

HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVERS



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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HUMAN RIGHTS  
OBSERVERS  
CALAIS / GRANDE - SYNTHE



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# INTRODUCTION

2023 has been a complicated year, both in terms of the internal life of Human Rights Observers and for displaced persons on the Franco-British border, as well as regarding the national and international political, social and climatic context of France.



In terms of the internal life of the association: Human Rights Observers, born in 2017 as an inter-associative project and since September 2019 under the administrative, logistical and legal umbrella of L'Auberge des Migrants, decided to emancipate itself by becoming an association (under the 1901 law). Created on the 1st of March 2023 by several members of successive generations of Human Rights Observers, the association has retained the same objective: **to document State violence perpetrated against displaced people at the France-UK border, aiming to denounce and prevent it.** To pursue this objective, the association has maintained the same activities: documentation of police operations and analysis of collected data, actions to reach out to displaced persons, communication and advocacy actions, legal actions. This decision came with a variety of changes, challenges and uncertainties.

First, it incurred the loss of our main funder, of our logistical resources (vehicles, office, team housing, etc.), and some of our administrative support. **Furthermore, it came with the enormous work of re-structuring ourselves into an independent association, a process that we wanted to be collective and inclusive,** and for which we had to find a balance between the ideal structure we were aspiring to and the reality of legal obligations, and administrative and financial constraints and deadlines. These changes have had a major impact on the team and its ability to carry out our activities, which were initially suspended between 27 February and 10 April, before gradually coming back, in Calais, **with limited logistical and financial resources, and a small number of volunteers** determined not to leave State violence at the border invisible and unpunished. The first months of the association's existence were difficult and uncertain, but **the team gradually regrouped and activities resumed thanks to support** from our formal partners, various individuals, and Dunkirk's militant network, as well as through the hard work of the team on the ground and, from a distance, the HRO Board, composed of members of previous teams.

2017	Creation of HRO as an inter-association project.
2023	Independence of the association



**Thanks to their mobilization, 2023 was thus also a year of achievements and opportunities,** starting a new era for the struggle of Human Rights Observers against State violence on the Franco-British border. We managed to raise enough funds to get a team of two employees, three trainees and between five and ten volunteers, to rent space and accommodation for the team at the end of the year, to operate two vehicles that were generously donated by individuals, and to cover the rest of our operating costs. We were able to resume all our field activities in Calais and Dunkirk, and relaunch our communication, advocacy and legal work.

We have reintegrated into the local Calais community, maintained relations with our various partners and forged new promising links. Although it would be too long to mention all the achievements of the team during the year, we should nevertheless mention some successes as examples: we have resumed the publication of monthly bulletins, published our annual report 2022[1]\* (with some delay),

contributed to the 2023 report of the “Observatory on evictions from informal living sites”[2], met with political leaders[3], organized and participated in events with renowned researchers, sent reports of illegal acts to the competent authorities, shared our data with [violencespolicières.fr](https://violencespolicières.fr) (a website that collates instances of police violence across France), in addition to many other accomplishments that all Human Rights Observers volunteers in 2023 can be proud of.

While 2023 has been a year of change for us internally, displaced persons who transit through or are stranded in the Calais and Dunkirk regions are still **harassed by the authorities, as part of a so-called “Fight against fixation points” policy, in a continuous and increasing manner.** The same goes for the **criminalization of people who mobilize in support of people on the move and advocate against the deadly border.** This is the object of this report, which attempts to analyze the harassment of displaced people on the France-UK border.



\*See all our footnotes at the end of the report (pp. 67-69).

**On this border, in 2023, at least 30,000 people arrived in the UK from France by the sea[4], and many others by truck, instances of violence took place during departures and crossings, ships attempting to make the crossing capsized and wrecked, and at least 28 humans died or went missing[5].**

Across the Channel, the year was marked by a **nauseating British political debate aimed at criminalizing the crossing of the Channel** and making evidence of it detrimental to the asylum applications of displaced people once they have arrived in the UK. For first-time arrivals in the UK, we have also noted the establishment of highly questionable housing such as the barge Bibby Stockholm, a floating building installed at the port of Portland to house asylum seekers, which was evacuated in August following the detection of a bacteria causing lung infections[6]. This example shows the **ever-growing desire to remove and imprison people on the move, preventing their integration and organizing their spatial segregation.**

Finally, nationally and internationally, 2023 is characterized by a general political context that has only reinforced the importance of activist engagement and counterpower initiatives like ours. In France, the year was ma-

-rked by a staggering number of enforcements of Article 49.3 of the constitution of the Fifth Republic, in proposals and/or the adoption of racist and class-based laws such as pensions reform (which led to massive mobilizations and protests), the Kasbarian-Bergé law or the asylum and immigration law, among (too many) others. It was marked by a **strong repression of social movements and police violence**, including the homicide of Nahel Merzouk in June by the police, which led to heavily repressed uprisings. In 2023, according to the Abbé Pierre Foundation, “the social housing bomb exploded”[7]. The Defender of Rights notes a weakening of the rule of law, rights and freedoms, especially those of foreigners, and the persistence of discrimination[8]. The NousToutes collective has also counted at least 135 femicides in France[9].

Internationnally, 2023 has been the scene of climate inaction in the face of increasingly frequent and alarming disasters in all regions of the world. The year was also marked by the massacre of the Palestinians in Gaza and the hypocrisy and racism of leaders in the face of the ongoing genocide, the crimes of the wars in Sudan, Ukraine, Congo, Syria, Bangladesh, Yemen, among others: millions of deaths, populations surviving in famine and without care,





millions of internally or internationally displaced persons, some of whom are being chased at our borders. 2023, is thus another year during which authoritarian and repressive regimes (such as in Eritrea) prevailed, and the rise of a proud, unhinged extreme right.

Human Rights Observers, however, campaigned for peace, and against capitalists and heads of State who promote the arms industry and securitisation which lead to belligerent relations while a general feeling of insecurity persists.



The legislative evolution of 2023 unfortunately amplifies a movement aiming to reduce the fundamental rights of the most vulnerable people. The pension reform was mentioned earlier, but other texts - certainly involving a less strong social mobilization - have also forged the conditions for a world that represses solidarity, such as the Kasbarian-Bergé law which provided for:

- **Criminalization of people helping to open squats**, which are often the only decent living option that are accessible for people living on the street ;
- **Suppression of guarantees and protective rights of people occupying the squats, with faster evictions**, without access to judges, and facilitated use of police forces.

As a result of this law, displaced persons lose another structure that could provide them with

housing. Many then find themselves in conditions like those described in the Calais area: equipped only with a tent under a bridge and subjected to systematic evictions by the police.

The year ended with **the adoption of a racist law, formalizing the alliance of the government with the extreme right** and exacerbating the backward steps of the rights of foreigners in France.

**Its main focus** is on giving public authorities the greatest freedom to reject and deport those considered 'undesirable' by the French administration. Under vague terms, it involves investigations into peoples' levels of integration , requirements to demonstrate a "respect for the values of the Republic", and in order not to lose their right to stay, refugees and displaced people are required to be model citizens to avoid the risk of being perceived as a threat to "public order".

Finally, the Minister of the Interior shamefully defends an unconstitutional law. All it took was a transition through the Constitutional Council to cover this law with all the necessary conditions for its promulgation and thus allow the parliamentary majority to ignore its obligation to respect the constitutional rules during legislative construction. At the border, the law translates into enhanced means to track and remove displaced people from the

territory, and a weakening of the right to asylum: procedures with single judges at the CNDA (National Court of Asylum Law), problematic promiscuity between the OFPRA and the prefectures, automatic obligation to leave the territory in case of rejection of the application, withdrawal of social benefits for applicants of asylum... all arguments that can push people on the move to feel rejected in France and try their luck in the UK.

We are horrified by the situation in Palestine and as observers of human rights, we denounce particularly the continuous deliberate attacks by the Israeli army against Palestinian journalists who are documenting, on a daily basis, the acts of violence that Israel commit: within 6 months, more than 100 journalists were killed[10]. We equally support the important work of international authorities in this situation. On January 26th 2024, the International Court of Justice recognised the plausibility of an ongoing genocide[11]. On May 20th 2024, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, submitted a requ-

-est for the issuance of arrest warrants against the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his defense minister Yoav Gallant, as well as three senior Palestinian officials of Hamas, for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

By continuing to provide economic and diplomatic support and supplying weapons to Israel, numerous Western countries, primarily the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and France, become accomplice in these crimes. We urge France to adopt a position that is consistent with the values that it claims to withhold.



As a human rights defenders' association, HRO supports Palestinians in their fight for justice and equality, along with all populations oppressed by racist politics and economic destabilisation, in Yemen, Sudan, Bangladesh, DRC and elsewhere, all those people treated as undesirable across the world.

# RESSOURCES

## DOCUMENTARIES :

- **Yallah Gaza** (Roland Nurier, 2023)
- **Israel, Clash of the Tribes** (Duki Dror, Naftaly Glikberg and Jens Strohschnieder, 2023)

## BOOKS :

- **A Legitimate Boycott**, For the academic and cultural BDS of the State of Israel (Armelle Laborie and Eyal Sivan, 2016, La Fabrique)
- **The Lemon Tree** (novel) (Sandy Tolan, 2011, Flammarion)
- **The State of Isreal against the Jews** (Sylvain Cypel, 2020, La Découverte)
- **History of Gaza** (Jean-Pierre Filiu, 2015, Fayard)

## PODCASTS : (IN FRENCH)

- **The Zionist Project, the Colonisation of Palestine and the Israeli Far Right**, with Pierre Stambul, an activist with the French Jewish Union for Peace ("Midnight in the Century", available on Spectre, 2 episodes, 13th and 20th November 2023)
- **Israel, Hamas, humanitarians and Us, with Rony Brauman**, former President of Doctors Without Borders. (Au Poste, 20th December 2023, Season 6, Episode #77)

- **"Propaganda worthy of an authoritarian regime": can we still be pro-Palestinian in France?**, with Alain Gresh, podcast available on Le Média
- **Israel, Palestine & "The last war?"**, with Elias Sanbar (podcast available from Au Poste, 13th May 2024, Season 7, Episode #49)

## SERIES :

- **The Oath** (Peter Kosminsky, 2011) (available on Arte Boutique)

## WEBSITES :

- **Agence Media Palestine** : [agencemediapalestine.fr](http://agencemediapalestine.fr)
- **Orient XXI** : [orientxxi.info](http://orientxxi.info)

## ASSOCIATIONS AND COLLECTIVES :

- **Association France Palestine Solidarité** : [www.france-palestine.org](http://www.france-palestine.org)
- **Tsedek!, collectif juif décolonial** : [tsedek.fr](http://tsedek.fr)
- **Stop Arming Israel France** : [www.instagram.com/stoparmingisraelfrance/](https://www.instagram.com/stoparmingisraelfrance/)





# GLOSSARY and ABBREVIATIONS

**BAC**

Anti Crime Brigade (Brigade Anti Criminalité)

**BRI**

Search and Intervention Brigade (Brigade de Recherche et d'Intervention)

**CAES**

Center for initial reception and assessment of situations (Centre d'Accueil et d'Examens des Situations)

**CNDA**

National Court of Asylum Right (Cour nationale du droit d'asile)

**CRA**

Administrative Detention Center (Centre de rétention administrative)

**CRS**

Republican Security Company, also known as French riot police (Compagnie Républicaine de Sécurité)

**HRO**

Human Rights Observers

**FBG**

Defence Ball Launcher (Lanceur de Balles de Défense)

**OFPRA**

French Office of Protection for Refugees and Stateless People (Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides)

**OQTF**

Order to Leave the French Territory (Obligation de Quitter le Territoire Français)

**PAF**

Border Police (Police Aux Frontières)

## **DISPLACED PEOPLE**

Employing the term "displaced people" is a choice that aims to be inclusive and refers to all people in a state of migration/on the move, regardless of whether for political, social or economic reasons. This term is preferred to the term "migrants", which is no longer neutral in the media and political arena, and to the terms "refugees" or "asylum seekers", which refer to legal statuses linked to the Geneva Convention.

## **INFORMAL LIVING SITES**

Generic term to talk about the places where a person lives and carries out the totality of their daily activities.

