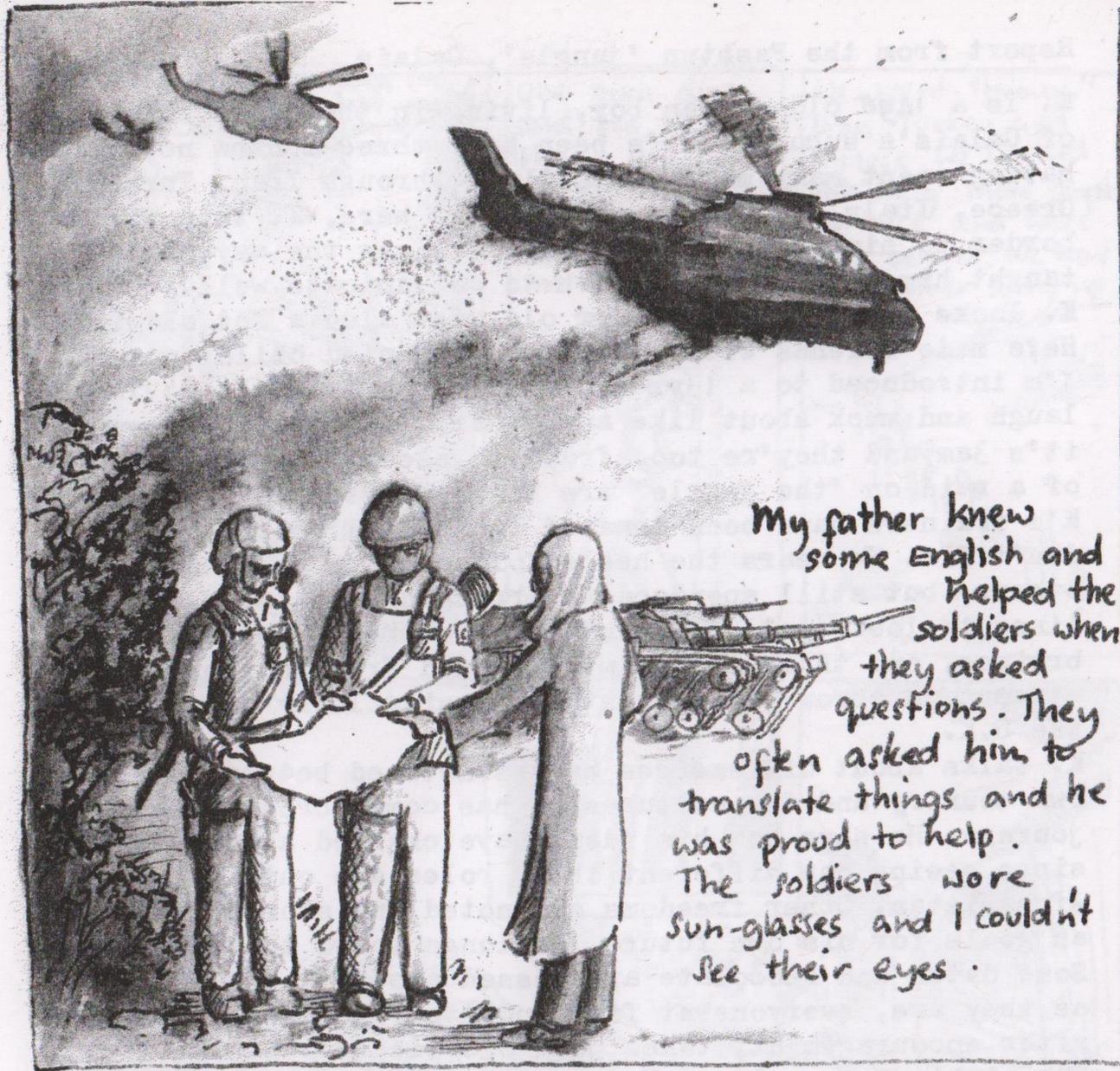
My name is Kaihan. I used to live in Afghanistan with my father and my brother, Amir.

My mother died when I was little and I don't remember her.

I don't remember much about my life before the soldiers came.

I was only six years old when the bombing started. I was very afraid but my father said the soldiers were our friends. They had promised to kill the Taliban and then we would all be happy and live in peace and I could go to school.

They promised.



My father knew some English and helped the soldiers when they asked questions. They often asked him to translate things and he was proud to help. The soldiers wore sun-glasses and I couldn't see their eyes.

When the Taliban came for my father, the soldiers had all gone.



me and Amir hid at my uncle's house but it wasn't safe. Uncle paid a lot of money to a man who could help us leave Afghanistan. He said we could have a safe life in England. He said the soldiers would remember our father and how he had helped them.

