

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



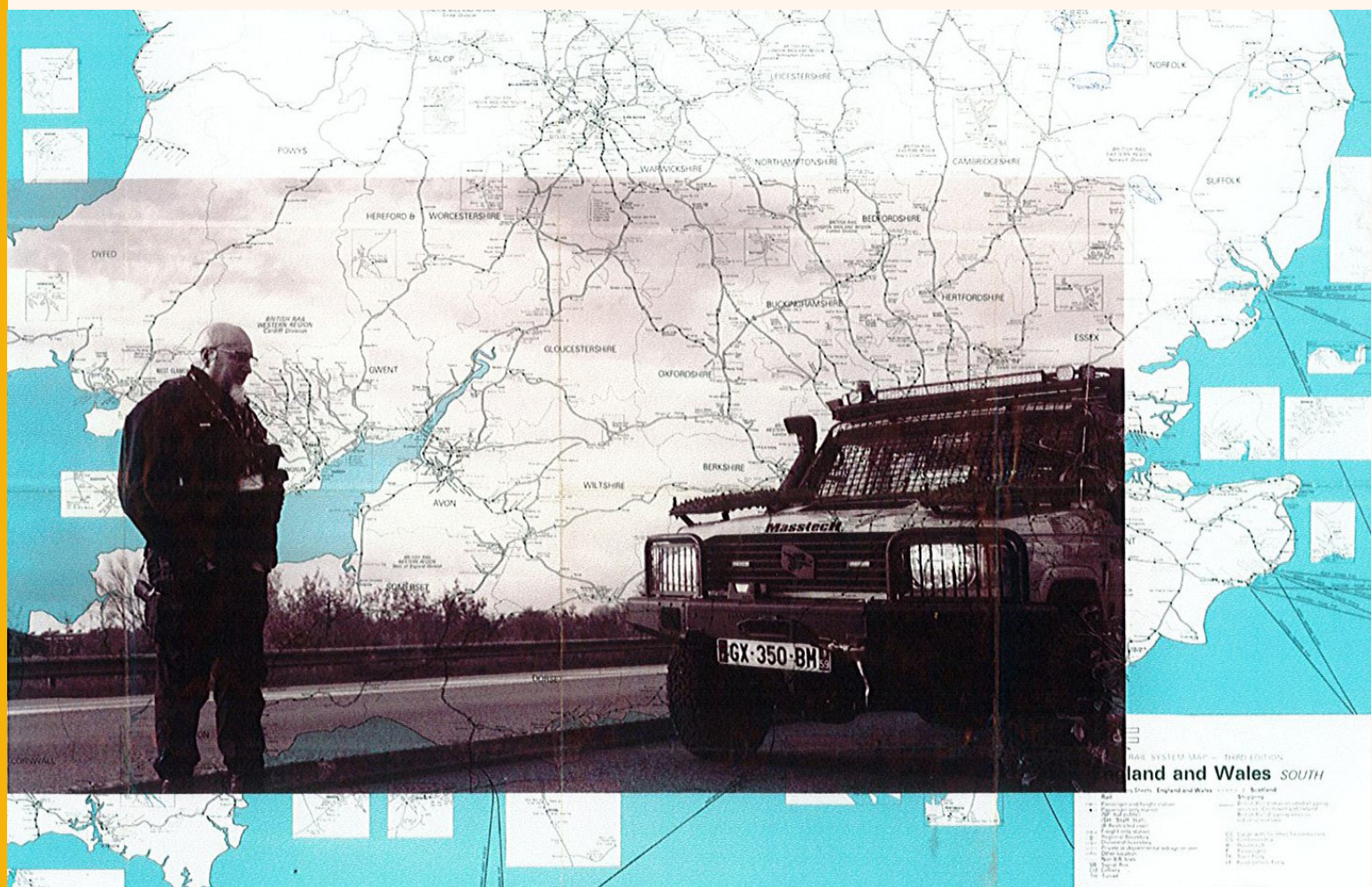
MONITOR



REPORT



ACT



sophie myles

**OBSERVATORY ON STATE VIOLENCE
AGAINST PEOPLE ON THE MOVE AT THE
FRANCE-UK BORDER**

1 JANUARY 2025 – 31 DECEMBER 2025

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2025, as in previous years, saw its share of **violence and repression directed at exiles stranded at the French-British border**. Human Rights Observers has thus recorded **645 evictions** from informal settlements in the Calais and Dunkirk areas.



645

Evictions from
informal settlements
recorded in 2025

However, these police operations represent only one form of repression carried out at the border. They are part of a **broader policy of non-admission, which aims to deter people from entering the UK, whilst making life on the coast unbearable**. State violence is pervasive in the Calais and Dunkirk areas. It takes the form of daily harassment by the police, discrimination, theft and even arrests. To prevent crossings of the English Channel, the government is militarising the border and adopting an increasingly repressive policy.

The northern coast thus finds itself in a paradoxical situation in which exiles can neither reach England nor settle in France. This determination to hinder the movement of exiles is not without consequences: due to a lack of safe routes and the harsh living conditions, exiles continue to lose their lives at the border. **In 2025, 42 people lost their lives at the border.**

Although xenophobic attacks had already been occurring in the region for several years, 2025 marked a turning point in their frequency. Since this summer, **we have regretfully observed the regular presence of British extremist groups**. These far-right activists, who come from racist movements such as UKIP or Raise the Colours, are directly targeting exiles and association members. Verbal and physical assaults have been reported, as well as damage to water points and community centres. These actions have resulted in entry bans for 10 people, but this response is unlikely to be sufficient to prevent similar incidents in the future



In face of such situations, **vigilance is crucial**. This is why HRO continues its observation work on the French-British border, as recorded in the **2025** report. The report enables the team to compile the data collected throughout the year, in collaboration with other groups. It also serves to share HRO's findings and analyses in order **to shed light on the situation, report on developments in repressive border policies, and to highlight some of the violence suffered by exiled people in the Calais and Dunkirk areas.**

ABBREVIATIONS

AOA	: Alors On Aide (association helping people on the move in Boulogne-sur-Mer)
APC	: Apogée Propreté Conseil ("Cleanliness Apex Consulting" - cleaning company in Calais)
BAC	: Anti Crime Brigade
CAA	: Administrative Appeals Court
CAES	: Center for initial reception and assessment of situations
CRA	: Administrative Detention Center
CRS	: Republican Security Company (French riot police)
GPMD	: Dunkirk Seaport
HRO	: Human Rights Observers
M.E.R	: Mutual Aid and Resources House (associative space in Calais)
NAG	: New Arrival Guide
NFI	: Non Food Items
ODE	: Observatory on the evictions of informal living spaces
ONU	: United Nations Organization
PAF	: French Border Police
PGF	: Winter Accommodation Scheme
SIAO	: Integrated Reception and Orientation Service (orientation service for homeless people)
SMIC	: Minimum wage
RIO	: Identity and Organisation Reference Number (identifying numbers worn by law enforcement agents)
TA	: Administrative Court

GLOSSARY

Self-eviction:

The act of leaving a living site in anticipation of a targeted forced eviction before it occurs, without direct physical intervention by the police. For exiled people, self-eviction ensures that they can keep some of their personal belongings (such as tents and rucksacks) and avoid arrest by border police.

Calaisis:

A term referring to all the towns and villages surrounding Calais. It helps to contextualise events taking place across the territory of more than one town around Calais, particularly the policy of hostility towards refugees.

Offence of gathering on public or private land:

An offence defined in Article 322-4-1 of the Criminal Code, used to justify police operations carried out every 48 hours in Calais. The police identify a site that is being occupied by exiled people and/or the landowner lodges a complaint. The police then arrive and put a stop to the offence by forcing the people to leave the premises. This is an abuse of procedure, as the displaced people move back in straight away, allowing the police to return two days later.

Dunkerquois:

A term referring to all the towns and villages surrounding Dunkirk. It helps to contextualise events taking place across the territory of more than one town around Dunkirk, particularly the policy of hostility towards refugees. The living sites in this area are located across several towns (Mardyck, Grande-Synthe, Loon-Plage). Other initiatives, such as the urban planning policies of local authorities (the Dunkirk Urban Community) or the activities of the Major Port of Dunkirk, also extend across several towns in the Dunkirk area.

Investigation into a recently committed offence:

An investigation into an offence committed in flagrante delicto is an investigation that may be conducted following the discovery of a crime or offence committed in flagrante delicto (Section 53 of the Code of Criminal Procedure). In other words, the offender has been "caught red-handed" or "caught in the act" at the moment the offence is committed or immediately thereafter. The investigation into offences committed in flagrante delicto is based on the principle of urgency: it is necessary to take the necessary measures to stop the offence from being committed and to prevent the destruction of evidence.

Forced eviction:

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing has defined forced evictions as "the permanent or temporary removal, against their will and without legal or appropriate protection, of individuals, families or communities from their homes or the land they occupy".¹ At the French-British border, in Calais, these evictions are almost a daily occurrence. Some of these evictions are described by the government as "placement in accommodation" operations to Reception and Situation Assessment Centres (CAES).

Informal living sites:

A general term used to refer to places where an exiled person shelters and carries out all their daily activities, including interactions with the local area and its residents. In the Calais and Dunkirk areas and the surrounding regions, these settlements consist mainly of tents and are also referred to as the "jungle" by their occupants. It is these living sites that are targeted by evictions and are referred to by various names (camps, jungles, living sites) throughout the report. The occupation of these places is not a choice, but a matter of necessity due to the lack of decent accommodation alternatives offered to displaced people by the authorities.

— **Placement in accommodation:**

An operation carried out by the authorities to provide temporary accommodation or to transfer people to a reception centre. This operation is accompanied by the confiscation of personal belongings and an absence of genuine alternative accommodation options. In theory, a person is free to choose whether or not to accept temporary accommodation, however, the procedures for providing such shelter are often accompanied by implied pressure. The heavy police presence during these operations exerts psychological pressure on those concerned, indirectly forcing them to accept a solution they might otherwise refuse.

— **Landscape alterations:**

A set of actions taken to alter the environment and make it inhospitable to any form of settlement (the placing of boulders, deforestation, building walls, installing barbed wire, etc.).

— **Racialised population:**

Racialised refers to a person who belongs, in reality or in perception, to a group that has undergone a process of racialisation. Racialisation is a political, social and mental process of othering².

