



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on June 9, 2011

Britain's Home Secretary: African Immigrants Will Be Stopped at Border

Like most European nations, Britain has had little control of its borders, and now, facing the prospect of thousands of Africans heading for the scepter'd isle, [Home Secretary Theresa May](#) has flatly announced that its borders are closed.

On Saturday, Merkel [declared](#) that Germany would not accept the Africans to which Italy had granted temporary visas and travel permits because they are not political refugees fleeing persecution.



Why the Change

Like the rest of Europe, Britain faces the likelihood of a steady influx of Tunisians and Libyans who fled unrest in their countries.

The mass departure [began in January](#), when rebels toppled the Tunisian government and 5,000 boat refugees landed on the Italian isle of Lampedusa. Stunned Italian officials were nearly paralyzed, as the scenario described in [Jean Raspail's book *The Camp of the Saints*](#) began to unfold. That novel describes a flotilla of one million Indians who [sail around](#) the Cape of Good Hope to land in France and eventually destroy the West.

As the Tunisians kept coming, Libya exploded, and the Italian foreign minister, [Franco Frattini](#), [warned that](#) as many as 800,000 refugees could be expected to land in Europe if Libyan strongman Moammar Gadhafi fell.

By March 31, 19,000 Africans, now including Libyans running from the turmoil in that country, [had fled](#) to the tiny island. Italian officials packed them off to the mainland and issued travel permits. Italy had warned that it would scatter the refugees across Europe.

[France closed](#) its border with Italy after [it stopped](#) a train that carried a load of Tunisians, which precipitated a border crisis that caused the European Union to begin considering changes in its border policies inside the Schengen Area of free travel across the continent.

Merkel Says No to Refugees

Last week, Germany's international broadcaster Deutsche-Welle reported, Merkel [laid down](#) the law: Germany would not permit the Tunisians to cross its borders en masse.

[According to](#) DW:

The chancellor said the country had no responsibility for those arriving from countries such as Tunisia — where a ruling dictatorship had been toppled.

"That cannot be the way," she said.

Tens of thousands of migrants from North Africa have sought to enter the EU following a wave of



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popular uprisings in Arab countries that has already toppled two long-term leaders. Many of them are economic migrants who do not qualify to stay in the EU.

Britain Agrees

Theresa May [was in](#) France visiting her French opposite number, and promised "strong practical action," [the Independent reported](#), to stop the deluge.

The Home Secretary, visiting France to inspect cross-Channel border controls, said there was no evidence yet that refugees from the Arab Spring had arrived in this country. But she added: "We do need to look ahead to what might be happening in the future."

The *Daily Mail*, citing the 25,000 travel permits that Italy passed out to its African horde, [reported that](#) French officials warned Britain that the Olympics in 2012 will likely present a tough problem for immigration authorities.

Yesterday she met her French counterpart [Claude Gueant](#), who warned illegal immigrants would try to exploit the influx of tourists for the Olympic Games to try to get into the UK.

He said: "Of the eight million spectators expected in London, 800,000 will come from Europe and a third of those will be cross-Channel passengers.

"We must therefore put into place [plans] on the French side to safeguard border security whilst also ensuring the free-flow of traffic."

[The paper reported](#) that 3,500 immigrants have been caught "trying to cross the Channel hidden in the back of lorries so far this year. That compares with a total of nearly ten thousand discovered last year."

Authorities even captured an Iranian border jumper during May's visit to France.

"We have a joint cause in trying to ensure we stop illegal immigration," [May said](#), "and in making sure access to the Olympics is secure." May also claimed that tighter border controls had decreased the number of immigrants trying to get into Britain by 70 percent.

"We are committed to continuing to ensure the border is impenetrable," [she stressed](#). "The fight against illegal immigration is one of this government's highest priorities."

Immigration Scandal

One reason May spoke so firmly, [news reports strongly suggest](#), is that Britain's Home Affairs ministry has given asylum to some 160,000 asylum seekers out of a backlog of some 450,000. It denied very few.

When details of the backlog and its resolution surfaced just days before May's trip to France, [British officials said](#) the immigration authorities had, in effect, granted an amnesty.

[Reported the BBC:](#)

So far 403,500 applications from the backlog have been fully processed. Of those, only 38,000 were rejected compared with 161,000 who were given permission to remain.

The latter was "such a large proportion that it amounts in effect to an amnesty," [members of Parliament] said.

Of the remaining 205,500 applications, 40,500 were effectively shelved simply because "the applicants cannot be found and it is unknown whether they are in the UK, have left the country or are dead" — an outcome [members of Parliament] said was "indefensible."



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Photo of Theresa May: AP Images



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