

The Struggle for a Better Life

The Lethal Journey

1. Logline:

A harrowing yet hopeful documentary exposing the perilous journeys of undocumented migrants crossing **the English Channel**, unearthing their untold stories of **courage**, **loss**, and the **relentless** pursuit of a safer future.

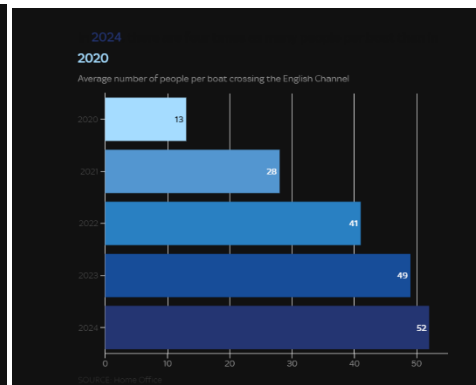
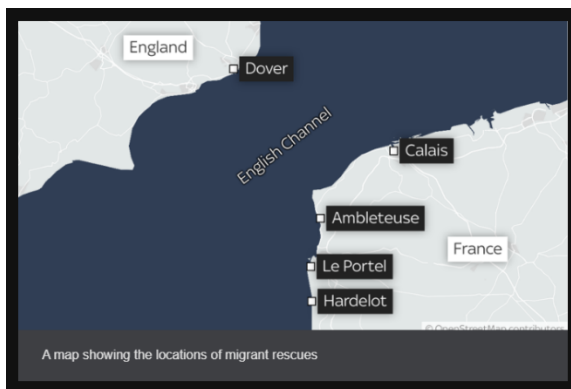


2. Project Description:

"**The Struggle for a Better Life**" is a powerful and evocative documentary in three parts that sheds light on the perilous voyages undertaken by undocumented migrants trying to cross the English Channel in search of sanctuary in the United Kingdom. This part called "**The Lethal Journey**" At the film's heart lies an intimate exploration of the motivations, dangers, and tragic consequences that define these crossings – humanising a crisis often reduced to statistics and headlines. Through immersive storytelling, the documentary reveals the lived experiences of migrants, the personal stories of families

torn apart by loss, and the frontline perspectives of rescue teams, aid workers, and activists fighting for safer migration policies.

The film not only confronts the physical perils of the journey – overcrowded dinghies, freezing waters, and exploitative traffickers – but also delves into the emotional and psychological toll on those involved. By giving voice to survivors and the bereaved, *The Struggle for a Better Life* brings forth a narrative that highlights resilience, hope, and the universal longing for safety and a brighter future. The documentary aims to spark empathy and galvanise action, urging viewers to re-examine their perceptions of migration and the human cost of policy inaction.



Key Characters

1. **On December 29, 2024**, In the cold waters near *Blériot-Plage* the fragile hope of a better life ended in tragedy as an overcrowded migrant boat capsized, claiming the lives of three individuals. Among the victims were families torn apart by desperation; their journey marked by courage but halted by the unforgiving sea. Rescue efforts saved many, yet for some, the dream of safety slipped beneath the waves, leaving behind stories that will echo across borders and hearts.



2. **On December 28, 2024**, off the coast of Sangatte, northern France, a dinghy crammed with around 100 migrants – far exceeding its 12-person capacity – capsized, plunging families into chaos and tragedy.

Four lives were lost, including a child, as the desperate attempt to reach safety ended in heartbreak. Rescue teams saved 45 people, but the sea claimed the dreams and futures of those who could not be saved, leaving a solemn reminder of the human cost behind each crossing.



3. **In November 2021**, tragedy struck the English Channel near Calais when an inflatable dinghy carrying 30 migrants capsized, claiming the lives of 27 people, including children.

Among the victims were families from Iraqi Kurdistan, Afghanistan, and beyond – their hopes for safety extinguished by the perilous waters. Marking one of the deadliest migrant disasters in the Channel’s history, this heartbreaking event stands as a stark reminder of the desperate journeys taken in pursuit of refuge.



4. **On October 5, 2024**, the peril of crossing the Channel claimed the life of a two-year-old child, tragically trampled during the chaos aboard an overcrowded migrant boat.



In the same month, another infant lost their life when an overloaded vessel sank off the coast of France. Though 65 people were rescued, these heartbreaking incidents lay bare the unimaginable risks families endure in search of safety, where even the smallest lives are not spared from the harshness of the journey.

5. **On October 27, 2020**, a Kurdish-Iranian family of five from Sardasht – *Rasoul* Iran-Nejad (35), his wife *Shiva* Mohammad Panahi (35), and their children *Anita* (9), *Armin* (6), and 15-month-old *Artin* – drowned when their boat capsized during a Channel crossing attempt.

