

Monthly Report of observations of evictions by Human Rights Observers, Pas-de-Calais - May 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 :

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|  | At least 30 evictions from 10 informal settlements |  | At least 40 tents including 20 full of personal belongings and 10 tarps stolen |
|  | At least 20 people on the move arrested during evictions |  | At least 8 sleeping bags and blankets stolen |
|  | At least 44 unaccompanied children met** |  | At least 1 bike 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 May 2023.

During all the operations, HRO noted the over-arming 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 several occasions, on May 11, 15, 25 and 31, the police **shook tents in which people were still sleeping** to wake them up and **arrest** them.*

*On May 15, this happened several times, with the operation leader **shouting "wake up, wake up"** to the people still in their tents.*

*On May 17 and 27, during eviction operations in the city center, the police forces **searched the bushes** where exiles were **hiding**.*

*On May 27, a CRS returned from the woods, stating that he could not carry out the operation, **"because they've shit everywhere, it's their crapper"** and repeating this several times.*

*On May 31, HRO overhears a discussion between two CRS, at the perimeter: **"apparently we shouldn't hit people"**, followed by: **"hum, actually, we should be trained for that"**.*

Harassment of observers during evictions :

Several attempts at intimidation:



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 3 times, including once with personal phones, and had their identity checked 3 times.

*On May 21, while HRO was filming the advance to the living site, a CRS **voluntarily stood in front of the camera to prevent it from filming**.*

*Another CRS stands in front of the camera and says **"family photo"**, while another **threatens to sue the association** if his head ends up on social networks.*

*Perimeters are often **large and at a variable geometry**: on May 23 and 25, cars drove through the perimeter; on May 31, a schoolchildren's orienteering race took place inside the security perimeter, during the eviction!*

*On May 31, HRO overheard a walkie-talkie conversation about them: **"You get them out on the other way, it has to go over there, you wave your arms at them, I think they'll understand"**.*

* 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)