



Monthly Report of observations of evictions by the Human Rights Observers project supported by l'Auberge des Migrants in the Calais area, Pas-de-Calais - September 2022

Since 2017, the aim of the Human Rights Observers project 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 129 evictions in 14 informal settlements



At least 134 sleeping bags and blankets stolen



At least 17 arrests during evictions



At least 10 bags stolen with personal belongings inside, including at least 1 backpack



At least 54 unaccompanied children met**



At least 370 tents and tarps stolen (including 63 tents full with personal belongings)

The political strategy of avoiding "fixation points" has led to daily evictions in the Calais area, which mainly take place between 8am and 7pm. This involves displaced people being forced to move their tents and belongings, anywhere between 2 to 500 meters. Personal belongings and basic necessities are often stolen and/ or destroyed***. In Calais, a place for the recovery of belongings has been set up without people being systematically informed of its existence by members of the Prefecture or the police. HRO has received several testimonials from people who claim they were not made aware of the case of this recovery system.

These operations of harassment are also often accompanied by abusive identity checks (Cour de cassation, 25 avril 1985, n° de pourvoi 84-92916), followed by arbitrary arrests and illegal stays in administrative detention.



During the evictions operations, HRO members witnessed violent intimidation of displaced people. Our observations are non-exhaustive. These are some examples of instances of violent intimidation perpetrated by police against displaced people during evictions in September 2022.

During all the operations, HRO noted the over-armament of the police forces, who are very often armed with LBDs, tear gas, tonfas, shields, helmets... This armament is intimidating and disproportionate to the operations in question.

On 5th of September, during an eviction operation in Calais city centre, displaced people are surrounded by police officers. On 7th and 8th of September, displaced people are violently awoken by the CRS shaking their tents in order to evict them. On 14th and 24th September, during eviction operations, displaced people are seen to be refused access to their informal living sites to recuperate their personal belongings, thus they are stolen.



Harassment of observers during evictions :

Members of the HRO team are regularly subjected to intimidation from the police. During September, 19 counts of intimidation were recorded. This included the filming of HRO members, without prior warning, at least 10 times, filming of HRO members by police on their personal phones (which is illegal) 4 times and 7 identity checks. On 2nd and 4th of September, members of the HRO team were physically pushed outside the operation perimeter by members of the police even though they had complied with initial orders to do so.

Obstacles to observation are equally numerous; during September, 66 arbitrary and abusive perimeters were put in place to prevent HRO team from observing eviction operations. Perimeters are often very large which prevents HRO team from being able to properly observe the operations. For example, 3rd of September in Calais city centre, the perimeter only applied to HRO team members while locals were allowed to freely cross through the perimeter. Again, on 30th of September, CRS members purposefully stood in front of cameras of HRO team preventing them from documenting the operation that was underway. These perimeters can sometimes pose risks for HRO team members. For example, on the 14th and 22nd of September, a perimeter was fixed along a railway line which blocked the HRO members on the train tracks.

* Our data are based on our observations and are therefore not exhaustive.

** Number of self-reported unaccompanied children met by the ECPAT association (not mandated by the department) in September who were in a street situation. This number is an underrepresentation of the number of children living on the streets because outreach activities are not carried out daily in all living areas by these actors; some children do not communicate with the associations; others access shelter directly via the mandated association and are therefore not included in this figure. One observation remains: repeated dismantling operations are a source of increased fragility or even disappearance of these children, both girls and boys, and therefore of increased risks of trafficking and exploitation.

*** During each eviction operation, the personal belongings of displaced people are seized by agents of the private company APC, mandated by the State, under the supervision of the police.

Evidence shared on our social medias (instagram @Humanrightsobs, twitter @HumanRightsObs)