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## **CALAIS MAYOR SAYS UK BORDER DEAL MUST BE PART OF BREXIT TALKS**

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EU Observer

The mayor of the French port city Calais has demanded that a 2003 border deal between France and the UK allowing both sides to carry out immigration checks on each other's territory be renegotiated as part of Brexit talks.

Natacha Bouchart told this website on Wednesday (13 July) that the UK's decision to leave the EU has created an opportunity to shift the burden of thousands of migrants living in a camp around Calais on to the British authorities.

"What I am asking is to take advantage of UK's EU exit vote," she said.

Calais is one of the more visible flash points in a migration crisis that has gripped Europe in recent years.

People seeking international protection, along with refugees and other migrants, have amassed around the port city in an unofficial camp in their final desperate effort to reach the UK.

Local authorities say some 4,000 people remain in the camp, known as the Jungle. NGOs put the figure closer to 6,000. Many are from Afghanistan, Sudan and Eritrea.

More permanent structures have been erected since April 2015 but conditions remain dire.

In May, riots broke out at the camp's food distribution point.

A resident from Afghanistan, 32-year-old Safraz Nawaz, says the place is becoming increasingly dangerous.

"Fights break out a lot, it's dangerous here," he says.

One barber shop in the Jungle is adorned with spent tear gas canisters.

Patrick Visser-Bourdon, Calais' police commissioner, said they had fired thousands of rounds over the years.

"Not one person has been hurt and we've had no complaints," he told this website.

Le Touquet

Bouchart, from the Republicans party of Nicolas Sarkozy, plans to raze the northern zone of the camp in Calais and wants a refugee camp on the English side of the channel.

And she argues that the 2003 border agreement with the UK, known as Le Touquet, be renegotiated during the Brexit talks.

The 2003 Touquet pact grants British officers the right to carry out border controls in Calais. It means Britain's border effectively extends into France.

"I think a refugee centre should be opened in England and that we should review the conditions of the border accord," she said.

French economy minister Emmanuel Macron had earlier this year threatened to scrap the bilateral agreement.

The day this relationship unravels, migrants will no longer be in Calais, he told the Financial Times.

French presidential centre-right frontrunner Alain Juppe last week made similar comments to the newspaper.

We must move the border back to where it belongs, he said.

An article in the treaty allows the UK or France the option to terminate it at any moment.

#### Money and borders

Bouchart also said she wanted compensation for losses accrued over the years in her town of some 75,000 residents.

The mayor didn't cite a figure, but last year she was quoted as saying the UK should pay at least €50 million. She said at the time that Calais' image has suffered and tourism dropped.

Italian centre-left MEP Cecile Kyenge, who was among a parliamentary delegation in Calais, said Bouchart's demand for money was counter-productive.

"If an administration is unable [to perform] and says it is the fault of others, I would ask them to resign," she said.

Kyenge said those who govern would be better off "to transform a crisis into something positive".

Ana Gomes, a centre-left MEP from Portugal, was also critical.

"She [Bouchart] complained a lot about not having any state intervention support, which is not true," said Gomes.

"The mayor is on the complaining side, doing the very minimum, which is to make land available."

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