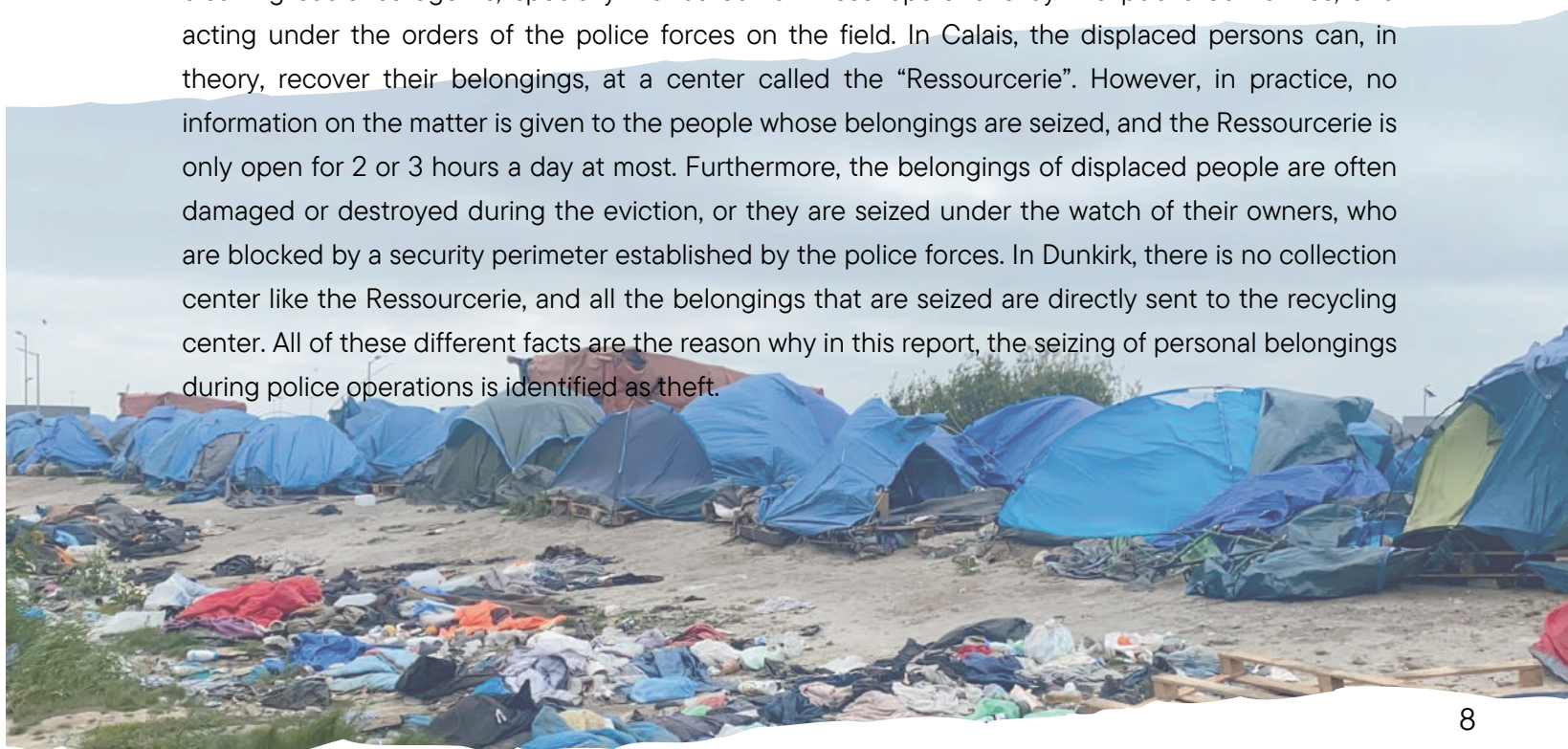
In Dunkirk and Calais, and in surrounding areas, these living spaces are camps, i.e. groupings of tents, also commonly referred to as "Jungles" by the people that temporarily inhabit them. These living sites are the target of evictions, and they are referred to throughout the report using all these different terms (camps, jungles, living sites).

## **FIXATION POINTS PREVENTION POLICY**

The State's systematic anticipation of evictions of informal settlements at the border in order to prevent the creation of anything resembling more permanent living spaces. When a living space is created, law enforcement agencies are systematically deployed in order to evict it.

## **THEFT, SEIZING, OR DESTRUCTIONS**

During the evictions, HRO observes illegal "seizings" of the displaced peoples' belongings by private cleaning societies agents, specially mandated for these operations by the public authorities, and acting under the orders of the police forces on the field. In Calais, the displaced persons can, in theory, recover their belongings, at a center called the "Ressourcerie". However, in practice, no information on the matter is given to the people whose belongings are seized, and the Ressourcerie is only open for 2 or 3 hours a day at most. Furthermore, the belongings of displaced people are often damaged or destroyed during the eviction, or they are seized under the watch of their owners, who are blocked by a security perimeter established by the police forces. In Dunkirk, there is no collection center like the Ressourcerie, and all the belongings that are seized are directly sent to the recycling center. All of these different facts are the reason why in this report, the seizing of personal belongings during police operations is identified as theft.





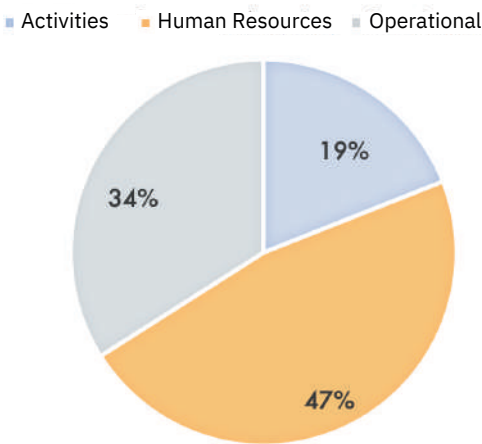
# FINANCES

Documenting and denouncing the State violences at the French-British border has a cost. Getting Human Rights Observers back in action in an independent structure, in the conditions exposed in the report’s introduction, represents a 33000 euro budget between March and December 2023.

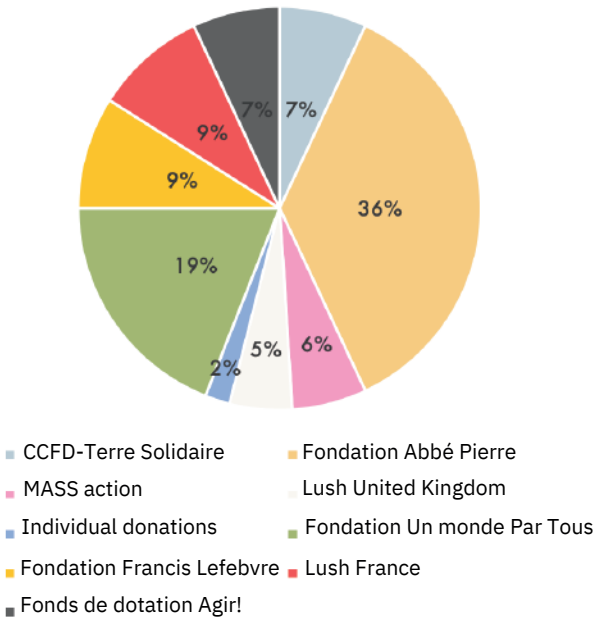
Structuring the association and starting its activities again was possible thanks to the financial support of partners with whom we have been working for several years, and with some new supports: **the CCFD-Terre solidaire, the Un Monde Par Tous Foundation, the Abbé Pierre Foundation, the Agir ! endowment fund of the Lyon bar, MASS Action, the Francis Lefebvre Foundation, Lush France and Lush UK.** The association also received funds from individuals supporting the fight for respect of human dignity and human rights.

Beyond the financial aspect, if the association Human Rights Observers was able to structure itself in 2023, it is on the one hand thanks to the hard work of its members, and on the other hand thanks to the moral and logistical support, the advice, donations of equipment, sharing of skills, and general help of former HRO members, volunteers of other associations and so many others . We sincerely thank all those who helped Human Rights Observers take off. ■

*Budget allocation*



*2023 distribution of subsidies*





# Comic account OF EVICTION

By LOUP BLASTER





SO, EVERY TWO DAYS, A TEAM POSITIONED AT THE CONVOY'S ASSEMBLY POINTS WAITS FOR THE SIGNS ANNOUNCING THE EVICTIONS.

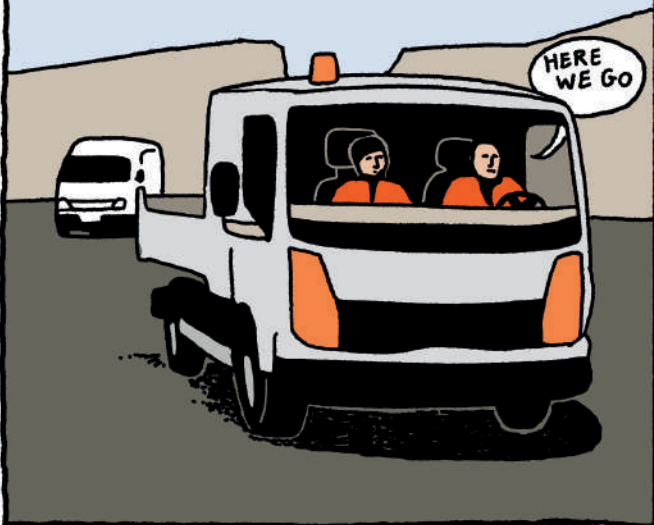
THIS PROCESS IS SYSTEMATIC, MEANING THAT IT ALMOST ALWAYS TAKES PLACE IN THE SAME WAY.



THE CONVOY ASSEMBLES : CRS, BORDER POLICE, NATIONAL POLICE AND TRANSLATORS MANDATED BY THE PREFECTURE.



WHEN THE CLEANING TRUCK ARRIVES, IT MEANS THE CONVOY'S DEPARTURE IS IMMINENT.



Hi, this is to let you know that the convoy is leaving. THERE ARE ABOUT TEN INFORMAL LIVING SITES.



THE TEAM ARRIVES AT THE FIRST LIVING SITE



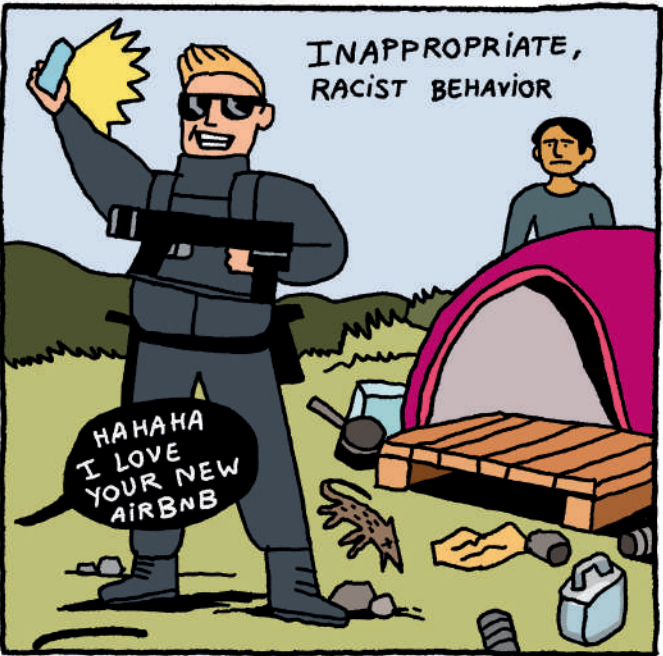
THE CONVOY IS HERE!



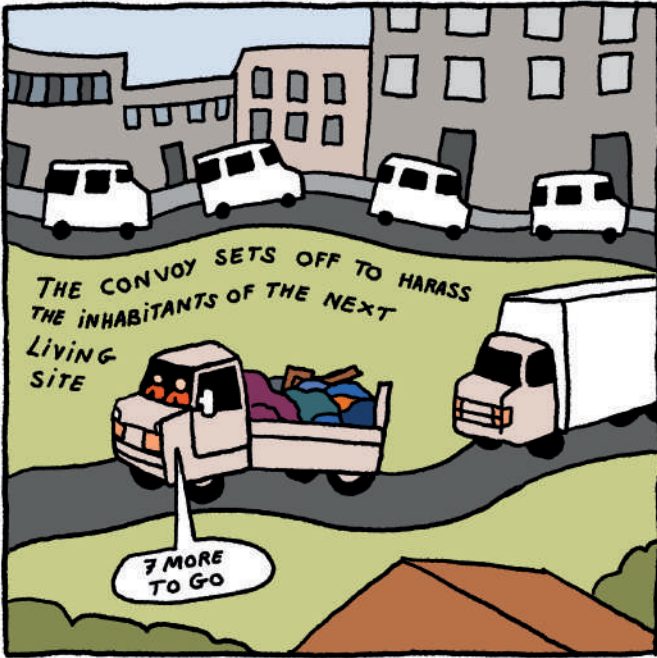


















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# CHRONOLOGY

## JANUARY

71

Number of evictions  
(flagrante delicto)  
counted by HRO

Large scale eviction of  
3 living sites in Dunkirk

Large scale eviction of  
3 living sites in Dunkirk

Large scale eviction of  
4 living sites in Dunkirk

## FEBRUARY

56

Number of evictions  
(flagrante delicto)  
counted by HRO

Suspension of the activities of  
Human Rights Observers

Human Rights Observers becomes  
an independent association.

Large scale evictions on  
2 living sites in Dunkirk

## MARCH

### JANUARY 3rd

The *Les Jours* website registered the death of Foad Dango (29 years old) who was hit by a freight train in Calais. Isolated for several weeks, it can be assumed that he killed himself. The event was directly witnessed by the other displaced people who were surviving in the same informal living site as him, and by volunteers who were distributing meals.

### JANUARY 4th

“*Stop the boats*”: The Prime Minister Rishi Sunak vows to make stopping the boats one of his 5 annual priorities and announces the adoption of a law fighting against the “rampant” immigration.

### JANUARY 12th

### JANUARY 17th

Launching of the website *violencespolicières.fr*

### JANUARY 26th

### JANUARY 31th

Protests against the pensions reform

### FEBRUARY 3rd

Publication by Louis Witter of the book “*La Battue. The state, the police and foreigners*”

### FEBRUARY 15th

The *Les Jours* website registered the death of Halkawt Ahmed (34 years) following wounds caused by bullets fired at head level on the 14th of February 2023.

