

Audio and photos from "Don't Let Them Drown" protest in Sheffield

Chris 2015-03-17 22:17

Attached is a audio recording and photos from a protest in Sheffield on 17th March 2015 against the policy of letting migrants seeking refuge in Europe drown in the Mediterranean Sea organised by South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group.

The protest started on The Moor, walked to the Town Hall and then went onto the Home Office building to submit a petition.

The following text is taken from a South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group report, at <http://www.symaag.org.uk/2015/03/17/let-them-drown-is-a-policy/> "Let them drown is a policy"

100 people demonstrated in Sheffield today to say "Don't Let Them Drown" and to call for a humanitarian migration policy towards refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.

Some of those on the demonstration were from countries experiencing war and repression. Tesfam from Eritrea spoke, condemning the UK Government's policy of leaving refugees to drown in the Mediterranean Sea comparing it to blocking a fire exit door – if there's a fire people will still try to break the door down. He stressed the point that people risked everything to find safety in Europe for good reasons.



The testimony of a Palestinian refugee whose friend drowned was also read out by a member of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign: "I am telling you this because I don't want it to happen to other people" his statement ended.

The march was organised by SYMAAG but supported by a range of asylum rights groups from South Yorkshire and branches of the Green Party, Labour Party and Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. There was also support from a range of faith groups, Sheffield Trade Union Council and Unite Community Union.

The demonstration attracted a lot of attention as we marched through up The Moor and past the main market. There was some



hostility: one man told me he was "pleased" that Syrian people were drowning trying to reach Europe (before walking away fast) but the majority of people were curious and sympathetic when a conversation got going. One English woman told me that her Syrian friend had crossed the Mediterranean to escape the war, taking her young son with her. Her son had drowned before the boat reached Italy.

We ended at Vulcan House, the regional Home Office HQ for a rally, interviews and to hand in a petition calling for a change in Government policy to recognise that the lives of refugees are as valuable as anyone else's and for safe, legal routes of migration to be established.



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But only yesterday the Home Office made it more difficult for Syrian refugees to claim asylum in the UK and revealed that dozens of Syrian refugees had been either forcibly deported from the UK or were locked in immigration detention awaiting deportation. <https://www.freemovement.org.uk/new-restrictions-on-syrian-travellers-to-prevent-asylum-claims/>

We know we have a long way to go but today was a start.



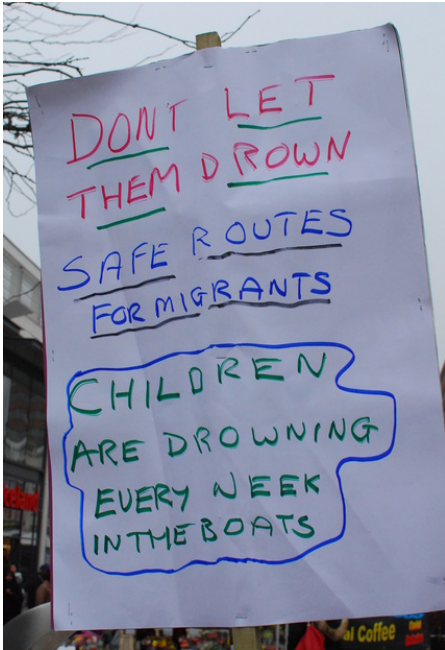
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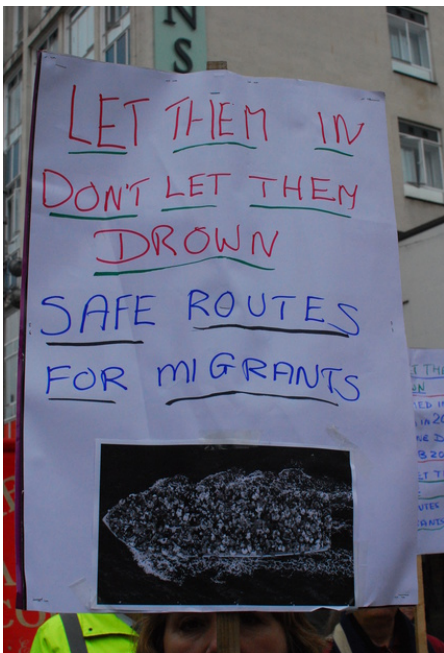
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