— **Exiled people:**

Term used to refer to all people in a migratory situation, whether they have been sentenced, forced into exile or have chosen to go into exile; or who are living in exile³. This term is preferred to "migrants", which is no longer perceived as neutral in media and political contexts, and to "refugees" or "asylum seekers", which implies a certain legal status.

— **Reinstallation:**

It is common for exiled people to return and resettle in the same place after being evicted. This highlights the ineffectiveness and repetitive nature of such operations. HRO notes that repeated evictions do not prevent exiled people from resettling, underscoring the ineffectiveness of these measures.

— **State-violence⁴:**

Despite the vague nature of this term, we refer to state violence because, by encouraging and rewarding police violence, failing to ensure accountability through internal or judicial mechanisms, and denying its existence, such violence transcends the police institutions and becomes state violence. In addition to police violence, state violence also encompasses the state's dehumanising, irreparable and systemic practices.

— **Police violence:**

We use the definition adopted by local supporters of those stranded at the French-UK border: police violence stems from the use and abuse of the powers granted to the police by the state. They may be physical and/or psychological, more or less visible, more or less frequent, legal or illegal, but they are systemic. They are dehumanising, irreparable, and those responsible are never held to account.

¹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "The right to adequate housing", June 2014.

² This definition was adopted by the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of Joseph-Christopher Luamba v. the Attorney General of Quebec (2022 QCCS 3866).

³ Dictionary of the Académie Française (page consulted 18th March 2026).

⁴ This definition is partly taken from Didier Fassin's opinion piece "Naming State Violence", published in Libération on 28th January 2020.

METHODOLOGY

The collection and analysis of data on evictions is one of the main tasks of Human Rights Observers. It is for this reason that the association relies on multiple tools instead of a single method enabling to document episodes of violence in the best way we can. HRO's methodology consists almost exclusively of **observation on the ground**. Our teams are present during evictions and track what happens in the most accurate way possible.

While monitoring an eviction, we take notes of everything that could be useful for our data analysis. Part of the data can already be obtained by simply following the movements of the police convoy. Eviction's start and ending time, composition of the convoy, evicted living sites during the operation. Nonetheless, another portion of the data must be collected by directly getting closer to the living site during the police operation. By getting on site, we are able to gather essential information such as the number of people evicted, the number of seized personal items, as well as the occurrence of police violence during the operation. In case, these data can be reinforced by collecting **testimonies** from exiled people after the eviction or by using information passed on by other associations who are present on the ground.

This calculation is not an easy task. Law enforcement authorities do not wish to be observed during their operations, so they obstruct our monitoring which diminishes the accuracy of our data gathering. Therefore, one must bear in mind that the figures provided by associations are far below the reality of the evictions.

Once gathered, these data are rigorously registered. The field team writes a debrief of the operation and subsequently other association members insert the key data gathered in a dedicated collection tool. Multiple verifications are conducted to make sure that there are no mistakes in the data collection process. Then the data are employed for the redaction of a monthly note and the annual report publication, such as in the present one.

This material is also accessible to journalists, researchers, and other HRO's partners with the aim to make visible and analyze as much as possible the situation on the Franco-British border. Here are two partners who explain how our data are useful for their work:

“ PARALLAX

Parallax is a nonprofit research organization which employs spatial and open-source methods to investigate on state violence. We are building a case on crimes against humanity by highlighting that the border policies of the United Kingdom, France and Belgium create systematic and widespread conditions that are detrimental, deadly and persecutory towards exiled people. Taken together, HRO's data on evictions in Calais and Grand-Synthe constitute an essential probatory basis for this work which enables us to examine the extent, regularity, and organized nature of the “Zero point of fixation” policy. We map these data in order to spatialise/visualize on a map/geographically set/place the eviction policies so that their intentional and detrimental schemes are made visible. Coupled with observations and analysis on landscape modifications, as well as on border infrastructures and other police operations (such as arrests, surveillance, ...), the data collected by HRO substantiate the argument that these practices are part of a larger crime according to international law.

“ OBSERVATOIRE DES EXPULSIONS de lieux de vie informels

HRO data are also a valuable source for the “Observatory of informal living sites evictions” (Observatoire des expulsions de lieux de vie informel). Through its precise documentation of informal living sites' evictions, under the quantitative perspective, as well as on the qualitative side in terms of the unfolding of the evictions and the monitoring of the local context, HRO makes it possible to report on the systematic harassment to which people living in informality are subjected in these territories, on the lack of alternatives to this informality, on the failure to respect the rights of people caught up in this cycle of expulsions and on the effects thereof on the persons concerned. Finally, HRO also consistently contributes to the analysis and advocacy carried out by the Observatory at the national level.



**HUMAN RIGHTS
OBSERVERS**

CALAIS / GRANDE - SYNTHE

CHRONOLOGY

This timeline of 2025 is not exhaustive and reflects only the events that stood out for the HRO teams throughout 2025.

TIMELINE LEGEND:

-  Legal proceedings and decisions (appeals, hearings)
-  Evictions and landscape alterations
-  Presence of far-right groups
-  Political events
-  Shootings and deaths



JANUARY:

11th January: A march “against the deadly policies at the French-British border” was carried out despite the mayor of Calais’s attempt to ban it from happening.

27th January: deployment of police to patrol on three bus routes in Calais and the surrounding area to “reassure passengers”, even though no serious incidents had been reported.⁵



FEBRUARY:

7th February: Those sheltering in informal living sites in the centre of Calais challenged an eviction order issued by the Mayor before the Lille Administrative Court. During the hearing, the living sites were evicted, as they are every 48 hours. The judge therefore ruled that the Mayor’s application was groundless and that there was no need to give a ruling. (TA Lille, 07/02/2025, n°2500538).⁶

21st February: 100 living sites recorded to have been evicted since the beginning of the year.

27th February: The Administrative Court of Appeal in Douai (city in Northern France) definitively overturned the prefectural orders banning food distributions in Calais city centre, ruling them to be unlawful. These orders dated from September 2020 and were previously overturned by the Administrative Court in Lille, but the Interior Minister decided to appeal against that decision (CAA, Douai, 27/02/2025, n°22DA02653)



MARCH:

25th March: A hearing was held at Calais Magistrates’ Court regarding the eviction of the “Orange Squat”, where between 300 and 400 people were sheltering.



APRIL:

11th April: a decision was made by the Calais Magistrates’ Court regarding the eviction of the “Orange Squat”: a five-month grace period granted to squatters before eviction.

Tuesday 29th April: a public meeting on the “migration situation” was held at Loon-Plage, attended by the mayor, the sub-prefect of Dunkirk and the deputy prefect for defence and security in front of the prefect of the Hauts-de-France region. During the meeting they announced that deportation operations would take place every week and they reinforced the policy of repression across the region.⁷



MAY:

Wednesday 21st May: A hearing was held at the Lille Administrative Court concerning a request to evict 50 people from an informal settlement. Those sheltering there submitted a written statement defending their case with subsequent attempts to delay the eviction of the premises they were sheltering on. The Court granted the eviction request to the landlord and the premises was evicted a few weeks later. (TA, 23rd May 2025, n°2503944).



JUNE:

3rd June: many English fascists, including Nic Tenconi (the new leader of Ukip) arrived at the Orange Squat with a megaphone. They shouted at exiled people to “go back to where they came from” and threatened volunteers. They also arrived at the Secours Catholique day centre. A video was then circulated on social media.

12th June: In the wider Dunkirk area, record of 38 living sites evicted since the beginning of January. In 2024 HRO recorded evictions of 36 living sites across the whole year.

14th and 15th June: seven people were injured and three people were killed during a shooting at an informal settled at Loon-Plage.⁸



JULY:

8th – 10th July: The 37th Franco-British summit was held and announced the adoption of a new agreement named “One in, One out”: for every person sent back to France after attempting to reach the English coast by small boat across the English Channel, another person, selected in France, will be allowed to enter the UK on a visa. This tactic transforms the right to asylum into a bargaining chip, reinforces the externalisation of the borders and tramples on the very essence of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees⁹



AUGUST:

6th August: in line with the agreement “One in, One out”, the first people were detained in English detention centres before being sent back to France.¹⁰

19th August: another hearing was held at the Lille Administrative Court concerning the same living site which was heard in May 2025. Those sheltering there, once again, submitted a written statement defending their case with subsequent attempts to delay the eviction of the premises they were sheltering on. The Court, once again, granted the landlord’s eviction request and the property was evicted a few weeks later (TA, 19th August 2025, n°2507174).



SEPTEMBER:

3rd September: A group of MPs visited Calais. Some of them observed the HRO security checks at Grande Synthe, whilst others did the same in Calais. According to information from HRO, no evictions took place that day. The MPs also visited the Secours Catholique day centre and attended a public meeting in the evening at La MER.

9th September: An “experimental” plan was introduced at the Orange Squat ahead of the eviction. The plan was put in place by the Prefecture to offer accommodation in reception and assessment centres (CAES); this is one of the rare occasions on which a genuine social assessment was carried out.

18th – 23rd September: the first deportations were carried out from the UK to France in line with the “One in, One out” agreement.¹¹

19th September: landscape alteration (deforestation, placement of boulders) evident across the entire northern part of a living site in Calais

Installation of barriers and fences following repeated dismantling in February 2025 at this same living site.



@elio_j_

Landscape modification of the same living site, in September, using new methods: the placement of boulders and extensive deforestation in various areas to prevent people from resettling there.



23rd – 30th September: In the wider Calais region, within 1 week, 13 living sites were evicted, 5 of them following court orders, including the Orange Squat. More than 300 people were displaced.

28th September: a swastika was marked on a water tank installed by the association Calais Food Collective (cfc).

30th September: Ukip uploaded a video online showing exiled people being physically and verbally assaulted. A fund was started online to raise money to bring English fascists to the Opal Coast (northern French coast) in order to “stop the boats from crossing”.

⁵ France Bleu Nord, “Migrants : des patrouilles de police dans les bus du Calaisais pour rassurer les usagers”, ici, 29 jan. 2025

⁶ Press Release published by Human Rights Observers on 4 February 2025, entitled: “La police expulse de facto un lieu de vie informel, pendant une audience visant à faire autoriser par le juge une expulsion de ce même lieu”.

⁷ Press Release published by Human Rights Observers on 2 May 2025, entitled: “Réunion de Loon-Plage : Human Rights Observers dénonce une politique inefficace et brutale”.

⁸ Press Release published by Human Rights Observers on 20 June 2025, entitled: “Fusillades de Loon-Plage : comment les violences d’Etat conduisent au drame”.

