

Spontaneity can be falsely claimed once. The second tim...

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As the FT [has reported](#) this morning:

On Saturday, people dressed in black and wearing scarves and balaclavas blocked roads near the Port of Dover, which is England's main hub for ferries to France, disrupting operations for several hours before services resumed.

On Sunday, a group including Daniel Thomas, the far-right activist who claimed credit for Saturday's events, sought to stop lifeboat crews in Portsmouth from bringing ashore 140 migrants picked up from a large dinghy launched from Normandy.

I have been a member of the RNLI for maybe 40 years. I inherited the interest from my father. I have supported it with donations because I believe saving lives at sea is essential. Oddly, this service is voluntarily supplied in the UK. That is an aberration, but in this case it works. I have no problem with that.

I do have a problem with people interfering with the work of the RNLI's volunteer crews when they are saving lives at sea. That action puts people at risk. Amongst those threatened were the RNLI crews, as more than one boat was involved. Worse, this was a deliberate attempt to prevent lives from being saved at sea, and national and international law has long treated this as a priority. I have not bothered to investigate the law, but I suspect it is backed by that.

On Saturday, Kent police claimed that the arrival of hundreds of people dressed in black, including their balaclava helmets, was a spontaneous event in Dover. The police did, of course, lie when doing so, and I use the term quite deliberately. I do not believe them. They can no longer pretend that what happened last night was spontaneous in any way. 500 people do not arrive from a distance spontaneously. Social media was used to promote the action.

So, what are we seeing? Is it the rise of co-ordinated vigilante action, or something worse? Is this organised opposition to the state as well as organised intimidation? What is the goal? Those of us old enough to remember will recall how "the Troubles"

undermined life in Northern Ireland. Might we see the same here?

I hope our politicians have a suitable response.

And might I assure them that saying they will "Stop the boats" does not represent the response that is required. Refugees have a right to come to this country. It is their political duty to let them make their claim to remain. Nothing less will do.