



MARK CARWARDINE

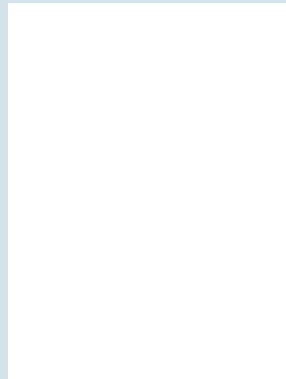
WILD THOUGHTS

The European Union's hypocrisy and deceitfulness knows no bounds. This time a high-profile human crisis is being caused by its dreadful – yet low-profile – disregard for the environment and people of the developing world.

Poverty and unemployment are driving more and more young men from West Africa to the Canary Islands. In the first six months of this year, more than 10,000 illegal immigrants, squashed into small, overcrowded fishing boats, made the perilous journey to the Spanish archipelago. Some 1,500 of them died in their bid for a better life in Europe.

No fewer than nine EU countries – including Britain – have rallied to the support of Spain, offering patrol boats, helicopters and surveillance planes to stem the flood.

What we're not being told is that European greed is largely to blame. Having overfished its own waters, the EU is invading West Africa to keep its subsidised fleet in work. In one of the world's great environmental scandals, it has persuaded some of Africa's poorest countries, including Senegal and Mauritania, to sell off their fishing rights. For contemptibly small sums of money – most of which goes into the pockets of politicians and high-ranking officials – hundreds of factory-style EU trawlers (with Spanish vessels conspicuous among them) can asset-strip Africa's fish stocks.



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The people of West Africa are being robbed of their livelihoods. It's no wonder they are getting desperate.

But heavy-handed patrols are not the answer. The solution is simple: stop wreaking havoc on West African fish populations and help local fishermen develop their own fisheries. I wouldn't dare suggest the EU provides such advice: that would be like asking Japan to advise on whale conservation. It would be better for Namibia, which has shut out the European invaders and successfully developed its own sustainable modern fishing industry, to help instead.

But will that ever happen? Not a chance. The EU is already planning to rape and pillage fish stocks in other developing countries. It'll continue to rob the poor to feed the rich as long as the rest of the world turns a blind eye.