⁹ Opinion piece entitled “Accord franco-britannique sur l’immigration : ‘Nous, associations et personnes solidaires, dénonçons ce marchandage cynique de vies humaines’ ”, Le Monde, 8 Oct. 2025, online.

¹⁰ Diane Taylor, “First People to Be Returned to France under UK’s “One in, One out” Asylum Deal”, The Guardian, 7 Aug. 2025, online.

¹¹ InfoMigrants, “Accord ‘un pour un’ avec la France : une première famille arrivée au Royaume-Uni”, 27 Sept. 2025, online.



OCTOBER:

10th October: Several organisations, including HRO, lodged an appeal with the Council of State seeking to have the decree publishing the so-called “one in, one out” agreement annulled. The aim of this appeal is to have the agreement itself annulled.

28th October: Work began on building a wall along a railway line around the camps in the Dunkirk area. Police were always stationed around the site and large floodlights illuminated the wall. It cost €800,000 and is 1.5 kilometres long.



NOVEMBER:

5th – 13th November: “Raise the Colours” (a racist English movement) arrives at Gravelines and Grand Fort Philippe to display banners promoting their identity.

18th November: 6 associations, including HRO, took the State to court before the Lille Administrative Court for failing to respect human rights.

21st November: Judges from the Lille Administrative Court visited the camps in the Dunkirk area to assess the situation. They were accompanied by representatives from various organisations and the authorities.

21st November: In the Calais area, work to make a thicket – where a few dozen people had been sheltering – completely inaccessible was almost completed: barriers and moats were built to prevent anyone from settling there again.





DECEMBER:

3rd – 5th December: Members of an English fascist group “Raise the Colours” arrived at the living sites in Dunkirk to film videos and provoke those present. They verbally assaulted members of Doctors Without Borders on a beach along the coast.

4th December: The Lille Administrative Court granted some of the requests made by the associations calling for greater respect for human dignity in the camps in the Dunkirk area.¹²

24th December: multiple racist graffiti tags appeared around the living sites in the Dunkirk area.

30th December: the Council of State rejected the appeal by the associations seeking the annulment of the so-called “One in, One out” agreement. (CE, 30th December 2025, n°508947, 508948)

31st December: A total of 41 472 people in 2025 recorded to have arrived in the UK after crossing the Channel in makeshift small boats..¹³

In 2025, 42 people lost their lives at the French–British border as a result of non–admission policies.¹⁴

In total, 631 living sites were evicted in the wider Calais and Dunkirk areas in 2025.

¹² Human Rights Observers, “Dunkerque : L’État condamné pour non–respect de la dignité humaine”, Le Club de Mediapart, 5 Dec. 2025, online.

¹³ Nathan Grassi, “People Crossing the English Channel in Small Boats,” The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, 31 Mar. 2026, online.

¹⁴ Utopia 56, “Bilan 2025 à la frontière franco–britannique : des fausses réponses politiques et une situation humanitaire qui s’empire”, Utopia 56, 18 Feb. 2026, online.

ANNUAL REPORT

CALAIS AREA

THE FIGURES: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CALAIS AREA

In 2025, HRO recorded at least :



539

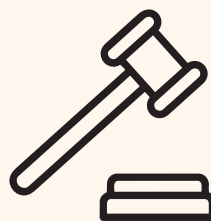
FORCED EVICTIONS FROM LAND

during :



142

operations carried out
based on investigations
into offences committed
in flagrance



21

operations carried out
following court orders

3792

**people
evicted**

25

**settlements
affected by the
evictions**

1576

**tents or tarps
seized**

119

**arrests made during the
eviction operation**



IN CALAIS

A drop in evictions?



539 EVICTIONS¹⁵

including **21** large-scale evictions and **1** eviction carried out without legal grounds or where the legal basis was unclear.

The remaining **517** evictions were carried out by exploiting the criminal investigation procedure for offences committed in flagrance.



THIS IS 243 FEWER EVICTIONS THAN IN 2024, REPRESENTING A 31% DECREASE.



If we focus on the number of eviction operations recorded rather than the number of settlements cleared, as above, the observed decline virtually disappears, since in 2025 HRO recorded at least:

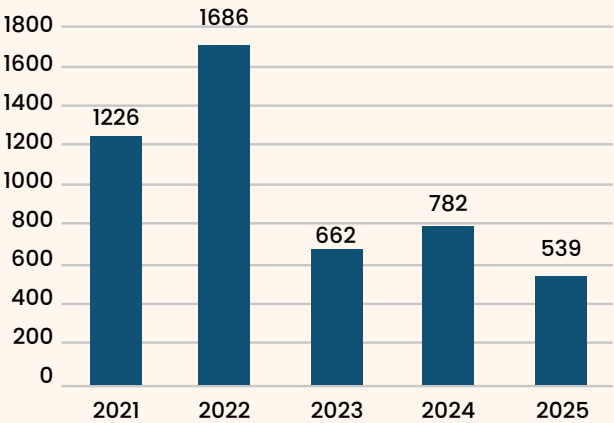
164 eviction operations, compared with 166 in 2024, of which:

21 large-scaled deportation operations, with only 12 recorded in 2024

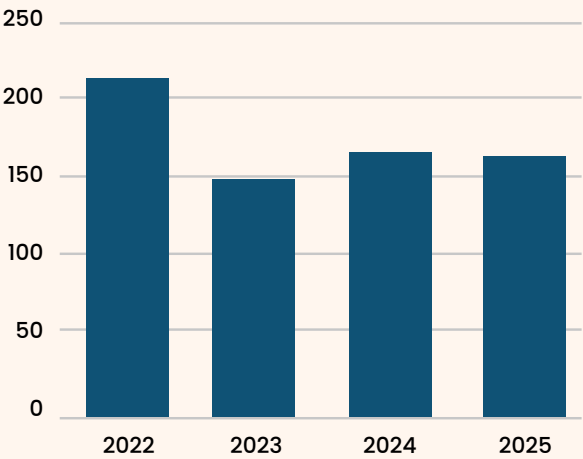
142 “flagrante delicto” operations, 10 fewer than in the previous year

1 operation without a legal basis or with an unclear legal basis, compared with 8 in 2024

EVICTIONS FROM SETTLEMENTS IN THE CALAIS AREA
2021-2025



EVICTION OPERATIONS AT INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE CALAIS AREA
2022-2025



¹⁵ For HRO, an eviction from a place of residence counts as an eviction, regardless of the legal basis or the way the operation was carried out.

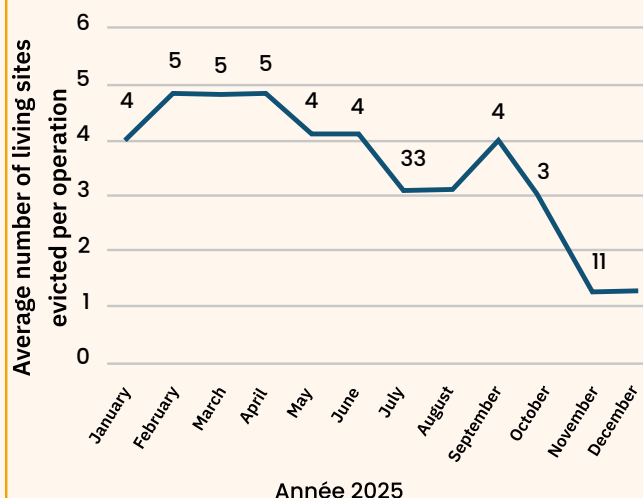
Evictions in the Calais area: “Flagrante delicto” evictions – but that’s not all

These 518 evictions were carried out as part of 143 eviction operations. In the Calais area, evictions from various living areas are carried out one after the other during the same morning or afternoon, following a sort of circuit that HRO refers to as an “eviction operation”.

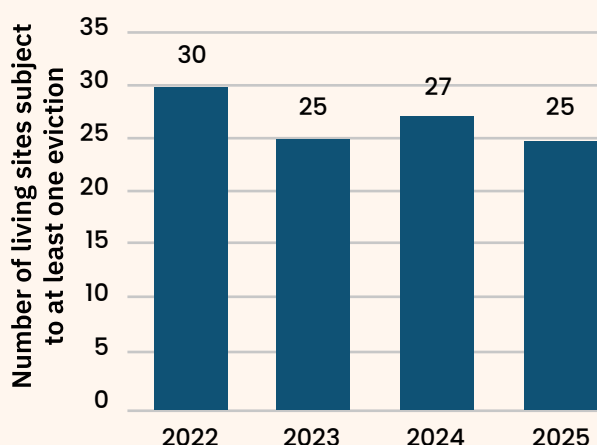
These evictions have been carried out approximately every 48 hours since 2018. They keep displaced people in a constant state of vulnerability to eviction.

In 2024, law enforcement agencies were evicting around five living sites per operation. **By comparison, in 2025, an average of 3.3 settlements were evicted per operation.** This partly explains the 31% drop in the number of evictions recorded in 2025, whilst the frequency of eviction operations remained virtually unchanged.

Living sites evicted during a police operation in the Calais area (2025)



LIVING SITES AFFECTED BY EVICTIONS (2022 - 2025)



Whilst the frequency of evictions varies from one settlement to another in Calais, this variation should not be interpreted as reflecting a difference in the intensity of the police harassment experienced. Indeed, beyond the frequency of evictions, people are subjected to a range of practices by the police that create constant pressure. **The unpredictability of eviction operations, as well as their recurrence, contributes to a climate of instability and insecurity.**



Some living sites were evicted just once during the year.



In line with a policy of exclusion and invisibilisation, the five living spaces located in Calais's city centre (all located within a radius of a few hundred metres) **were particularly targeted in 2025.** They were cleared 241 times in 2025, accounting for 44% of all clearances in the Calais area in 2025.



A settlement on an outdoor sports ground owned by the municipality of Calais was evicted 119 times in 2025, accounting for 24% of all clearances in the Calais area in 2025. In terms of police operations rather than evicted settlements, this settlement was the target of 83% of flagrante delicto eviction operations and 72% of all eviction operations combined.