### FEBRUARY 27th

### MARCH 1st

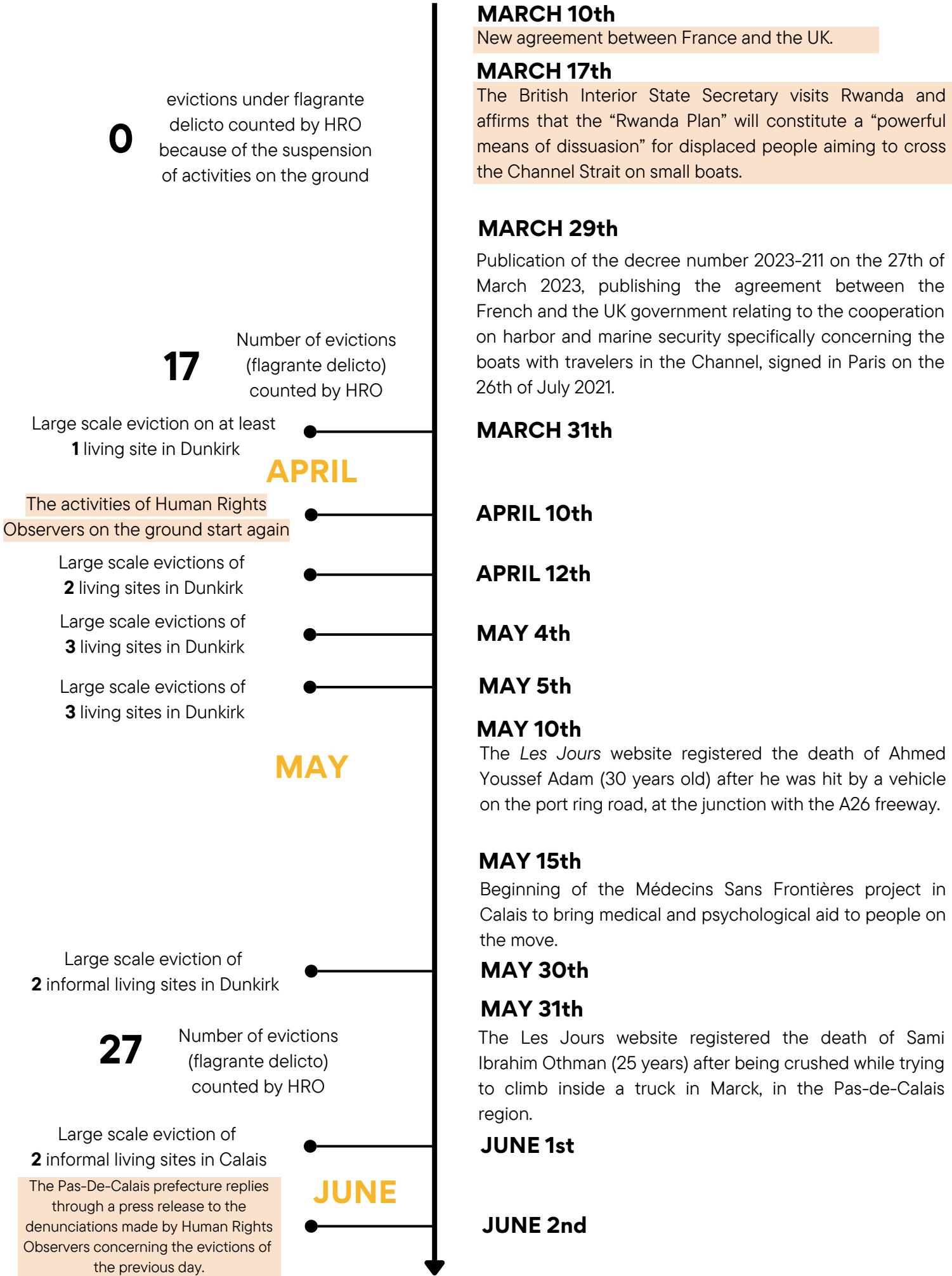
New rocks are put in the Calais town center to prevent displaced people from settling there.

### MARCH 5th

Diffusion on France 2 of the St Sulpice d’Amette Church Mass in the Pas-de-Calais with the Priest Phillippe Demeestère on the theme “*Solidarity with migrants*”.

### MARCH 7th

The British Interior Minister Suella Braverman presents the illegal immigration bill to the UK parliament (the legal project aims to prevent anyone who enters the UK irregularly from claiming asylum and will order their deportation).



The administrative judge of Lille authorizes the eviction of displaced people who had settled on an appointed Traveller’s site in Loon Plage.  
An appeal was filed by 4 applicants with the support of Salam and HRO.

61

Number of evictions (flagrante delicto) counted by HRO

JULY

Large scale evictions on 1 informal living site in Loon-Plage

67

Number of evictions (flagrante delicto) counted by HRO

Large scale evictions of 3 informal living sites in Dunkirk

AUGUST

61

Number of evictions (flagrante delicto) counted by HRO

JUNE 13th

JUNE 25th

2 displaced people testify having been victims of police violence and phone thefts by CRS agents.

JUNE 27th

Complaints filed about the incident by the 2 individuals at the Calais police station.

The British Ministry of Interior estimates that sending back an asylum seeker to a country such as Rwanda would cost 169000 pounds by persons

JUNE 29th

The British Court of Appeal declares that the “Rwanda Plan” is illegal due to the failings of the asylum system of Rwanda, and to the fact that the country cannot be considered safe.

JULY 4th

The Les Jours website registered the death of Yayha Ibrahim Omar (26 years) after having been hit by a vehicle on the A16 highway. According to witnesses, he fell from the trailer of a truck in which he had managed to enter and was then hit by one of the vehicles that followed the truck, on the A16 freeway.

JULY 13th

JULY 20th

Adoption of the Illegal Migration Law project in England.

JULY 26th

Validation by the Constitutional Council of the “Kasbarian-Bergé” law, which marks a step back for the rights of displaced persons and those who support them.

JULY 27th

Adoption of the “Kasbarian-Bergé” law n°2023-668.

AUGUST 12th

The Les Jours website registered the death of 6 Afghani men after the shattering of the barge of an inflatable dinghy which was carrying around 65 people off the Sangatte shores.

AUGUST 22nd

Beginning of the strike of the Emmaüs Grande-Synthe community fellows.

SEPTEMBER

Large scale eviction on  
2 informal living sites in Dunkirk.

49 Number of evictions  
(flagrante delicto)  
counted by HRO

SEPTEMBER 14th

The *Les Jours* website registered the death of Jallal Alden Mohamed (25 years old) who was hit by a car while he was walking on the RN225 road near Bierne, in the North department.

SEPTEMBER 26th

The *Les Jours* website registered the death of W.M. (24 years old), who was found dead on the Blériot beach, in Sangatte, in the Pas-de-Calais department. The victim was trampled on a boat which was leaving the beach for England and thrown overboard. Her partner then jumped into the water and brought her back to the beach.

The British Home Secretary receives criticism after having called for a revision of the UN Refugee Convention and declaring that offering asylum to displaced persons due to them being homosexual or being women, was unviable.

SEPTEMBER 30th

The *Les Jours* website registered the death of a displaced person who was fatally hit by a freight train going to Dunkirk. The victim was buried anonymously in the South Cemetery of Calais.

The *Les Jours* website also registered the death of Dinesh Shanmugarajah (33 years old), who was found drowned in the Bourbourg canal in the North of Loon-Plage. The man was brought back to the shore by other displaced persons who then called for help.

OCTOBER

Large scale eviction of  
1 living site in Calais

73 Number of evictions  
(flagrante delicto)  
counted by HRO

OCTOBER 8th

The *Les Jours* website registered the death of Meron Brhane (23 years old) who was found drowned in Merlimont, after 60 persons on board of a pneumatic canoe capsized near the beach.

OCTOBER 10th

OCTOBER 11th

The State Council calls on the French government to guarantee police agents will visibly carry the Identity and Organisation Reference Number so as to be identifiable and accountable.

OCTOBER 12th

OCTOBER 19th

OCTOBER 24th

Large scale eviction of  
3 living sites in Dunkirk  
Large scale eviction of  
2 living sites in Dunkirk  
Large scale eviction of  
1 living site in Dunkirk

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 1st

Beginning of the ‘winter truce’

NOVEMBER 2nd

Beginning of the Claran storm

NOVEMBER 4th

Beginning of the Domingos storm

NOVEMBER 6th

The *Les Jours* website registered the death of Dinh Anh Nguyen (37 years old) after being hit by a train while he walked on the track in North Loon Plage. He did not hear the train arriving, and the driver, due to the obscurity, couldn’t do anything to prevent the accident. The death was not shared to any media, and the information only reached the association members through an SNCF Security agent met during the eviction of an informal living site.

NOVEMBER 11th

Beginning of floods in the Nord-Pas-De-Calais.

Following serious knife aggressions on the 24th of October 2023 on the Toumaniantz avenue in Calais, *Les Jours* website registered the death of Awad Adam Goudatullah, a displaced person, after being in a coma for weeks at the hospital.

NOVEMBER 13th

Following aggressions, *Les Jours* website registered the death of Abdelbassit Nourredine Ahmad Mohammad, a 22 year old, under Mollien Bridge in Calais, after having been strangled. He came from the city of Gadarif, in East Sudan, near the Ethiopian border.

James Cleverly, former Foreign Relations Minister, becomes State Secretary after the departure of Braverman.

NOVEMBER 14th

Recognition of the state of natural catastrophe after the floods in Pas-de-Calais.

NOVEMBER 15th

The UK Supreme Court declares the Rwanda plan to be illegal. The UK government vows to produce a new treaty with Rwanda and an urgency legislation with the Parliament.

NOVEMBER 16th

Beginning of the Frederico storm.

NOVEMBER 17th

In the night of the 16th, about 15 displaced people are hit by a truck on the RN 216 towards the Calais port. *Les Jours* website registered the death of Baysal Recep and Geçsoyler Mehmet Ali, who both died immediately. Four other people were injured, including 1 severely.

Abusive administrative detention of 2 British volunteers of HRO



86

Number of evictions  
(flagrante delicto)  
counted by HRO

Publication of the 5th annual  
report of the Observatory on  
evictions from informal living  
sites.

Simultaneous large-scale  
evictions in Calais  
(4 informal living sites) and  
Dunkirk (2 informal living sites)

DECEMBER

The Defender of Rights recognizes  
the abusive character of the fines  
received by HRO during the Covid  
19 lockdowns. The observations  
and monitoring of police activities  
is recognized as a constitutive  
element in the legitimate scrutiny  
of police forces' deontological  
rigor.

Eviction of a squat in the  
Calais city center.

NOVEMBER 22nd

Beginning of the hunger strike of Pierre Lascoux, volunteer  
in the SALAM association.

*Les Jours* website registered the death of 3 persons who  
drowned off the shores of the Equihen Beach, due to the  
inflatable dinghy capsizing near the coast. 57 survivors  
managed to swim back to the beach.

NOVEMBER 27th

A trench is dug near the Beau-Marais street in Calais, in  
which displaced persons live.

NOVEMBER 28th

NOVEMBER 30th

Call for respect of the rights of displaced persons from  
Véronique Devise (Secours Catholique President) and Mr  
Leborgne (Bishop of Arras).

DECEMBER 1st

The British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak meets with the  
Rwanda president during the COP 28 Summit in Dubai.

DECEMBER 4th

A dead body was found on the shores of Dannes, in the  
Pas-de-Calais. The *Les Jours* website indicated it could be  
Eskiel Sebsbea Tsgaye (37 years old) who had disappeared  
since the shipwreck of November 22nd on the shores of  
the Équihen Beach.

James Cleverly visits Kigali to sign a treaty between the UK  
and Rwanda.

DECEMBER 5th

DECEMBER 8th

DECEMBER 9th

The *Les Jours* website registered the death of a displaced  
person in a freight train fire near the Eurotunnel. The SNCF  
indicates that "People near the rails attempted to get on  
the freight train. The electrocution of one of them caused  
a fire on the wagon." Despite the help brought by the  
firemen and the SNCF staff, the person died in the fire,  
while another was slightly injured.

DECEMBER 11th

The Asylum and immigration law is rejected by the  
National Assembly deputies.

The HRO 2022 Annual Report is published.

Organization by HRO of a conference on “*The police state, crossed gazes of the neighborhood near the border*” with sociologist Mathieu Rigouste.

Large scale eviction of **2** informal living sites in Dunkirk.

**87** Number of evictions (flagrante delicto) counted by HRO

**DECEMBER 15th**

The information website *Calais la sociale* reports “While the interior Minister Gérald Darmanin was visiting Calais, tens of people demonstrated their opposition to the Asylum and immigration law, recently rejected by the National Assembly Deputies. The protestors were kept away from the police Station and encircled by the police forces for more than an hour”

The *Les Jours* website registered the death of Ahmed, who drowned.

The *Les Jours* website registered that a boat which had left from Oye-Plage in the Pas De Calais, with around 60 people in it, had had an accident near the Grand Fort Phillipe. One man drowned and 2 other people disappeared.

Following the visit of Gérard Darmanin to Calais, the associations supporting people on the move at the border organized a press conference to denounce the Zero Fixation Point Policy.

**DECEMBER 18th**

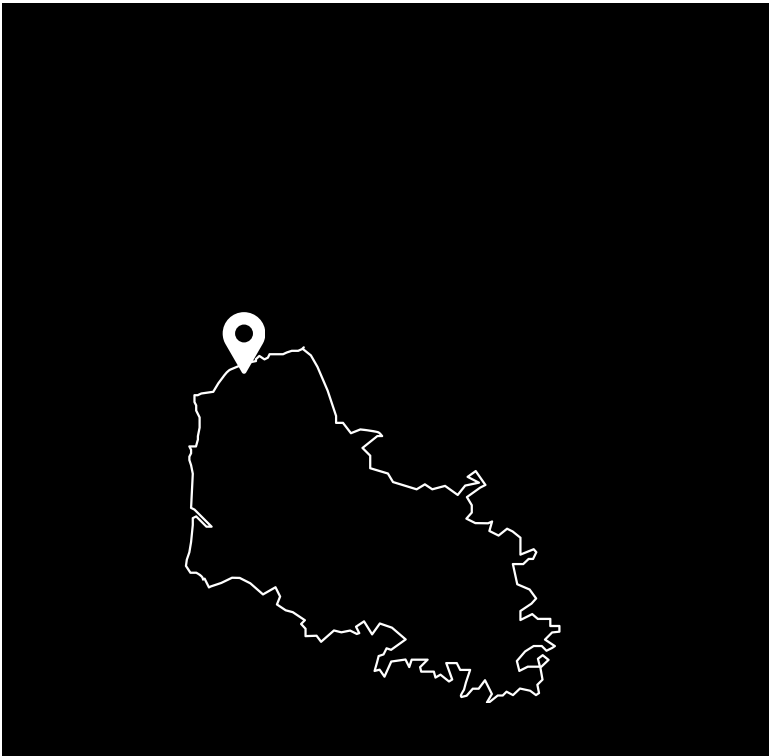
**DECEMBER 19th**

Adoption by the National Assembly of the “Asylum and Immigration law”, which marks a set back for the rights of displaced people.

