

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



**15** living sites dismantled in the framework of **10** eviction operations carried out following court order and **5** eviction operations by flagrancy investigation order



**91** seized tents



**48** m<sup>3</sup> of seized goods



**86** seized tents and **34** seized mattress in a living site in Calais

## Neither forgotten, nor forgiven

Sadly, the month of May began with the **decease** of two people during a shipwreck off the coast of Hardelot on the night of May 2nd. They were a **16-year-old boy** and a **woman**. Seven people were **hospitalized**. That same night, a **person died in Calais following an aggression involving a non-lethal weapon**. During the night between May 28th and 29th, a **man was run over by a truck close to Marck**. These deaths are clearly linked to the **deadly policies** carried out at the border and to the **absence of safe and legal pathways**, as well as **humanitarian aid** for exiled people blocked at the frontier.

## Several expulsions each week in the biggest Calais living site



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During the month of May, the biggest Calais living site, where nearly a **thousand** people live, was subjected to **an intensification of police violence**. For the first time, since the living site had been targeted by evictions, police operations took place over several days in a row. On **May 11th, 12th, 13th, 18th, and 19th** dozens of CRS vans, border police as well as several workers from a cleaning company mandated by the State have entered the living site to carry out evictions. Beyond this paraphernalia, we documented the presence of a **helicopter** flying over the area on May 12th. Moreover, concerns about the **deployment of private security companies arose**, after observing people wearing vests with “security” tags.



As usual, these operations were presented by the prefecture of Pas-de-Calais as humanitarian interventions (press statements of May 12th, 13th, and 28th) aimed at offering a shelter to the people living on the sites, moving them away from coercion networks, and cleaning occupied areas.

However, our observations, as well as testimonies collected from exiled people on site, contradict this narrative. Numerous people told us that **they had not been informed prior to the eviction**. They also had no chance to exchange with **interpreters** on site to **understand** what was happening and what **sheltering options** would be available to them. On May 12th, one person told us that their **bag**, containing a significant amount of money and important OFII (French Office of Immigration and Integration) documents, **was stolen**. These testimonies demonstrate the gap between the authorities' discourse, which presents these actions as humanitarian, and the reality: **the moral, psychological, and physical exhaustion of exiled people**.

During each eviction, **construction engines** were deployed. Once on site, they switch their functions as they are used to **destroying** the living site itself, **preventing any kind of reinstallation**, seizing personal belongings, and destroying the soil. On May 19th inhabitants had their living site destroyed by the cleaning team under their eyes : **the soil was dug** by the **excavator** and **poured** in a 30 m<sup>3</sup> skip. Like the evictions themselves, these practices are part of the **“No fixation policy”** and represent the **State will to push the exiled people** out of the Northern littoral without offering any other safe and lasting solution.

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### Violations of the right to housing

In early April, the inhabitants, through their lawyer, had made themselves known to the authorities so that they could **be informed** of any eviction proceedings initiated by the owner, **assert their rights** and **defend** themselves in court. Despite that, **no information was communicated** to them before the operations, **in violation of the legal obligations** requiring identified inhabitants to be informed that an eviction request has been issued against them. The authorities simply **ignored their declaration of presence** on the site. Only after several requests by the associations and the lawyer, on June 2nd we finally had access to the decision which authorized the evictions.



This succession of evictions shows once again the **authorities' failure to protect exiled people** and the absurdity of this violence. Far from enabling dignified living conditions, they instead put their **casualization** in place. Relentlessly evicting and destroying living sites means **depriving hundreds of people of a place to rest**, but also of **an essential access to aid and everyday resources**. It has been 10 years that the government has been pursuing this policy without any effect. Right after an eviction, people resettle on the same spot or just a little bit further, and they **must rebuild everything**. [extract from our press release of May 19th]

## Two HRO volunteers released in the name of freedom of expression

On April 7th, 2025, **two HRO volunteers** were **arrested** by the police, including the railway police, and taken **into custody** for standing next to the railways during their expulsion monitoring and documenting work. The two volunteers remained in custody respectively for 16 and 17 hours. Their testimony **reveals psychologically challenging detention conditions, marked by prolonged isolation, lack of access to basic healthcare, and a generalized lack of understanding** in relation to their role as independent observers. On May 28th, their process took place.

The lawyers reminded the **increasingly concealed nature of living-site evictions**, which are taking place farther and farther from city centres and behind walls and barbed wire erected by the municipality of Calais. **Without the work of HRO** and other **organizations** mobilized at the French-British border, these expulsions would largely go unnoticed. Therefore, the infraction was justified by **the need to access the evicted living site**. The collected data are then spread with the aim of raising public awareness on exiled people's living conditions and on the systemic violence which they are exposed to. **Relying on the caselaw of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights**, which ensures freedom of expression, the lawyers demonstrated that HRO's monitoring function **justifies protection similar** to that afforded to the **press** regarding the **collection, dissemination, and access to information**. The article provides **"freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers"**. On this basis, the lawyers requested a complete discharge against the defendants, which was accepted by the judge and the prosecutor.

This decision implies **recognizing our advocacy activities** towards **civil society** and **authorities**, as well as HRO's role in providing information on matters of **public interest**. This protection against State and police inference applies in this case, but it should also be taken into account during the many **unjustified identity** and **vehicle checks** carried out by law enforcement officers against HRO teams in the field. Since the beginning of the year, volunteers **have been subjected to 18 identity checks** and **10 vehicle checks**. These practices constitute genuine **intimidation** and reflect a clear intention to **discourage HRO** from monitoring and documenting living-site evictions and the systemic violence they perpetuate.