While the bodies of the parents and two older children were recovered, baby Artin remained missing, deepening the heartbreak for relatives left behind. The devastating tragedy serves as a powerful reminder of the dangers migrants face in search of a better future, as families risk everything in the pursuit of safety and hope.



6. **On September 3, 2024**, tragedy struck the Channel when an overcrowded boat carrying migrants, primarily from Eritrea, capsized, resulting in 12 fatalities – including a pregnant woman and six children.

Less than two weeks later, on September 15, a rubber boat carrying 60 migrants broke apart after striking rocks near Boulogne-sur-Mer. Eight lives were lost, and six survivors required hospitalisation. These heartbreaking incidents underscore the profound

dangers that accompany the desperate search for safety, with entire families often bearing the heaviest toll.



7. **On August 19, 2020, *Abdulfatah Hamdallah***, a Sudanese man, tragically drowned while attempting to cross the Channel in an inflatable dinghy.

Though his companion survived, Abdulfatah's death stands as a solemn reminder of the immense risks faced by migrants driven by hope and necessity. His story reflects the dangerous reality of these perilous journeys, where pursuing a safer future often comes at the gravest cost.

Aid Workers and Rescuers – Individuals providing critical assistance and insight into the complexities of search and rescue missions. Their perspectives add depth to the broader humanitarian response.



Migrants in Calais Camps – Anonymous voices from makeshift camps offer firsthand accounts of daily struggles, motivations, and the harsh realities that define their journeys.

Film Structure

The documentary follows a chronological yet interwoven narrative, tracking the migrant experience from the initial stages of displacement to the crossing itself and the aftermath for both survivors and those left behind.

Act One

Setting the Stage – Introduces the migrant camps in Calais and the bustling port of Dover, framing the broader context of migration. Showing border police, Aid Workers and Rescuers Personal interviews reveal the underlying reasons for leaving home.



Act Two

The Harrowing Journey – A vivid portrayal of the crossing, capturing survivor testimonies and visual depictions of the perilous waters. Interviews with the families of survivors and those who have lost loved ones explore the how, when, and where of their experiences. The act also features conversations with border police, aid workers, and rescuers, offering personal insights into their experiences and the challenges they face. The act builds to a climax with scenes of rescue missions and tragic incidents at sea.



Act Three

Advocacy and Action – Shifts focus to the bereaved, policy experts, and activists, calling for systemic change while highlighting grassroots efforts aimed at providing aid and promoting awareness.

Top nationalities for people crossing the channel in small boats

Rank	2021	2022	2023	2024*
1	Iran	Albania	Afghanistan	Afghanistan
2	Iraq	Afghanistan	Iran	Vietnam
3	Eritrea	Iran	Turkey	Iran
4	Syria	Iraq	Eritrea	Syria
5	Afghanistan	Syria	Iraq	Eritrea
6	Vietnam	Eritrea	Syria	Sudan
7	Sudan	Sudan	Sudan	Iraq

Source: Home Office Irregular Migration Statistics, year ending September 2024, table Ir_01. *2024 data up to end of September. - Created with Datawrapper

Annual recorded deaths and channel crossings

Year	Recorded deaths	Channel crossings
2021	32	28,526
2022	5	45,744
2023	12	29,437
2024	69	36,816

Source: International Organization for Migration, Missing Migrants Project: <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/data>; Home Office Irregular Migration Statistics, year ending September 2024, table Ir_01 and Home Office transparency data, Small boat activity in the English Channel. Data correct as of 31 December 2024. Recorded deaths for 2024 include three deaths on 29 December 2024 that weren't recorded in the IOM data at the time of extraction. - Created with Datawrapper

Unique Perspective

What sets **"The Struggle for a Better Life"** apart is its human-centric and emotionally intimate approach to the migration crisis. By foregrounding personal stories and fostering direct engagement with migrants and their families, the film transcends traditional journalistic coverage, offering a rare and unfiltered lens into the daily realities faced by those risking everything.

The documentary refuses to sensationalise tragedy, instead amplifying the quiet resilience, hope, and unyielding spirit that migrants carry with them. This empathetic storytelling approach challenges prevailing media narratives, positioning the audience not as passive observers but as potential advocates for change. The film's focus on

firsthand experiences and the voices of the bereaved ensures an authentic, respectful portrayal of the individuals behind the headlines, driving home the message that every statistic represents a life, a family, and a future hanging in the balance.

