

PEOPLE ^{NOT} WALLS

The Cross-Channel Human Rights Initiative
L'initiative trans-Manche de défense des droits humains

MEDIA RELEASE – 21 May 2020.

For immediate release

CHILDREN SHOULD NOT HAVE TO SUFFER THE TRAUMA OF A DANGEROUS CHANNEL CROSSING

The good news has recently emerged that the Greek and UK governments have cooperated to ensure that 52 unaccompanied minors were flown to the UK to be reunited with family members. However many more are still surviving in dire conditions in various places in Europe, driven to take desperate measures to try to cross borders.

This desperation is illustrated in disturbing photographs received from the French charity 'Utopia 56', which has been active in the Pas-de-Calais region since January 2016.

The photos, taken near Dunkirk, show relatives putting bundles of empty plastic water bottles around young children to provide buoyancy in the event of them falling into the water during a hazardous crossing of the Channel on small and flimsy boats.

Ben Bano, Coordinator of People not Walls commented: 'This situation demonstrates the dangers and risks when people feel that they and their children have no choice other than to embark in small boats and face potential death through drowning. In the current Covid 19 crisis those involved are desperate to escape the appalling the insanitary conditions which threaten to spread the virus in the makeshift camps of Northern France.

Once again we call on the UK and French governments to provide safe ways to claim asylum for those seeking sanctuary. If we really believe in safeguarding the children involved, then their safety and survival must be our first concern'.

Picture shows the bundles of bottles which are being used to provide buoyancy.



ENDS

'People not Walls' is a collaborative partnership between French and English NGOs and individuals concerned to maintain the rights and dignity of people who find themselves trapped at borders in Europe, especially the French-UK border along the coasts of the English Channel.