

Jean Lambert: Dunkirk is burning, it's time to throw refugee children a lifeline



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On Monday night, a fire ripped through Dunkirk refugee camp in northern France destroying 80% of the site including wooden shelters, community spaces, kitchens and the women's and children's centre [1].

The camp was home to approximately 1,500 people, including more than 100 unaccompanied children. According to legal organisation Safe Passage, there were 80 children living in the camp who have the legal right to be reunited with family members in the UK. Their names have been sent to the Home Office [2].

Jean Lambert, Green MEP for London and Green Party migration spokesperson, said:

"The situation in Dunkirk is desperately sad. As a result of Monday's fire, more than 100 unaccompanied minors now find themselves homeless once again, facing the very real risk of violence and exploitation from people smugglers or of going missing among the chaos.

Legal mechanisms exist to help these young people. All 80 unaccompanied minors who have family members in the UK could be reunited with them immediately under the Dublin Regulation. More lone children who are particularly vulnerable should also be eligible for protection in the UK under the 'Dubs' scheme, which the government scrapped earlier this year after claiming there was no space for them.

I want the Home Office to know that there's space in my constituency, London, where local authorities' offers to take in so-called 'Dubs' children have been cruelly rejected. Many other cities including Birmingham, Bristol and Glasgow are also ready and waiting to welcome more child refugees.

Theresa May's hard-line government has so far showed a total lack of compassion for unaccompanied children in Europe, choosing to invest in fencing and barbed wire rather than in their safety and security. Now that Dunkirk is burning, it's time to throw them a lifeline. I am calling for the Home Office to step up, and fulfill its moral and legal obligations."

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-39562742>
2. http://www.citizensuk.org/need_for_urgent_transfer_of_80_children_from_fire_damaged_refugee_camp

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