

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.

August in numbers :

Au moins



20 evictions of informal living sites, **5** dismantling of informal shops during **6** police operations.



154m³ of personal items seized



382 people evicted



31 tents seized

A new wall and ever more evictions

On 19 and 25 August, HRO documented **two large-scale police operations** in the areas of Loon-Plage and Dunkirk. These alone mobilized **39 CRS vans** (17 and 22), many vehicles and officers from the Border Police (PAF), the national police and the cleaning company APC, **operating at least 10 construction machines**.

During these operations, **at least 105 and then 117 people**, including many minors, were forced to move in the rain and were unable to access the distribution services provided by associations until the afternoon. **At least two people were arrested**.

The eviction of nine living sites in one week forms part of a two-pronged agenda, **linked to the 'Zero Fixation Points' policy**:

1. **The systematic organisation of evictions** of informal living sites by court order at the request of the public prosecutor on a weekly basis;
2. **The destruction of living sites through clearing operations** and the construction of walls, barriers and barbed wire.

Indeed, these two operations **took place alongside the construction of a concrete wall** several hundred metres long, **cutting off access from one of the major living sites in Loon-Plage to the distribution point**. The stated aim of the project, led by the RTE (Réseau Transport d'Électricité), is to prevent people from settling near an electricity pylon for safety reasons.

In reality, the construction site was used as a pretext to justify two violent evictions, **during which personal belongings were seized**, including tents, despite the violent storms that had hit the region in those weeks. It also involved reconnaissance missions by the police, **which intensified the harassment suffered by people who live there**, on top of the weekly evictions and arbitrary arrests.

During the construction of the wall, a significant part of the living site located near the pylon **was cleared of trees** using a forestry crane, a tipper lorry, a grapple excavator and a chainsaw.



Despite the proven danger posed by the location of the living site, **we condemn the police tactics employed**, which amount to a **demonstration of force: harassment, evictions, the seizure and destruction of personal belongings, a failure to provide information to residents, and a refusal to recognise these sites**, where hundreds of people have been living for several years.

We reiterate that the 'shelter solutions' offered by the State **are neither sustainable nor suited to the needs of people on the move**. Of all those affected by these eviction operations, **fewer than forty people are reported to have been granted a few nights respite in a CAES**.

These "Center for initial reception and assessment of situations" are, in theory, intended for people wishing to apply for asylum and **are deliberately located far from the coast, from most population centres and from the areas where associations operate**. Bus departures to the CAES are supposed to take place every working day at a specific time. This is not always the case: **departures sometimes do not take place, the number of places is limited, and people are not informed of their destination in advance**.

This also means that anyone wishing to go to a CAES after the bus has left is unable to do so, even if they have particular vulnerabilities (health problems, exposure to a traumatic event, etc.).

Furthermore, organisations regularly receive reports of inadequate care in the CAES centres: **difficulties in accessing food, the centre's isolated location, and difficulties in accessing specific medical or administrative services** (for people who are injured, require psychological support, are relatives of those who have died at the border whilst waiting to be reunited with a loved one, or are awaiting the identification of a body or a funeral, etc.). **In Grande-Synthe, there is no emergency accommodation whatsoever.**

The growing number of projects destroying living sites



The construction of the wall near the electricity pylon at Loon-Plage is the latest addition to the long list of projects that have alter the landscape of the Dunkirk area over the past several years. **These operations aim to create hostile structures (barbed wire, rock fill, walls, ditches, etc.) or even to wipe entire habitats off the map by completely clearing the area where people live.** Thus, the new wall abuts an earlier wall built this winter and funded by the United Kingdom under the Sandhurst Agreement.

In August, we observed **the complete deforestation of a particularly isolated living site situated in a clearing in the municipality of Dunkirk.** Families we met during a maraude told us about the difficulties they faced in obtaining drinking water and clothing.

This living site was, in fact, a 1½-hour walk from the distribution point run by associations in Loon-Plage and situated right next to a railway line where trains pass regularly.



We emphasise that the decision by these people to live in such an inaccessible and dangerous area stems from police harassment, **which forces them to move ever further away and to prioritise discretion**. Evicted at the end of July, this living site was completely cleared of trees during the first two weeks of August.



We also note **the partial clearing of another regularly inhabited site in a wooded area belonging to the Grand Port Maritime de Dunkerque**. As with the wall-building site near the electricity pylon, the clearing of this living area on 25 August required the eviction of the residents, in the absence of buses to take them to temporary accommodation. This eviction, accompanied by the partial destruction of the site, comes **on top of the constant harassment by the authorities against people on the move living here, who have been evicted on an almost weekly basis since July**.

Targeted intimidation of HRO teams

During operations in August, several volunteers **were subjected to intimidating behaviors by law enforcement agents whilst observing evictions**.

On 5 August, two volunteers were escorted out of the police cordon whilst they were documenting an eviction. During this incident, they were escorted along a steep and dangerous path and **were filmed by a police officer using his personal mobile phone, which is a clear breach of police ethics**.



Furthermore, on several occasions, including on that day, police officers told the volunteers that they were not allowed to film them or to publish footage in which they appeared. We point out that filming and broadcasting footage of law enforcement officers whilst on duty is perfectly legal. **On this occasion, a CRS officer notably threatened one of the volunteers by telling her, 'If I see myself in your videos, things won't end well.'**

On 19 August, whilst a team of four HRO volunteers was documenting the ongoing eviction, our car was followed by a national police van. As the team left the area after being escorted out, the van followed them for nearly an hour, including whilst the HRO members were taking a break in a supermarket car park.

These intimidation tactics, combined with the numerous identity checks carried out on our team members, **serve to hinder our work in documenting state violence on a daily basis.**