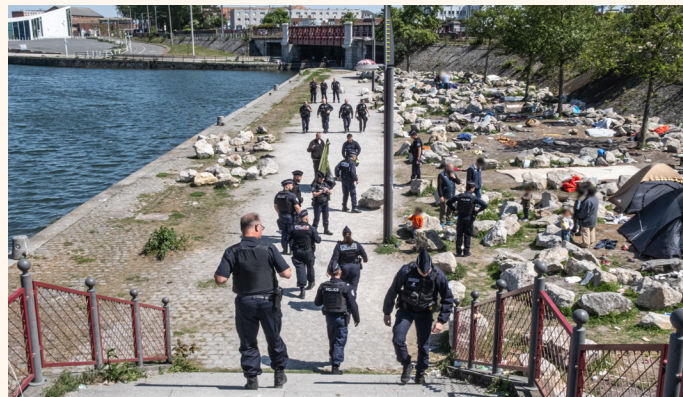


This persistence, along with the differences in treatment observed between different living environments, appears to be strongly correlated with their level of visibility.

In the city center, evictions are driven by a desire to render people invisible: **the aim is to remove displaced people from view, particularly from that of tourists, to conceal the appalling living conditions and lack of services they face.**

Other areas are subjected to repeated interventions due to their use or the number of people who frequent them. For example, this particularly busy sports ground, which is undergoing significant infrastructure development, has been regularly cleared of people.

Finally, some sites are targeted as part of development projects. For example, a plot of land has been cleared on multiple occasions, to the point where it has been almost completely deforested, followed by the installation of barriers fitted with cameras and a ditch designed to prevent access. This site is now earmarked to house a logistics hub for trade with the United Kingdom.



Whilst the government's policy to tackle "points de fixation" (or hotspots) applies to all residential areas, the motivations behind the interventions and the methods employed (flagrante delicto and large-scale operations) appear to vary.

3,792 PEOPLE EVICTED

This figure is an underestimate of the actual number of people affected by the evictions. This is because it only includes those present at the time of the eviction whom HRO was able to count. However, due to obstacles to observation and the difficulty, at times, of counting large numbers of people on the move, HRO is unable to determine the exact number of people deported. Furthermore, the number of people present during evictions also depends on the days and times of the evictions and of the services offered by the associations and groups are available.

For example, evictions mainly take place on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons, which is the same time as Secours Catholique's day centre is open. Many other services are also available during these times. **This schedule forces residents to make a difficult choice: access the services, at the risk of having their personal belongings seized in their absence or remain in their homes at the expense of accessing these services.**

In this context, it is highly likely that a significant number of people will not be present at the scene at the time of the evictions yet will nevertheless suffer the consequences. Furthermore, the regularity of police harassment may lead some people to anticipate such evictions by leaving their homes before the police arrive. **However, any personal belongings left behind are then seized, and their homes are destroyed.** HRO notes, therefore, that this count does not generally reflect the actual population of the residential areas in question.¹⁶

Similarly, it is important to bear in mind that some people who are usually present at the camps may be absent on the day of the eviction, **particularly if they are attempting to cross the border.** Finally, despite the monitoring carried out by HRO members, it remains difficult to predict when large-scale operations will take place. On several occasions during 2025, such operations began without any organizations or groups being present to monitor their conduct and thus to record the number of people evicted by the police.

119 ARRESTS DURING THE EVICTIONS

Evictions are almost always accompanied by arrests carried out by border police officers. Officially, these arrests are intended to verify the right of residence of the individuals concerned. However, given that most people living in these settlements are in a precarious administrative situation, the use of such arrests during evictions appears to be an unfair practice. In effect, **evacuation operations are thus diverted from their intended purpose to serve as a means of carrying out targeted checks, exploiting the administrative vulnerability of those concerned.**

Furthermore, **numerous arrests also take place outside of eviction operations.** These practices are particularly difficult for local organizations and groups in the Calais area to document and **they contribute to creating constant police pressure, playing a significant part in the daily harassment endured by people on the move.**



¹⁶ There is no official or formal census, but organisations and groups working in informal settlements attempt to produce estimates for their own purposes.

Items seized

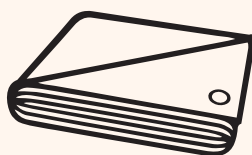


It is essential to emphasize here that, as team members are almost invariably restricted in their observations by large perimeters, the figures collected are therefore significantly underestimated and should be regarded as absolute minimums.



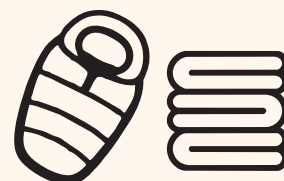
1378

TENTS SEIZED,
1186 of which were full of
personal belongings



198

TARPS



29

SLEEPINGS BAGS
and
134 **BLANKETS**



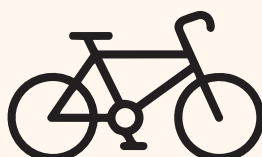
15

RUCKSACKS



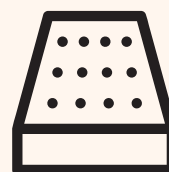
44

PLASTICS
BAGS
often used to
keep personal
belongings dry



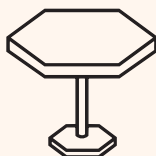
8

BIKES



117

MATTRESSES



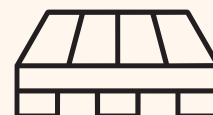
53

CHAIRS OR
TABLES



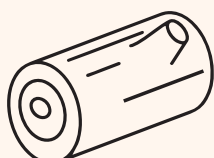
85

TROLLEYS OR OTHER
ITEMS OF FURNITURE



182 **PALLETS SEIZED**

These are used to raise tents off the ground to protect against damp and the cold and can sometimes also be used as firewood.



On at least **14** occasions, firewood has been seized, particularly in winter. It is the only source of heat that enables people to survive the cold, feed themselves, and dry their belongings.

Obstructions to monitoring and Intimidation experienced by HRO members in the field

REGARDING OBSTRUCTIONS:



307

occasions, the HRO team was prevented from carrying out its monitoring due to the establishment of security perimeters.



88

times, the HRO team was escorted out of these perimeters by law enforcement officers.



Monitoring of the eviction was



Completely blocked on at least

106

occasions



Partially blocked on at least

156

occasions

INTIMIDATION

(verbal comments, being filmed, identity checks)



90

A total of 90 incidents of intimidation or violence



28

incidents of verbal or physical violence against observers (mockery, derogatory comments, insults, threats of fines or violence)



7

identity checks
(counted by the number of checks carried out on the group of observers, not by the number of individuals checked)



52

Filmed: 52 times

40

Without warning using body cameras

12

Using personal mobile phones

3

Vehicle checks

ANNUAL REPORT

DUNKIRK AREA

THE FIGURES: AN OVERVIEW OF THE DUNKIRK AREA

In 2025, HRO recorded at least:



106

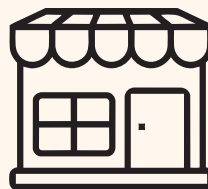
FORCED EVICTIONS

including:



92

evictions following
court orders



14

operations to dismantle
informal trading posts

43

eviction
operations

4965

people
evicted

18

settlements affected
by the evictions

2911

tents seized

1257^{m3}

cubic metres of personal
belongings and essential
items seized and subsequently
destroyed

263

arrests made during
eviction operations



@elio_j_

IN THE DUNKIRK AREA

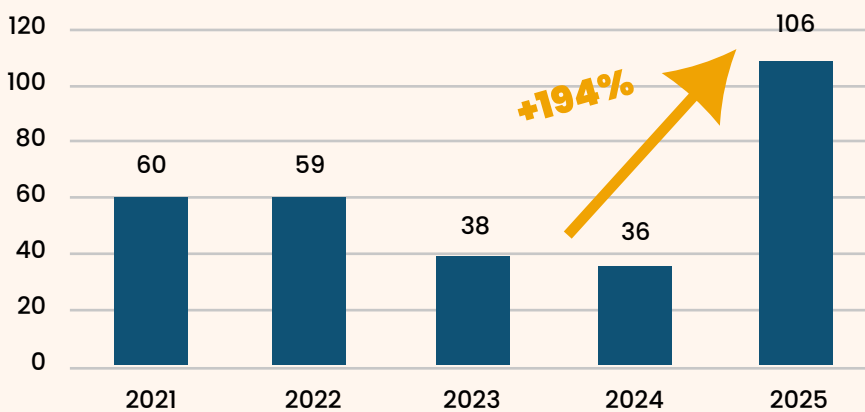
 92 LARGE-SCALE EVICTIONS

In 2025, **106** living sites were evicted during **43** eviction operations, representing a **194%** increase of living sites evicted and a **53%** increase in the number of operations compared with 2024. This amounts to nearly **2.5** living sites evicted per operation.

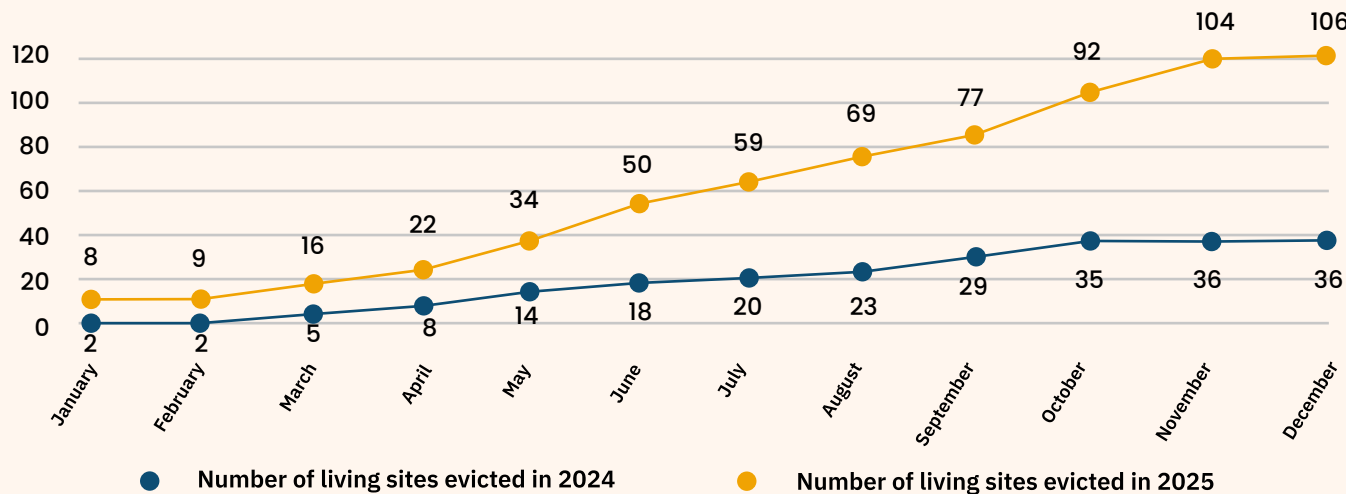


Of these, 92 were large-scale evictions, and 14 were evictions targeting only informal shops located within or on the outskirts of residential areas; HRO is unaware of the legal basis for these.

