

Dozens of immigrants discovered trapped, one dead, in British shipping container

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Crew at Tilbury Docks, near London, were alerted to the fact that 35 immigrants were trapped in a shipping container by the “banging and screaming” of those trapped inside.

The container had arrived on a ship from Zeebrugge, Belgium, after an overnight journey, and was being unloaded at 7:35 a.m. on Saturday. After staff breached the container, they discovered that one man had died and many of the children and adults were very sick, suffering badly from dehydration and hypothermia.

Natalie Hardy, of P&O Ferries, said the container was on board a Norstream commercial vessel, which was scheduled to leave Zeebrugge late Friday night. The ship was carrying 64 containers, 72 trailers and five lorries and drivers.

The immigrants “had been in there overnight, because the ship was an overnight freight ferry,” she said.

However, that gives little indication of what suffering occurred, as Belgian authorities have yet to identify where the container originated. Essex police said they understood that those trapped inside were Sikhs from Afghanistan.

Emergency services arrived at the “very difficult scene” within 11 minutes. East of England ambulance service told the press that they had despatched seven ambulances, two rapid response cars, a patient transport services vehicle, two duty operational managers, two BASICS doctors, and a hazardous area response team.

Eighteen patients were taken to Basildon Hospital, nine to London Whitechapel Hospital and seven to Southend Hospital. At least seven of those treated at three different hospitals had “significant health problems.” The police as well as the UK Border Force have become involved.

At a press conference at Tilbury Docks, Essex Chief

Superintendent Trevor Roe said, “This is a humanitarian issue—the welfare of these patients is a priority.” The death of one of the immigrants is now the subject of a homicide investigation in liaison with Belgian police, he added.

In reality, far from taking a humanitarian approach, the almost exclusive focus of officialdom has been to approach the issue as a criminal incident. Numerous spokesmen have denounced “people trafficking” gangs, with Roe declaring that police “will be looking to see...whoever may [be] involved in this conspiracy to bring these people in this way over to this country.”

Chief Inspector Peter De Waele, from the Belgian police, said he believed the lorry that delivered the container in Zeebrugge had been identified through CCTV footage, and he was “very, very hopeful that we find the truck who put the container in Zeebrugge. I think it is very, very important that we have the identification of that truck and also of the driver.”

Almost wholly absent is any reference to the terrible economic circumstances that drive people to put themselves at the mercy of such traffickers and give over their life savings—let alone critical media commentary on the way these unfortunates are then treated like criminals by the UK’s police and border authorities.

The survivors, as soon as they were released from hospital, were sent directly to an immigration reception centre near Tilbury on Sunday—in some instances less than 24 hours after their ordeal—where they are being held under immigration powers and subject to interrogation.

Former head of the UK Border Force Tony Smith spoke for all officialdom when he told the BBC, “We really need to get a message out to migrants that if they want to come to this country there are legal routes that

they need to explore and they need to apply for visas and permits.”

Anthony Steen, chairman of the Human Trafficking Foundation, spoke of how desperate people “hope to arrive in somewhere that’s more accommodating, more kind, and offering them a better quality of life. Usually, they’re sadly wrong.”



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