As UK backs French police tactics to ‘immobilise’ channel boats, TNA investigation reveals officers failed to save drowning migrant

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With Macron in London for a state visit, and as the UK announces support for French police intercepting and slashing migrant boats — a tactic that experts and campaigners say will put scores of migrant lives at risk — a new investigation by The New Arab (TNA) reveals a stark case of French police failure to save a drowning Syrian migrant.

Jumaa al-Hasan, a young Syrian man, drowned on the night between 2 and 3 March 2024 in the north of France, during an attempted police interception. The investigation reveals that, despite the proximity of officers on shore and repeated warnings from those travelling with Jumaa al-Hasan, the police did nothing to save the 27-year-old. In the aftermath of his death, the fire brigade carried out only a minimal search.

Our one-year-long investigation - co-published with French investigative outlet Disclose, French NGO Index and Italian research centre Liminal - used 3D digital modelling to reconstruct the circumstances of Jumaa’s death.

The investigation raises questions about the precarious nature of attempted crossings in the Channel, the responsibilities of the French police and the shortcomings of the emergency services. As in many similar cases, official probes appear to look the other way, by focussing only on smuggling networks, an approach now endorsed by the UK despite its implications for human rights.

As a result of our findings, French NGO Utopia56 has announced its intent to file a “Note of Intervention” to prompt courts to look into the role of the police and the firefighters, as part of the ongoing legal proceedings that include Jumaa’s case.

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Notes to Editors:

-Read the full investigation here.

-High-resolution images are attached to this investigation for use in your coverage. All images and videos are © The New Arab. They may be republished for news reporting and editorial purposes, with credit to The New Arab.

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