Evictions in the Dunkirk area
2021-2025



Evictions per Month (including informal Businesses)
2024 vs 2025



On 29 April 2025, a public meeting was held in Loon-Plage, attended by the mayor, Eric Rommel; the sub-prefect of Dunkirk, Frédéric Loiseau, and the deputy prefect for defence and security to the prefect of the Hauts-de-France region, Vincent Lagoguey. According to the framework proposed by these officials, the meeting was organized to address the “growing and legitimate concerns” of the local population regarding the migration situation. In response, **government officials have announced an increase in security measures to prevent exiles from settling in the Dunkirk area**, particularly in Loon-Plage.

Since then, evictions have increased in both frequency and scale. They now take place almost weekly (42 eviction operations over 48 weeks between January 1st and November 30th of 2025¹⁷), and each operation affects a much larger number of living sites.

Furthermore, it was from this point onwards that the informal shops located opposite the charities’ distribution points began to be regularly dismantled. According to the narrative put forward by government officials, these stalls are seen as key hubs for smuggling networks and “criminal affairs”; dismantling them would therefore help to disrupt these networks. **Above all, this justification serves as a convenient way of showcasing the authorities’ actions and demonstrating that the state is “doing something” to address the situation.** These operations often **result in scenes of extreme violence**: shelters are demolished using excavators and other heavy machinery, in full view of residents, including families and children. They disrupt food distributions or cause delays, as charities are no longer able to access suitable venues from which to distribute the goods.



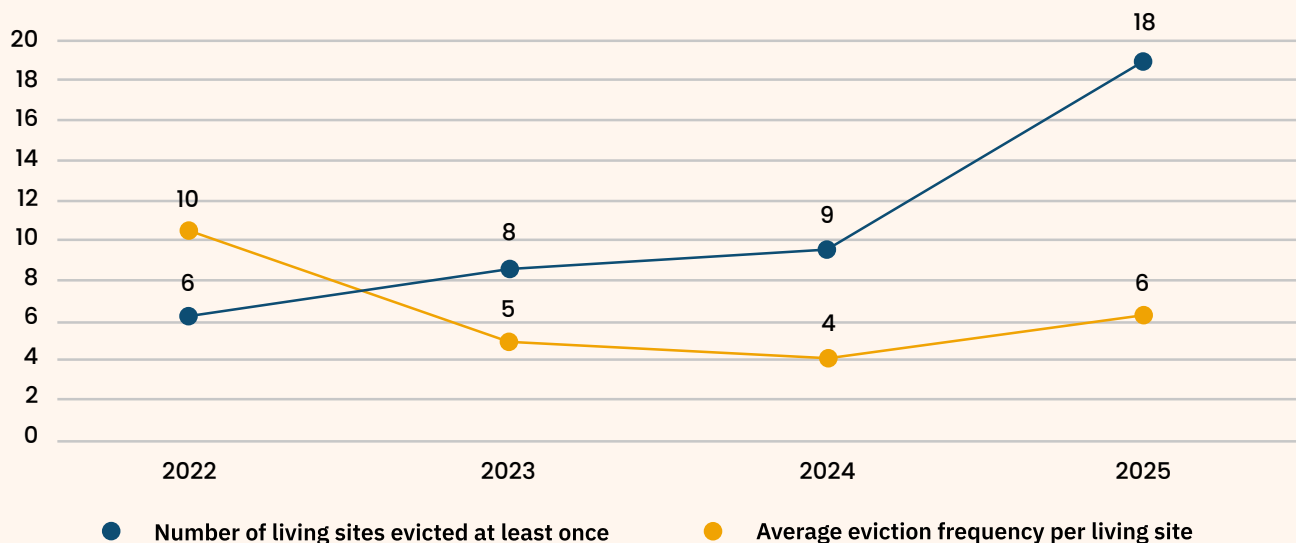
@elio_j_

¹⁷ We have chosen to exclude December 2025 from the analysis because evictions were suspended for the duration of an appeal before the Council of State concerning, amongst other things, the seizing of personal belonging during evictions.

18 settlements affected by evictions

Evictions of living sites :

How many sites affected and at what intensity (2022-2025)



Between 2022 and 2024, the number of settlements affected by eviction operations rose gradually (+3 areas over two years); then, between 2024 and 2025, there was a sharp increase (the number doubled in one year).

More and more gathering places are being affected by evictions. This can be explained in part after the increase in the number of existing gathering places after the closure, following evictions and police harassment, of the large gathering places that previously served as a hub for most of the exiled people surviving in the Dunkirk area¹⁸. In 2022, for example, the same sites were systematically targeted in every eviction operation: a settlement was evicted around 10 times that year. In 2023, a settlement was evicted on average 5 times, and then on average 4 times in 2024. However, by 2025, the average number of evictions per living sites rises again to around six evictions per living sites, even as the number of living sites evicted at least once skyrockets – doubling in just one year – as does the total number of evictions. We can interpret this in two different ways:

1 Living sites in the Dunkirk area are becoming increasingly scattered and fragmented, and more and more resources are being devoted to ensuring that they are all effectively addressed;

2 Some living sites are targeted more than others. For example, the largest settlement in Loon-Plage, home to more than half of the displaced people from the Dunkirk area until its final clearance at the end of October 2025, was cleared 20 times in 2025, accounting for 22% of all clearances of informal settlements (not including operations to dismantle informal trading posts). Conversely, four settlements were each cleared just once in 2025.



¹⁸ See article "In Grande-Synthe and Dunkerque, a process of gradual displacement of exiled people towards the industrial zone" in the 2024 Annual Report of the Observatory of Evictions of Informal Living Sites, <https://www.observatoiredesexpulsions.org/fr/login#publications-wrapper>

4,902 PEOPLE EVICTED IN THE DUNKIRK AREA

Number of people deported



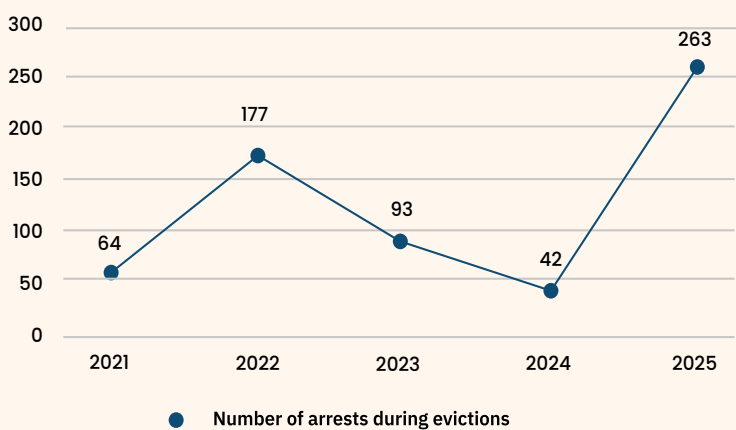
Although this figure is higher than those for 2023 (+16%) and 2024 (+37%), it nevertheless significantly underestimates the actual number of people affected by evictions.

In fact, this figure only includes those present at the time of the eviction and whom HRO was able to count. However, due to obstacles to observation and the difficulty, at times, of counting large numbers of people on the move, HRO is almost never able to determine the exact number of people evicted.

Furthermore, **police strategies changed in 2025**. Whereas in 2024, living sites were cleared one after the other in the course of a single morning, in 2025, **several living sites were evicted at the same time, which made it much more difficult for the HRO teams to collect this data**. HRO was unable to document several operations (8 out of 43) and did not obtain information on the number of people present.

263 ARRESTS DURING THE EVICTIONS IN 2025

Number of arrests during evictions



This represents an **84% increase in the number of arrests compared with 2024**. The figure is an aggregate of official figures from the prefecture, obtained during legal proceedings between us and the Nord prefecture, and our own figures, which partly explains the increase.¹⁹ Notwithstanding this methodological caveat, there is no denying that arrests have risen sharply, in line with the general trend towards an intensification of deportation operations in the Dunkirk area.

It should also be borne in mind that the Border Police are almost always present during these operations, as observed in 30 of the 35 deportation operations where HRO observer teams were present.

¹⁹ Between 1 January and 19 June 2025, the prefecture recorded 245 arrests (compared with 55 recorded by HRO). We have therefore added the prefecture's figures for the period from 1 January 2025 to 19 June 2025 to the figures from our own observations for the period from 19 June 2025 to 31 December 2025 (18 recorded by HRO).



Items seized during evictions: Figures for Dunkirk area in 2025



It is essential to emphasize here that, as team members are almost invariably restricted in their observations by large perimeters, the figures collected are therefore significantly underestimated and should be regarded as absolute minimums.



1257m³

cubic metres of goods seized using heavy machinery. These stolen goods, which were subsequently destroyed with the assistance of the police, would fill almost the entire ground floor of the Dunkirk Sub-Prefecture, or 10 swimming pools measuring 10 by 5 metres.



2911 TENTS²⁰

The systematic and almost total destruction of the living areas affected by the evictions, and the seizure of all tents, blankets, personal belongings, clothing, electrical transformers, cables, important documents and wood.



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²⁰ During a lawsuit against the Nord Prefecture, we were able to obtain certain official figures regarding evictions. Between 1 January and 19 June 2025, the Prefecture recorded 2,528 tents seized (compared to 416 recorded by HRO). We therefore added the Prefecture's figures for the period from 1 January 2025 to 19 June 2025 to the figures from our own observations for the period from 19 June 2025 to 31 December 2025 (383 tents seized).

Obstructions to monitoring and intimidation faced by HRO members in the field

OBSTACLES



67

times, the HRO team's monitoring was hindered by the establishment of cordoned-off areas



36

times, the HRO team was escorted out of the areas by law enforcement officers



17

times, completely blocked



39

times, partially blocked

The eviction was observed as follows:

INTIMIDATION



143

incidents of bullying or violence



27

incidents of verbal or physical abuse towards observers (mockery, derogatory comments, insults, threats of fines or physical violence)



81

identity checks (counted by the observer group rather than by the individuals being observed)



20

Filmed

12

Filmed without warning beforehand

8

Filmed using personal mobile phones

15

vehicle inspections



THE STATE'S ZERO FIXATION POINT POLICY: MANUFACTURING PRECARITY IN DUNKIRK

For the last 30 years, the French state has been enforcing a policy of deterrence against people on the move along its entire northern coast. Different strategies come into play but overtime the state's tactics have been slowly converging to a unified, paradoxical and violent framework called "zero fixation point"²¹. Today, the latter is a full-blown repressive policy that seeks to prevent the emergence of any stable place of life for people on the move. It does so by maintaining a hostile environment and prohibiting any lasting settlement²². In the Dunkirk area, this policy is characterised by repeated evictions leading to forced displacement, daily police presence, sometimes accompanied by violence on informal living sites and their surroundings, discrimination, denied access to fundamental rights, and acts of intimidation against people in solidarity.