Report from the Pashtun 'jungle', Calais

K. is a 14yr old Afghan boy, living in the bleak scrub of Calais's suburbs. He's been here three months now, having spent many more travelling through Iran, Turkey, Greece, Italy and France, to wash up here, at this final border to his hopes of a new life. Along the way, he's taught himself enough English to communicate well.

K. looks smaller than a 14yr old, yet also a lot older. He's made friends with other unaccompanied children and I'm introduced to a 13yr old and another lad of 15. They laugh and muck about like any other kids would, although it's 3am and they're too afraid to sleep tonight. Rumours of a raid on 'the jungle' are keeping everyone awake. K's trainers have been donated by a local charity and don't fit. He wears the heels folded down, as do many others, but still spends ages arranging the laces in neat lines to look cool. His hands are covered with cuts and bruises, one thumb and palm distended from another failed attempt to throw himself onto a passing lorry bound for the U.K.

K. talks about differences he has noticed between his own country and the cultures he has come across on his journey. He says how his ideas have changed about women since seeing how different their roles are outside of Afghanistan. Other freedoms are noted and stored away as goals for his own future. He longs to go to school. Some dates and chocolate are passed around and hungry as they are, everyone at first politely refuses, then, after encouragement, takes just one piece each.

The night grows colder. K. shuffles off, returning with a blanket, not for himself but for you. Someone else offers tea, another wants to give up his sleeping space which, he assures you, is safe from the regular attacks by drunken locals. K. says that one thing he proud of in Afghanistan is their hospitality. He explains that if someone comes to the poorest house in the village, they will be made to feel welcomed and given the best food. Even your enemy cannot be turned away if in need.

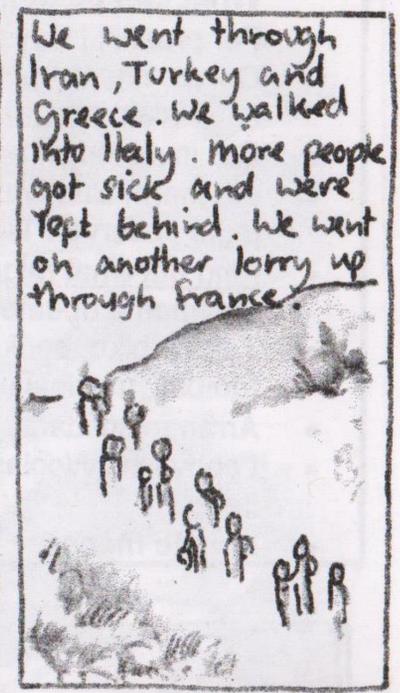
K. raises his head to sniff the air. "Smells of police", he says. It sounds like a joke until you sniff too and smell the tear gas. But this time they haven't come for him and he relaxes and begins to sing quietly, joined by his young friends. They sing in Pashto, a gentle undulating tune. Later still, someone produces a walkman and shares one ear-piece with K. and the two boys begin a beautiful, slow dance on the ends of their wires; eyes closed, humming, the graceful movement of hands and feet. You have to look away."



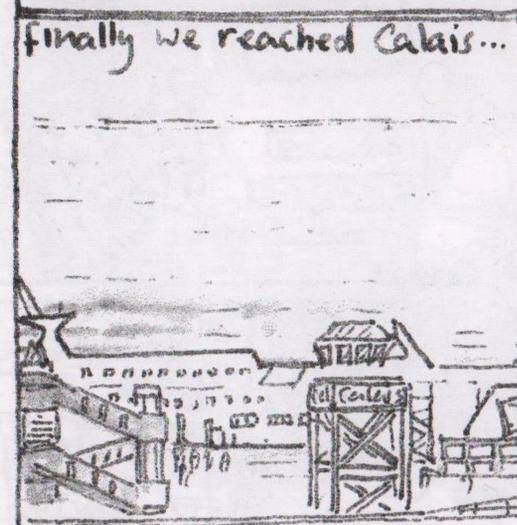
Twenty of us travelled in a lorry. It was hot and we had no air.



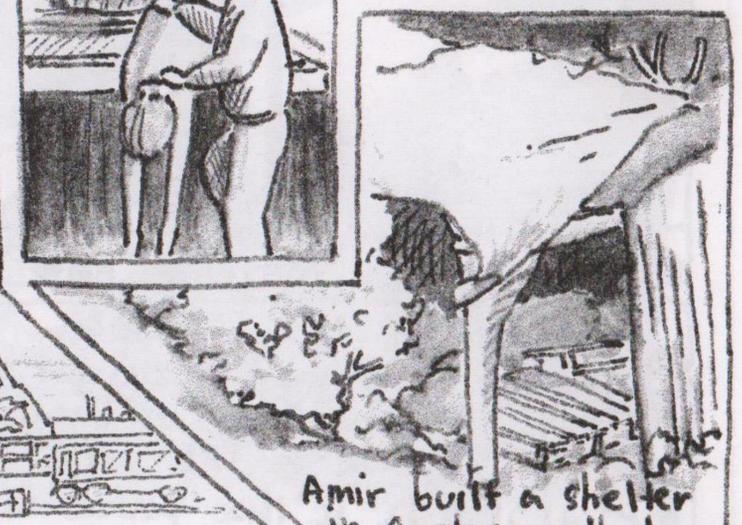
One man died and the driver threw him out of the lorry and kept all his money.



