



## Monthly bulletin of observations of evictions documented by Human Rights Observers in the Dunkirk area, North of France January 2024

Since 2017, HRO's mission has been to observe, document and denounce the daily state violence perpetrated against people in exile on the French-British border\*.

Due to a understaffing, HRO was unable to go to the eviction sites. The data reported here are therefore based on the observations of other associations, and should be taken as an extreme minimum.

### Figures on evictions from informal settlements :



**At least 2 evictions from 2 informal living sites**



**Arrests not reported, but 3 Border Police vehicles present during eviction operations**



**At least 59 Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs) met by the associations\*\***



**The so-called "shops areas" were specifically targeted by these police operations; these meeting, commercial and social spaces were totally destroyed after the police had passed through.**



**Despite the eviction of people from these areas, no bus were chartered to drive people to alternative housing solutions.**

The political strategy of **avoiding "fixation points"** is leading to increasingly frequent and violent evictions in the Dunkirk area. Some **sheltering options are not communicated** to the people living in the evicted areas. These evictions are accompanied by **identity checks that are often abusive** (Court of Cassation, 25 April 1985, appeal no. 84-92916) and lead to **arrests and subsequent placement in administrative detention, which is illegal**. These identity checks and arbitrary arrests are a daily occurrence, even outside the context of evictions.

As part of its policy of harassment at the border, the French government carried out evictions in the Dunkirk area on **January 4**. Personal belongings (tents, blankets, bags, identity papers, cell phones, medicines, clothes, etc.) were **destroyed on the spot and/or thrown into the skip**, without giving people the opportunity to recover them; these acts are contrary to the law (art 322-1 et seq. of the Penal Code).



**During the eviction operations, the organizations witnessed violent intimidation of displaced people. While fully accepting the non-exhaustive nature of this report, we have documented the following intimidation perpetrated by the police against displaced people :**

*The recurrent nature of police interventions in living sites and the violence of their application are **traumatic factors** for the people occupying them. For example, when the eviction operation began on January 4, many displaced people fled to the rear of the camp, leading to **crowd movements** that **endangered** the people living there.*

*The **repressive measures** put in place reinforced this **climate of panic**, with the police using **tear gas** indiscriminately on displaced people, including women and children.*

### Disproportionate police deployment:

*The **repressive measures** put in place to ensure the evacuation of the living sites were particularly massive at the start of the year. A **helicopter** and a **propeller plane** flew overhead right from the start of the operation; the CRS moved in **imposing vehicles designed to carry heavy equipment** (Iveco Eurocargot); three Border Police vehicles completed the convoy.*

*The deployment of such a convoy enables the application of **constant police harassment**, creating a climate of insecurity for displaced people in the Dunkirk area. All these practices form part of the **continuum of a dissuasion policy at the Franco-British border**.*

### Obstructing observation of police operations :

As the eviction operation began on January 4, police forces were forcing associations to remain outside a **perimeter arbitrarily decided** by the CRS, keeping them at a distance from the living sites. This perimeter **hindered the observation and documentation** of police operations.

**Intimidation strategies** reinforce these attempts to obstruct the observation of police operations. In this context, the police has carried out **identity checks and vehicle inspections** twice on associative supporters. The aim of these practices is to **dissuade** associations from showing solidarity with people subjected to police harassment.

### Landscape modification :

Harassment also involves **profound and destructive changes of the environments** in which displaced people seek refuge. In January, the main informal settlement in the Dunkirk area has been **surrounded by fences**, and another area was completely **deforested**. In addition to being tactics of warfare **designed to trap and make visible**, these new infrastructures **impede circulation**, which is extremely worrying in view of the forthcoming eviction.

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

\*\* The number of reports made to the authorities is lower than the actual number of unaccompanied children present and at risk in Dunkirk and the surrounding area during the month of January 2024. In this area, unlike Calais, no association mandated by the State has specific activities targeting UFM or is able to carry out this precise identification work. One fact remains: repeated expulsions are a source of increased fragility, or even disappearance, for these children, and therefore of increased risks of trafficking and exploitation (Source: Utopia 56).

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