Since 2017, a "half-security, half-humanitarian apparatus"²³ has emerged on the northern coast of France. This apparatus enables the French state to make the living conditions of people on the move more precarious in order to justify carrying on with the zero fixation point policy. In its lingo, the French state speaks of combining "humanity and firmness".

From April 2025, the zero fixation point policy was intensified in the Dunkirk area. This change was seen in both the number and nature of police operations. Evictions of informal living sites were multiplied, creating a deterrent instability. But this intensification was not limited to evictions alone: it was accompanied by the diversification of targets and the widening of interventions' scope. From April 2025 onwards, the authorities extended the scope of their actions to informal shops and spaces essential to the daily life of people on the move, access to food and basic needs.

The year 2025 ended in a court case. On 18 November 2025, the civil society organisations Refugee Women's Centre, Médecins du Monde, Utopia 56, Roots, Salam and Human Rights Observers filed for the protection of fundamental freedoms²⁴ in the Dunkirk area in the Lille Administrative Court²⁵. They called the court to order the French state to take immediate and lasting measures to respect the fundamental rights of people on the move at the border. The hearing once again demonstrated the idleness of state representatives when confronted with the precarious living conditions of people on the move. It also demonstrated how relentlessly the administration pursues its policy of hostility. The court case was the occasion for HRO to consult documents submitted by the defendants, particularly the Prefecture of the Nord county²⁶, in support of their defence. The content of these documents is disclosed here.

²¹ It was first Minister Bernard Cazeneuve who used this term to justify the dismantling operation of the Calais Jungle (La Voix du Nord, 23 octobre 2016). It was then adopted by ministers Bruno Le Roux (France 3, 1 mars 2017), Gérard Collomb (France 3, 23 juin 2017), and Gérald Darmanin (La Voix du Nord, 23 juillet 2021) during Emmanuel Macron's first presidential term. on.

²² Défenseur des droits, "Défenseur des droits, Exilés et droits fondamentaux : trois ans après le rapport Calais" 2018, online: https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/2023-10/ddd_rapport_droits-fondamentaux-et-rangers_3ans-apres-calais_20181214.pdf

²³ Plateforme des Soutiens aux Migrant.e.s (PSM) and Pierre Bonneval, "l'État français et la gestion de la présence des personnes exilées dans la frontière franco-britannique : harceler, expulser, disperser" 2022, p.233, online: https://psmigrants.org/documents/8/Rapport_P._Bonneval_.pdf

²⁴ This procedure, called "référé-liberté" under French Administrative law, protects fundamental freedoms against the actions of public authorities.

²⁵ TA Lille, ord. réf. lib. n°2511276, 4 Dec. 2025, "Le tribunal ordonne aux autorités publiques de mieux répondre aux besoins élémentaires des migrants installés dans le Dunkerquois". Online: <https://lille.tribunal-administratif.fr/decisions-de-justice/dernieres-decisions/le-tribunal-ordonne-aux-autoritespubliques-de-mieux-repondre-aux-besoins-elementaires-des-migrants-installes-dans-le-dunkerquois>

²⁶ In this text the French "département", the territorial division between regions and municipalities, was translated to the British equivalent of a "county". The administration of a "département" is a Prefecture, and the latter is headed by a Prefect.

Actors map



French state and decentralised administrations

(Sub-Prefecture of Dunkirk, North prefecture, Northern Defence and Security Zone): produce migration policies and implement strategies to enforce them.



United Kingdom:

its government finances policies implemented on French territory (Sandhurst Treaty of 2018).



Local authorities

(Loon-Plage, Grande-Synthe, Craywick, Tétéghem, Gravelines, Dunkirk Urban Community): municipalities and inter-municipal bodies may provide humanitarian responses or may cooperate with the French state to construct the zero fixation point policy.



Port of Dunkirk²⁷

major economic actor, under the administrative tutelage of the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy.



People on the move:
settled in informal living sites in the Dunkirk area.



Port companies:

private companies and their contractors present in the Port of Dunkirk. They hold concessions and/or conduct logistics and industrial activities.



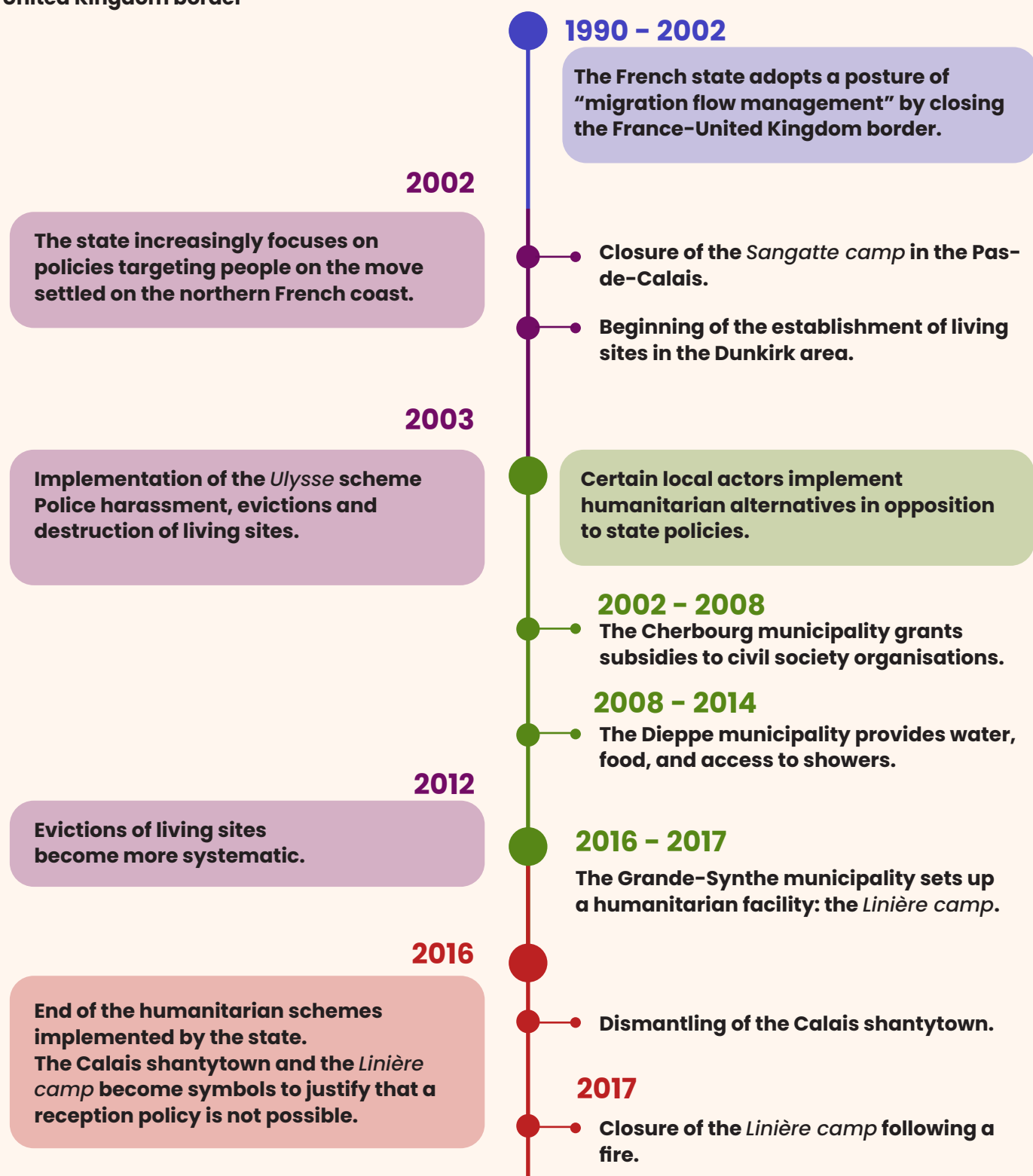
Civil society organisations mandated and non-mandated by the French State:

provide humanitarian services to persons in situation of exile.

²⁷ The Port of Dunkirk, or "Grand Port Maritime de Dunkerque" in French, is a state entity that owns and operates the port infrastructure. It has the status of a Public Industrial and Commercial Establishment (shortened to "EPIC" in French), a kind of state agency of industrial and commercial nature.