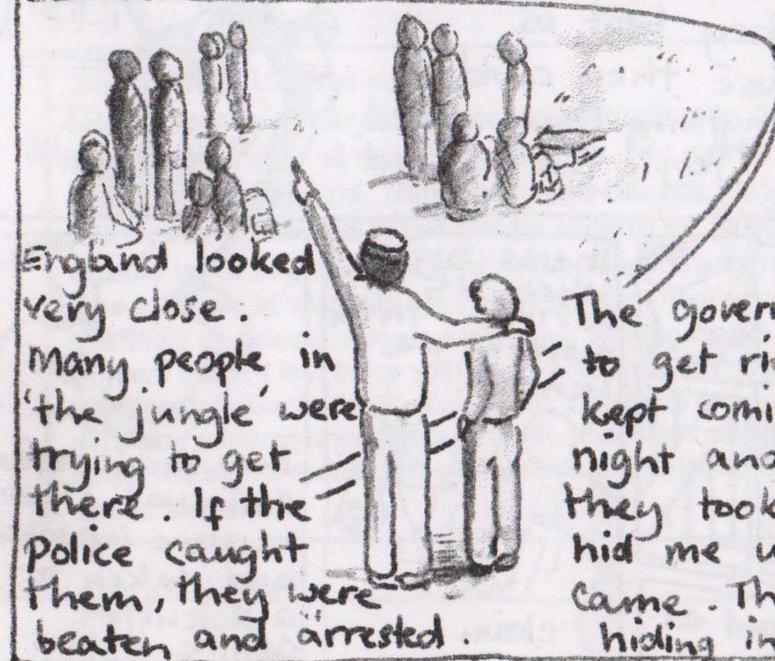
We went through Iran, Turkey and Greece. We walked into Italy. More people got sick and were left behind. We went on another lorry up through France.



finally we reached Calais...



Amir built a shelter in a place called 'the jungle'. It was hard living there. No food, no where to wash. The police came every night.

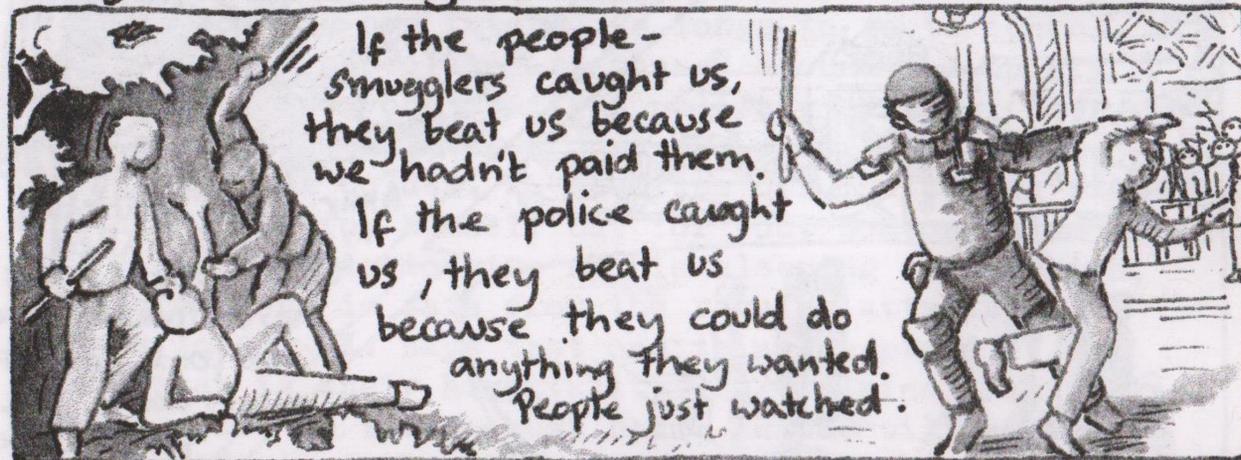


England looked very close. Many people in 'the jungle' were trying to get there. If the police caught them, they were beaten and arrested.

The governments wanted to get rid of us so they kept coming to the jungle at night and fired tear gas and they took people away. Amir hid me under bushes when they came. There were other children hiding in there too.

What can be done?

