



ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights

EJDM Europäische Vereinigung von Juristinnen & Juristen für Demokratie und Menschenrechte in der Welt
EJDH Asociación Europea de los Juristas por la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos en el Mundo
EJDH Association Européenne des Juristes pour la Démocratie & les Droits de l'Homme
EGDU Associazione Europea delle Giuriste e dei Giuristi per la Democrazia e i diritti dell'Uomo nel Mondo

WITH LAWYERS
IN 21 COUNTRIES

Equality Privacy Social Rights
No Racism Peace No Torture No War
Self-Determination of Peoples Civil Rights Democracy
Human Rights Rights of Migrants

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ELDH - Solidarity Statement for the Stansted 15

On 28 March 2017, 15 activists, known as the Stansted 15, physically prevented the departure of a chartered aircraft intended to deport individuals from the UK to Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. It is the activists' case that some of the people on the flight were at risk of serious harm if forcibly removed to their home country.

The coming days will see the conclusion of the trial of the Stansted 15 at Chelmsford Crown Court. Originally charged with aggravated trespass, their charges were amended to endangering safety at an aerodrome under section 1 of the Aviation and Maritime Security Act 1990. This law was intended to address terrorist acts and carries a maximum sentence of imprisonment for life. The amendment of the charge risks being a politically chilling decision which dissuades activists from taking direct action; it also associates non-violent direct action with terrorist acts.

The Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers which is a founding member of the European Association of lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH) recognises that there is a long and proud history of direct action in the UK which has preceded significant changes in the law and government policies. It is an apt time, on the 100 year anniversary of women winning the right to vote, to remember that the suffragette movement employed direct action.

In April 2018, Amber Rudd, then Home Secretary admitted that the Home Office used deportation targets.¹ Corporate Watch updated its report on Charter Flights and referred to evidence indicating that immigration officials target certain nationalities for removal in the

¹ 27 April 2018, The Guardian, [Amber Rudd was sent targets for migrant removal. Leak reveals, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/apr/27/amber-rudd-was-told-about-migrant-removal-targets-leak-reveals](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/apr/27/amber-rudd-was-told-about-migrant-removal-targets-leak-reveals)

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lead up to a Charter Flight.² In June 2018, the Independent Monitoring Boards' Charter Flight Monitoring Team expressed concern about the use of excessive restraint in Charter Flights.³ The Independent Monitoring Board also noted that there had been no official response to their report of 2016.⁴ In addition, recent government policies have been deemed to unlawfully remove people with a right to be in the UK (for example the Windrush controversy⁵ and the High Court decision finding that the removal of European nationals for rough sleeping was unlawful⁶).

In this context, ELDH expresses its concern that such serious charges have been laid against the Stansted 15. We express our solidarity with the Stansted 15, and with activists everywhere who put their bodies and freedoms on the line to save others.

ELDH fully agrees with the statement of Amnesty International UK "Public protest and non-violent direct action can often be a key means of defending human rights, particularly when victims have no way to make their voices heard and have been denied access to justice." Such non-violent actions should not be criminalized.

² 2 July 2018, Corporate Watch, [Deportation Charter Flights: Updated Report 2018](https://corporatewatch.org/deportation-charter-flights-updated-report-2018/), <https://corporatewatch.org/deportation-charter-flights-updated-report-2018/>

³ 12 June 2018, Independent Monitoring Boards, [Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Boards' Charter Flight Monitoring Team for reporting year 2017](https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/imb-prod-storage-1ocod6bqky0vo/uploads/2018/06/IMB-Charter-Flights-2017-annual-report.pdf), <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/imb-prod-storage-1ocod6bqky0vo/uploads/2018/06/IMB-Charter-Flights-2017-annual-report.pdf>

⁴ *Ibid* para 2.1

⁵ 18 July 2018, The Guardian, [Revealed: depth of Home Office Failures on Windrush](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/18/revealed-depth-of-home-office-failures-on-windrush), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/18/revealed-depth-of-home-office-failures-on-windrush> ; BBC News, [Home Office 'was told about Windrush Problems in 2016'](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-43900697), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-43900697>

⁶ **14 December 2017, BBC News, [Deporting EU Rough sleepers from UK unlawful, High Court rules](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42354864), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42354864>; R (On the Application of *Gureckis*) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2017] EWHC 3298 (Admin)**