

Since 2017, HRO's mission has been to observe, document and denounce state violence at the Franco-British border. Due to recurring hindrances to our observation work, the following figures should be taken as an extreme minimum.

This month in numbers

At least



5 police operation, resulting in the eviction of **10** living sites and **3** dismantling of informal shops



55 people evicted



180 m³ of personal effect



46 tents seized



3 blankets seized



2 bags seized with personal belongings

Excerpt from a testimony by a person on the move

Here are excerpts from an account collected in April from a resident of the informal settlements in the Dunkirk area. He recounts his experience of life on the border: the evictions, theft of belongings and police harassment he faces on a daily basis. This account was recorded in English. The transcript is in the first person.

The full testimony can be read on our website, in the "Testimonies" section:

"First of all, (...) **you know how difficult it is to live in the jungle.** At some point, you don't have many blankets, you don't have anything, any money to get all these things. All of a sudden, the police come to destroy everything you have.

After (...) **they come with some of these people with orange clothes. They destroy everything, all the tents, break all the pallets.** Then, they somehow take these things. I was having some clothes. I lost some clothes, some new shoes. And then, they will tell you there is a bus that will take people to the hotel. If you can go in the bus, they will take you to the hotel. I don't want to go to a hotel. I said no. Many people said no.



I lost at least two pairs of shoes. These are very very new shoes. I bought them for 49 euros and these shoes are gone and some other also very important clothes like baggy jeans and some other t-shirts. All this thing the police take, it's all gone and many other people complain a lot, people lose many things.

Yesterday, they went to the market⁴ area and some other areas and just demolished everything, destroyed everything. Somehow took it away. And this other organization, the **Afeji**, that is taking people for showers, they take you to go somewhere five minutes from the jungle for you to go and take a shower. They're the same organization helping the police so for me I'm a little bit surprised what they are doing in the jungle.

If they are the same people helping the police, why are they also helping migrants? I really don't understand. They try to say to people that they can have a condition or stuff but it's a very strange organization. **I feel like people don't feel safe with Afeji to be honest.** It's ok if they want to work with the state, but I think they should not offer help to migrants. This is not help. Somehow, this is not help.

I think everybody is really sad and desperate here. Nobody's happy in this jungle. Life is not okay here yeah yeah for sure. People are very desperate and probably going through a lot. **And then, when the police come to destroy everything, to put more panic and fear on people.**

Let's say **if there were a proper asylum system** or people **have places to stay or have**, let's say, good integration in France, **nobody will come to you.** But nobody is trying to provide a solution.

France already gave so many people I know papers to leave the country.

So where do you want these people to stay if the government tells them they should leave the country where they should stay ?"

⁴ Informal markets run by refugees and located near the organizations' distribution points.

'Abandoned' tents, refurbished, redistributed: the absurd cycle of evictions in the Dunkirk area

This testimony is interesting in several respects, but particularly regarding the issue of items seized and the role of the **AFEJI association**. In April, the latter **began an activity of redistributing tents seized during evictions to people on the move surviving in the Dunkirk area, under the authority of the State**.

To understand this turning point, we must go back to the **end of 2025**. In mid-November, several associations filed an **emergency application for the protection of fundamental freedoms ("référé-liberté")** before the Lille Administrative Court, **denouncing serious and unlawful violations of fundamental rights committed by the authorities in the camps in the Dunkirk area**. HRO was a party to this legal action, challenging the evictions, as well as the essential items seized and subsequently destroyed during these operations.

On **4 December 2025**, the Lille Administrative Court **ruled against the State** and granted some of the claims made by the applicant organisations. To implement these orders, **it appointed AFEJI**, an organisation with which the local authorities have been working for years at the border, primarily to provide **emergency accommodation** in Reception and Situation Assessment Centres (CAES). This organisation was thus also entrusted with providing **shower facilities and outreach services for unaccompanied minors**, which began to be rolled out from the end of 2025.

At the same time, the applicant associations decided to lodge an appeal with the Council of State (CE) to try to obtain injunctions on the issues on which the Administrative Court had not ruled in their favour, for example regarding the distribution of food, healthcare, as well as deportations and the seized property.

This appeal lasted a month and a half. **Throughout this period, evictions are put on hold** (see the [January 2026 monthly report](#)).

On 21 January 2026, the Council of State delivers its ruling. On all issues, it refuses to rule in favour of the applicant organisations. **On the issue of the seized personal belongings during evictions, the Council of State considers that there is insufficient evidence to find against the State**. The very next day, evictions resume on a weekly basis.

Yet, at the same time, the government has decided to commission AFEJI to "repurpose abandoned tents and redistribute them" to people on the move in the Dunkirk area. To the general surprise of local charities in the Dunkirk area, AFEJI staff have been distributing tents at the distribution point since 9 April.

How does the system work?



According to the Dunkirk sub-prefecture, when a camp is evicted, around 85% of tents would be "left behind by their occupants as they prefer not to be burdened with them."