- For practical ways of supporting migrants in the 'jungles' and squats of Calais, check out Calais Migrant Solidarity. (www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com)
- Get involved with a No Borders group to plan action. (links on back page)
- Go there. Buddy up with street medics (uk_medics@lists.riseup.net), be a legal observer. Take a camera, take medical supplies.
- Find out what migrants are requesting (Calais Migrant Solidarity or check Indymedia updates)
- Take a bike, books in English & on learning English, SIM cards, batteries, a football, musical instruments, lighters, candles.
- Arrange solidarity actions where you live.
- Lobby Phil Woolas, immigration minister and other idiots with power over lives.
- Donate money to help activists stay active on site! (see back page)



After three months, Amir gave the smugglers all our money and they got us places on a lorry. We were so happy to be going to England at last! Soon we would be safe.



It was night when we arrived. In the morning we went to claim asylum.

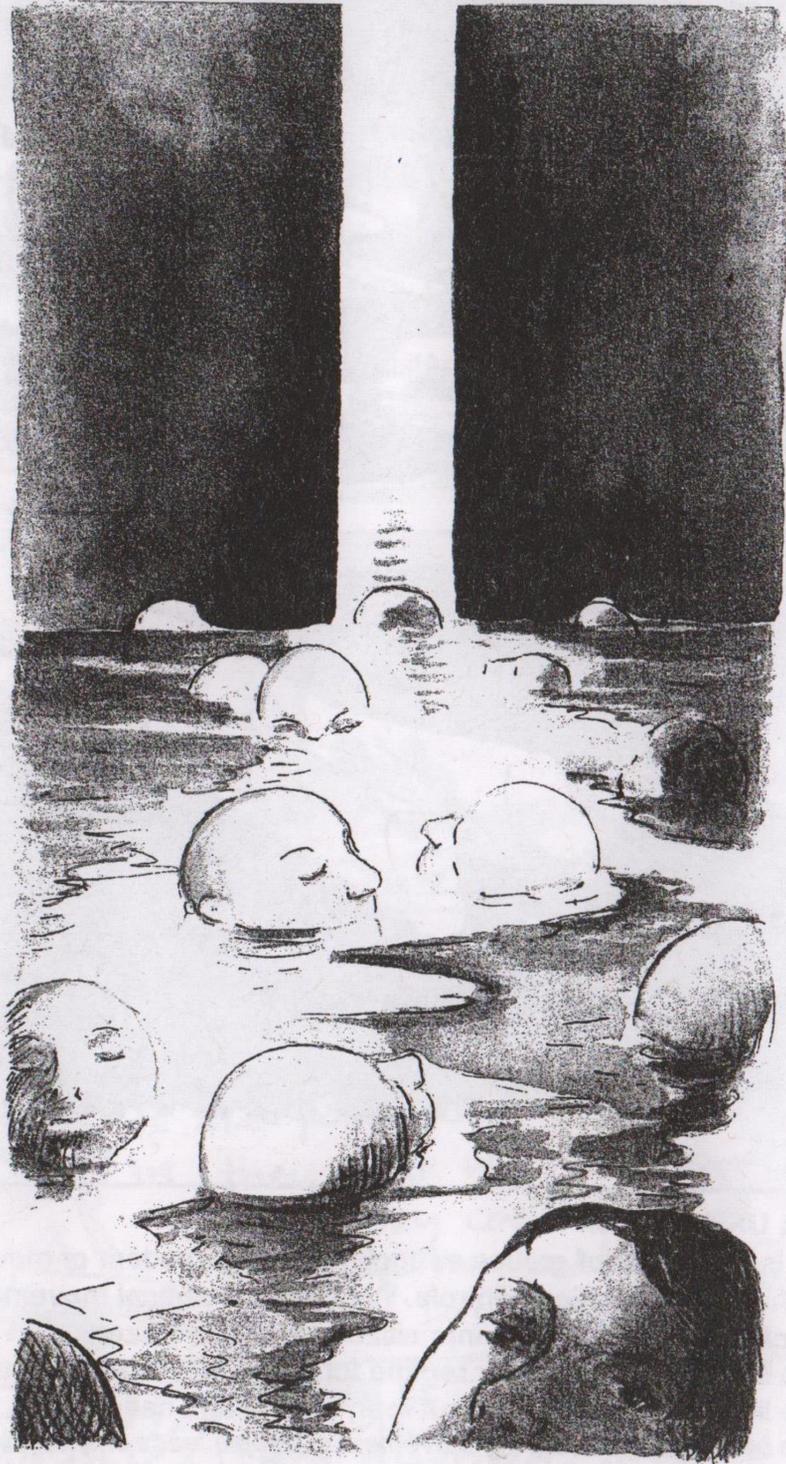
They didn't believe Amir was 17 and we were separated and taken to a detention centre. It was very frightening.



