Supporter briefing

Brexit Red Lines

Our seven key demands from the UK's negotiations with the EU

Global Justice Now

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The decision to leave the European Union is the biggest political choice the UK has made in a generation. It has had serious knock-on effects for the UK's political landscape, and has the potential to fundamentally change the future shape of the country's politics. Unfortunately, some are looking to use the new situation to further roll back human rights, even threatening some of the key victories achieved by social justice campaigners in the twentieth century. Even the European Convention on Human Rights, which the UK has been part of since 1953, has been called into question.

In this precarious time, it is vital that we put down some clear red lines and say to both the UK government and the European Commission 'this far but no further'. This is why we have listed our top red lines for Brexit, seven issues on which we demand that the EU and UK negotiators refuse to roll back decades of social progress. They are not meant to be a definitive list of what an ideal Brexit agreement would look like, our ambitions for that go much further. But if we are successful in defending these seven red lines, we will have succeeded in averting the worst of what many activists feared Brexit would lead to.

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The Red Lines

1) Free movement and migrant rights. The UK needs to defend free movement, take on its fair share of refugees and reject unethical deals like the one signed between the EU and Turkey.

2) Strong climate change targets. Brexit cannot serve as an excuse for the UK to shirk its historical responsibility for climate change. The UK must work with the EU to secure at least an 80 % cut in CO2 emissions by 2030.

3) No toxic trade deals. The UK must reject TTIP, CETA and TISA, deals that threaten our public services and lock in privatisation while handing unprecedented power to corporations.

4) Protect Human Rights. The UK cannot leave the European Convention on Human Rights or repeal the Human Rights Act. To do so would be a green light for those who wish to abuse human rights across the world.

5) Protect workers' rights. Gains in workers' rights which have come from EU law, like paid holiday, maternity leave and decent treatment for temporary workers, must be retained.

6) No to tax haven UK. Brexit must not turn the UK into a huge offshore tax haven. The UK's financial sector must be properly regulated if it wants to access the European market.

7) Safe and sustainable food. The UK must maintain EU food safety standards and set up a fairer, more sustainable agricultural policy that does not undermine progressive change in the rest of Europe.

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WHAT ARE YOUR BREXIT RED LINES?

1) Free movement and migrant rights

Millions of people from the UK face being stripped of the right to live and work in Europe. Millions more EU citizens in the UK live in fear of losing their right to live here. This cannot be allowed to happen. The call for migration controls may have been instrumental in winning the referendum for the Leave campaign, but it is not true to say that most people in the UK want to end free movement and leave the single market. Even some people who voted Leave support maintaining free movement as part of a Norway-style EEA (European Economic Area) relationship. The UK cannot be allowed to secure single market access for the City of London unless it grants free movement to the people. And that free movement must be universal. Proposals like the one expressed by Chancellor Philip Hammond of keeping free movement for bankers while everyone else loses it must be rejected.

But merely defending the status quo on free movement is not enough. Until now, the UK has used its half-in, half-out position in the EU to ensure that it has taken in an inadequate number of refugees from Syria. This must change. The UK has agreed to accept just 20,000 Syrians over five years while Germany has already taken in an estimated 600,000 people. If the UK wants a good trading relationship with the EU, it must share some of the responsibility for refugee resettlement. It must also change unfair immigration rules for non-EU citizens that undermine basic human rights like the minimum income requirement for family reunion (meaning that only well-off people are allowed to live with their families). Non-EU immigrants have been treated appallingly by the UK government for too long. We must lift visa rules that have led to cases like that of Nimat Salih, a Sudanese woman who was denied permission to visit the UK to donate her kidney and save her daughter's life.

The UK has also traditionally been one of the greatest advocates of the Fortress Europe policies that are claiming the lives of thousands on the Mediterranean every year. Now the UK is leaving the EU, there must be an end to UK involvement in the militarisation of the Mediterranean and in the EU-Turkey deal. While funding for rescue missions has been cut, the EU has agreed a deal with Turkey that essentially turns a blind eye to human rights violations in exchange for the acceptance of refugees rejected by EU countries. The UK must be outside the scope of such deals and must not participate.

