

27-10-16

The editorial Board

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/28/opinion/clearing-the-jungle-in-calais.html>

**Clearing the Jungle in Calais**

Riot police at the migrant camp known as the Jungle in Calais, France, on Wednesday. Credit Mauricio Lima for The New York Times

The Jungle, a sprawling migrant camp in northern France that had come to symbolize Europe’s dismal failure to cope with the waves of desperate people fleeing violence and hunger in the Middle East and Africa, is finally gone, cleared in a three-day French operation that will disperse the migrants and refugees among centers across France. But the greater problem that brought them there in the first place is far from cleared.

Razing the tawdry, unsafe and unhealthy camp in Calais was overdue and necessary, and the thousands of people — including hundreds of unaccompanied youths — who had somehow reached the entrance to the Channel Tunnel in the largely false hope of reaching Britain, the promised land for so many refugees, will now have a chance at least to live in a degree of safety while they try to get permission to stay in France.

But the Somalis, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Afghans, Iraqis, Syrians and others who have risked everything to flee their hellish lands are still arriving in a continent that still has no unified, humane policy to deal with them. That the Jungle existed in the first place testifies not only to their desperate resourcefulness, but to Europe’s fecklessness. The refugees had to navigate war zones, cross a sea, sneak ashore and travel for hundreds of miles to get there. Europe did a poor job of processing them, on arrival and an even worse job of distributing them fairly.

Britain, the most prized destination for many of the refugees, closed its doors the tightest. Protected by geography and outside the passport-free Schengen zone, it accepted only a handful of asylum seekers, opted out of most E.U. asylum policies and effectively left it to France to hold back the refugees who reached the Chunnel. Even then, purportedly “uncontrolled” immigration was one of the biggest reasons Britons voted to opt out of the European Union.

Britain has now taken a commendable step under a measure known as the Dubs amendment, named after a peer who was himself a child refugee, to let in unaccompanied refugee youths, of whom there were about 1,300 in Calais. Britain should go further and demonstrate that even if it is leaving the E.U., it still recognizes its obligations to refugees and to its neighbors. How the French handle the thousands of refugees who are being dispersed among scores of French communities will also be watched carefully.

However competently it was done, clearing Calais only a temporary measure.