3. Significance and Impact:

The Struggle for a Better Life: *The Lethal Journey* is an urgent and vital contribution to the discourse surrounding migration, human rights, and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the English Channel. At its core, the documentary addresses one of the most pressing moral and political challenges of our time – the plight of vulnerable individuals risking their lives in pursuit of safety, dignity, and opportunity. By amplifying the voices of those directly affected, the film seeks to dismantle misconceptions, confront indifference, and inspire action towards creating more compassionate and effective migration policies.

The broader *social, cultural, and political implications* of the film extend beyond individual stories of hardship. The documentary shines a light on:

Migrants Awareness - Raising greater awareness among migrants about the dangers of travel. Informing migrants of the risks and tragic incidents that can occur during the sea crossing from Calais to Dover, where large numbers attempt the journey in inflatable boats without life jackets or proper safety measures.

Policy Failures and Accountability - Highlighting the urgent need for safe, legal migration routes, the film underscores the inadequacies of current immigration systems and the consequences of border militarization.

Humanising the Migration Debate – By personalising the statistics, the documentary challenges dehumanising rhetoric and encourages empathy, fostering a more inclusive and informed public dialogue.

Solidarity and Shared Responsibility – The film advocates for collective solutions, urging cooperation between governments, communities, and humanitarian organisations to address the root causes of displacement and migration.

Memorialisation and Justice – By honouring the memories of those who have perished, *The Struggle for a Better Life* demands recognition of their humanity and the pursuit of justice for grieving families.

Target Audience

The documentary is designed to engage a diverse audience, including:

General Public – Individuals seeking to understand the human impact of migration and the experiences of those attempting to cross the Channel.

Policymakers and Advocacy Groups – Those involved in shaping immigration and refugee policies, as well as NGOs and grassroots organisations advocating for migrant rights.

Educators and Students – Institutions focusing on social justice, human rights, and international relations can use the film as an educational resource to spark dialogue and critical thinking.

Journalists and Media Professionals – Providing deeper context and firsthand narratives, the documentary serves as a tool for fostering responsible and ethical reporting on migration issues.

Resonance with Viewers

The Struggle for a Better Life will resonate with viewers by appealing to universal values of “compassion, justice, and shared humanity”. The raw emotional weight of the personal testimonies, coupled with striking visuals and survivor stories, creates an immersive experience that lingers long after the credits roll. Audiences will be moved to reconsider their perspectives, reflect on their role in society, and feel empowered to support initiatives that champion migrant welfare and human rights.

The documentary’s emphasis is on “**hope, resilience, and raising greater awareness among migrants about the dangers of travel**”. “Offers not just a sobering account of tragedy, but also a call to envision and contribute to a future rooted in empathy and solidarity. By confronting audiences with the realities of migration while showcasing pathways to positive change, the film serves as both a mirror to society’s shortcomings and a beacon for a more compassionate world.

4. Production Plan (Brief):

Shooting Style:

The documentary will adopt a hybrid approach, combining:

Observational Filmmaking – Capturing raw, unfiltered moments in migrant camps, at ports, and during rescue operations.

Interview-Driven Narratives – Conducting in-depth interviews with migrants, their families, aid workers, policymakers, and rescue teams.

Archival Footage – Integrating historical news reports and media coverage of past Channel crossings to provide context and continuity.

Reconstruction and Visual Metaphors – Using subtle reconstructions and visual storytelling to convey the emotional and psychological dimensions of the migrant experience.

Key Locations:

Filming will take place across multiple locations to authentically represent both sides of the journey:

United Kingdom: "*Dover, London, Folkestone*" Kent coastlines, migrant shelters, and processing centres.

France: Calais migrant camps, coastal areas, and rescue operation zones.

English Channel: Coordinating with maritime authorities to capture footage of rescue missions and Channel crossings (where feasible).

Production Schedule:

Pre-Production (Oct 2023 – January 2025):

- *Research*, script development, and securing interviewees.
- Location scouting and risk assessments in *Calais* and *Dover*.
- Casting and assembling crew.

Production (February- Mar 2025):

- Filming on location in *Calais*, *Dover*, and the *English Channel*.
- Interviews with survivors, families, and advocacy groups.
- Capturing **B-roll** footage of camps, rescue boats, and maritime operations.

Post-Production (April – Jun 2025):

- Editing and assembling the narrative.
- *Sound* design, *colour* correction, and *visual* effects.
- Scoring and finalising the musical composition.

Distribution and Release (July 2025 Onwards):

- Submissions to international **film festivals** and online streaming platforms.

- Community screenings and educational events.
- Social media campaigns and advocacy-driven premieres.

This structured yet flexible production plan ensures that the documentary remains responsive to evolving conditions in the field while staying aligned with the overarching goal of raising awareness and driving meaningful social change.

