

## Asylum seekers and the militarisation of borders

by Bridget Walker, Birmingham 22 February 2020

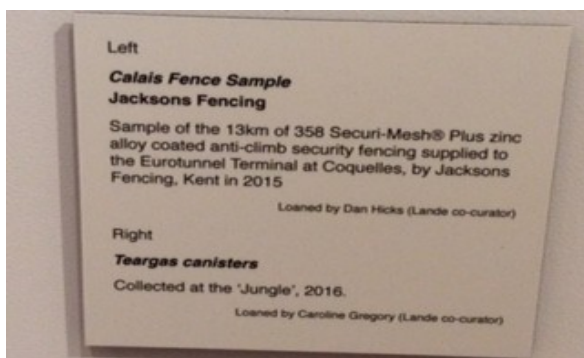
Evils which have struck their roots deep in the fabric of human society are often accepted, even by the best minds, as part of the providential ordering of life. They lurk unsuspected in the system of things.....

*William Charles Braithwaite, 1919 Quaker Faith and Practice 23.05*

### EU budget: Commission proposes major funding increase for stronger borders and migration Press Release Brussels 12<sup>th</sup> June 2018

Under its budget for the next EU budget cycle (2021–2027) the European Commission has earmarked €8.02 billion to its Integrated Border Management Fund (2021-2027), €11.27bn to Frontex (of which €2.2 billion will be used for acquiring, maintaining and operating air, sea and land assets) and at least €1.9 billion total spending (2000-2027) on its identity databases and Eurosur (the European Border Surveillance System).

*In Mark Akkerman (2019) The Business of Building Walls*



Borders around the world are being militarised with electric fences and razor wire springing up and helicopters and drones, watchtowers and hi-tech systems including sensors, cameras, ground-penetrating radar and carbon dioxide probes surveilling vast amounts of territory. Military personnel and special forces have been deployed on borders from Austria to the Czech Republic to South Africa and there are reports of the use of private security guards by countries ranging from Slovenia to the United Kingdom. (<https://wri-irg.org/en/pm-themes/border-militarisation>)

The big players in Europe's border security complex include arms companies **Airbus**, **Finmeccanica (now Leonardo)**, **Thales** and **Safran**, as well as technology giant **Indra**. Finmeccanica and Airbus have been particularly prominent winners of EU contracts aimed at strengthening borders..... Finmeccanica, Thales and Airbus, are also three of the top four European arms traders, all actively selling to countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Their total revenues in 2015 amounted to 95 billion Euros..

*In Mark Akkerman (2016): The Arms Dealers profiting from Europe's Refugee Tragedy*

Mitie, the largest provider of immigration detention in the UK, has a contract for escorts (for removing people) and for border controls in Northern France. Perhaps the most outward and visible signs of the security apparatus of the state are the 7 immigration removal centres where nearly 30,000 people a year are held, in administrative detention. There has been no judicial oversight of the decision to detain and they do not know how long they will be there.

## What can we do?

### **International Agreements**

The UN Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration (adopted in December 2018)

### **Principles and Values**

- Fully protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants regardless of status
- Migration should not be criminalised:
- There should be regular, fair and safe migration pathways
- National security policies should never violate the security of the person
- Border management policies should be in line with international law
- Approach should be *whole of government* and *whole of society*: migrants themselves should be involved.

### **Sanctuary Movement** (<https://cityofsanctuary.org/>)

Cities of Sanctuary, Sanctuary Churches, Quaker Sanctuary Meetings with twofold commitment to work locally and advocate jointly on issues of concern

**Change the discourse**—challenge negative images and language of criminalisation

### **Campaign with others in Europe and UK**

- Migreurop, network of European and African activists <http://www.migreurop.org/?lang=en>
- Platform for International Co-operation on Undocumented Migrants <https://picum.org/>
- Detention Forum group of 30+ CSOs <https://detentionforum.org.uk/>
- Global Justice Now: Freedom of Movement (<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/>)

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Challenge the discourse of fear and containment – create another political story – protect people not borders

### *Further reading*

Akkerman, Mark (2019): The Business of Building Walls <https://www.tni.org/en/businessbuildingwalls>

FoR Militarism <https://for.org.uk/act/>

Hayter, Teresa (2004): Open Borders: The case against immigration control, Plutobooks

QARN(Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network) leaflet series

Quaker Council for European Affairs <http://www.qcea.org/> publications on Human Policing, The Politics of Human Rights in the Khartoum Process, and Anti Migrant Hate Speech

Quaker UN Office (2018)– Briefing for Friends – a short guide for engaging with the Global Compact on Migration <https://quno.org/resource/2018/12/briefing-friends-short-guide>

Rethinking Security <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/>

UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

[https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180711\\_final\\_draft\\_0.pdf](https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180711_final_draft_0.pdf)

War Resisters' International: <https://wri-irg.org/en/pm-themes/border-militarisation>