HISTORY

30 Years of Repressive Policies Towards People on the move at the France-United Kingdom border ²⁸



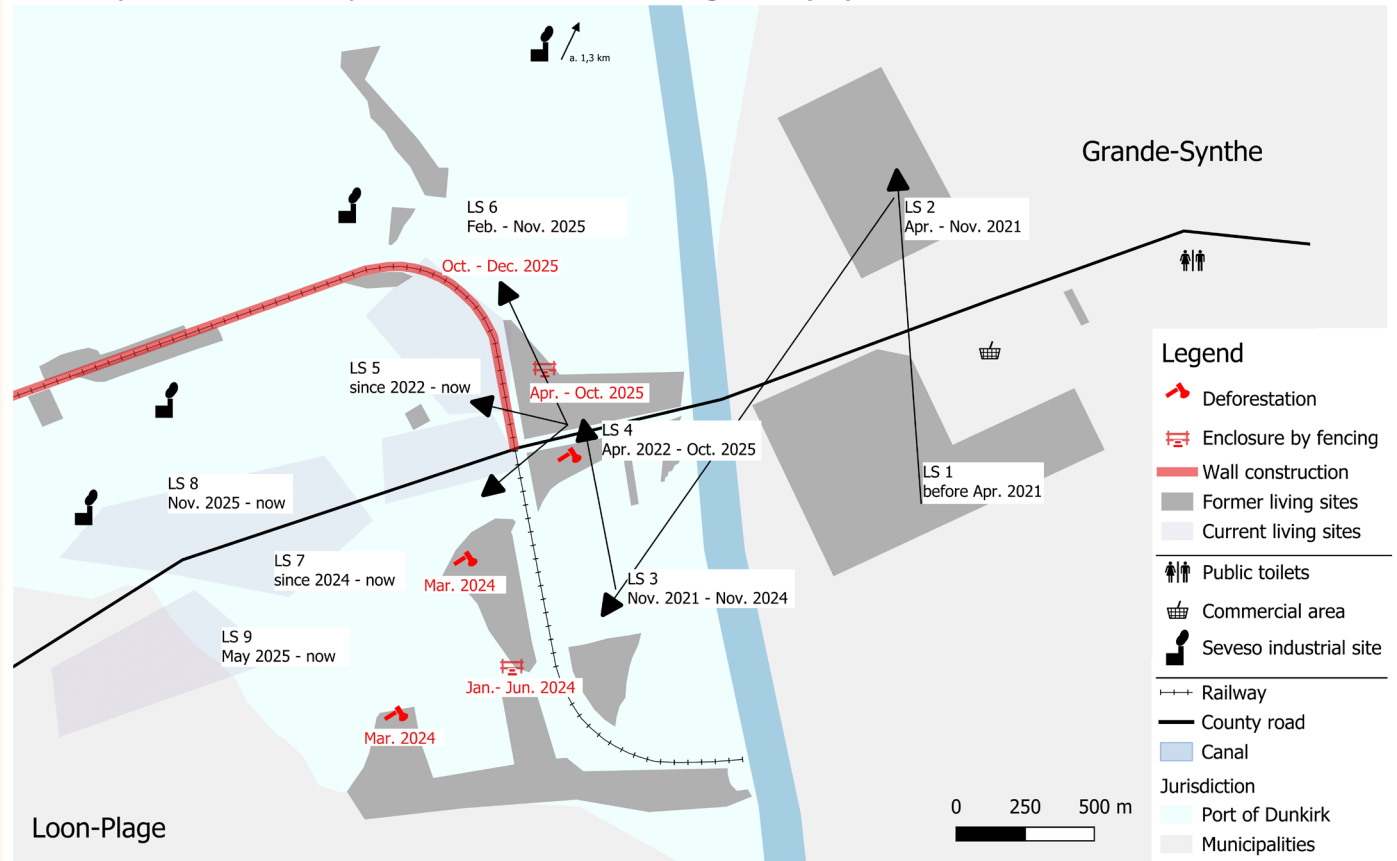
The “zero settlement point” policy is intensified. Evictions become more systematic and routine in the Dunkirk area. They are presented as “sheltering” operations.

²⁸ This historical account was primarily constructed from the investigation report by Pierre Bonnevalle and the Plateforme de Soutien aux Migrants, “l’État français et la gestion de la présence des personnes exilées dans la frontière franco-britannique : harceler, expulser, disperser” (2022, online: <https://www.lacimade.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/02-01a-PSM-Rapport-30ans-V3.pdf>), in which the various aspects of this timeline are detailed.

Evictions and Displacement of Informal Living Sites in the Dunkirk Area between 2021 and 2025

Between 2021 and 2025, informal living sites in the Dunkirk area were gradually displaced from the municipalities of Grande-Synthe to Loon-Plage. The overall movement consisted of several displacements over several periods. Each displacement was the result of police operations and deterrent measures. These are represented on the map below.

Police operations and displacement of informal living sites (LS) in the Dunkirk area, 2021–2025



- Before 2021, people on the move were settled on the site called Living Site 1 on the map. This was a wooded area close to a commercial zone and relatively closer to public toilets to the east. **In April 2021, the Grande-Synthe municipality forcibly displaced people under the pretext of reclaiming this space for recreational purposes. People were thus pushed further away from the commercial zone.** Personal belongings were removed by tractors and the inhabitants were pushed toward the area referred to as Living Site 2.
- At the end of 2021, **people were pushed towards land belonging to the Port of Dunkirk, an industrial area in the Loon-Plage municipality. The choice of this new location was no coincidence: it resulted directly from the intent to make these populations invisible.** As a result, the inhabitants of the living sites found themselves enclosed between railway lines, port infrastructure, and several Seveso-classified industrial sites. **The latter are industrial sites whose activities involve risks of major accidents because they store substances dangerous to humans and the environment.**

The map does not represent a series of movements. It represents police operations, deterrence measures, and the use of a tactic that leads to displacement. Between January and June 2024, Living Site 3 was progressively fenced off, leading to its abandonment in November 2024. A similar suffocation process affected Living Site 4: the installation of fences and stone blocks began in April 2024. At the end of October 2025, following a massive week-long police intervention, the authorities erected a permanent three-metre-high concrete wall.

From 2022 onwards living sites spread further north, west and south-west into the port and industrial area of Loon-Plage. The closure of the last two larger living sites in 2024 and 2025 intensified the spread. **The result is a survival space fragmented everywhere by roads, railway lines, and industrial sites, in addition to walls, fences and other hostile measures.** The westward advance of the concrete wall along the railway lines was completed at the end of 2025. It literally cut off the northern zone from basic services and the rest of the area. These living sites further north became increasingly isolated, until uninhabited following a final eviction at the end of the year. After that, the spread of living sites continued westward and south-westward.

The data collected by HRO demonstrates a significant deterioration in living conditions for people on the move. As police operations persisted, the living areas became increasingly risky. Access to basic services, most notably to organisations' distribution point, became extremely difficult for those pushed to the extreme margins of the territory.

The Zero Fixation Point Policy Concretely: Means and Practices

The Means and Funding of the Zero Fixation Point Policy

Since the Le Touquet Treaty (2003), the United Kingdom has its borders controlled from French territory, **effectively externalising border management**²⁹. **In exchange, the UK government finances part of the costs surveillance and law enforcement operations involve.** The Sandhurst Treaty (2018) between the French and UK governments follows this logic: it aims to make the border hermetically sealed. Over the period 2018–2025, the United Kingdom committed more than 763 million euros to prevent people on the move from crossing the Channel. It also committed approximately 4 billion euros through border security contracts with private companies³⁰.

The hermetically sealed border is a very dangerous illusion. Despite aerial surveillance, police patrols on the French coastline, and the dismantling of supply chains for equipment needed for crossings, the number of people on the move who successfully crossed the Channel by boat³¹ rose from 1,843 in 2019 to 41,472 in 2025. **Surveillance measures primarily exacerbated overcrowding on vessels.** The average density of passengers per vessel at departure rose from fewer than 20 people to nearly 70 people between 2019 and 2025. Over the same period, the number of people who died or went missing each year rose from 5 in 2019 to 29 in 2025. This followed a record figure for deaths and disappearances in 2024, which reached 83 people³².

In France, one of the justifications for the zero fixation point policy is the “pull factor” theory³³. This theory holds that receiving people in an appropriate way and providing worthy living conditions to people on the move would encourage more people to cross the France–United Kingdom border. **It is by this logic that evictions became more systematic from 2012 onwards.** Evictions and the policy of hostility displayed on the Northern coastline aggravates the precarious living conditions of people on the move, pushing them to take greater risks to cross the Channel to escape them.

In the Dunkirk area, the zero fixation point policy is implemented via a combination of material and administrative practices³⁴ partly financed by the UK government. Drones are used to locate people attempting to cross, law enforcement to destroy living sites, municipal services to secure spaces. Under the coordination of the Prefect of the Nord county, police evictions mobilise law enforcement and decentralised state administration. Municipalities or inter-municipal bodies, such as Dunkirk municipality, Loon-Plage municipality, and the Dunkirk Urban Community, intervene through their technical services or by delegation to private contractors (cleaning companies, public works firms) tasked with carrying out post-eviction operations. Some municipalities cooperate to prevent any reconstitution of encampments on their land by setting up fences and other deterrent measures.

²⁹ “The term ‘externalization’ rests on the idea that migration and asylum policies are internal to States and that by reaching across borders, a State relocates its management of asylum and migration to a third country. Externalization involves any form of diplomatic cooperation between migrants’ destination States and their States of origin or transit, and entails direct or indirect interventions for the management of migration and asylum.” “As such, externalization relocates an internal sovereign prerogative of the countries to third countries” [our translation]. See Héliène Thiollet, “Externalisation. Comprendre la diplomatie migratoire de l’Europe” 2024, online: <https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-04738209v2/document>

³⁰ Humans for Rights Network, “State Violence”, 2025, online: <https://www.humansforrights.org/stateviolence>

³¹ In the absence of legal routes for exiled persons wishing to reach the United Kingdom, people often choose “small boat” crossings rather than via lorries crossing the Channel by ferry or through the Channel Tunnel, or aboard the TGV, as they are more effective.

³² Border Forensics, “How ‘stopping the boats’ kills: A digital counter-forensic investigation of the human cost of the UK’s externalised border in the Channel”, 2026, online: https://www.borderforensics.org/investigations/channel/#Numbers_of_deaths

³³ CNDH, “Avis sur la situation des personnes exilées à Calais et Grande Synthe”, 2021.

³⁴ Ligue des droits de l’Homme (LDH), “Comme à Calais, le port de Dunkerque repousse les exilés à coups de barbelés”, 2024, online: <https://site.ldh-france.org/troyes-et-aube/comme-a-calais-le-port-de-dunkerque-repousse-les-exiles-a-coups-de-barbeles/>

The Zero Fixation Point Policy: A Sequence of Violent Acts

The zero fixation point policy is implemented through a sequence of violent acts. Each stage feeds into the next in a chain. Increased police surveillance often precedes evictions and the destruction of living sites. Following evictions, the grounds are ploughed and deforested. Rocks may be placed to impede access, and fences or concrete walls are then erected. The final stage is the deployment of cameras or other surveillance measures.

Since April 2025, evictions have intensified in the Dunkirk area. The frequency has gone from approximately one operation every ten days to weekly operations. These police operations are systematically accompanied by the seizing of tents, blankets, sleeping bags and tarps. They also involve the theft³⁵ or confiscation of personal belongings such as cash, medicine, identity documents and phones. Even in harsh weather conditions, these practices continue without interruption.

“A., who lived for a month and a half in Loon-Plage (April–May 2025), recounts: “In the jungle, the police will come every time. They will just damage the house, what we made. They will just dismiss, burn it, and they will snatch with their sticks”. He describes operations that happened at dawn, which he experienced more than three times: “They came early in the morning... They came and they broke everything. Everybody was shouting, crying. They are not like a human (...), it seems the devil cannot do this kind of work”³⁶.