**DECEMBER 28th**

# ANNUAL NOTES 2023\*

## CALAISIS



**662**  
forced evictions



**655**  
operations under  
“flagrante delicto”



**7**  
large-scale  
eviction operations



**4 630**  
tents moved



**14 729**  
people evicted



**184**  
arrests\*

\*This data is based on our observations and is therefore not exhaustive. They should be considered as minimum figures.

\*\*There were numerous others, particularly during the summer around the train stations.

# ITEMS SEIZED



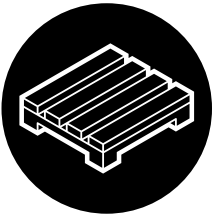
**1118**  
tents seized,  
including 160 full  
of personal items



**102**  
blankets



**249**  
tarps



**84**  
wooden  
pallets



**20**  
sleeping  
bags



**37**  
bikes



**8**  
shelters  
were  
destroyed



**23**  
plastic bags



**13**  
mattresses

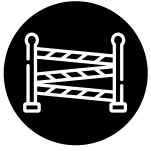


**6**  
On  
occasions clothes  
were seized



**6**  
backpacks





## CONSTRAINTS

**592** times, the HRO team were blocked by arbitrary police perimeters put in place, including:

**116** times, the HRO team were escorted out of these perimeters.



## INTIMIDATIONS



**35** identity checks



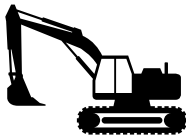
**97** times our teams were filmed by the police using:

- **Hands-free cameras:** often without prior notification which is mandatory
- **Personal phones** (very rarely professional phones)

# LARGE-SCALE EVICTIONS



24 arrests



Sites entirely destroyed, too many items seized to keep count



7 evictions

- 01/06: 2 living sites concerned
- 10/10: 1 living sites concerned
- 30/11: 4 living sites concerned

One of these living sites concerned, one of the largest in Calais, was targeted during all 3 operations.

**As the perimeters were far too wide, observations were hindered** so the figures reported should be taken as extreme minimums.





# ANNUAL NOTES 2023\*

## DUNKIRK



**39**

forced evictions



**4098**

people evicted



**93**

arrests



\*This data is based on our observations and is therefore not exhaustive. They should be considered as minimum figures.



# SEIZURES

**52**

The number of medium-sized machines for removing personal belongings (Loxam skip or telescopic forklift, 1m<sup>3</sup>)

**17**

The number of large vehicles for storing and emptying personal belongings at the waste disposal site (skips, 30m<sup>3</sup>)

**556**

Tents in total (230 empty and 336 full of personal belongings)

**108**

Blankets

**88**

Tarps

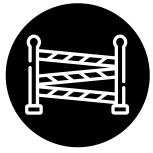
**5**

Mobile phones

**+**

Pallets, shoes, electric transformers and cables, important documents, wood...





## CONSTRAINTS

22

times, the HRO team were blocked by arbitrary police perimeters put in place, including:

7

times, the HRO team were escorted out of the perimeters.

## INTIMIDATIONS

(comments, filmed volunteers, Identity Check...)



20 identity checks



6

times, our teams were filmed by the police using:

- **Hands-free cameras:** often without prior notification which is mandatory
- **Personal phones** (very rarely professional phones)



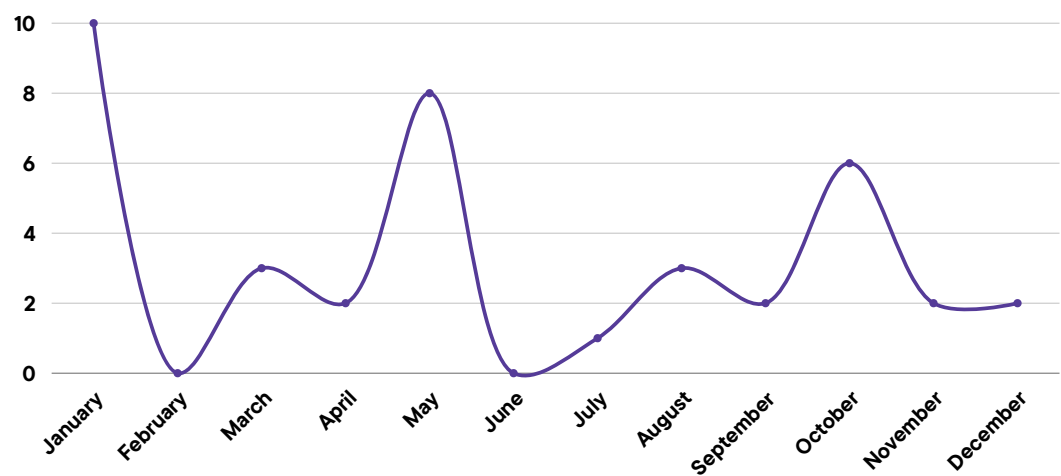
## EXPLANATION OF THE DROP IN NUMBERS IN 2023

Through contributions to the 2023 Annual Report of the “Observatory of Evictions from Informal Living Places”, we explain **two main reasons for the quantitative drop in the number of evictions recorded in Calais** but highlight how the daily harassment of exiled people living in camps has not been curbed, since eviction operations have continued at the same frantic pace, on average every 48 hours.

**Firstly, HRO was not able to carry out their work to the same level as previous years.** As a result of structural changes, our activities in the field came to a complete halt between 27th February and 9th April 2023. The evictions that took place during this period could not therefore be counted, documented or reported. At an average of 75 evictions per month over the remaining months of the reporting period, this could roughly represent

an estimated 100 evictions that were not recorded. **Above all, for a variety of reasons, the number of living sites evicted during each police operation fell drastically from January 2023 onwards.** In 2022, HRO counted an average of 140 evictions per month. For example, an average of 4 living sites were evicted during each eviction operation in the second half of January, throughout February and since June 2023, compared with an average of 8 living sites evicted in November and December 2022, which represents **a halving of the total number of evictions in some months.** There have even been several occasions where just one single living space was evicted in 48 hours, an almost unseen since the introduction of the so-called ‘combat against fixation points’ policy at the end of 2016.

The number of evictions in Dunkirk, 2023





Three concurrent circumstances may explain this drop. **On the one hand, the number of displaced people in Calais fell sharply in late winter and early spring**, probably because the weather made survival conditions in the camps unbearable and crossing the Channel too dangerous, and because **people hoping to claim asylum were still worried about the “Rwanda plan”**, which was still being discussed in the UK. In this situation, as there were fewer people, they grouped together in a smaller number of living sites. The associations agree that these numbers reached a record low between February and the beginning of May, with an average of 206 people present.

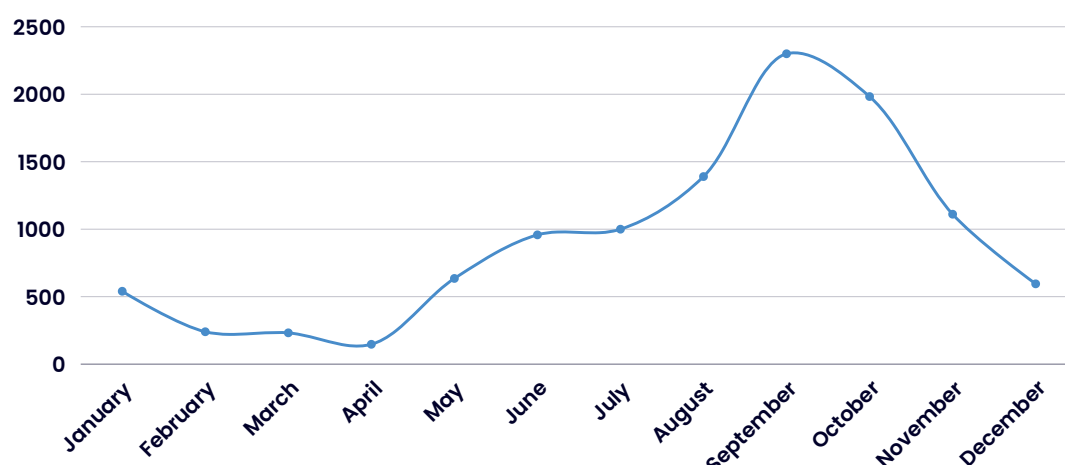
As a result, **the living sites were deserted** and with no one “living” there, the evictions naturally stopped. However, this did not stop police from briefly entering and leaving the living sites, realising that there is no one to

harass or steal from, and turning on their heels.

For example, **to highlight the absurd nature of this kind of operation**, on 9 May, at 8.42 am, when the HRO team had just been blocked by an arbitrary perimeter put in place a far distance from the police operation, and was questioning this perimeter, the police officers who had just entered the premises ten minutes prior went back to their vehicles, shouting to HRO: “There's no one here, so the problem's solved”; “Not a tent, that's it, we're done with it”.

On the other hand, following large-scale evictions, accompanied by forced shelter operations, in 2022 and early 2023, **several living sites in Calais town centre were permanently shut down**, thereby reducing the number of living sites evicted by the authorities in the following months. **This situation highlights the political willingness to push displaced people to the outskirts of the town in order to make them invisible.**

## Number of displaced people present in Calais, 2023



**Lastly, and more marginally, the fall in the number of evictions recorded should be regarded in light of the political and social context in France.** While the authorities mobilised law enforcement units in response to the large-scale protests against pension reform, the numbers of CRS agents usually assigned to daily evictions in Calais were no longer available. The HRO observers noted particularly in April and May, **that evictions were carried out with fewer CRS** (3 or 4 vans instead of the usual 8 or 9), and on several occasions **they were accompanied by agents from Police Nationale forces, and sometimes members of the BAC**, thereby reducing the duration of the eviction operations and the number of living sites each time.

In addition, the answers provided by the officers (when they were provided) clarified the assumptions described above. For example, on the 14th of April, the head of operations told the HRO teams that “they’re busy elsewhere. With the demonstrations, they’ve been very busy, so they’ve had a rest”; on 20th April: “they’re certainly caught up with other things”. The question, which was subsequently repeated, quickly became pointless, as HRO was given answers such as: “that’s none of your business, it’s how the units are organised” (1st July) or simply: “I don’t have to give you an answer” (29th July). **The reduced police presence had a direct impact on HRO’s work**; with no police cordon to obstruct observations, they were much better than usual.

**The national police, fearing that their action would be too visible, asked HRO members to perimeter themselves**, as was the case on **April 14** after an identity check : “As our papers were handed back, the head of the operation told us that normally “you should be escorted off private land but we’re not going to do that” and asked us to stay away from the operation if we wanted to follow them”. In contrast, on July 27, while the CRS had been absent from the evictions for 15 days, they made their grand return, which was immediately felt by HRO, describing much wider perimeters than before.

Additionally, **the evictions that took place during this period were surprisingly brief**. While these operations generally took between four and five hours, those in April lasted an average of 50 minutes and those in May 48 minutes, with records for the evictions on 15 May (10 minutes) and 9 May (13 minutes).

**Repression should therefore be understood as a choice**, rather than a strict application of the law. The choice to use violence against people seeking protection, the choice to slowly shatter lives, the choice to make the public believe that those the most repressed are in fact the criminals, the choice to waste public money on operations that are obviously pointless but serve another purpose by subjecting more and more people to the steamroller of oppression and dispossessing them of their time and space. ■

# POLICY OF FIGHTING AGAINST FIXATION POINTS, AND WEATHER CONDITIONS

## BAD WEATHER CONDITIONS IN CALAIS AND DUNKIRK : NO RESPITE FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE

In the Calais and Dunkirk regions, **displaced people survive amongst informal living spaces**. These places are located on wasteland, **under bridges and, more rarely, in abandoned buildings, mainly on the outskirts of towns and in industrial areas**.

These living sites are subject to systematic evictions and seizures of belongings outside the legal framework. The inhabitants of these sites are therefore particularly vulnerable to the climatic eventualities and **weather conditions that are so common along the Northern coast, adding yet another complication to their survival** in already undignified conditions: there is a lot of rain, humidity and the wind is relentless.

2023 was marked by particularly difficult weather conditions in Calais and Dunkirk.

Notably, historic episodes of high temperatures hit the two regions, which were placed under drought alert from the month of May and experienced heat records from June to September, making the summer of 2023 the 4th hottest summer of the century[15].

These unprecedented meteorological phenomenon also increased during the end of the year. The month of November was marked by the exceptional rise of rivers across Calais and Dunkirk, which pushed authorities to recognise **the state of natural disasters** across 348 towns including Calais and Marck, where multiple informal living sites were found, between the 2nd and 12th of November[16]. The storms of the 2nd, 4th and 16th of November also left a mark on the Pas-de-Calais landscape[17].

A few weeks later, the Pas-de-Calais and Nord departments experienced a cold spell, with temperatures falling to -4 degrees[18].

While the situation in the region made media headlines and moved political leaders, **the hundreds of displaced people surviving outdoors were not taken into consideration or protected**, despite the numerous warnings from associations.



## ALMOST DAILY EVICTIONS

Despite the bad weather, there was no respite from State harassment of displaced people in Calais and Dunkirk. **In the Calais area, the authorities continued to routinely evict people on the move from their living quarters every 48 hours or so**, including during particularly bad weather. This was particularly evident during the months of November and December: **while storms, floods and low temperatures came one after the other**, Human Rights Observers recorded at least 90 evictions in November and 87 in December, the highest number of evictions recorded per month in 2023

During these evictions, observers recorded the targeted seizure of items that would offer shelter during the bad weather, particularly a large number of tents and tarps, as well as the

destruction of several makeshift shelters:

- In November, HRO recorded the seizure of at least 121 tents, 39 tarps, almost twice the amount seized the previous month;
- In December, at least 214 tents and 21 tarps.

Another figure highlights the desire of authorities to **make living conditions for displaced people even more unbearable**: sites had been flooded since November, and in December observers witnessed the seizure of at least 74 wooden pallets that were used by inhabitants to raise their tents above ground level in attempt to preserve the watertightness, a disproportionately high number compared to the rest of the year, representing 88% of pallets seized throughout the entire year.