No Borders UK Network
 No Borders is a network of groups struggling for the freedom of movement for all and an end to all migration controls. We call for a radical movement against the system of control, dividing us into citizens and non-citizens. We demand the end of the border regime for everyone, including ourselves, to enable us to live another way, without fear, racism and nationalism.
'The attempts by states to control the movement of people leads only to criminalisation, apartheid and death. People are divided into those with and without documents, workers divided into those with and without rights, and countries divided into a strict hierarchy of wealth. Thousands die as they try to cross borders, as the conditions of detention become unbearable or as the threat of return to unbearable conditions get closer. Selective inclusion and 'illegality' are methods to divide and control us all. No One Is Illegal!'
 (London No Borders website)

Detention

"Being in Yarl's Wood was the lowest I have ever been: it was mental torture at its worst. Now I've got mental and physical scars that will stay with me for the rest of my life."
(28yr old woman on self-harming)



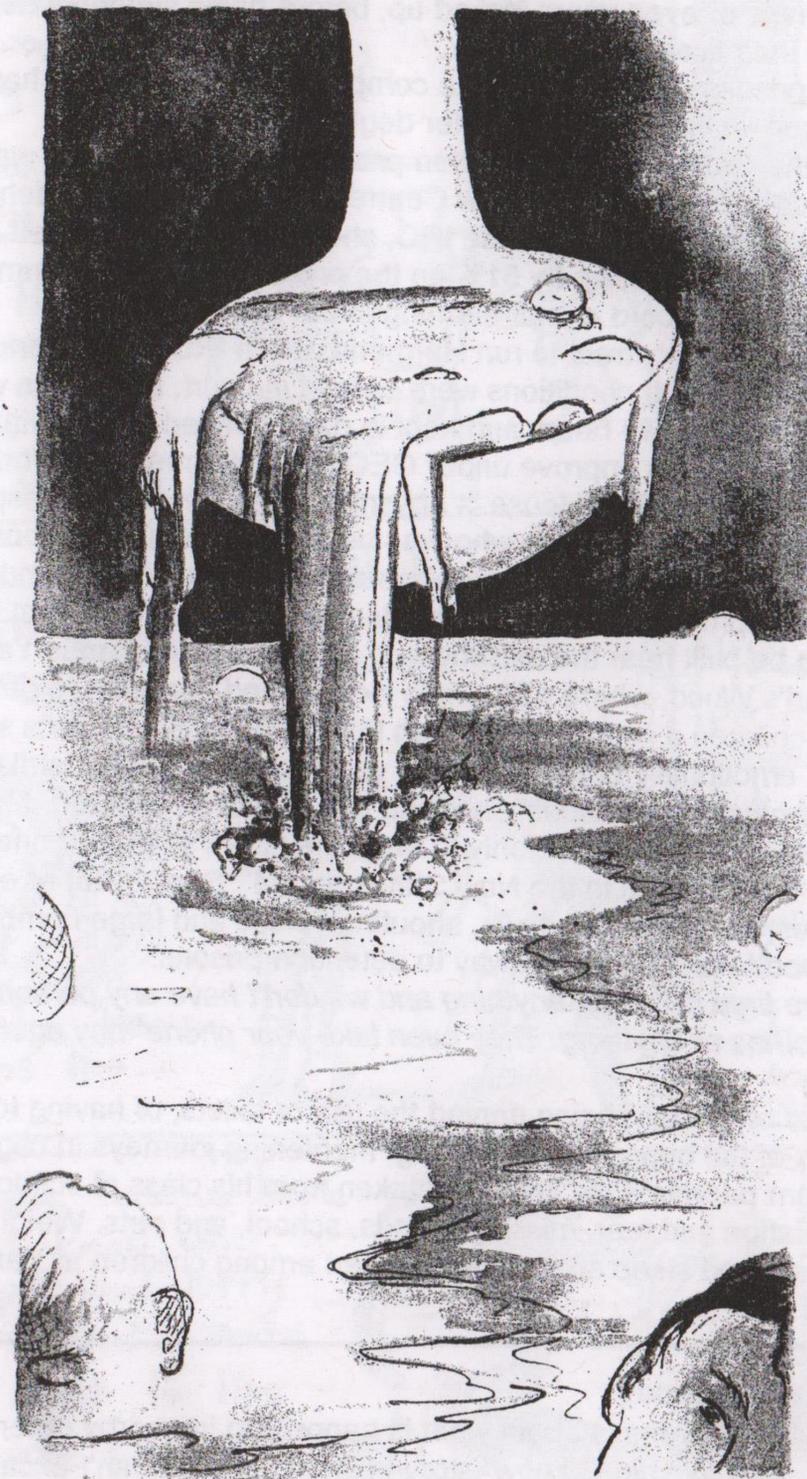
"I think that the children should be free and when they are there for one year or two years they are just wasting their time, they could go to school and they could learn something. They could be free. Instead they are like a bird in a cage"
(10 yr old Afghan girl)

"It was like dipping your toe in

"We couldn't tell things to officers or other people because we were afraid of them because maybe if we say something, something might happen"
(Afghan boy)

Centres

"and most of the time our roommates and the people who used to live with us, they were getting changed every three weeks or every two weeks ... some new people would replace them"
(Afghan teenager)



"We were all foreigners there and the British don't like foreigners. Some of the officers talked to us as though we were animals. If you are illegal you are not a human being in Britain"
(African man, 20's)

an enormous pool of lost people"

"You lose your mentality and you lose your thoughts as well and this is what was happening to us"

What are Detention Centres?

