



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 - January 2023

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 71 evictions in 13 living sites



At least 14 arrests during evictions



At least 55 unaccompanied children met**



At least 113 tents, including 9 containing personal belongings and 47 tarps have been stolen



At least 5 sleeping bags and blankets stolen



At least 4 bags containing personal belongings stolen

The political strategy of avoiding "fixation points" has led to daily evictions in the Calaisis 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 informed about the existence of this recovery system.

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.

During the eviction operation, HRO members witnessed violent intimidation against displaced people. Our observations are non-exhaustive. These are some examples of violent intimidation perpetrated by police against displaced people during evictions in January 2023.



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 January 3, a person dies on a living place. The next day, this same living place is evicted. On the same day, January 4th, a CRS urinates on the place he is evicting.

On January 12, despite strong gusts of wind and rain, the CRS took the people out of their tents to proceed with the eviction.

On January 16, two displaced people were woken up and taken out of their tents by the police, who then asked them for their identity documents. The displaced persons were arrested by the French border police.

On January 20, a CRS beat up a tent to get its residents out, followed by the cleaning team who opened the zipper of the same tent and forcibly removed the people (three people, including a minor). The same day, the CRS laugh at the wind that blows away the displaced tents.

On January 25, the CRS prevent displaced people from reaching the place where the eviction operation is taking place, telling them "we are pushing the migrants away".

Harassment of observers during evictions :



Obstacles to observation are numerous. Without counting the perimeters arbitrarily deployed to prevent the observation of operations by members of HRO, 20 attempts to intimidate observers and/or obstacles were recorded. Among these, HRO members were filmed without their knowledge at least 10 times, including twice with personal phones, and had their identity checked 5 times.

Regularly, aggressive and intimidating comments are made to HRO members. For example, on January 14, during an eviction, a CRS discredits the HRO work by saying: "Are you the ones doing the sheltering? Because apparently it didn't work out too well here".

On January 20 and 23, CRS push HRO members by the arm to take them to overly far perimeters, adding intimidating words : "you are absolutely useless", 20/01; "let's push them back, let's get them on the sidewalk" 23/01

On the 25th, HRO is confronted with CRS making sexist remarks towards them: "One of them is cute".

On the 29th, some CRS make xenophobic comments to a HRO member and repeat several times her French mistakes. When she asked for the RIO of one of them, he replied: "RIO de Janeiro" and laughed loudly before adding "go on, roll away". One of his colleagues notifies that he starts filming the HRO members by saying: "smile you are cute".

* 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 January 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)