HERE A FEW EXAMPLES

STORM CIARÁN

As Storm Ciarán passed, hundreds of displaced people surviving outdoors were subject to full force gusts of wind at up to 160km/h[19]. Dozens of trees fell on living sites and the ground was flooded. On the 3rd of November, the day following the storm, at least 107 people surviving in 6 different living sites were evicted from these places and the 12m3 truck from the cleaning company appointed by the Prefecture was filled with confiscated tents and tarps. No solution was offered to inhabitants dispossessed of the equipment they used to shelter, even though a second storm was already announced.

STORM DOMINGOS

Storm Domingos aggravated the damage already caused by Storm Ciarán two days previously, making the survival of those without shelter even more difficult. On the 5th of November, the day after the storm, at least 295 people were evicted, and 6 tents and 2 tarps were seized arbitrarily. A few days later, on the 7th of November, while Pas-de-Calais was on red flood alert, at least 293 people were evicted from 9 living sites and 7 tents and 2 tarps were seized.

16th NOVEMBER



2nd NOVEMBER



4th NOVEMBER

STORM FREDERICO

After about ten days of exceptionally bad weather[20] – the equivalent of a month’s rainfall in around ten days[21] – a new storm struck Pas-de-Calais, with an orange flood alert and violent winds. Yet again, no solution was offered to give shelter to displaced people living on the street, and the political leaders showed no consideration to the situation despite warnings from associations, even as Prime Minister E. Borne visited certain victims of the damage living in the region. The night before the storm, on the 15th of November, authorities evicted at least 239 people including women and children, from whom they took 18 tents and 1 tarp that could have been used to protect themselves at least from the rain and wind that was forecast. State harassment didn’t stop there: the 16th of November a family with young children was evicted on the same day as the storm, the following day, 17th of November, authorities evicted at least 231 people, from whom they confiscated at least 21 tents (including 6 which were full of personal items) and 4 tarps and two days later at least 350 people were evicted and at least 18 tents, 9 tarps and clothes were confiscated. This harassment continued, as usual, every 2 days after that.



## HERE A FEW EXAMPLES

### EXTREME COLD

While temperatures remained around 0°C, on the 30th of November, authorities carried out simultaneous large-scale evictions of 4 living sites in Calais inhabited by at least 300 people and 2 living sites in Dunkirk where more than 800 people were living. From 5.30 am, inhabitants of these sites were forced, by heavily armed police officers and gendarmes (military police officer), to leave their shelters. They were surrounded by police, assaulted, chased and many were arrested by the PAF. Several hundred displaced people were forced onto buses that would bring them to accommodation centres far away from the coast, without knowing the destination and without evaluation of their individual situations. Many of them returned to the region that afternoon and in the following days. The living sites and belongings of displaced people were destroyed, notably due to the use of construction machinery in Dunkirk, leaving inhabitants without equipment to cope with the cold, frost and snow that fell on the first weekend of December.

### END OF NOVEMBER - BEGINNING OF DÉCEMBRE



Both through its inaction (lack of adequate shelter) and through its action (almost daily evictions from living sites and the seizure of people's belongings), **the State forced displaced people to live for several months in the damp and without being able to dry themselves or protect their personal belongings from rain and mud.**

These living conditions enabled by the State had a **detrimental effect on people's health**, the dampness posed difficulties for treating wounds, particularly those on the feet[22].

These strategies perfectly illustrate the aforementioned **policy of “fight against fixation points”** implemented on the border since the end of 2016.



## IMPOSING SUFFERING ON PEOPLE DEEMED UNDESIRABLE

Forcing people to survive outdoors is physically and psychologically difficult, dangerous and disastrous in terms of health. But forcing people on the move to survive outdoors, especially in these conditions, while making them even more vulnerable through **systematic illegal evictions and seizures of essential equipment** also has an intrinsically violent dimension and reflects a desire to inflict suffering on people deemed undesirable[23].

**Silence from authorities in face of the critical situation of people** on the street during these events, sends a very clear message of exclusion and rejection, of the difference between “nationals” and “foreigners”, between the settled and the homeless, and contributes to the invisibilisation of the presence and the experience of displaced people on the Franco-British border.

The living conditions in informal camps, particularly during bad weather and high heat in 2023, in Calais and Dunkirk are by nature not compatible with respect to human dignity and the protection of individuals from inhuman or degrading treatment or even for the protection of their private life that the French State should guarantee in accordance with its national, European and international obligations.





On the one hand, the simple fact that **the authorities provide not a single dignified solution to the people living in informal living sites constitutes a violation of these obligations** since it must take all necessary measures to prevent people to be forced to live in undignified conditions. The manner of implementation must consider the vulnerability of certain individuals (women, children, sick people, precarious, or undocumented people, etc.). These violations are all the more serious when the government knowingly refuses to offer permanent solutions at a time when the Pas-de-Calais and Nord regions are experiencing climatic events that are endangering exiled people living in precarious conditions.

On the other hand, in accordance with its commitments, **the French state cannot implement public policies which will consequently worsen the vulnerability of people.**



However, the record number of evictions, seizures and destruction of personal belongings organised by the authorities during **severe cold weather or floods** in the Calais and Dunkirk areas, in order to implement a **policy to “fight against fixation points”**, also make the State responsible for breaches of its obligations. In fact, instead of protecting individuals in vulnerable situations from serious violations of their rights during exceptional climatic episodes, the State implements a **policy which constitutes an attack on the dignity of people through inhuman and degrading treatment.** ■







# POLICE VIOLENCE

**2023 was marked by a flurry of laws and new security procedures that have continued to whittle away at the rights of people on the move at our borders.**

Despite the provision of the Global Security Act of 2021 prohibiting the use of drones during administrative police missions, the use of drones for surveillance purposes was legalised by the Criminal Liability and Internal Security Act of 24th January 2022. On the 19th of April 2023, the Ministry of the Interior and Overseas Territories published the decree implementing this law, authorising the capture of images by these machines during such police operations, particularly for border surveillance[24].





## DRONES

On the 7th of February 2023, concerning the Franco-British border, prefectures from the departments of Nord, Pas-de-Calais and Somme authorised **3 months of simultaneous use of 76 cameras on-board drones, helicopters and an aeroplane** with the official motive of combatting human trafficking and irregular border crossings aswell as for“search and rescue” of people who are increasingly numerous on makeshift boats[25]. However, their use suggests that **they are part of the ongoing control and repression of displaced people living at the border, the criminalisation of crossings and the dehumanisation of these people**, perceived by the State as mere statistics to be reduced, pushing them ever more to risk their lives on their migration journeys.

In the Calais and Dunkirk areas, it is particularly difficult for associations to challenge the pref-

ecture’s decision to use drones before the administrative courts. On a day-to-day basis, and particularly when they fly over the informal living areas where displaced people survive, **their deployment is not necessary, appropriate or proportionate in view of the supposed risk of a ‘threat to public order’**. In our view, this use is a violation of the rights of displaced people and contributes to their **constant surveillance, in disregard of their right to privacy**[26].

The Franco-British border is not an exceptional case, **the use of drones can be seen in all border contexts**. For example, in Mayotte or on the Franco-Italian border, the prefectures have authorised the use of these video devices for several consecutive months over large areas, thus contributing to the further securitisation and militarisation of borders[27].

76

The number of cameras transported by the border police Drones with the aim of monitoring the north coast.

150 Km

The length of the stretch of coast over which the drones have been deployed.

5 Km

The distance at which these drones can transmit images



## DEFENCE BALL LAUNCHER (LBD)

While the evictions of informal living places in Calais and Grand-Synthe are themselves synonymous with violence for displaced people, we observe that **the police on the ground are heavily armed**. Police measures are disproportionate, and officers are equipped with batons, tear gas and defence ball launchers (LBD) and even assault rifles. **The use of LBDs and other rifles in policing in France continues**, despite the fact that the Defender of Rights continues to recommend that lawmakers adopt a more precise and coherent legal framework for the use of weapons by law enforcement officers in order to avoid any scope for mis-interpretation and to better protect the right to life and physical integrity. They have also called on the public authorities to ban the use of LBD40x46 during

policing operations[28]. However, the public authorities do not seem inclined to do away with these weapons during public order operations, given the revelations made by Mediapart in 2023 concerning a ministerial memorandum issued in August 2017 by the Directorate General of the Police, which reduced acceptable firing distances from 10 to 3 metres[29].

**In Calais, the presence of these weapons during the daily evictions from living sites is all the more inappropriate given that these police operations are supposedly taking place as part of a judicial investigation for flagrante delicto[30]** and not as part of an administrative operation to maintain order.

## CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING LBD

The LBD is often at the centre of debates because of the serious injuries it can cause, including eye injuries and severe trauma. In November 2022, **the State** was found to be (partially) **responsible** for the **injury inflicted** by an **LBD shot** to a displaced person from the Calais Jungle.

*Lille Administrative Court, 22nd November 2022, n°2009059*



# WITNESSES

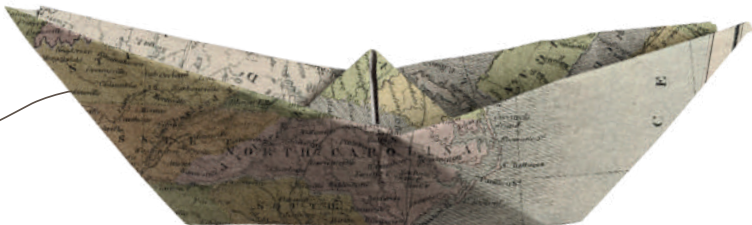
## WITNESS OF POLICE VIOLENCE DURING A CHANNEL CROSSING:

On the 15th of December 2023, HRO recorded a person’s witness statement, recounting the violence that he was subjected to while attempting to cross the Channel with more than 55 other people, including 2 women and a child on Calais beach at 9am.

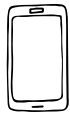
” We wanted to cross to the UK, but the police arrived and wanted to get us out of the water. We were on the beach, in the water, and the police wanted to come and get us in the water. We told them they had no right to come and get us in the water. They beat two of my friends with their batons and used tear gas. When we started the engine, an officer said: ‘If you start your boat and stay on it, we’re going to come and tear this boat apart if you want to cross the Channel.

We got out of the water because they started to hit us. So, we left the boat and got out of the water. They had weapons, at least 5 of them, and they started pulling the boat. [One of the policemen] said he wanted to arrest everyone and take them to the gendarmerie. They arrested 20 of my friends. Three of them were held at the station, one got out a day later, but there are still two who no one has heard from, we don't know where they are. We told them: ‘If you behave like that, we'll record it’. When we took videos, they acted normally. But when they used tear gas, when they beat people up... We were running, we didn't have time to take videos! That's not respect for human rights. You know, we left our countries to find and benefit from respect for human rights and they treat us like animals.

”







## THEFT OF MOBILE PHONES BY CRS OFFICERS

**On the 27th of June 2023, the HRO team accompanied 2 displaced people to the police station to lodge a formal complaint as victims of violence and theft of their mobile phones by CRS officers.** The events reported to us took place on Sunday 25 June 2023 in one of the oldest informal living areas in Calais.

Some Sudanese people were charging their phones at a building site, with permission from the builders, and were making use of this moment to stroll, have some fun and rest. When two CRS vans pulled up alongside them at 4pm, the people stayed put, expecting a simple identity check or a summons to leave.

One man, I., fled once he caught sight of the tear gas canisters being held by a few of the CRS officers. They used the teargas on the people who had gathered there, at less than a metre's distance from them. Some people, like A., were sleeping and immediately fled after being woken by the smell of the gas.

They waited 2-3 hours for the CRS vans to leave to dare return to the area to recover their personal belongings they had had to leave behind. The extension leads they had been using for the electricity supply had been cut by the CRS officers and all the mobile phones had been taken. This example is one of countless instances of institutional harassment of people on the move at the Franco-British border.

The actions of the on-duty CRS officers who intervened in a context of "flagrante delicto" is

simply part of the French State's policy of "combating fixation points" which aims to make life at the border unbearable. The supposed object of the flagrante delicto criminal investigation is to curtail offending behaviour. **This legal procedure is constantly instrumentalised by our judiciary and administrative bodies to carry out the State's established and assumed policy, undermining the rule of law.**

In this case, what constitutes the flagrante delicto? Having used electricity from builders with their consent? Daring to rest on an unoccupied bit of wasteland? Or simply being present on a border in search of some human dignity? ■



# EVICTIIONS

## in the DUNKIRK AREA

### INHUMANE AND VIOLENT POLICE INTERVENTION



In 2023, **39 eviction operations** were observed and documented in the Dunkirk area by association's teams who were present in the field. Some of this documentation was carried out by other associations and we would like to sincerely thank them for their involvement and their invaluable help. In the Dunkirk area, several hundred up to nearly 2,000 people are living in informal settlements, depending on the period. **Eviction operations are massive and never-ending.** On the 8th August 2023, at least 489 people - among them at least 15 children and 15 women - were evicted during an operation that lasted at least 7 hours. Eviction operations are organised by the authorities **regardless of the weather condi-**

**-tions and without any prior social assessment.** On 4th January, an eviction was carried out in the Dunkirk area (simultaneously with one in Calais) even though a person had died the previous day at the border. No respite or respect is granted to displaced people. What's more, although the operations are generally decided by court order (order on request), the people living in these camps are never notified and therefore have no means of defending themselves[31]. These police interventions are a further form of violence for people on the move, whose living conditions are already extremely precarious, who are confronted by **the arrival of a large and remarkable police presence before the su-**

**nries, accompanied by destruction machinery, buses and government agents.**

On the 4th of May, we counted the presence of more than 200 law enforcement officers, most of them CRS and mobile gendarmes whose primary tasks are that of crowd management and maintaining public order. At least 45 police vans (national police, CRS, mobile gendarmes), 10 motorbikes, 1 boat, skips, 3 JCBs, 1 digger and tractors were mobilised to carry out these operations. On the 30th of November, we also documented the presence of boats and a helicopter.