Detention Centres, Immigration Prisons, Immigration Removal Centres (IRC's) are various names for prisons where migrants are locked away without trial and for undetermined lengths of time. Vulnerable people, including traumatised children can spend months or even years locked up, before being suddenly deported to a country where their lives may be at risk.

Most of these prisons are run by private companies and conditions have been reported as poor, where detainees suffer degrading treatment.

For example, the G4S runs 6 immigration prisons in the UK. Prison watchdogs described conditions at their Heathrow Centre as 'inadequate and dehumanising'. Another G4S run prison, Brook House IRC, shows an increase in self-harming requiring medical attention, up by 51% on the previous year. This immigration prison has the worst record of self-harming in the country.

GEO has just won the contract to run Harmondsworth IRC where serious allegations over appalling conditions were upheld in court. Detainees were denied food and water for up to 40 hours and kept in dark, flooded rooms without sanitation. Will conditions improve under GEO's management? Doubtful, as their record of running Campsfield House is abysmal. They were found responsible for the death of Gregorio De La Rosa who was beaten to death in his room.

This profiteering from human misery looks set to continue and expand. This year has seen plans approved to build the UK's largest detention centre at Bullingdon, with another to be built near the existing and increasingly infamous Yarl's Wood. Serco runs Yarl's Wood, where 450 single women and families are detained.

Around 2,000 children a year pass through this prison, which reports say is physically and emotionally damaging. This year has seen hunger strikes by detainees, in protest at poor healthcare and the effects on children. Many of these children had grown up in the UK, only to have their lives shattered one day. Sir Al Aynsley-Green wrote in the New Statesman (4th Sept 2008) of early morning raids on families, doors broken down, shouting voices and large numbers of officers deployed to take families away to detention prisons.

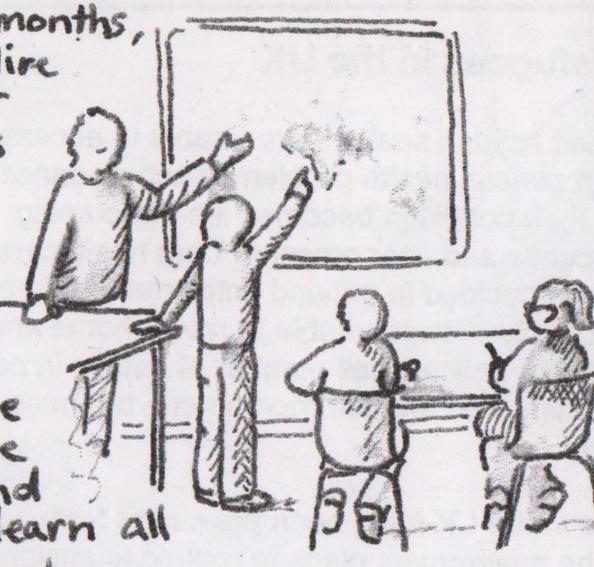
"We didn't have time to collect anything and we don't have any personal belongings, clothes or anything. They even take your phone" boy aged 11 in Yarl's Wood IRC

The report talks of children being denied the use of toilets, of having to undress in front of officers of the opposite sex, of long, frightening journeys in caged vans, of separations from parents. One child was taken from his class at school. All reported humiliation and fear, missing friends, school, and pets. Weight loss, deep anxiety and disturbed sleep are frequently seen among children at Yarl's Wood IRC.

What can be done?

- Raise local awareness about what is happening in nearby detention centres. The "We didn't know" story is an old one we can't excuse.
- Form affinity action groups that can mobilise at short notice.
- Get alerts on imminent deportations. (www.ncadc.org.uk)
- Mass phone campaigns to airlines have been effective.
- Contact refugee prison support groups (www.aviddetention.org.uk) and visit migrant detainees who have requested visitors.
- Fundraise to help migrants access legal support.
- Campaign/take action against new-build detention centres.

After three months, we went to live with a foster family. I was very happy to go to school and improve my English. Some of the teachers were very kind and wanted to learn all about my country.



I play football and I have made friends here ...

... but I often have bad dreams too.



It was harder for Amir. He wanted to work but wasn't allowed to. People in the street shouted bad things and said he was lazy. After one year, immigration want to send him back to Afghanistan.



Some people hate us here but I don't know why. Some people feel sorry for us but I don't want that! I want to live like everyone else and study and work hard. I want to be a good man like my father.



