

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



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



759 people evicted



108 m³ of personal belongings seized



72 tents seized



8 blankets seized



7 phones and/or batteries

A reality on the ground that questions the official discourse

Since a few months, dismantling operations of living sites in the Calais area and the Dunkirk area are increasingly presented by authorities as **operations of against smuggling networks, of investigation and of securitization**. This rhetoric, used by state officials, police unions and the prosecutor's department – including during the Parliamentary inquiry committee and the different court hearings ... traduire AESI ... we attended in May – helps **legitimize the massive police presence and the daily harassment against people on the move**.

However, the **reality on the ground is completely different**: these operations affect before and foremost families, women, men and children who are trying to survive in conditions of precarity. By linking living sites with criminal space, **this speech erases the police brutality present during repeated eviction and hides the state's responsibility in the deliberate upholding of people on the move in a permanent urgency situation**.

Instead of guaranteeing an effective access to a shelter, water, food or sustainable sheltering solutions, public powers continue to put in place a **militarization policy at the border**, illustrated by the renewal of the UK-France bilateral agreement "one in, one out". This agreement is presented as a combat tool against crossing, although it fits into a logic of dissuasion and control, without responding to the fundamental needs of concerned people.

Behind the 'sheltering' operations: the testimonies of those evicted

On 12 May, the police carried out an operation in the Dunkirk area, as they do every week. This operation was described as 'sheltering individuals', in the words of a CRS officer present at the scene. However, the testimonies gathered from those evicted paint a very different picture.

At one of the living sites, HRO met a family a few minutes after the convoy had left. **As none of the adults spoke English, the entire conversation had to be translated by one of the family's children.** The child found himself having to recount the violence they had just endured. According to their account, the police simply shouted "Leave! Leave!" **without any explanation or translation.** The family claimed to have witnessed **an arrest during which a weapon was pointed at a person.** They also report that the police or agents from the state-contracted company (cleaning company) **killed one of their chickens during the operation.** When asked what had become of the tents, the mother mimed the gesture of tearing the tent with her hands. Moments later, it became clear that **the living site had been completely cleared of its tents; all that remained were personal belongings scattered on the ground.**

These testimonies echo numerous observations made throughout the morning. **Whilst the authorities refer to 'providing shelter', in several cases those being evicted are neither escorted to the AFEJI (a company mandated by the state) buses nor directed towards alternative accommodation.** People on the move leave the site with one or two bags at most, whilst their tents are seized, dragged along the ground, piled up and sometimes trampled on before being removed. A few minutes after the convoy has left, several people return to set up camp again at the site, as they have no alternative.

This discrepancy between the official line and the reality on the ground is also evident in the comments made by some police officers themselves. Following the operation to clear one of the living sites on 12 May, officers admitted to HRO observers that the living sites **"are a massive rubbish tip, caused by us and by them – it's a shared fault (...), though it's true that when we arrived, it wasn't quite such a mess".**



At another living site, we arrived to find that the perimeter had already been set up, the police had already evicted people from their living site, and the cleaning team were seizing the tents. We could see very little at that point, but we could hear exchanges – **notably violent and misogynistic remarks from the CRS officers as they left the camp and walked past the confiscated tents, trampling on them.** Once they had finished seizing the items, the perimeter was lifted and we were able to enter the site: **police officers were emptying bags onto the ground, supposedly to look for official documents and so on. However, the only item we saw being seized was a speaker, which we subsequently lost track of.** Whilst we were speaking with the police, we witnessed a staged scene: a police officer was chatting to a displaced person about the scent of their perfume, telling them to make sure they collected their life jacket... Later, it was the same officer who lamented the fact that the media and the government do not sufficiently highlight the rescue work carried out by the police during attempted crossings...

However, testimonies from people on the move, HRO's observations and the video evidence gathered paint a very different picture: **intimidation, loss of property, the destruction of the minimum conditions necessary for survival, and repeated acts of violence that remain largely unseen as they take place within people's homes, out of the public eye.**



The destruction of informal shops: a further factor contributing to precarious living conditions

On 20 May 2026, during an operation to clear several living sites in the Dunkirk area, **informal shops were also destroyed**. After the police had established the perimeter, APC – the company commissioned by the public authorities to seize the belongings present at the living sites – dismantled all the shelters and **damaged several pipes supplying water to the distribution points on the site**. Roots volunteers present at the scene observed **significant flooding of the ground caused by the burst pipes**.

Communications during the morning confirm the situation: at 10:46am, it was reported that the main water supply was out of service and that the pipes had been destroyed by the work vehicle. **Faced with this emergency, it was the voluntary organizations not commissioned by the state that took charge of the immediate response**. Repair work began first thing in the morning and, by 2:51pm, most of the water points were back in operation; however, **one could not be restored due to the extent of the damage**. This incident once again illustrates **the shift in responsibility towards non-government organizations, which are forced to step in to address the direct consequences of operations carried out by a company commissioned by the authorities**.

More broadly, the **destruction** during police operations observed during May had a **significant impact on the activities of the organizations working on the ground daily**.

Several organizations reported that their work had been hampered. No Border Medics, for example, found that **their consultations on 12 May had to take place within the police perimeter**, in the immediate vicinity of the police, **compromising the conditions of confidentiality that are essential to building a relationship of trust with people in need of medical support**.

Food distribution organizations also reported difficulties accessing this same location, leading to **delays in distribution**. Yet these moments represent one of the **few sources of stability and routine for people living in conditions of extreme precariousness**. Similarly, the **toilet facilities set up by the public authorities have at times been surrounded by police perimeters during operations, creating a clear deterrent to their use**. **Access to these essential services is therefore effectively restricted for the very people for whom they are intended**.

Finally, contrary to the stated aim of cleaning up the sites, the demolition of informal shops and other living sites has resulted in large piles of rubbish being left behind. Observations made by the organizations and the photos collected show that **the waste generated by the dismantling operations has not been cleared away, contributing to the deterioration of the camp's environment and the living conditions of people on the move**.