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Editorials

Europe’s migrant containment policies threaten the response to covid-19

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Policy makers must include migrant camps in their national plans

The world has watched the growing global health crisis caused by covid-19 with alarm, fear, and desperation. One after another, governments, healthcare systems, and individuals are adopting

increasingly restrictive measures, with "social distancing" now the norm in most countries. Yet for many people, and especially migrants who have been displaced from their homes, this is not possible.

Several tens of thousands of people are living in migrant camps around the Mediterranean. These are often run well beyond capacity and in suboptimal conditions, including lack of basic infrastructure or hygiene, making them a high risk environment for coronavirus spread. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has called on the Greek government to immediately evacuate its camps, particularly older people and those with chronic diseases, so far without response.1

People held in immigration detention centres are also affected. Demands from 10 refugee and detention charities for UK detainees to be released on public health grounds have been ignored. 2
And there are thousands of migrants forcibly detained along the north African coast, intercepted en route to Europe, living in appalling conditions and lacking food, …

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