Challenges facing refugees in the UK

Health

The vast majority of refused asylum seekers are unable to access free health care or even a GP. People with serious health problems such as cancer will not be entitled to treatment until their condition becomes life-threatening, often too late to respond to treatment. Recently and after pressure from healthcare and charity groups, the government has decided to expand entitlement to free healthcare to 'Section 4' asylum seekers only – those unable to return home and unaccompanied children. However, this covers only a small number of people in need. Depression, stress and anxiety-related illnesses are common among refugees, who have often already faced great trauma.

Poverty

Almost all asylum seekers in the UK have been prevented from working. From October this year, the government plans to reduce financial support to asylum seekers to just £5 a day. A day's bus ticket in Manchester for example, costs £5.30. Therefore we see people excluded from the workplace, unable to travel, participate in society, represent themselves fairly or even feed and clothe themselves adequately. The discredited system of handing out vouchers rather than money, supposed to have been phased out, is still in use for those most vulnerable, at the 'end of the immigration process' i.e. refused and on the lowest benefits. Some live far from the supermarket which will accept their vouchers and have no travel costs to get there. The vouchers can't cover the cost of things like babies nappies and childcare equipment, where the choice is between eating and staying clean and healthy.

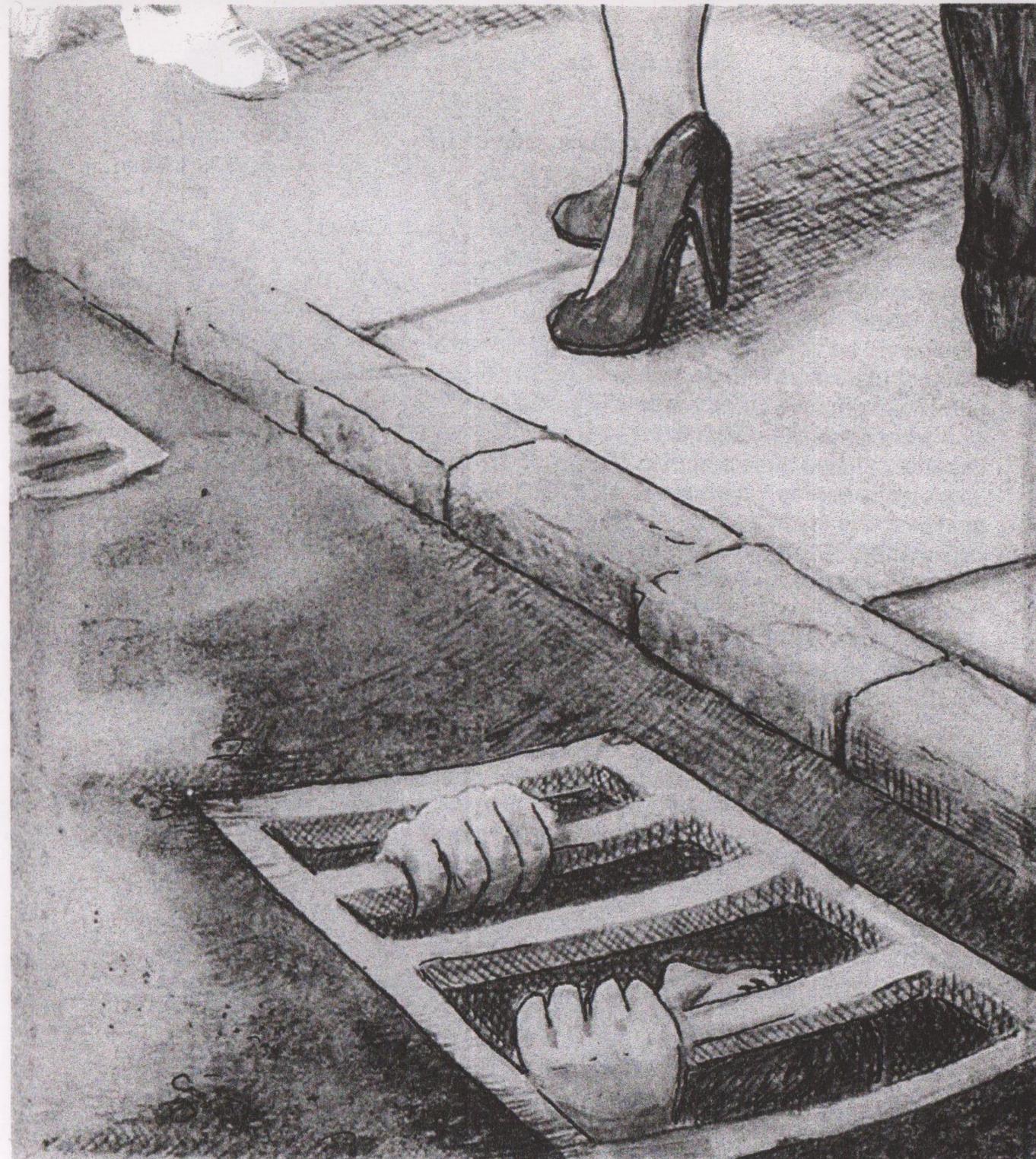
Racism

In a wealth and status obsessed society, refugees are often seen as second-class or non-people. Successive British governments have led and legitimised public hostility towards asylum-seekers, allowing hysteria and prejudice to thrive and far-right groups to prosper, only decrying these when their own Party seats are in jeopardy. Migrants face daily persecution and abuse. As one man said, "We are being punished twice. Once in our own countries and now for seeking asylum". In a strangely skewed argument, it seems that 'British values' are somehow at risk, rather than the health and well-being of the refugee!

Are we heading towards the Greek model?

'Eurodac' is a central database storing the fingerprints of asylum applicants and those arrested trying to cross European borders. It allows the effective application of the Dublin Convention (1990) whereby refugees can be deported to the first country of entry – in many cases, Greece. This means certain deportation to the migrant's country and possible persecution or death.

'Greece has taken the approach of using noxious detention conditions, procedural obstacles to lodging claims and illegal summary removals and abusing police and coast guard conduct to deter asylum seekers from entering Greece' (Human Rights Watch. Nov 26 2008)



What can be done?

- campaign against upcoming cuts in the living allowance for asylum seekers (www.stillhumanstillhere.wordpress.com)
- campaign to allow asylum seekers to work ('Let Them Work' www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)
