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France must provide safe drinking water and sanitation for migrants in the “Calais Jungle”, say UN rights experts

France: water for migrants

16 October 2017

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GENEVA (16 October 2017) – UN human rights experts* are urging the Government of France to devise long-term measures to provide access to safe drinking water and sanitation for migrants in Calais and other areas along the northern French coast.

After the migrant camps in the vicinity of Calais, the so-called “Calais Jungle” were dismantled in November 2016, migrants continued to return to the area. Many of the migrants are living without shelter and proper access to drinking water, toilets or washing facilities.

“It is worrying that approximately 700 migrants in Calais and the greater area of Calais temporarily rely on only 10 portable lavatories and water from 10 taps,” said one of the experts, Mr. Léo Heller, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation.

Despite the decision by the Conseil d’État, the highest administrative court in France, reaffirming the obligation of the French State to provide access to water and sanitation to the migrants in Calais, the local authorities have refused to implement concrete measures.

“Human rights apply to all, including migrants-regardless of their status. Consequently, the legal recognition by the French court of the human rights obligation to provide access to water and sanitation should be commended, but the authority of those decisions is diminished if they are not implemented in practice,” said the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe Gonzalez Morales.

Migrants in camps at Grande-Synthe, Tatinghem, Arras and Digne have

migrants in camps at Grande-Synthe, Calais, Sangatte, Arras and Dieppe have limited access to drinking water, showers and other washing facilities, and rely on help from volunteers and NGOs.

"We learned that volunteers and NGOs are opening their facilities for migrants to come and use toilets and showers. Some provide transportation so that migrants can travel to sport facilities to take showers," the experts said. "This is a temporary solution and it should not be the only one."

The group of UN experts urged the international community to join calls emphasizing the primary obligation of the Government of France to provide a durable solution to the situation of migrants along the northern French coast.

Earlier this year, the Special Rapporteurs contacted the Government of France to seek clarification about the situation.

ENDS

** The UN experts: **Mr. Léo Heller** Special Rapporteur on the **human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation**; **Mr. Felipe Gonzalez Morales** Special Rapporteur on the **human rights of migrants**; **Ms. Leilani Farha** Special Rapporteur on the **adequate housing** as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*

*Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the **Special Procedures** of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.*

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