2) Strong climate change targets

On climate targets, the UK and the rest of the EU cannot be allowed to engage in a race to the bottom. There needs to be a solid commitment to higher ambition on climate change – at least an 80 per cent cut in emissions by 2030.

Indeed the UK is one of a handful of countries with the biggest historical responsibility for climate change. The average Brit is responsible for more CO2 in just 2 days than the average person from Burundi in a whole year. The UK has played a huge role in causing climate change that is going to cause more drought, famine and flooding across large swathes of the world, possibly costing the lives of millions. Brexit cannot be used as an excuse to shirk the UK's responsibility to people in the global south who will face the worst effects of climate change despite having only minimal responsibility for causing it.

This principle also applies to the environment more generally. Before it joined the EU, the UK was the dirty man of Europe. In the 1970s the UK just put untreated sewage straight into the sea. It was only EU regulation (the Bathing Water Directive) that forced the UK to clean up its act. We cannot go back to the sewage ridden beaches and environmental destruction of decades past. It is of vital important that any Brexit deal must involve the UK agreeing to fully maintain EU standards on areas like biodiversity, water and air quality.

3) No toxic trade deals

The EU-US trade deal TTIP and its Canadian equivalent CETA are among the biggest threats to democratic decision-making in Europe of our time. Both deals include the introduction of parallel corporate courts, called the Investor Court System in CETA, which will allow multinationals to sue governments for billions of pounds for making legitimate policy decisions if they affect profits. A similar system has seen Egypt sued for increasing the minimum wage and Canada sued for introducing a temporary ban on fracking in Quebec. Both deals include provisions of 'regulatory cooperation' that could lead to a race to the bottom on key health and safety standards. The deals are also feared to lead to the entrenchment of privatisation of public services like the NHS and an increase in the leverage of fracking companies in Europe. At the same time, another deal, the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA) is being negotiated that focuses specifically on opening up services (possibly including health and education) and locking in privatisation.

Senior members of the British government have spoken of CETA as a 'model' trade agreement. But the UK must not sign up to CETA, TTIP or TISA, independently outside the EU on exiting. Now the UK, one of TTIP and CETA's major backers, is leaving the EU, we hope other member states are in a stronger position to reject these so-called trade deals (a misleading name as the scope of them goes far beyond trade). At the very least, the UK must remain outside them.

4) Protect human rights

The new Prime Minister, Theresa May, has previously advocated leaving the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) arguing that it gets in the way of extraditing people suspected of supporting terrorism. Throwing away fundamental rights like freedom of speech and the right not to be tortured for the convenience of deporting terror suspects slightly faster is like using a flamethrower to weed a garden. We have the ECHR to thank for a number of victories like stopping the criminalisation of homosexuality in Northern Ireland in 1981 and ending the use of torture by British forces in Ireland. The UK cannot be allowed to become the only country in Europe (apart from authoritarian Belarus) to be outside the ECHR.

The Human Rights Act, which entrenches the ECHR in UK legislation, is also under threat. The Act means that UK judges can use the ECHR in domestic courts. Without the act, you would have to go to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, a long and arduous process outside the means of most people, to defend your human rights.

Dropping the ECHR or the Human Rights Act would set a terrible precedent for human rights protection in the rest of the world. Governments around the world would cite the UK's action as justification for cracking down on the human rights of trade union activists, journalists and members of grassroots social movements. For this reason, retaining both the ECHR and the Human Rights Act should be demanded by the EU as a condition for a new post-Brexit relationship.

5) Protect workers' rights

In order to gain favourable access to the EU market, the UK must commit to maintaining key EU standards on workers' rights.