Under no circumstances are these people trained to work with vulnerable people. **In addition to their excessive numbers (and incompetence), they have an arsenal of weapons including LBDs, assault rifles, cougar grenade launchers and tear gas canisters.**

Particularly violent and significant events were observed and documented in the Dunkirk and Loon-plage camps, where hundreds of people live/survive on a daily basis. On the 23rd of February 2023: our teams observed police repeatedly refusing people to retrieve their personal belongings. Forcing them to leave the site, the people were pushed back towards the canal and the main road. The situation created a lot of danger: from their vehicles police gassed people on foot at the side of a road, and in particular on a bridge.



During 2023, at least 93 displaced people were arrested by the Border Police during evictions of living sites. These arrests were most often violent.

**During eviction operations in Dunkirk, police made everybody leave their living sites and ushered them onto buses.** These “shelter” or accommodation operations are not in the interests of people on the move and are in fact forced. HRO has observed CRS and gendarmes trying to trap people, forcing them onto buses, resulting in some people at times running away to avoid having to get on. On the 4th of May, we documented cases of manhunts where law enforcement officers **chased after people on foot and by car.**



The fact that the presence of **large numbers of border police encourages people to board the buses for fear of being arrested if they refuse** also demonstrates **the forced nature of the operation**. What's more, during some evictions, people are patted down and searched before boarding the buses. **The absence of any prior information about the destination of the buses** is an additional element that attests to the forced nature of these operations.

On the 7th of June 2023, a judicial police operation was carried out at a living site, as part of an investigation “for serious offences of a criminal nature”. The BRI (Research and Investigation Brigade) was present, heavily armed and hooded, with a police dog. Several people reported that they were violently woken, handcuffed with very tight flexes and put on their knees for around thirty minutes before being released. At least 7 people were arrested.

## DESTRUCTION OF THE LANDSCAPE, SCORCHED EARTH POLICY

As in previous years, 2023 has not escaped the dynamics of landscape destruction and the scorched earth policy[32]. The aim is always to make the land inhabitable, to make it as difficult as possible for displaced people to find shelter, driving them even further away, and to make them increasingly invisible. This policy, which has been in place for several years, was illustrated on numerous occasions in the Dunkirk area in 2023. Generally speaking, lands evictions between Loon-Plage,

Mardyck, Dunkirk and Grande-Synthe are followed by the destruction of the environment and the ground, **using large construction machinery** to dig ditches, lift up the ground and mud and remove trees. The authorities apply a scorched earth policy by decimating the landscape used as living sites and rendering those spaces inhabitable, in order to **push those trying to cross the border further away and further out of sight**.



The beginning of the year was particularly marked by this destruction of the landscape. The authorities went further than usual, for example on 4th and 5th of May, the entrance to a living site, which was already fenced off, was padlocked. **Construction machinery was used to block access to the evicted site, preventing people from resettling and associations from returning for distributions.** Of course, no alternative accommodation was offered.

The irony of it all lies in the way the surrounding towns have communicated their commitment to biodiversity and the environment: 100 meters from the living sites ransacked at the start of the year, and from another living site where the Communauté Urbaine de Dunkerque refuses to install a skip

and organise refuse collection, there is a sign praising respect for biodiversity. “Limited grass cutting” is praised in the name of preserving biodiversity, but there are clearly no limits to the deforestation and churning of the soil when it comes to preventing houseless people from having a few days “respite”.



## **CONFINEMENT STRATEGIES AND SECURITY DYNAMICS**



If the border is a fortress where people are prevented from both entering and leaving, then the same strategy is in place for the living sites. For several years now, evictions have been continuous, always following a logic of forced and constant displacement of populations. To achieve this, **fences, barbed wire, concrete blocks, embankments and large rocks are used to barricade the spaces where people live**, or the passages through which they usually move. The desire to control people and their movements is such that political and police manoeuvres to make people on the move at the border invisible and persecute them follow one another with a logic that is difficult to understand.



At the beginning of 2023, HRO observed a desire by the authorities to group people together in the same area, called “La Plaine”, and together with the other associations present in Dunkirk, denounced the danger of this manoeuvre. The Plaine in question was landlocked between a canal, an excavated ditch, a railway line, a regional road, and fences surrounding a Total oil refinery. The displacement was carried out by force, without any guarantee or concern for a dignified recep-

-tion. The associations have noted an even greater **precariousness of people and an obstacle to associative support and assistance activities due to the lack of accessibility of the site**. No official access to water was put in place at this new living site, and access to emergency services was impossible due to the width of the gate at the entrance to the site. The associations also criticised the possibility of people becoming enclosed in this space.



From May onwards, the authorities' strategies changed again, and the policy of harassment and the “combat against fixation points” resumed with renewed vigour. On 4th and 5th May 2023, La Plaine was evicted for two days in a row and emptied completely. The informal living area was closed off, the gates padlocked, and a mound of earth erected with diggers, thus preventing people from moving back into the area. The people evicted at the beginning of May then moved into neighbouring areas,

including an area reserved for members of the Travelling community - which was empty at the time. The evictions that followed involved all these areas and were repeated over and over again, with no offer ever being made of another area for the people to settle in. **Surviving on land that was regularly evicted, displaced people had their belongings stolen and destroyed in the name of an inhumane policy of harassment.**



**This elaborate system and costly operations rolled out by the authorities in the Dunkirk area in 2023 reflects the xenophobic and repressive nature of French policy towards people in transit,** who are approached daily from a purely securitised perspective.

Evictions in Dunkirk are accompanied by forced sheltering operations. For years, the State has managed to subvert sheltering oper-

-ations in order to better remove people in transit from the border-crossing areas.

The prefecture's bad faith is perfectly illustrated by the way in which they used bad weather conditions at the end of the year to justify large-scale evictions, whereas at other times during extreme weather conditions associations had to fight for Cold Weather Plans to be activated and even had to play crucial roles in their logistical implementation.

## **THE USE OF COURT DECISIONS TO CONTROL LIVING SPACES: 'ORDERS UPON REQUEST' AND A 'RÉFÉRÉ MESURE UTILE'**

**Orders on request, or "Ordonnances sur requête", are reused over several months, and are the most common legal basis used for evictions in Dunkirk.** These evictions are all the more violent because **they do not allow displaced people to defend themselves in court beforehand.** Most of the land evicted in 2023 belongs to the Dunkirk Port Authority. While these orders do not give people access to the courts, these procedures are becoming more and more dangerously normalised at the border. The bailiffs responsible for recording the occupation of the land deliberately choose to declare the people living there as unidentifiable, by choosing not to visit the site accompanied by translators or by deliberately not approaching the people concerned. As a result, no court summons is issued, and people are excluded from access to justice[33].

However, it should be noted that on the 24th May 2023, the Communauté Urbaine de Dunkerque applied for the eviction of its site

reserved for members of the Travelling community at Loon-Plage, this time by means of a **summary measure**, as this is public land subject to the jurisdiction of the administrative judge. A notice of the hearing was posted at the entrance to the site on 25 May. The HRO and SALAM associations were able to put four of the applicants in touch with the lawyer Maître Lionel Crusoé, who represented them at the hearing on 31 May at the Lille Administrative Court. Although the judge finally authorised the eviction from the site[34], it is interesting to note that, for once, the right of displaced peoples access to justice was respected, contrary to the rest of the year. However, without the associations' support, the hearing would have taken place without the people targeted for eviction, in defiance of the principle of adversarial proceedings (essentially, it is the principle that both parties have the right to be heard. Failure to respect the adversarial principle amounts to depriving the people concerned of one of the fundamental principles of French justice)[35].

## OBSTACLES TO SOLIDARITY AND REPRESSION OF ASSOCIATIONS

In the same logic of invisibilisation and harassment of displaced people, **those who show solidarity (including associations) are also prevented, hindered and repressed.**

**Volunteers** who come to support people on the move **are systematically kept away from evictions by police and subjected to intimidation, identity checks, pat-downs, searches of their bags and sometimes physical violence.** But it doesn't stop with the evictions, the authorities have many other strategies.

By the end of 2022, the authorities, with the help of the Port of Dunkirk, had moved the water access facilities set up by the associations to a new site also belonging to the Port of Dunkirk. **Large concrete embankments had been installed on either side of the former living area to block access.** As explained above, the emergency services could no longer intervene in the living quarters and **the work of the associations was seriously hindered.** The authorities refused to set up waste collection in the living areas. Between November 2023 and January 2024, it took an associative volunteer 28 days on hunger strike to extort this meagre basic right from the relevant authorities[36]. This same volunteer was arrested, and his vehicle seized by the police.

During each eviction operation, members of the HRO team and members of other associat-

-ions are kept away from the site by wide perimeters set up at random by the police. **The aim is clearly to prevent any outside observation of the police action,** and this is even admitted by police officers during discussions.

Volunteers regularly receive **threats if they don't respect the perimeter:** "If you don't get out of the way, it won't end well." HRO members have also been subjected to **physical violence** by the police. In 2023, several observers were grabbed by the shoulders, pushed and even tear-gassed during their documentation activities. In addition, there have been **identity checks**, sometimes even before the start of the operation, accompanied by **abusive vehicle checks** or **pat downs.** Identity documents are sometimes photographed with the police's personal phones. ■



# ARRESTS AT TRAIN STATION

## of Calais-Ville, Summer 2023

The summer of 2023 was marked by significant police interventions, notably observed at the central Calais train station. Undoubtedly similar events took place in other train stations along the Calais and Dunkirk coastline, but HRO was unable to document them.



These interventions materialised **in a wave of police inspections and arrests of displaced persons inside the train station** and even on the platforms as they disembarked the trains.

On numerous occasions, police were deliberately awaiting the arrival of trains at the central Calais train station, such as trains arriving from Paris, Lille and Amiens. When trains arrived, police would carry out systematic identity checks. At first, national **police agents were exclusively targeting racialised people**<sup>[37]</sup> who were getting off these trains. These ID checks were completely illegal because they were based on racial profiling and therefore discriminatory. HRO and other associations had teams at the train

station to attempt to film and document the racial profiling taking place, but as soon as police noticed the association's presence, they started to ID check all passengers. However, these checks became no less abusive, as transport tickets were barely looked at, and it was evident whose **identity** and **nationality** documents were of interest to the officers. **These inspections were often followed by pat downs and bag searches of the targeted people.** Some of the checks that HRO were able to document were carried out with the aim of sorting displaced people according to their nationality and making arrests.



The 9th June marks a particularly significant incident. On this particular day, PAF (Border Police), CRS (Republican Security Companies) and BAC (Anti-Crime Brigade) units awaited the arrival of a train coming from Amiens. As the train arrived, **a CRS agent proceeded to conduct identity checks on all racialised people getting off the train, while a member of the Border Police sorted the passengers according to their nationality.** Afghani passengers were finally able to leave the station, but those of other nationalities (particularly Turkish) were led onto the train platform. They were then patted down and **arrested by members of the Border Police** who were waiting for them at one of the exits at the back of the train station. Three vehicles belonging to the PAF, and the BAC then left the train station after conducting **10 discreet, racist and targeted arrests.**

During the month of June 2023, HRO were able to document five police interventions that occurred on the 9th, 10th, 14th and 26th of June as well as the 23rd August. Amongst these five evictions, HRO recorded **twenty arrests by the PAF.** Monitoring evictions every two days is never easy, but documenting the arrests at Calais station is even harder. The random nature of the trains chosen to be inspected at any time of the day or evening throughout the summer, and the limited resources of the associations made systematic observations of these police interventions even harder. It is therefore undeniable that not all of these police interventions were able to be documented and recorded by HRO. It should also be noted that the HRO team are subject to daily intimidation attempts during their observation and documentation activities, which was no different on the 9th, 10th and 14th June as well as the 23rd August, when HRO team members were inspected by law



enforcement. A HRO member was **patted down**, and their **bag was searched** during an intervention on the 14th June. While documenting police interventions, HRO members were led to and **restricted at random spots** within and around the outside of the train station.

This custom of targeted arrests is unacceptable and racist and once again shines a light on the nature of the policing of displaced people at the border. **Racial profiling, the discreet arrests and relentless intimidation used by police at the border are constantly observed, from the train station to the beaches, along every street corner and every possible small grove imaginable.** This discrimination, documented now for many years[38], is inherent in the violence and blatant State racism at the border. ■



## Life and transformation of an informal living site in Calais

It is difficult to define the camp; Michel Agier attempted to do so in his book “*A world of camps*” (2014; 19) and had not found any very precise definition that could fully describe what we see appear and disappear over the course of events on the border of northern France. Why? As Agier himself points out, the difficulty in qualifying the camp lies first of all in its multifaceted and evolving nature.