- get involved with local refugee support groups, anything from admin and advice to well-being projects
- protest against troops being Afghanistan, arms exports, UK complicity in human rights abuses, etc.

Thoughts on Migration...

Throughout the history of human domination of the world's resources, nations have been delineated by an elite. Increasingly, freedom of movement has been limited and even curtailed in the interest of these elite.

It seems natural that a deep love of country and culture would grow up within our families and communities and many choose to spend their whole lives within that landscape. Yet, in common with other living things, human migration is a natural urge. Sometimes this is motivated by natural or man-made events. No-one chooses to be born into an environment where war rages, diseases thrive, crops fail and aggressors invade. We have no choice over our place of birth but we surely should have control over where and how we live out our lives.

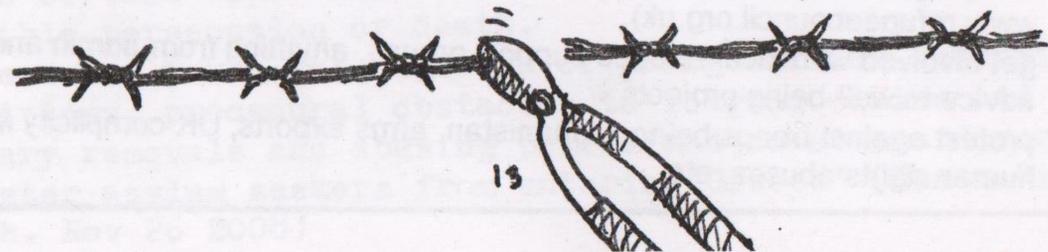
And sometimes the desire to migrate may be a wish to explore and widen our experiences and understanding of the world. All too often it seems that where the 'explorer' is setting out from a wealthy country, these are seen as admirable qualities! The inverse journey is viewed with suspicion. Governments and tabloid newspapers speak the same language of hostility, whereby 'asylum-seeker' becomes synonymous with 'cheat', 'scrounger', 'criminal'. Migrants are represented as our competitors, as though letting 'them' in, will make 'us' poor. Governments are always pleased to blame inequalities in the capitalist state on foreigners when we know full well that if all movement of peoples to and from the UK halted tomorrow, the same divisions between rich and poor would continue.

Asylum seekers, if their cases are considered at all, are categorised into how 'deserving' they are; how disabled, damaged or abused, how deserving of our pity. This is another way of dehumanising migrants and ensuring as few people as possible make it through the nightmare of border controls. Meanwhile, people from the UK move abroad when they wish, snapping up second homes for a song in post-war Bosnia.

The UK is a wealthy consumer and poorer countries are seen as producers or suppliers for our needs. We 'allow' cheap imported labour when it suits and exclude anyone needing anything in return. This exploitation of the world's resources and people is a continuation of colonialism and slavery, now smartly dressed in the modern garb of 'globalisation' and 'free-trade'.

We need to oppose this culture's commodification of all life, which allows for migrants to be used then discarded.

We must challenge the xenophobia and flawed reasoning behind immigration controls. If instead, we see migrants as our global allies in the struggle against inequalities in society, we can undermine a State that declares some of us 'legal' and some 'illegal'. Working together, we can fight for a world without borders, for equality and freedom of movement for all.



"Sometimes I have a good dream where me and Amir are living in a flat together and we are happy like birds."

Klahaan