

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/open-the-doors-we-have-the-right-27-02-2012,41944.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - France

Access denied

Appeal against denial of access to immigrant detention centres

3 October 2012

Reporters Without Borders is appealing against the denial of its request for access to detention centres for irregular immigrants, which it submitted to the French interior ministry on 27 February as part of [the *Open Access* campaign](#) (see below).

The interior ministry gave no reason for rejecting the requests made by Reporters Without Borders and all the other French journalists who are participating in the campaign.

"The lack of legal provisions for media access to immigrant detention centres should not be regarded as a prohibition," Reporters Without Borders says in its appeal. "The requirements linked to the functioning of detention centres cannot be allowed to completely suppress the right to information and freedom of information, which are guaranteed by the constitution and international conventions."

On 21 June, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that a member state had violated freedom of expression by preventing a journalist from entering a prison to film an interview with a woman detainee

27.02.2012 - "Open the doors, We have the right to know!"

The journalists of Reporters Without Borders are demanding access to administrative detention centres and invite their European colleagues to join the campaign launched today entitled ["Open Access: Open the doors, We have the right to know!"](#)

The initiative, launched by European Alternatives and Migreurop together with a coalition of immigrants' rights groups, is aimed at claiming the right of citizens to know what happens in centres where migrants are held.

Four journalists from Reporters Without Borders today applied for access to several detention centres in France's Ile-de-France region. The press freedom organization's participation in the campaign is in support of the demand that the centres be opened to the media. Journalists from 20 European countries are invited to apply for access to detention centres in their regions.

If access is granted, visits should take place between 26 March and 26 April.

"While immigration issues are at the forefront of public debate today, journalists are unable to carry out their work freely in detention centres," Reporters Without Borders said.

["In some countries, such as Italy and Spain, they are forced to bypass official channels to investigate this matter of public interest.](#) This is unworthy of democratic countries. We call on as many European journalists as possible to join the campaign in order to ensure the right to information is established."

Also in France, Reporters Without Borders has received several consistent reports of refusals to allow access to detention centres, difficulties in covering demonstrations outside the centres and poor visiting conditions.

A freelance journalist, **Linda Maziz**, who wrote an in-depth article on the Mesnil-Amelot centre just outside Paris, described the absurdity of the situation: "It is no easy matter to report on detention centres. As a journalist, it is impossible to get access to these premises where freedom of information is trampled. On the other hand, it is difficult to prevent a visit by an ordinary citizen, or a journalist who leaves behind camera, notebook and pen at the entrance."

A cloak of silence surrounds migrant detention centres in Europe and other continents. [Reporters Without Borders last year deplored Australia's new rules for media access to immigrant detention centres.](#)

The campaign has been launched in 10 countries – Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom,

Information about the campaign and awareness kits are available [here](#). A video can be accessed [here](#).

For further information, contact: openaccess@euroalter.com

(Photo: AFP / Pierre Andrieu)

You can download those documents on our website :

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