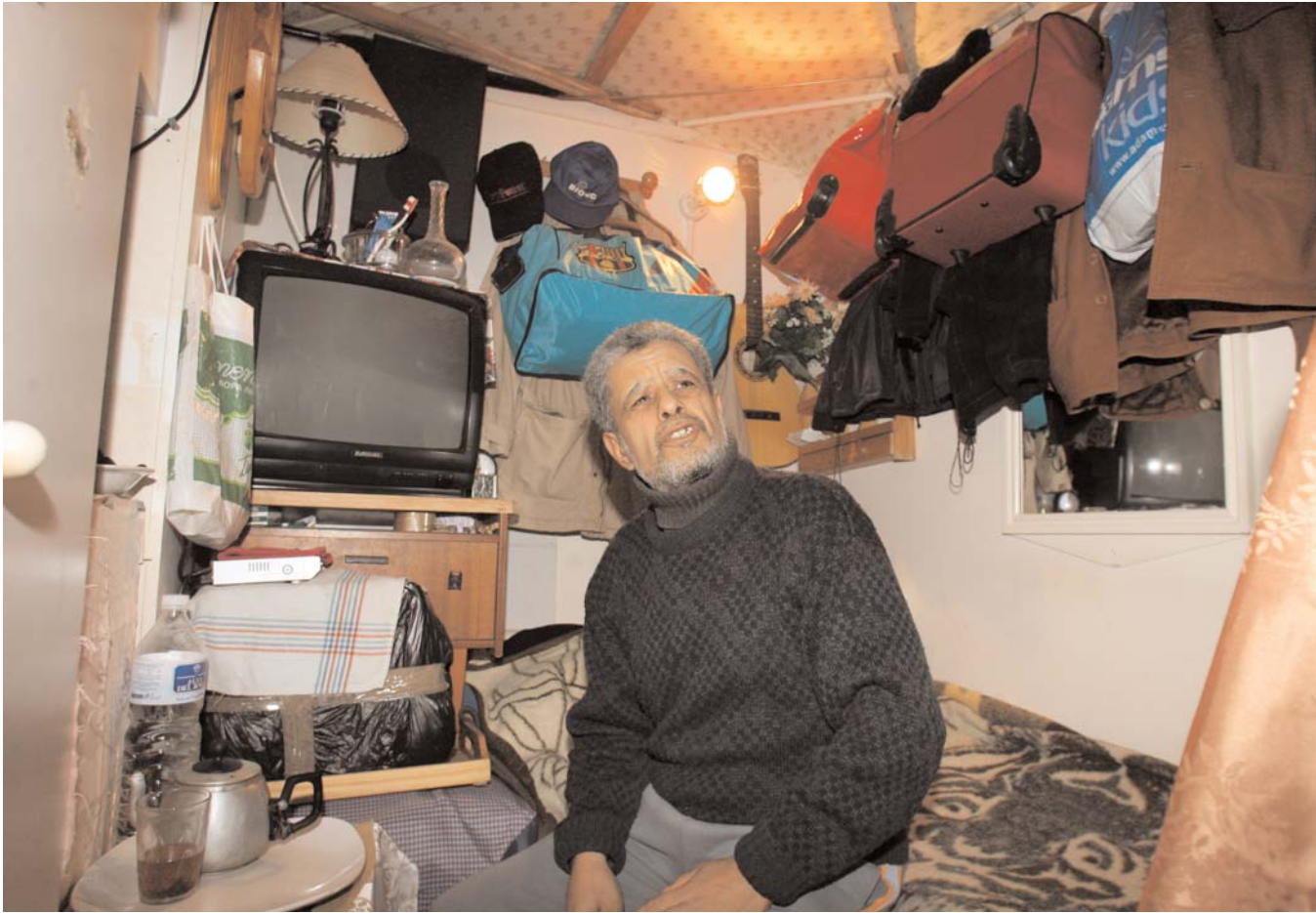


# REALITY CHECK ON THE ROCK



Mohamed (above) in his room in the grim government-run workers' hostel, he has lived and worked in Gibraltar for 41 years, but his wife and five children cannot join him



The Rock (above) and the Unite campaign team and migrant workers at the union's Gibraltar office (below)



## GIBRALTAR: A FORTY YEAR STRUGGLE FOR RIGHTS FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

**Chantal Chegrinec highlights the misery of life for migrant workers on the Rock of Gibraltar**

No education, no housing, no healthcare, sounds like no rights, but this is the reality for migrant workers on the Rock.

At its recent policy conference Unite members threw their support behind the union's national campaign to win justice for migrant workers.