They would then be collected by the cleaning company APC, which would sort them on site. Around 70% would be deemed reusable and sent to an AFEJI warehouse, where they would be refurbished for redistribution. This distribution would be based on a vulnerability criterion: families, women, and unaccompanied minors would be given priority. From Monday to Friday, AFEJI staff would be present at the distribution site and reachable by phone to assess needs. The following day, a tent would be distributed to them. As of April 29, still according to the sub-prefecture, 220 tents would have been delivered to AFEJI, 90 would have been deemed reusable, and 77 would have been redistributed.

But let's return to a key point : **the tents are not 'left behind' by their occupants.** In the vast majority of cases, people are unable to retrieve their tents during an eviction. For one thing, **people on the move may not be present at the time of the eviction.**

They may, for example, be at the hospital, the shop or the water point, all of which are located several kilometres from their living sites. They may also be on the coast attempting to cross. Very often, this attempt fails due to the extensive security and police measures put in place by the French state to prevent them from crossing.

Finally, they may have been victims of a shipwreck. After being brought back to port by French rescue workers, they are often not looked after and must return to their informal living sites.

When they return, they find their camp destroyed, the tents gone and their personal belongings either in the mud or also gone.

In all three scenarios, **although the individuals were not present at the time of the eviction, they had not abandoned their belongings.** Ownership of property does not cease the moment one stops keeping an eye on it.



When one leaves one's home to go shopping, it does not cease to belong to one. For evicted individuals who are present in their home at the time of eviction, the situation should be different. Since the people are present, it should be possible for the bailiff, who is responsible for enforcing the court order and thus ensuring the legality of the eviction procedure, to make an inventory of the people's belongings and to ensure that they are informed of the fate of the items seized by the clearance teams.

In reality, **the inhabitants of the Loon-Plage living sites are never warned of an imminent eviction.** Woken at dawn by police officers, they often do not understand what is happening. Without an interpreter, the judicial officer, who is also present at this stage of the eviction, merely moves from one camp to another without speaking to those being evicted. He does not explain the procedure to them at all, and no documents are handed to them, in particular the eviction report, which is a legal requirement.



Until recently, these personal belongings were destroyed. Today, some of them are refurbished and given... to another person who has been evicted from the premises. **Once again, the inhabitants of the Loon-Plage living sites are not regarded as having the same rights as any other person on French territory.** When a person is evicted from a squatted building, their personal belongings are inventoried, seized and held for a period stipulated by law. Upon request, the evicted person has the right to recover their own belongings, not similar items.⁵ **They have the right to recover THEIR bed, not just A bed. In the Dunkirk area, this right is flouted.**

This is all the more so because the person who has just been evicted has no certainty whatsoever that AFEJI will provide them with a tent on the same day, or even in the days that follow, depending on the waiting list and the priorities set by AFEJI staff.

Mobile Refugee Support (MRS), the main non-mandated organisation distributing tents to people on the move in the Dunkirk area, notes, for example, that it remains very difficult for people on the move, and particularly single men, to access these tents, even though they make up the majority of the informal living sites inhabitants in the Dunkirk area. **Once again, it is the non-governmental organisations that are making up for the state's structural shortcomings.**

MRS continues to distribute between 60 and 120 tents following each eviction, depending on the size of the camp, and 8 to 10 tents a day in normal circumstances – a figure that rises significantly in winter with the distribution of emergency supplies.

Without this massive and continuous supply, the stock of tents to be 'reused' would run out within a few weeks.

Added to this is the **way in which the tents themselves are seized, which affects their potential reuse and subsequent redistribution.** As a reminder, cleaning staff from APC drag the tents over long distances before loading them into skips or lorries, **damaging them in the process.**



We have also recently received reports of tents being torn during evictions, rendering them unusable even before they can be sorted (February 2026 monthly report).

To sum up, the state steals tents distributed by associations to help people on the move survive, destroys some of them in the process, refurbishes the rest, and then redistributes them to people in need – though not necessarily to those from whom the tents were stolen. Ultimately, this system serves to legitimise a security measure – weekly evictions ordered by the courts – by giving it a veneer of humanitarianism. It thus perpetuates a repressive policy that continues to have the same aim: to remove people on the move from a territory where, according to the state, they should not be.

⁵ : Article R. 433-1 of the "Code des procédures civiles d'exécution"

The resumption of the dismantling of informal trading posts

As mentioned in the account above, **the dismantling of informal shops resumed in April 2025.**

Following a final dismantling on 5 November 2025, there were no further operations until Friday 3 April 2026, when only the shops were targeted by the eviction convoy. Since then, during certain weekly operations, the shops have also been targeted. This was notably the case on Wednesdays 22 and 29 April. **In 2025, the State had already adopted the same strategy towards these businesses from the spring onwards.**

These informal shops, run by people on the move themselves, compensate for (or profit from, depending on one's perspective) the absence of the state and **the glaring lack of resources among aid workers when it comes to food distribution in the camps around Dunkirk.** Located in a strategic spot within the informal camps, as they are adjacent to the associations' distribution point and one of only two water points in the area, **these shops had been dismantled 14 times in 2025.**

