

Monthly Report of observations of evictions by Human Rights Observers, Pas-de-Calais - June 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*.

HRO started observing evictions again in April, and due to the extremely limited capacity of the field team, some evictions could not be documented. These figures should therefore be taken as an extreme minimum.

Data collected during evictions of informal living sites :



At least 54 evictions from 7 informal settlements



At least 265 tents including 16 full of personal belongings and 19 tarps stolen



At least 10 displaced people arrested during evictions and at least 21 people arrested at Calais town station



At least 6 sleeping bags and blankets stolen



At least 56 unaccompanied children met**



At least 2 bikes stolen

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 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 June 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 the 1st of June, a forced sheltering operation took place. Around 400 people were forced into buses from 6am. The prefecture declared that the evacuation was "voluntary", while HRO received testimonies from people who said they had had no choice and did not even know the destination of the bus that the police had forced them to board. HRO observed the **police forming a net around the displaced people to prevent them from leaving** at any point other than the one where the buses and border police were waiting for them.

On the 9th of June, one displaced person was grabbed by the shoulder quite roughly for a few seconds. On the same day, a CRS officer shook a tent, shouting "come on, let's wake up".

Between the 9th and 10th of June, at least 21 people were arrested at Calais town station. People were checked on their faces as they left the trains, then sorted by nationality, and finally some were arbitrarily arrested by the Border Police, the Anti-Criminality Brigade and the National Police.

On the 16th of June, HRO heard a CRS officer shout "wake up wake up" as he approached the tents.

On the 25th of June, a CRS van arrived at a living area next to a telephone charging point. They got out of the vehicle to scare away the people nearby, **cut the charging point's cables, stole the phones and used excessive and arbitrary tear gas on the displaced people present.**

Harassment of observers during evictions :

Several attempts at intimidation:



Obstacles to observation were numerous. Not counting the perimeters arbitrarily deployed to prevent HRO members from observing the operations, 9 attempts at intimidation and/or obstruction were recorded. Of these, HRO members were filmed 3 times, including 1 without prior warning, and had their identity checked on 2 occasions. HRO underwent 1 roadside check in June.

During the forced busing on 1st June, HRO was perimtered on, at least, 5 occasions. The perimeters were so wide that it was almost impossible to observe the eviction operation. Also on 1st June, HRO was perimtered by car and then subjected to a roadside check, while other vehicles were allowed to pass through the perimeter.

On the 29th of June, a CRS threatened the HRO volunteers: "I've told you twice, the third time it's going to go wrong."

* 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 May 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)