



Monthly Report of observations of evictions by the Human Rights Observers in Grande-Synthe, Nord - February 2022

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 3 evictions of informal settlements		At least 321 tents and tarps destroyed
	At least 2 shelters destroyed		At least 189 blankets and sleeping bags destroyed
	Clothes have been destroyed at least 16 times		At least 3 water tanks destroyed
	At least 6 arrests during evictions		At least 21 unaccompanied children met**

The political strategy of avoiding "fixation points" at the Franco-British border has led to increasingly violent evictions in Grande-Synthe. Often, sheltering options are not communicated to the inhabitants of the living sites. During these evictions, all shelters, essential supplies and personal belongings are seized and/or destroyed. These operations of harassment are also often accompanied by abusive ID checks (Cour de cassation, 25 avril 1985, n°de pourvoi 84-92916) followed by arbitrary arrests and illegal administrative detention. These ID checks and arrests happen 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 24/02, affecting at least 500 people including families with children. During these operations, the personal belongings of the inhabitants (tents, documents, phones, medicine, clothes, etc.) were destroyed and thrown into a skip, sometimes 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 bailiffs in charge of the evictions.



HRO has recorded an increase of violence during evictions since 10th July 2020, concurrent with the appointment of Gerald Darmanin as Minister of the Interior.

Like the previous evictions, all tents and shelters are destroyed by the company "Ramery" under the supervision of law enforcement and the State***. The observers saw Ramery agents and law enforcement shaking tents to wake people up or to check if anyone were still sleeping inside, most of the time without any translators present.

On the 24/02, observers saw a translator opening and looking inside a tent without announcing it, while someone was still inside. Meanwhile, HRO members saw Ramery agents seizing the tarp covering the tent; it was reported to the observers that a displaced person had been beaten with a stick by a CRS. HRO saw that this person couldn't walk anymore and had to be taken to the hospital; HRO spoke to a displaced person who said that his phone was still inside his tent. When asking a police agent if it would be possible to recover this phone, he denied entry to the camp, stating that the phone will be destroyed; also, while an inhabitant wanted to go back to his living site, the observers heard a CRS shouting "get out, you won't pass, go back there"; finally, the observers saw CRS refusing the entrance to the living space to an unaccompanied minor who wanted to be sheltered. One of them replied to the observers "We are not paid for that".



Observers witnessed the systematic use of heavy machinery, including excavators and diggers, to clear the zones of evicted people's personal belongings. Often, it happens whilst the owners are still in reach and near their belongings. ****

Harassment of human rights observers



17 intimidation attempts:

In total, observers have been ID checked 7 times; when an observer asked for the legal basis of the ID check, she was threatened with police custody. At the same time, an officer asked for an observer's phone number and address, adding "because you're annoying". An officer made xenophobic statements towards a HRO member, asking her to speak French; also, a HRO member was threatened with police custody if he observed the eviction again; the "security perimeters" were arbitrarily established. As a result, the observations were greatly impeded; many times, observers were touched and pushed by CRS. A CRS tried to knock over a HRO members by stepping on his feet; in total, the observers were filmed by law enforcement at least 3 times, including once with a personal phone.

* 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 february. On this territory, contrary to Calais, no association that 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).

*** Ramery is a company mandated by the State in charge of seizing and destroying the belongings during the evictions.

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