Let's take the example of the informal living site which marked the year 2023 in Calais, by its remarkable developments over the months. Inhabited since 2017 by displaced persons of Calais, this informal living site is, like many others, on the outskirts of the city, close to areas where the lorries transiting to the United Kingdom stop: **a strategic place for people on the move who may attempt to board these lorries.** This means of crossing the border is almost impossible to quantify; while arrivals by boat are the subject of an accurate count by the British authorities (small boats are most often intercepted before arriving to the shore), **the crossings aboard lorries remain unquantifiable to both French and British institutions as those who make it across do so undetected.**

People have transited through this informal living site for years, in search of protection, between mud and wind, wood fires and rain, trying their best to create spaces of security and socialization. People have transited

through this informal living site for years, in search of protection, between mud and wind, wood fires and rain, trying their best to create spaces of security and socialization. **In 2023, this space took many different forms, moving according to police repression, adaptation strategies and resistance of the inhabitants.** Like all the other informal living sites in Calais, the informal camp is subject to police evictions every two days that have no other purpose than institutionalized harassment – HRO observed 115 expulsions on the basis of flagrante delicto[39] investigation procedure in 2023. K.[40], who resided six months in the so-called “land of Human Rights” (France), suffered from the moment he arrived at the camp:

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*When I arrived in Calais, I met friends who explained to me how to get a tent. The next morning, the police came to the Jungle, asked us to leave the place and took our tents. Some people had money in their tents, or their phones...I then learned that this was just part of daily life here.*

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He describes that, several times during these operations, he was also robbed of his personal belongings by the police forces, forcing him to rely on the community's solidarity for shelter, clothing and food. This harassment was also experienced by Hz., residing in this living site for 8 months in 2022-2023:

*The police comes almost every day in the living site. I don't understand what they're doing, what they want. The worst is when they come while it's raining. All our stuff (blankets, mattresses, clothes) are wet, because they throw it outside the tents, and leave them lying on the ground. I don't understand. Afterwards, everything is dirty and wet.*

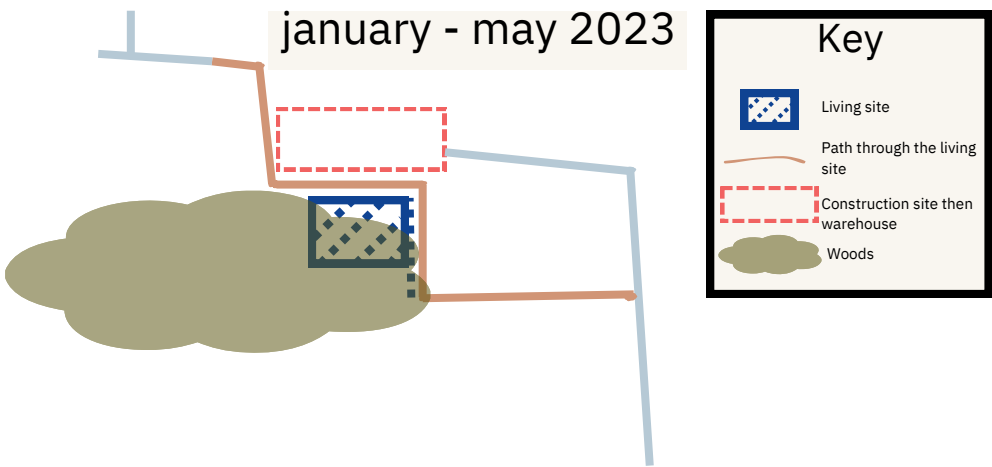
But beyond the harassment commonly endured by survivors in camps in Calais, this specific camp has been **the target of several deep transformations of its landscape, increasingly shrinking the living space of displaced persons and contributing to a strategy of suffocation**[41].

Existing since 2017, the informal living site we are talking about here has a history that is obviously much longer than the one presented in this report: repression and harassment by

the authorities have had, since the installation of the first tents, effects of changes in the landscape and successive modifications of the living space by several meters.

The year 2023 is a continuation of this phenomenon, to be taken as an illustration rather than an exceptional phenomenon. In January 2023, the space was still relatively open, until workers from a company setting up on the site marked out a space that would be under construction for several months. At this time about a hundred people survived in the woods of the living site and around the path leading to it, and were relatively hidden and out of sight.

As months passed the weather improved, and the living site welcomed new arrivals, which enlarged its perimeter. **Between the months of May and June, the number of people present on the living site increased by 45%.** In June, around 630 people were living on it[42].





It was at that time that the authorities decided to carry out **a large-scale operation, unilaterally and in defiance of all the rules applicable to fair trial in a State governed by the rule of law**: HRO observed that the operation started just before 6:00 a.m., taking displaced people by surprise while they slept, with an arsenal of at least 24 CRS vans (three different companies), 6 PAF vans and 8 vehicles from the national police. At least 8 buses were present, and people were ushered onto them or risked arrest by the Border Police if they refused. This operation was documented by HRO from 6:00 am to 10:00 am, before **the meticulous destruction of the camp by the “cleaning” teams, who came to seize the personal belongings that the displaced people were forced to leave behind**. K. testifies of the event:

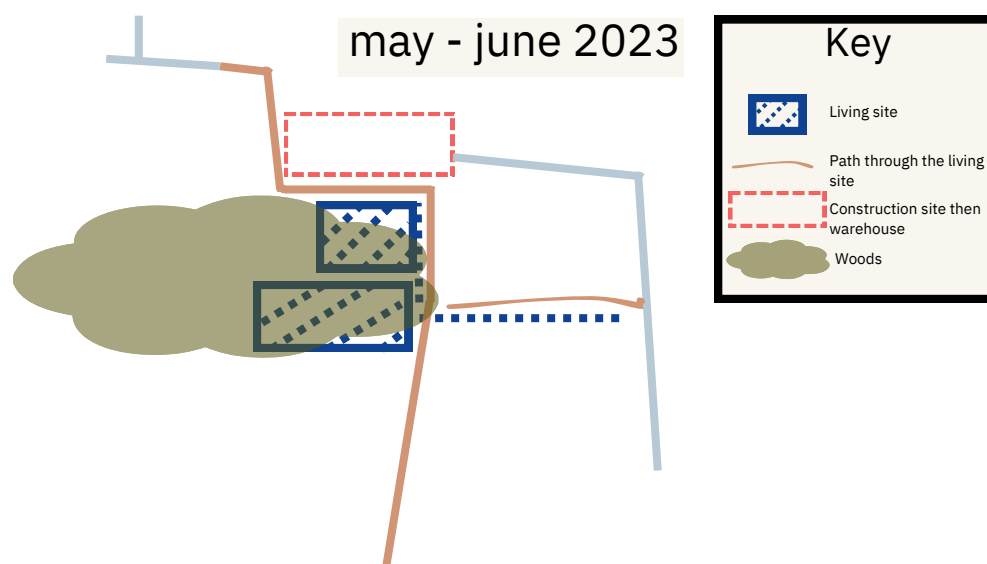
*After a month in Calais or something like that, there was a raid in the jungle. The police came very early in the morning, at 5 o'clock in the morning, I was still sleeping in my tent. I was awakened by the cries of young men who did not want to be taken away by the police. I opened my tent and there I saw a ton of police. I was extremely scared, I remained petrified in a corner of my tent...*

Re-stating the oppressive and violent nature of the evictions after a testimony like K.'s feels redundant. After having managed to hide and escape the eviction, K. came back in the afternoon:

*I couldn't find anything. Everything had been either destroyed or taken. Tents, water, food, all the tarps and the shelters we had built to protect ourselves from the rain.*

**On that day, authorities bragged about having removed 430 persons from the border.** As usual[43], most of them did not have time to gather their belongings, which were destroyed without exception by the cleaning team mandated by the State.





Despite being **transferred up to 200 kilometers away from the border, people on the move seeking to reach the UK return, mostly the very next day**; they have no choice but to cross the Channel and it has been shown on many occasions that the repeated relocations have no impact on this fact. **Back at the camp, displaced persons bring it back to life in a few days, and, again, undergo police harassment**; notably, on June 25, 2023, many of them were robbed of their mobile phones by the police[44].

In addition, the end of summer 2023 saw an unusual[45] number of new arrivals; many of them reported to HRO that they had arrived in Italy a few weeks or even days earlier. In September, the European press had identified massive arrivals of boats on the coasts of Lampedusa, stirring once again racist polemics from one end of Europe to the other. In the space we are interested in, the change was widely felt: the area covered by the camp more than tripled in a matter of weeks.

The invisibilization strategy pursued by the authorities since the implementation of the 'zero fixation point' policy was beginning to fail significantly. In September, the associations counted approximately 1,760 people living in the informal living site. While during the first part of the year, displaced people had mostly retreated into forests and their surroundings, remaining relatively hidden, the living site later developed into a far more open and visible camp. This was an embarrassment to the authorities, who once again decided to **set up a futile operation of eviction and forced displacement**. Thus, on October 10, as early as 5:45 a.m., **the police forces arrived in huge numbers, in a still sleeping camp, to take everyone by surprise and optimize the number of removals from the border**.

Among the 537 persons that were forcibly removed, Hs. testifies:

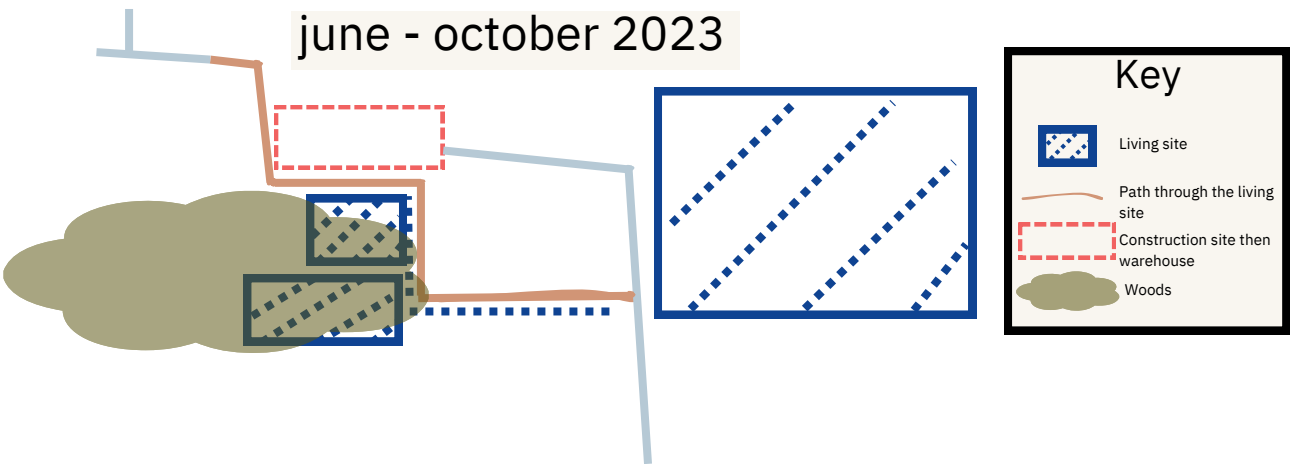
« Early in the morning, I heard screams around me. People were shouting that the police were there. I came out of my tent to see what was going on, and I was blinded by a policeman who pointed a flashlight right at my eyes! Everyone had to get out of the tents and go into line. There were buses that took groups of people, I was transported like this to a small town in central France. Some people did not want to get on the buses and protested. Several were arrested by the police, who dragged people who did not want to follow them on the ground. At one point, they used tear gas against us ».

On that day, HRO observed the use of **tear gas** at least twice when people tried to flee, **which demonstrates the coercive nature of these so-called shelter operations.**

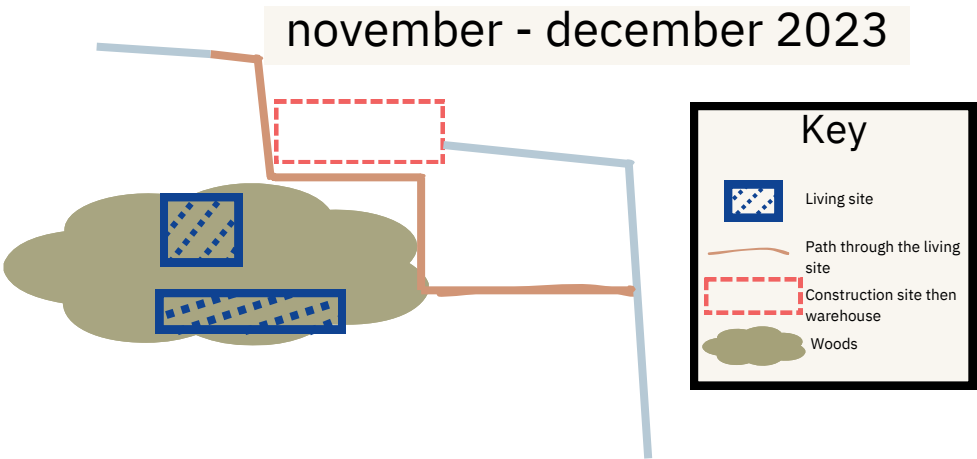
Once again, the space was completely destroyed. The ground in the area to the right of the plan (the most exposed and visible, not benefiting from the cover of the small woods present on the left of the sketch), **was plowed, to prevent the resettlement of people.** As usual, those who could, returned, and together with those who had managed to escape the operation, re-settled in the wooded area least exposed to surveillance and repression by the police forces, for a month and a half.

At the end of October, **the Ciarán storm** hit the coasts of the Pas-de-Calais with a very serious intensity, as explained elsewhere in this report[46]. This camp was not spared: particularly exposed because of the woods, whole trees collapsed on tents and shelters, which were set on sticky mud. **The daily evictions continued, in water and mud.**

Finally, on the 30th November, in minus degrees, another large-scale eviction took place. By this time, only about 400 people had been counted by associations across Calais







HRO and other associations had heard in advance about the planned operation and were able to alert those targeted. The day of the operation was a sad sight for law enforcement: 200 or so police officers deployed from 5.50 AM, who seemed to be responding to vague orders, given over an ill-defined geographical perimeter, moving in space in a very disorganized way, found almost deserted living sites. On that relatively unusual day[47], the operation was deployed to four different locations, with law enforcement seeking to maximize the number of people to be arrested or moved. Prepared for such an offensive, most displaced people present in Calais at that time were able to flee in advance of the operation. Although some manhunts did take place, a relatively small number of displaced people had to undergo forced displacement. Nevertheless, the operation pushed the people to move their camps even further into the woods of the living site, making it extremely difficult to access for the last month of 2023.

In Calais, this is how a camp transforms itself and adapts itself, punctuated by repression and other elements, despite the goodwill of its inhabitants. **The living space studied here illustrates both the extent of police harassment and the strategies that prevent displaced persons from organizing themselves as a resilient community.**



HS. explains that a particular vocabulary is used among the inhabitants of the camp to designate the police, describe their position, actions and gestures without the translators present with them being able to understand. K. explains that whenever someone was robbed of their tent, a collective organization was set up to host those people until they found new shelter. Hz. also describes moments of sharing, especially meals, as unifying and necessary to build bonds of solidarity. **Repression is applied, but not without resistance.** These different dynamics impact the geography of a place, which itself induces changes in strategies. Nevertheless, this brief one-year case study of a place in Calais highlights the political will to invisibilise and further the precariousness of the people living in the camps through relentless harassment.

