



Monthly Report of observations of evictions by the Human Rights Observers in Grande-Synthe, Nord - December 2021

Since 2017, the aim of the Human Rights Observers project, supported by l'Auberge des Migrants, has been to observe, document and denounce the daily state violence against displaced people at the French-British border *.

Data collected during evictions of informal living sites :



At least 2 large-scale evictions of informal settlements



At least 82 tents destroyed



At least 29 shelters destroyed



All blankets and sleeping-bags thrown on the mud



All showers destroyed



At least 2 IBC water tanks destroyed



At least 13 unaccompanied children met **

The political strategy of avoiding "fixation points" at the Franco-British border has led to increasingly frequent evictions in Grande Synthe. Some sheltering options not communicated to the inhabitants of the living sites. During these evictions, all shelters, essential supplies and personal belongings are seized destroyed. These operations of harassment are also accompanied by often abusive identity checks (Cour de cassation, 25 avril 1985, n° de pourvoi 84-92916), followed by arbitrary arrests and illegal stays in administrative detention. These arbitrary ID checks and arrests are daily, outside the context of evictions as well.

As part of the harassment policy, the State carried out large-scale evictions in Grande Synthe on the 09/12 and 17/12, affecting at least 300 people including families with children. During these operations, the personal belongings of the inhabitants (tents, documents, mobile phones, medicines, clothes, etc.) were destroyed and/or thrown into the skip, without allowing the owners to keep them. These illegal acts, (Art 322-1 and following of the Penal Code), were committed before the eyes of the bailiff in charge of the evictions.



HRO has recorded an increase in large-scale dismantling operations since the 10th July 2020, concurrent with the appointment of Gerald Darmanin as Minister of the Interior :

Like the previous operation of evictions, the tents and shelters are destroyed by the cleaning team under the supervision of law enforcements and the State. The cleaning agents and/or law enforcements have been shaking tents to wake people up or to check if no one still sleeps inside.

On the 09/12, a person was roughly woken up and his tent was destroyed in front of him.

On the 17/12, five persons reported that they had not been allowed to keep their belongings before they were destroyed in front of them. No reason was given to these inhabitants.



Observers witness the systematic use of heavy machinery, including excavators and diggers, to clear the zones of evicted people's personal affairs. Often, it happens whilst the proprietors are still present beside their belongings. ***

Harassment of human rights defenders during observations



21 intimidation attempts :

In total, during both evictions operations, observers have been ID checked 14 times, without any legal basis. The "security perimeters" were arbitrary established. As a result, the observations were greatly impeded.

On the 09/12, the police asked for the address and telephone number of a HRO member, threatening to file a police report against her. On the same day, observers were escorted by a National Police car for 1km.

On the 17/12, a police officer was verbally threatening to the observers who were filming the arbitrary ID check. Also, 5 officers surrounded the observers' car and threatened them with a fine, even though the car was parked in an authorized space.

* This data is based on our observations, and is therefore not exhaustive.

** The number of reports made to authorities is below the actual number of unaccompanied children present and in danger in Grande-Synthe during December. On this territory, contrary to Calais, no association that is not mandated by the State has any specific activity targeting UACs or is able to carry out this precise identification work. One observation remains: repeated evictions are a source of increased fragility and even disappearance of these children, both girls and boys, and therefore of increased risks of trafficking and exploitation (Source: Utopia 56).

*** Evidences shared on our social media (instagram: @Humanrightsobs, twitter: @HumanRightsObs).