



## News

**25 March (Issue 04/22)**

[www.statewatch.org](http://www.statewatch.org)

[Like us on Facebook](#) | [Follow us on Twitter](#)

Welcome to our latest email update, featuring:

- **French government proposes EU measures against “radical rhetoric”**
- **Statewatch contributes to Belgian parliamentary hearing on pushbacks**
- **La construction de l’État biométrique, La construcción del Estado biométrico – our latest report now available in French and Spanish**

Plus, all our other news, links and documentation – and don’t forget to check out our extensive roundup of news from across Europe from the last month.

---

## We need your support

**We know that thousands of people find our work informative, interesting and useful to their research, campaigning and advocacy. If you are one of them, please consider becoming a Friend of Statewatch.**

We operate on a very tight budget and receive just 5% of our annual income from individual supporters. If you appreciate what we do, we’d love you to become a Friend of Statewatch.

**Donate £**

**Donate €**

---

## French Presidency proposes action against “radical rhetoric”

The French government’s domestic record on civil liberties leaves much to be desired – and now it has proposed that the EU introduce measures against “entities or individuals” that are “active in the spread of radical rhetoric” as a way to stop “the spread of extremist and violent ideologies and to prevent the radicalisation of new actors.”

Measures against “propaganda leading to terrorism,” asset freezing and EU-wide bans are listed as potential ways “to hinder the activity of such entities or individuals in a coordinated manner.”

Read more [here](#).

## Belgian parliament discusses pushbacks

Last October MPs from the Green and Socialist parties in the Belgian parliament proposed a resolution condemning the “systematic” use of pushbacks at the EU’s external borders. The resolution condemns the practice, calls on the Belgian government to demand that EU institutions and member states ensure rights are upheld, calls for financial support for human rights organisations and monitors, and demands that fundamental rights staff at Frontex be given greater prominence and powers, amongst other things.

Last Tuesday the parliament held a hearing to discuss the draft resolutions and the issues it raises. Following on from [our submission](#) to a [UN Special Rapporteur report on pushbacks](#), *Statewatch* was invited to provide a contribution. Our researcher Yasha Maccanico went on our behalf – you can view the hearing [here](#).

---

## La construction de l’État biométrique, La construcción del Estado biométrico

***Notre dernier rapport est disponible en français!***

La construction de l’État biométrique: pouvoirs de la police et discrimination - un examen critique du développement et du déploiement actuels des technologies biométrique.

***¡Nuestro último informe ya está disponible en español!***

La construcción del Estado biométrico: poderes policiales y discriminación – un examen crítico del actual desarrollo y despliegue de las tecnologías biométricas para el control policial y migratorio.

Disponible [ici / aquí](#).

## News

Tracking the Pact: Externalisation and “Team Europe” at the heart of the “gradual approach”

Free speech under attack: French Presidency proposes action against “radical rhetoric”

Council seeks political guidance and approval on support for Ukrainian refugees

Fine-tuning surveillance: proposal to enhance monitoring of “most dangerous” terrorists

Ukraine war sparks revision of EU crime priorities

EU: E-evidence: “the Parliament has moved substantially towards the Council position”

EU: Linking development aid to deportation compliance under discussion in the Council

EU: Concept Note on providing arms to Ukraine

# News

---

25 March

## [EU: Tracking the Pact: Externalisation and “Team Europe” at the heart of the “gradual approach”](#)

With negotiations on the laws that make up the EU’s Pact on Migration and Asylum making little progress, in January the French Presidency of the Council proposed a “gradual approach” – pickling out some elements on which progress could be made, and leaving others to one side. Key to the plans is the consolidation of political unity amongst member states and EU institutions (“Team Europe”) in order to further externalise migration control.

---

24 March

## [EU: Free speech under attack: French Presidency proposes action against “radical rhetoric”](#)

The French government has proposed EU action against “entities or individuals” that are “active in the spread of radical rhetoric” as a way to stop “the spread of extremist and violent ideologies and to prevent the radicalisation of new actors.”