While in January 2023 the tents and shelters were relatively dry when they were on the roadside of the living space, they are currently in the mud and water, in the middle of a wood overgrown with brambles and garbage[48]. Hz., talking about his survival conditions, says:

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*« I can't get used to living in a tent. I'm cold, it's raining a lot, my belongings are rotting, I don't sleep well. All I need, all I'm asking for, at the moment, is a house. I have back problems because of the tent, and I'm sick all the time. »*

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Many speak of their difficulties to sleep, their concentration or memory disorders, stress...

**Police harassment and the maintenance of undignified living conditions are obviously not without consequences on bodies and minds, and must come to an end.** ■



# CRIMINALIZATION

## Faced by British Volunteers

Like every year, HRO had to endure a variety of obstructions to its documentation work (disproportionate security perimeters that prevented any observations, systematic identity checks, vehicle controls and fines, intimidations)



### THE SURVEILLANCE

**In 2023, we noticed that British observers were particularly targeted at the French-UK border since Brexit.** French authorities used the new legislation concerning their freedom of movement within the EU to intimidate them, especially considering that British volunteers possess a right to stay that is much more precarious in France and have to obtain the authorization of the host country.

According to a British volunteer, despite the promiscuity of the two countries, his “foreigner” (i.e: non-French citizen) **status in France was often used against him by the French authorities, to dissuade him from continuing his solidarity activities at the border.**

This same volunteer was made aware of the **excessive quantity of information held against him by the French police forces** in their inquiries on his associative work.

Since the beginning of the year, many of his personal and private information had been revealed in a right-wing British newspaper, mentioning places where he had lived and studied, and information about his personal and family life. The article mentioned that it had been written based on information provided by the French police forces[49].

**The leak of information from the files of the French police forces, in addition to the contents of an inquiry file including a level of profiling that was excessive and unnecessary to any purpose compatible with the work of police forces, raises questions.** To this day, HRO volunteers have never had the chance to access the police files in which they probably are registered (considering the frequency of identity checks by the police forces), and this gives them reasons to worry about the amount of information these files most likely contain.



## EXAMPLES OF BLATANT OBSTRUCTION OF OBSERVATIONS:

Two British volunteers were taken into custody while they were documenting an eviction operation, and were kept at the Administrative Detention Center for 23 hours and 30 minutes.

In November 2023, still in the midst of an increased targeting of volunteers at the Calais border, **two British volunteers were placed in administrative detention to verify the legality of their presence in France, while they were documenting the evictions of an informal living site for HRO.** The police forces were particularly intimidating and abusive of their position of power: the volunteers were kept at the police station for 23h30 after their arrest, even though their passports, which prove the legality of their stay in France, were accessible 2 hours after the beginning of the administrative detention.

**The two volunteers who went through this event testify.**



© Bahram\_Mia

**The incident starts as a team of three HRO volunteers are carrying out a standard observation of evictions of living sites in Calais, as described in our methodology and illustrated in the comic strip (pages 10-16).**

**HRO Member 1:** « On Friday the 17th of November, while I was volunteering for Human Rights Observers, I was detained by the French National Police, and more precisely by the V/28 CRS company. On that morning I left with two other HRO members to follow a series of police evictions around Calais. It was an operation like those that take place every 48 hours in Calais ».

**HRO Member 2:** « On Friday the 17th of November 2023 was my first field day with HRO. The day before I had had a complete training, which included a briefing on my rights in administrative detention ».

**As was previously reported by HRO, members of the association are often hindered in their observation work, especially by abusive identity checks, which both intimidate and keep volunteers away from the ongoing eviction operations<sup>[50]</sup>. This operation was no exception, with the HRO members being subjected to heavy identity checks:**

**Membre HRO 1:** « Around noon, I was subjected to an identity check. I was near an informal living site with displaced persons near it. I presented my driver's license, assuming that it constituted sufficient identification documentation. The identity check was done by the group leader (CRS A). His demeanor was intimidating and aggressive. At this moment, around 5 other CRS agents surrounded the HRO group. One of them was holding a tear gas cannister. It felt like they were intentionally trying to intimidate us ».

**However, this “routine” control quickly becomes a pretext to put the volunteers in administrative detention.**

**HRO Member 2:** « After 15 minutes, during which the CRS A had spoken on the walkie talkie, we were both told to follow them to a silver truck. Our driving licenses were not sufficient to establish our identity. There were 3 or 4 CRS agents in the truck, 2 in the front and 1 or 2 in the back (CRS B). My colleague and I exchanged a few words while we were driving and the CRS A aggressively told us to stop talking. My colleague had her bag on her knees, and it was violently snatched from her ».

**Without any previous aggressive behavior from the HRO members, the two volunteers were subjected to intimidating behaviors from the police forces right after their arrival at the police station, all in the context of a simple identity check.**

**HRO Member 1 :** « We arrived at the police station and left the vehicle. Approaching the police station, I was still confused. I asked CRS A if he had legitimate reasons to bring us to the police station. Even though I asked in a respectful and polite manner, CRS A seemed profoundly offended.

*He suddenly changed demeanor. He joked with his colleague, and said, "I am the law" while showing his badge. He then caught my right arm and forcefully took me to the police station. He was purposefully pinching my skin. I told him he was hurting me and he answered "Oh yeah.". He did not stop. At the same time, he took my hat. I felt in danger and afraid next to him.*

*I entered the station, and I was asked to sit down. CRS A disappeared, leaving me "under the supervision" of 3 other agents, including CRS B, who was just as disagreeable. He asked me to find a picture of my passport on my phone. I started looking for one and said to myself "I have my passport", meaning that I had a picture of my passport on my phone. CRS B intervened: "No, you don't have a passport, you have a picture of your passport. We speak correctly. In France we speak correctly." He imitated me for a while, like a child would imitate another child. I was not expecting a minor semantic fault to make them mock me like that. I felt attacked and vulnerable, both as a British volunteer and a woman."*

*"Later, I was brought to the hallway. Officers yelled after me "In France, we have rights and we have obligations"; one of his colleagues said "Hey, she speaks French, you know.". He answered "I don't care." They laughed. ».*

**HRO Member 2 :** *« My colleague is a medium-sized woman, while the CRS were both over 1.80 m tall and wore riot gear and heavy boots. I was worried about my colleague and nervous about what might happen to us. At that time, we had an interpreter on the phone. Sometimes the interpreter would ask me to pass on information to my colleague rather than speaking to each of us separately. I found it interesting that she addressed me - the man - rather than my colleague ».*

**This intimidating environment was thus filled with macho and xenophobic behaviors. The two HRO members were held for long hours without being informed of the situation's evolution.**

**HRO Member 1 :** *« The detention center was in a separate building. I was body searched and placed in a cell. A male officer (PAF A) told me not to worry and that I would be released before the end of the day. I was not. At around 4 p.m. I was taken to a room where I was questioned by a member of the border police, who did not take the time to explain my rights to me. An interpreter was present. I was asked a series of questions. The investigator had my passport, which was brought to the station by the HRO team ».*

**HRO Member 2 :** *« After a while, a PAF officer asked me to follow him. He took me to a small separate facility. My belongings were taken from me, and I was put in a cell, which was unsanitary and uncomfortable. At first, I was alone in a cell located opposite the entrance of the center, and I could see displaced people go through the process of being detained: either taken to the center or released with their personal belongings. PAF officers were rude to the displaced persons, mocking and insulting them when they did not understand the instructions given in French.*

*Afterwards, I was moved to another cell further down in the center. I was interviewed in the middle of the afternoon by an officer from the PAF, in the presence of the interpreter I had previously had. I was not clearly told that I had the right not to answer questions. Some of the questions were confusing.*



*The PAF officer and interpreter were pleasant, but I felt that sometimes the interpreter was trying to put words in my mouth. I was then photographed, and my fingerprints were taken in another building ».*

**The two HRO members then had to spend the night at the administrative detention center even though the police had their passports since the middle of the afternoon. There was thus no reason to retain them.**

**HRO Member 1 :** « *At about 7:00 p.m., the investigator and PAF A told me that I would stay overnight because it was a Friday afternoon and the prefecture had not yet responded. I was shocked by this information and I got angry again.*

*I spent the night in the cell. I didn't sleep much. It was unsanitary, uncomfortable and the lights in the hallway were bright. The officers present were loud and rowdy. During the night, I watched from my cell a series of people from communities of displaced persons enter the center. While they were body searching them, the police officers shouted at them, obviously annoyed by the fact that they did not understand French. No interpreter was present. I witnessed a tall officer, about 40 years old, yell "shut your mouth" to a man. He then said, "My God, he's pissing me off." They didn't know I understood French. I watched many exchanges like this one that night, shocked by their contemptuous behavior and total intolerance of language barriers. Despite the great injustice I was subjected to, I could not help feeling somewhat protected by my "privileged" nationality, in this unstable and inhumane environment ».*

**HRO Member 2 :** « *Although I managed to sleep properly, the conditions in the cell were clearly hostile to the detainees: extremely bright lights, PAF officers constantly shouting, not enough mattresses, cramped cells. I shared my cell with a displaced man from Iraq. He had recently been attacked and showed obvious signs of injury (I did not know who had attacked him), and yet no medical treatment was offered to him. We shared food and our life stories, despite the lack of a common language. At 12 o'clock the next day, almost 24 hours later, my passport was finally returned to me, and I was released ».*

**This event considerably impacted the rest of their experience at the Calais border. Going back on the field was approached with much more apprehension.**

**Membre HRO 2 :** « *I only stayed in Calais for a few more days. When I was working with another organization, I felt nervous when the CRS drove past our operations. And I never had so much fear in Calais as when I was walking towards the port to take my ferry for England at about 2h00, with vans of CRS V/28 passing by me, wondering if they would recognize me. But in the end, the experience was instructive, demonstrating the arbitrary use of detention by the French police, and its hostile treatment of displaced people behind closed doors. It has only strengthened my determination to fight for displaced people and their rights.* ■

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**[31]** For more information on the legal bases for evictions and, more specifically, on the procedure for orders on applications: see our 2021 Annual Report (pp. 12-13) and our 2022 Annual Report (pp. 15-20).

**[32]** For more information on how the control of living spaces can be likened to a “scorched earth policy”, see our 2020 Annual Report (p. 16).

**[33]** See our 2022 Annual Report (pp. 15-20).

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**[35]** The adversarial principle implies that “any party can only be judged after having been heard or called, and that any evidence produced in court must have been communicated in advance to the adversary”. (Ministère de la Justice, « Les grands principes de la justice ») [consulted on the 31st of August 2024].



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**[37]** « The notion of racialization is used by researchers in the social sciences to shed light on the production logics of racial hierarchies in a given society. It can therefore be used to account for the production of groups subject to racial attribution, while also examining the mechanisms that lead a group to benefit from the logics of racialization. » (MAZOUZ Sarah, « Race », in : Race. sous la direction de MAZOUZ Sarah. Paris, Anamosa, « Le mot est faible », 2020, p. 48,) [translated by HRO].

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**[39]** Observations made by HRO: this is an extreme minimum, as HRO cannot be present at every eviction. If the legal basis is not passed on to the association members for each operation, it is 'flagrante delicto' every time the police contact HRO (74 times to be precise); for the rest, we can reasonably assume that it is also flagrante delicto, since when the legal basis is passed on, the police do not hesitate to regularly point out: 'as always'; 'as every other day'; 'you know the legal basis, it's always the same'.

**[40]** HRO was able to collect testimonies from people living in the area in 2023, including K, HZ and HS.

**[41]** Martina Tazzioli (2021).

**[42]** According to estimates by associations working in Calais.

**[43]** See our various press releases published on our website concerning these operations and in particular the one concerning a large-scale eviction in Grande-Synthe in 2021.

**[44]** See the article detailing these theft on page 44 of the report.

**[45]** According to estimates by associations working in Calais.

**[46]** See page 36 of the report.

**[47]** Extracts from the HRO debrief of November 30, 2023 :

- 08:12: Team F2 observes displaced people fleeing from the police from the west of the site. The police are running after them, shouting. At the same time, Team D witnesses another group of police chasing a group of displaced people. The displaced people and the police run eastwards.

- 09:04: The 9 Gendarmerie vans stop alongside the entrance to the informal living site, followed by the 7 CRS vans. A member of the D team there estimates that around forty displaced people are fleeing towards the main road. The CRS pursued the displaced people as far as the N216 before stopping.

**[48]** It should be pointed out that despite the various appeals and actions by displaced people and associations, the town hall categorically refuses to install skips, dustbins and public rubbish collection in the vicinity and on the site, forcing displaced people to live in deplorable sanitary conditions.

**[49]** In the introduction to the press article, it is stated that: "French authorities have passed an intelligence dossier to the UK on the British charities operating in and around Calais."

**[50]** See our 2020 Annual Report, pp. 17-18.

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Among them, HRO would particularly like to thank the associations and groups that worked alongside us in 2023, during the suspension of our activities and periods of understaffing, to ensure that State violence did not go unseen in the Dunkirk area:

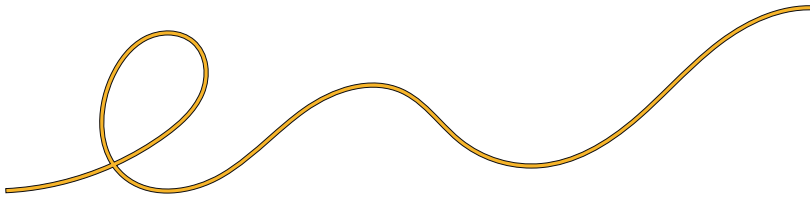
**Help 4 Dunkerque, Mobile Refugee Support, No Border Medics, Project Play, Refugee Women's Centre, Roots, Salam, Utopia 56 Grande-Synthe.**

Finally, a big thank you to all the people who have financially supported the HRO association in 2023:

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In order to continue documenting and denouncing the State violence perpetrated against displaced people at the Franco-British border, Human Rights Observers needs you.

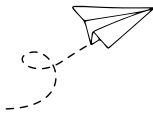
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