5. Team:

The Struggle for a Better Life: *The Lethal Journey* is brought to life by a skilled and passionate team, each contributing their expertise to craft a compelling and thought-provoking documentary.

- **Director / Writer / Project Manager – Michael Carter**
Michael Carter is an adaptable, resourceful, and highly experienced filmmaker and photographer. With a strong background in both documentary and fiction, Michael has demonstrated exceptional leadership across various projects, focusing on themes of human rights, social justice, and migration. His extensive experience in directing, producing, and writing for *Third Eye Productions* has resulted in critically acclaimed works. Michael holds a master's degree in Filmmaking from the University for the Creative Arts and has a wealth of experience in theatre, photography, and broadcast media. His ability to communicate complex stories through empathetic and visually engaging narratives drives this project forward.
- **Head of Production – Kyrah Russell**
Kyrah Russell brings exceptional organisational skills and extensive experience in managing large-scale productions. From budgeting and forecasting to overseeing crew welfare and complex risk assessments, Kyrah ensures smooth coordination across all departments. Her expertise in navigating sensitive filming environments and managing logistical challenges makes her an invaluable part of the production team.
- **Composer – Marina Makarova**
A classically trained composer with over 20 years of experience, Marina Makarova began composing professionally at the age of 12. She has since scored more than 140 documentaries, 30 feature films, and multiple animated works. A laureate of prestigious Russian composition awards, Marina's emotive and haunting musical style will underscore the emotional gravity of the migrants' stories. Her ability to capture the essence of human struggle through music will serve as a vital narrative tool throughout the film.
- **Director of Photography – Tom Cressey**
Tom Cressey brings a distinctive visual flair to the project, focusing on capturing authentic, raw moments that reflect the harsh realities of migrant journeys. His work on numerous award-winning documentaries has cemented his reputation for delivering evocative and immersive cinematography that draws audiences into the heart of the story.

6. Budget: (Estimated)

The estimated budget for **The Struggle for a Better Life: *The Lethal Journey*** reflects the scale and ambition of the project, ensuring high production values and a professional finish. This budget accounts for experienced professionals, extensive pre-production research, and the logistical demands of international filming.

6.1 - Pre-Production

- Writer/Script Development/Research

Development of the script, conducting necessary research, and writing tasks.

- Equipment Rental

Hiring necessary filming and production equipment.

- Location Scouting

Exploring and securing suitable locations for filming. Apply for permits.

6.2 - Production

- Producer/Director

Overseeing the production process and ensuring the project stays on track.

- Casting (for Interviews/Reenactments)

Finding and selecting talent for interviews or dramatized scenes.

- Filming Costs (Including Travel)

Covering the cost of filming, crew expenses, and travel-related expenditures.

6.3 - Post-Production

- Editing/Sound Mixing

Refining footage, adding effects, and balancing sound for the final production.

- Music Licensing (Original Score/Stock Music)

Getting rights to original or stock music for the production.

- Distribution and Festivals

Preparing the film for release and submission to festivals.

Total Estimated Budget: £200,000 to £290,000

This budget reflects the commitment to producing a high-calibre documentary that does justice to the sensitive and urgent nature of the subject matter.

7. Call to Action:

We are seeking **funding, distribution** partnerships, and **collaborators** to bring **The Struggle for a Better Life: *The Lethal Journey*** to life. This documentary is a crucial exploration of the harrowing migration routes from **Calais to Dover**, offering an intimate, humanised portrayal of the perilous journey that many migrants undertake in search of a better life.

We are looking for **funders** who are passionate about amplifying migrant voices and raising awareness about the human cost of such journeys. Your support will be critical in helping us capture the reality of this issue, from the ground level, and amplify its message on a global scale.

Distributors interested in showcasing this project will have the opportunity to present an urgent, impactful story with broad international relevance. By partnering with us, you will help ensure that these essential conversations about migration, human rights, and survival reach the widest audience possible.

We also invite **collaborators**—filmmakers, researchers, and specialists in migration issues—to join our effort in making this film as authentic and powerful as it can be. Your expertise and vision will play an integral role in realising this ambitious project.

Why Support This Project?

- The film sheds light on the experiences of migrants, offering a voice to those who are often unheard.
- It aims to raise awareness about the dangers of illegal migration while promoting empathy and understanding.
- The documentary has the potential to reach international audiences and create meaningful change in how migration is perceived and addressed.

With your **support, partnership, and expertise**, we can bring this urgent, heart-wrenching story to the screen and drive forward the conversation about migration, human rights, and survival. Together, we can make a powerful impact.

Join us in telling this crucial story.



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