---

24 March

## [EU: Council seeks political guidance and approval on support for Ukranian refugees](#)

On 28 March an extraordinary meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council will discuss "European coordination for the reception of people fleeing the war in Ukraine." A note from the French Presidency to other Council delegations, published here, seeks the views of justice and interior ministers on three issues: implementation of material and financial support to member states; the monitoring and coordination of movements within the EU; support to Moldova and relocation in the EU of Ukranian refugees currently in Moldova.

---

22 March

## [EU: Fine-tuning surveillance: proposal to enhance monitoring of “most dangerous” terrorists](#)

The French Presidency of the Council has kicked off a discussion on making changes to the Schengen Information System that will make it possible for a greater number of member states to access alerts on the “most dangerous” categories of terrorist, such as foreign terrorist fighters. Any such changes would significantly increase the amount of personal data shared between national authorities, and would require legal amendments to come into force.

---

22 March

## [Ukraine war sparks revision of EU crime priorities](#)

The French Presidency of the Council is calling for national authorities to increase information-sharing with EU agencies Europol and Frontex "in order to anticipate developments and prepare for and implement a swift and coordinated operational response" to the activities of "criminal networks and individuals" seeking to take advantage of the war in Ukraine.

---

17 March

**[EU: E-evidence: "the Parliament has moved substantially towards the Council position"](#)**

EU institutions have been discussing new rules to ease cross-border gathering of evidence for use in criminal investigations and judicial proceedings since 2018. A letter to the Council from the MEP responsible for the file says that "the Parliament has moved substantially towards the Council position," dropping a number of its initial demands. We are also making public the latest trilogue document on European production and preservation orders, showing the positions of the different institutions and a Council progress report.

---

17 March

**[EU: Linking development aid to deportation compliance under discussion in the Council](#)**

A note from the French Presidency of the Council on the annual implementation of the visa readmission mechanism discusses "the place of readmission levers in the overall management of the relationship with third countries".

---

16 March

**[EU: Concept Note on providing arms to Ukraine](#)**

"Guns, ammunition, rockets and fuel are on their way to your troops," announced the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, in an "address to the Ukrainian people" on Sunday 27 February. The address came after the European Council agreed to an "assistance measure" that will provide €500 million worth of weapons to Ukraine using funds from the new European Peace Facility. A Concept Note produced by the Council, publicly available here, outlines the possible pros and cons of that assistance.

# The Roundup

Material we have shared on our [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts in the last fortnight.

---

OpenDemocracy, 24 March

## [Revealed: 90% of Met officers disciplined for racism still work for force](#)

"Just 5% of Metropolitan Police officers disciplined for racism towards fellow officers in recent years were sacked, openDemocracy can reveal.

Four officers of the 76 who had disciplinary proceedings for racism against their colleagues upheld were dismissed without notice between 2017 and 2021, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests reveal. Three further officers resigned or retired during this period after claims against them for racism were upheld."

---

Guardian, 23 March

## [Two Met officers who strip-searched school girl removed from frontline duties](#)

"Two of the five officers involved in the traumatic strip search of a 15-year-old black girl at school in London have been removed from frontline duties"

"The Met has seemed incapable of reform for generations, it is difficult to say it will ever change"

---

EURACTIV, 23 March

## [EU lawmakers adopt recommendations on Artificial Intelligence](#)

"After significant redrafting, report was adopted with vast majority in parliamentary committee while maintaining original emphasis on potential benefits of emerging technology"

---

EU Observer, 23 March

## [A call to release migrant detainees in Ukraine](#)

"For much of the past decade, Ukraine has acted as a border guard for Europe keeping those fleeing war & poverty from reaching safety. Amidst this war, Ukraine continues this role"

---

InfoMigrants, 23 March

## [More migrants trying to reach Poland from Belarus](#)

"A video posted by the Polish Border Guard on Wednesday (March 23) shows sections of the new solid metal fence on the Belarusian border. The 186 kilometer long barrier, due for completion in June, will be topped with barbed wire, it says"

---

Matthias Monroy, 22 March

## [Screening of travellers: U.S. wants to query fingerprint databases in Europe](#)

"Enhanced Border Security Partnership would regulate access to fingerprint databases by US border authorities & be a condition for countries whose nationals can enter visa-free "

---

Guardian, 22 March

## [UK set to criminalise illicit refugee crossings after Commons rebellion averted](#)

"Government wins string of votes to restore elements of controversial borders and nationality bill removed by Lords"

---

---

Border Violence Monitoring Network, 22 March

[\*\*Balkan regional report – February 2022\*\*](#)

Bringing together first-hand testimony from countries in the region to look at the way EU states and other actors are affecting systemic violence towards people crossing borders

---

Independent, 22 March

[\*\*UK: Police guidance on facial recognition technology ‘a hammer blow to privacy’\*\*](#)

"Innocent people like victims and potential witnesses could be placed on police watchlists under guidance on use of facial recognition systems, civil liberties groups warn."