### A FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

That's why Unite, the largest union on the Rock, has recently reinforced its commitment to helping Moroccan and other non-EU migrant workers in their fight for justice.

Kevin Coyne, Unite's national officer leading the campaign, was joined by representatives from Unite's base in Gibraltar at a fringe meeting which highlighted the ongoing struggle of Gibraltar's long-suffering migrant workforce.

For 40 years Moroccan workers, lawfully resident and employed mainly in low-waged jobs, such as the construction and service sectors, have been denied basic human rights.

Recruited by a British state desperate to maintain its military operations following dictator Franco's sudden closure of Spain's border in 1969, 5,000 Moroccans eventually settled, today 1,200 remain.

But the Gibraltarian authorities are exercising arbitrary and discriminatory immigration laws, Unite argues this has resulted in the denial of citizenship rights to Moroccan and other non-EU migrant workers, hundreds of whom have been resident for several decades.

Kevin Coyne added: "It is clear that the Gibraltar government exercises its residency and immigration laws in a whimsical and arbitrary manner – the result is a cocktail of inhumanity that shames the standards that the UK purports to stand for."

Without citizenship these long serving, lawfully resident workers are prevented from accessing the state welfare

entitlements enjoyed by Gibraltarians, British nationals and Commonwealth citizens living on the Rock.

The refusal to extend benefits, such as social security entitlements, education for children, healthcare for families and access to affordable housing, has contributed to the hardship suffered by these workers, with many forced to live apart from their families in poorly maintained private sector accommodation or in the grim government-run workers' hostel.

### MOHAMED'S STORY

Take Mohamed, he is 61 years old, has lived and worked in Gibraltar for 41 years, paying taxes like everyone else. But unlike 'recognised' citizens his family have never been able to live with him. His wife and five children live only 13 miles away across the Straits of Gibraltar, but may as well be on the other side of the world.

He is forced to endure the poor ferry service to Tangiers once-a-month, just to be able to spend some time with his family.

He said: "I would like my family to live with me. It makes me sad to see my family for only one weekend a month. This is not living, it is only surviving."

Refused residency on two occasions the future for Mohamed and his family is uncertain.

He will continue to work in Gibraltar, living in the Buena Vista hostel (main picture), because he has no viable financial alternative. But without his family by his side, he describes the situation as 'unbearable'.

### SEPARATED FROM HIS DAUGHTER

Or how about Driss and his wife who have endured a lifetime of separation from their only daughter. The couple have lived and worked in Gibraltar since 1974, but his wife was deported back to Morocco to give birth. Without legal status their child was not entitled to attend the local state school, forcing Driss to send her away to be educated in Morocco. Family life has been limited to shared holidays ever since.

The couple are now Gibraltarian citizens, yet their daughter, who is in her twenties and studying in Spain, has been refused permission to live with her parents on a number of occasions and Driss and his wife face a future of continued separation from their daughter.

Said Driss: "I had no choice, but to send my daughter away, and my family is still suffering all these years later. All I want is to be able to live as a family."

Unite is backing the migrant workers of Gibraltar and calling on members to support the campaign for 'Equal rights on the Rock'. Exposing this shameful

situation is the key to securing equal rights for these workers and by raising awareness of this injustice Unite hopes that pressure will ensure the Gibraltarian and British Governments act to address this issue.

### GET INVOLVED: BACK THE CAMPAIGN

For more information on the problems facing Gibraltar's migrant Moroccan workforce - and other non-EU nationals - and for advice on how you can get involved, contact Liane Groves via email: [liane.groves@unitetheunion.org](mailto:liane.groves@unitetheunion.org) or visit: [www.unitetheunion.org/](http://www.unitetheunion.org/)

## DISCRIMINATION IN ACTION



### Nikolai: Has not left the Rock in 14 years

NIKOLAI Ivanov (left), from Abkhazia in the former Soviet republic of Georgia, has a work permit and has lived and worked on the Rock since 1995.

Like Moroccans, other non-EU residents are denied the rights enjoyed by Gibraltarians.

In the 14 years he has been in Gibraltar he has not left the Rock and was even unable to get home to see his mother when she died last year as he is not allowed to travel freely across Europe.

### Souknia: No legal status

SOUKNIA (right) arrived in Gibraltar with her mother seven years ago. Her father has been legally working on the rock for 42 years for the Ministry of Defence, but Souknia and her mother are living in Gibraltar illegally because they have been denied the right to stay.

She has been refused the right to work or study and her mother is sick but being denied treatment by the health service despite her father paying taxes for 42 years.

Said Souknia: "I am young but can't do anything with my life. I feel like I'm in prison, but at least in prison you can work."