The UK must retain all of the gains in workers' rights won through the EU, such as the rights to paid holiday, maternity leave and decent treatment for temporary workers. The UK cannot expect to benefit from close ties to the EU while flouting the basic rules of its labour market.

We cannot allow the UK to begin a bonfire of workers' rights that will hit those on low wages hardest. We must ensure that the maintenance of EU standards is a basic requirement of the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

6) No to tax haven UK

The UK has historically played a destructive role in financial regulation. But some of the City of London's worst excesses have been somewhat tempered by the UK's membership of the EU.

Though the EU's response to the 2008 financial crisis has been far from adequate, some EU regulations have secured progressive results such as limits on food commodity speculation (which the UK government fought tooth and nail against). The UK cannot be allowed to opt out of these rules or undermine them from outside the EU. If the City of London wants passporting (the right to operate across the European Economic Area) and access to the single market, it should have to abide by EU rules.

Though many of the bigger banks backed Remain in the referendum, many of the shadier parts of the UK financial sector like some hedge funds and private equity funds backed Brexit because of the

perception that freedom from EU regulation would mean a license to turn the UK into a 'wild west' for finance. Signs of this happening are already appearing with proposals to drop corporation tax to just 15%.

The dream of some Brexiters is for the UK to become a massive tax haven off the shores of Europe. The Trade Secretary Liam Fox has already said that he wants the UK to become even more of a "low-tax, low-regulation economy". This cannot be allowed to happen.

7) Safe and sustainable food

If the UK wishes to forge a positive trading relationship with the EU after Brexit, it needs, at the very least, to maintain levels of regulation on areas like food safety in line with EU standards. The UK government should also consider implementing higher standards where this is appropriate. For example, the UK should ban the use of the probably-carcinogenic herbicide glyphosate.

A similar principle applies to agriculture. It is true that the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is far from progressive. It is essentially a £50 billion welfare system for the landed gentry and other big landowners across Europe. An estimated 80% of the money goes to just 20% of farmers, big beneficiaries of which include Iain Duncan Smith's family and the Queen. For years, Europe dumped excess agricultural produce into markets in the global south, ruining the livelihoods of local farmers who could not compete with the artificially cheap imports.

But the CAP is being reformed (albeit insufficiently). The latest round of changes included a promise to end export subsidies that harm farmers in the global south and the option of introducing a ceiling on payments to stop rich farmers taking all the money.

And within the EU, the UK refused to implement the more progressive parts of the CAP. For example, the UK does not give subsidies to small farmers with under 5 hectares of land and has not implemented the ceiling on payments to large farms. It is clear that the UK is keen on an agricultural policy that functions as a welfare state for rich landowners.

Now the UK is leaving the EU, the UK's agricultural policy must not undermine efforts to make the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) fairer and more progressive. The new UK agricultural policy must remain in synch with Europe in terms of environmental standards. We believe, however, that subsidies should be linked to performance on protecting the environment and reducing unsustainable practices like routine antibiotic use.

What are your red lines?

These seven issues are the ones that we have chosen to fight for as part of any post-Brexit agreement with the EU. But we need your help to get the message to politicians from across the political spectrum. If we fail to do this, we could be left with a version of Brexit that leaves much of the progress we've seen in the last few decades in tatters. We need to tell our elected representatives that we will not accept a backward-looking Brexit that turns us into a deregulated tax haven:

Here are some things you can do now to help stop this from happening:

- **Take action by telling your MP directly that we won't allow them to cross our red lines by visiting globaljustice.org.uk/brexit-red-lines**
- **Tell the world what your Brexit Red Line is on Twitter using the hashtag #Brexitredlines. To save time you can use our templates by visiting globaljustice.org.uk/brexit-red-lines .**
- **Get in touch with us at offleyroad@globaljustice.org.uk and we'll send you an action pack with copies of this briefing, some action cards and leaflets. With it, you can get others involved in the campaign or even set up stall in your local high street.**

Global Justice Now

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