---

Irish Times, 21 March 2022

[\*\*State’s welcome for Ukrainians reveals ‘hypocrisy’ of Irish immigration system\*\*](#)

"'We appreciate what the Government is doing in response to the Ukrainian crisis but we're feeling the hypocrisy,' he said."

---

EURACTIV, 20 March

[\*\*Global Europe Brief: Last stretch for EU’s military strategy\*\*](#)

"The blueprint text, at this point already revised five times by member states, includes language that would have been considered utterly inconceivable as recently as two years ago."

---

Migration Control, 19 March

[\*\*MOCADEM Action File Niger\*\*](#)

"The Actions 3, 4, 5 planned for Niger are about evacuations of people on the move from Libya. Especially Action 5 is set to establish something like asylum capacity in Niger, trying to construct the country as a „safe third country“ in the longer run"

See also: [\*\*Frontex to boost border control efforts in Niger, Algeria and Libya\*\*](#)

---

BBC News, 18 March

UK: [\*\*Met Police apologises for strip-search of Hackney schoolgirl\*\*](#)

"A black schoolgirl was strip-searched by police after being wrongly suspected of carrying cannabis."

The "traumatic" search by Metropolitan Police officers took place without another adult present at the girl's secondary school in Hackney in 2020.

A safeguarding report on the incident concluded it was unjustified and racism was "likely" to have been a factor."

---

Politico Europe, 17 March

[\*\*War in Ukraine envelops EU rule-of-law fight at home\*\*](#)

"The EU's campaign to uphold the rule of law has temporarily run aground amid the fog of war, igniting fears that the bloc is neglecting to defend democracy at home even as it takes historic steps to do just that in Ukraine."

---

Transnational Institute, 17 March

[Fanning the Flames: How the European Union is fuelling a new arms race](#)

“The European Defence Fund (EDF) and its precursor programmes explicitly aim to strengthening the ‘global competitiveness’ of the technological industrial base of European defence. There is a major disconnect between such technologies and their potential impact beyond the profits they will generate. They will inevitably boost European arms exports and fuel the global arms race, which will in turn lead to more armed conflicts and wars, greater destruction, significant loss of life, and increased forced displacement.”

---

Evening Standard, 17 March

UK: [More terror police brought in to tackle Putin threat in wake of Ukraine war](#)

“...Met assistant commissioner Matt Jukes, the national head of counter-terrorism police, on Thursday disclosed that further resources will be ploughed into combating the hostile state threat, including from Russia, because of the increasing danger posed by agents of rogue overseas powers.”

---

Investigate Europe, 17 March

[EU member states exported weapons to Russia after the 2014 embargo](#)

“Missiles, aircraft, rockets, torpedoes, bombs. Russia continued to buy EU weapons until at least 2020. Despite the ongoing embargo, ten member states exported € 346 million worth of military equipment, according to public data analysed by Investigate Europe. Some of these weapons could be used against Ukraine now.

(...)

But Europe is not alone in having to deal with contradictions regarding their exports. According to SIPRI’s data on arms exports, there’s an even stranger fact: it was not just the EU selling arms to Russia after the annexation of Crimea – Russia also remained the second biggest market for weapons exports from Ukraine.”

---

The Guardian, 16 March

[UK spies who allegedly passed questions to CIA torturers subject to English law, court rules](#)

“UK intelligence services who allegedly asked the CIA to put questions to a detainee who was being tortured in “black sites” were subject to the law of England and Wales and not that of the countries in which he was being held, the court of appeal has ruled.

The three appeal judges were asked to decide whether Abu Zubaydah, who was subjected to extreme mistreatment and torture at secret CIA “black sites” in six different countries, has the right to sue the UK government in England.”

---

Refugee Council, 16 March

[Comprehensive analysis of UK asylum system published](#)

“The latest analysis of the UK ’s asylum system has been published, including all relevant statistics and policy developments.

The report forms part of the Asylum Information Database, a project coordinated by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles which aims to provide up to date information on asylum practice in 23 countries.”



---

Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 15 March

**[The Use of Biological Methods in Asylum Age Assessments](#)**

“An overview of current age assessment processes used in the UK asylum system and an examination of new proposals to use biological methods to distinguish children from adults.”

---

Border Criminologies, 15 March

**[Death at Sea: Dismantling the Spanish Search and Rescue System](#)**

“European member states are transforming their national Search-and-Rescue (SAR) systems to avoid their legal responsibilities in areas with high migration. A recent article explores how this is happening in Spain.”

---

Balkan Insight, 15 March

**[From Behind Bars, Greek Far-Right Still Spreading the Word](#)**

“Greece’s neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party was left broken by the October 2020 jailing of 18 of its senior figures. But they continue to reach far-right followers from behind bars in what critics say reeks of preferential prison treatment.”

---

London School of Economics, 14 March

**[The UK’s marginal action toward Ukrainian refugees shows just how solidly built its immigration bureaucracy is around suspicion](#)**

“Mike Slaven points to structural factors that help explain why the UK’s immigration system has been unable to welcome large numbers of Ukrainian refugees with any sense of urgency, despite government rhetoric and public opinion on the matter.”

---

Radio Blackout, 14 March

**[CONTROLLO BIOMETRICO E GUERRA AI MIGRANTI – FRONTEX – CARCERE](#)**

“Insieme a Yasha di Statewatch.org andiamo ad approfondire il rapporto “Building the Biometric State: Police Powers and Discrimination”. Uno sguardo sulla genesi del controllo biometrico della popolazione, il passaggio dalla War on Terror alla War on Migrants come bacino di normalizzazione della schedatura di massa, le ricadute in ambito repressivo e nella nostra quotidianità con l’Identità Digitale.”

---

Amnesty International, 14 March

**[UK: Refusal by Supreme Court to grant Assange right to appeal is “a blow for justice”](#)**

““Today’s decision is a blow to Julian Assange and to justice. The Supreme Court has missed an opportunity to clarify the UK’s acceptance of deeply flawed diplomatic assurances against torture. Such assurances are inherently unreliable and leave people at risk of severe abuse upon extradition or other transfer.”

And: **[Don’t Extradite Julian Assange! #FreeAssangeNow](#)**

---

Migration Control, 14 March

**[Containment-funding: The EU's external migration funding instruments](#)**

“Following the adoption of the 2020-2025 EU budget, the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF), a leaked Commission non-paper grants an overview into the distribution of funds on the external migration control.”

---

The Independent, 14 March

**[On neighbouring borders, Polish families helping refugees face very different fates](#)**

“Marina Sestavili-Piotrowska and her family have transformed their guest house near Poland's border with Ukraine into a refugee shelter, but just seven hours away on the Belarus border Dorota could face time in prison for the exact same act”

---

The Guardian, 14 March

**[Four arrested after protest at Oleg Deripaska's London mansion](#)**

“The four protesters who occupied the home of a Russian oligarch in London's Belgravia have ended their demonstration and have been arrested by police.

The squatters, who said they were opposed to Vladimir Putin and Russia's invasion of Ukraine and wanted to open the mansion up for Ukrainian refugees, got into the property owned by Oleg Deripaska around 1am on Monday morning.”

---

France 24, 11 March

**[Prison attack on Corsican nationalist reopens old wounds on restive French island](#)**

“A prison assault last week that left prominent Corsican nationalist Yvan Colonna in a coma has triggered days of angry protests and whipped up resentment against the French state on an island with a history of separatist violence.”

---

House of Commons Defence Committee, 11 March

**[Operation Isotrope: the use of the military to counter migrant crossings – Report Summary](#)**

“This Report focuses on a narrow issue - the announcement that the Royal Navy would be responsible for the operation to counter small boats crossing the Channel. Following the announcement, we sought clarity on the role which would be played by the Royal Navy, the assets which it would use and the details of strategic and operational responsibility. The Government has failed to provide that clarity. Furthermore, during this short inquiry we have heard numerous criticisms of the aspects of the operation which the Government has publicly announced.

We conclude that there are valid concerns about the objectives, the timeline and the measures for success of the operation.”

---

The Civil Fleet, 11 March

[\*\*19 people died in Home Office asylum-seeker accommodation in 2021\*\*](#)

“AT LEAST 19 people, including a two-year-old boy, died inside Home Office asylum-seeker accommodation in 2021, The Civil Fleet can reveal.

Sixteen men and three women died at Home Office asylum accommodation facilities across England and Wales, according to figures provided in a freedom of information (FOI) request.”

---

Politico Europe, 11 March

[\*\*UK visa center in Brussels ‘overwhelmed’ with Ukrainian refugees\*\*](#)

“After decades of bashing the EU for being overly bureaucratic, British red tape is now flourishing in Brussels.

While EU countries such as Poland have thrown open their borders to hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians and the bloc offered a “historic” residency agreement for those fleeing the war, the U.K. government has come under fire for its sluggish response to the humanitarian crisis.

Around 60 people per day make their way to a drab U.K. visa application center in a run-down area of Brussels, and administrative capacities have been pushed to breaking point.”

---

Corporate Watch, 9 March

[\*\*2021 UK CHARTER DEPORTATIONS: A BALANCE SHEET\*\*](#)

“Last year, the Home Office deported a total of 1,305 people on 65, multi-leg charter flights. While deportations from the UK have dropped overall due to the pandemic, the use of charter deportation flights increased more than threefold during this period, representing 45% of total deportations.”

---

Legal Centre Lesvos, 3 March 2022

[\*\*Press release: Justice for Amir and Razuli!\*\*](#)

“The organizations Legal Centre Lesvos, Aegean Migrant Solidarity, Borderline Europe e.V., You can’t evict Solidarity and Deportation Monitoring Aegean demand freedom for two young refugees.

The two men from Afghanistan were seeking safety in Europe, but were instead arbitrarily convicted to 50 years imprisonment. The Appeal Trial will take place on 17 March 2022 in Lesvos.”

---

Global Labour Column, 2 March

[\*\*Refugees unwelcome: EU-Turkey migration deal\*\*](#)

“By this agreement, it is accepted that Turkey is not a part of the EU but its border. Moreover, it serves to legitimate a labour hell, where millions of people make less than the minimum wage and have no access to social rights, and where even child and forced labour exist.”

---

Sudinfo, 7 February

**[L'homme qui s'est suicidé dans le canal à Anderlecht avait reçu un ordre de quitter le territoire](#) / Belgium: Suicide in canal in Anderlecht after an order to leave the country**

“Selon nos informations, un ordre de quitter le territoire a été retrouvé dans la veste de la victime que cette dernière avait enlevée tout comme son masque buccal avant de sauter. Le document émanant de l'Office des Etrangers était au nom d'un Ukrainien d'une trentaine d'années et il avait été émis le jour-même (c'est-à-dire vendredi dernier)... Questionnée, la porte-parole de la police de Bruxelles Midi, Sarah Frederickx, nous confirme ces informations et précise qu'il faudra toutefois attendre qu'on retrouve le corps de la victime pour pouvoir confirmer son identité à coup sûr.”

According to the report, "an order to leave the territory was found in the victim's jacket... The document... was in the name of a Ukrainian man in his thirties"

---

Global Studies Quarterly, 22 January

**[Asylum, Borders, and the Politics of Violence: From Suspicion to Cruelty](#)**

“Critical scholarship in international relations, border, and migration studies has analyzed the cultures of suspicion that underpin border practices and have increasingly reshaped the politics of asylum globally. They have highlighted either the generalization of suspicion through the securitization of asylum or racialized and gendered continuities of colonial violence. We propose to understand the entanglements of continuity and discontinuity in the politics of asylum through “technologies of cruelty.””

**Support the fight for civil liberties in Europe**

**Donate £**

**Donate €**