In the Dunkirk area, evictions take the form of violent evictions and constant harassment. **Most operations are marked by a disproportionate use of force.** Tents are torn while their occupants are sleeping inside, putting their safety at risk. Tear gas is used near places of shelter, brutally waking people up³⁷.

Once the inhabitants have been evicted, living sites are destroyed and rendered uninhabitable. This is often done by turning over the soil and deforesting. Closure and sealing of sites are carried out swiftly, **making for a more discreet form of violence.** Walls, fences, concrete blocks or rocks are placed to make any attempt to return difficult.

A living site in Loon-Plage was repeatedly targeted in 2024 and 2025. Of the 92 evictions recorded in the Dunkirk area in 2025, 20 were targeted at this living site. A final eviction on October 28 left it uninhabited. That day, more than 300 people were forced to leave. Diggers turned over the soil and trees were felled according to several testimonies.

In the days that followed, a concrete wall more than 3 metres high was built over nearly one and a half kilometres along the railway line, blocking access to the site³⁸. **This barrier profoundly changed the daily life of people on the move. It made access to civil society organisations’ distributions, sanitary facilities, water points and informal shops difficult. It also considerably lengthened the journey between living sites.**

From the 12th of November 2025, following large-scale evictions in October, the same living site was occupied by the national police continuously³⁹ to «secure» its closure, primarily the construction of the concrete wall. Law enforcement remained around the construction site day and night for a week, forcing at least 28 people to leave without notice or procedure: no legal basis, no means of contestation, no bailiff present. A few days later, on 20 November, two neighbouring living sites were evicted, forcing at least 42 people to leave. The same day, CRS officers returned to order the last occupants vacate the area by the next day⁴⁰.

³⁵ See “Annual Note 2025 – Dunkirk” in this same report.

³⁶ Testimony collected by the association Human for Rights Network in June 2025. Website: <https://www.humansforrights.org/>

³⁷ Human Rights Observers, “Monthly report Dunkirk area – September 2025”, 2025, online: <https://humanrightsobservers.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Note-Mensuelle-Dunkerque-Septembre-2025-1-2.pdf>

³⁸ Human Rights Observers, “Monthly report Grande-Synthe – October 2025”, online: <https://humanrightsobservers.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Note-mensuelle-GS-octobre-2025.pdf>

³⁹ “Un mur de béton entre migrants et voie ferrée à Loon-Plage”, France 3 Hauts-de-France report, broadcast on November 3, 2025. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n79dbcQXF3Y>

⁴⁰ Human Rights Observers, “Monthly report Dunkirk area – November 2025”, online: <https://humanrightsobservers.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/NM-DK-1125.pdf>

The Motivations Behind the Zero Fixation Point Policy in 2025

The Intensification of Security Discourse

In parallel with the operational escalation since April 2025, security arguments have been used to justify massive recourse to evictions and destruction.

The argument of infrastructure security and industrial risks became particularly central to states discourse in 2025. The authorities increasingly emphasised the dangers that living sites allegedly posed to railway lines, of electrical connections deemed illegal⁴¹, or proximity to high-voltage infrastructure. Not only the county Prefecture but also private actors invoke these dangers to argue that the presence of people on the move would impede the functioning of infrastructure and impair the safety of those who work there or use it⁴². The presence of camps near Seveso sites, sensitive industrial zones or polluted land is highlighted to underscore the vulnerability of people on the move themselves. It is also used to highlight the risks to the general population in the event of an incident.

During a hearing at the Lille Administrative Court⁴³, the Nord county Prefecture argued that the area “hosts 21 Seveso sites and a railway line”. The prefecture argued that “the installation of these camps in this zone exposes companies to risks of intrusion and fire, their employees to risks of stone-throwing, and people on the move as well as local residents to industrial risks”⁴⁴. This argument allows evictions to be presented as quasi-technical preventive measures, or as protective measures against a dangerous industrial environment. In this type of discourse, evictions are presented as a requirement dictated by safety standards, ignoring the deterrence policy it is actually rooted in.

The safety of local residents and “public tranquillity” constitute another pillar of the rhetoric mobilised to justify the intensification of operations. The authorities invoke alleged nuisances, waste and damage. A public meeting organised in Loon-Plage⁴⁵ in 2025 illustrates this narrative well. That very morning, a first operation to dismantle informal shops used by people on the move was carried out. At the meeting, the mayor, Éric Rommel, stated that “the people of Loon-Plage no longer feel at home” and spoke of a “feeling of invasion”⁴⁶ linked to the proximity of informal living sites. That day, statements along the same lines were many. Personal accounts were used to legitimise fear and demands for more firmness. No strong opposition or critical stance to these statements was expressed by the mayor or the state representatives present.

At the same meeting, some comments went further, accusing people on the move of passivity or of causing damage. **These narratives fuel the demand for firmer measures:** reinforcement of transport police, reinstatement of the offence of irregular stay, immediate evictions, fences and rock placements to secure areas. **The weak contestation of these comments by the authorities contributes to a discriminatory discourse. The idea of a diffuse threat helps to present evictions as an expected response.**

This “criminalisation” is part of a longstanding discourse: the accumulation of security arguments to make repression not only possible, but also necessary, acceptable and protective.

Industrial and Commercial Interests: the Port of Dunkirk

Private companies operating industrial sites and logistics services on the Port of Dunkirk rely on the Prefecture and the Port of Dunkirk to obtain «security» measures and the eviction of people on the move. **The Prefecture and the Port of Dunkirk evict people and deploy an arsenal of deterrence measures to respond to port economic concerns that the presence of people on the move appears to threaten.**

Particularly logistics and rail freight companies complain of intrusions onto the railway line and the passage of people on the move disrupting traffic.

In September 2025, Terminal des Flandres, the company operating the port’s container terminal, complained to the Sub-Prefect of Dunkirk about a full stop of rail traffic its freight contractors were compelled to make. The stop was due to the recurrent presence of people on the move on the tracks. Because contractors denied responsibility, Terminal des Flandres had to absorb the financial impact. The company added, in a letter to the Sub-Prefect of Dunkirk:

«It is indeed very difficult to convince logistics actors to once again use rail transport in order to increase the volume of exchanges with the hinterland.»⁴⁷

Intensifying exchanges with the hinterland, the inland area that constitutes the port's economic market, is one of the main priorities for the port's future expansion. One of the port's main expansion projects, named "CAP 2020", has a budget of 300 million euros. It includes plans for the enlargement of the basin that receives container ships. Work has already begun, and the basin will accommodate a new container terminal by 2029⁴⁸.

In the summer of 2025, other companies held the Port of Dunkirk and the Prefecture financially responsible for the harm caused by the lack of security. In letters to the Sub-Prefect, two companies spoke of **financial accountability**: compensation for harm and joint compensation funds. The Sub-Prefecture consistently responds in the same manner, with a summary of measures taken and that it intends to continue: "security works", "evacuations", measures "constantly adapting to the evolving practices of migrants"⁴⁹.

Each time, it is to the Sub-Prefect that companies send their complaints. He is able, together with the Port of Dunkirk (owner of the land), to request evictions from the judicial court, to grant the assistance of law enforcement, and to undertake deterrence measures. This policy therefore involves the deployment of an arsenal of measures.

Companies are not passive spectators of the hostility policy. They actively participate in it. Freight companies want to secure the railway line, and this works through the zero fixation point policy. Ensuring, as the company SNCF Réseau—the country's largest railway infrastructure manager—puts it in an email to the Prefecture, "that large numbers of migrants do not settle in this location"⁵⁰.

The rail freight company Hexafret is particularly notable for its participation. It insisted on at least six occasions⁵¹ in 2025, to the Sub-Prefect and the Port of Dunkirk, for

the intensification of measures. It demanded not only the construction of walls along the railway lines and the sealing of sites, but also the relocation of civil society organisations' distribution point, the eviction of people on the move, the deforestation of living sites, and the turning over of the soil. It added, in a letter to the president of the Port of Dunkirk:

"Deforestation has proven effective and could be continued."⁵²

Deforestation is a central element of deterrence targeted at people on the move. In December 2025, HRO discovered that the Port of Dunkirk was planning a major medium-term strategy to evict all living sites from its land. In the internal memo, the strategy is entitled "progressive nibbling" and intends to make intensive use of deforestation.

It is in this same internal memo that HRO discovered **the ambitions of the Prefect of the Nord County to remove people on the move from all of the Port of Dunkirk's land. This concerns almost all of the current living sites in the Dunkirk area:**

"The Prefect has set as a priority the rapid securing of the areas occupied by migrants on the Port of Dunkirk."⁵³

Those who have followed the history of living sites in the Dunkirk area, as well as the civil society organisations operating in the Dunkirk area, already know what this means. **In the absence of a genuine and dignified reception policy, and by continuing to perpetuate the myth of the "pull factor" that justifies violence and harassment, the Prefect of the Nord county is merely preparing a new phase of displacement of people on the move.** This will lead to even more precarious living conditions. The only unknown variable is the geographical location of this coming displacement.

⁴¹ Syndicat de l'eau, letter of 11/09/2025

⁴² Préfecture du Nord, "CP - Campagne de lutte contre les intrusions sur le réseau ferré", 2025, online: https://www.nord.gouv.fr/contenu/telechargement/103852/731401/file/20251203_CP_R_Campagne%20de%20lutte%20contre%20les%20intrusions.pdf

⁴³ TA Lille, ord. réf. lib. n°2511276, 4 Dec. 2025, "The court orders public authorities to better respond to the basic needs of migrants settled in the Dunkirk area" [our translation], online: <https://lille.tribunal-administratif.fr/decisions-de-justice/dernieres-decisions/le-tribunal-ordonne-aux-autoritespubliques-de-mieux-repondre-aux-besoins-elementaires-des-migrants-installes-dans-le-dunkerquois>

⁴⁴ [Our translation] Tribunal administratif de Lille, ordonnance de référé of December 4, 2025, Médecins du Monde and others, no. 2511276.

⁴⁵ La Voix du Nord, "Insécurité, bus bondés : des Loonois disent leurs griefs face à la présence des migrants", April 30, 2025, online: <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/1581122/article/2025-04-30/insecurite-busbondes-des-loonois-disent-leurs-griefs-face-la-presence-des>

⁴⁶ [Our translation] Human Rights Observers, "Communiqué de presse", May 2025, online: https://humanrightsobservers.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/HRO_Communique_de_Presse1.pdf

⁴⁷ [Our translation] Terminal des Flandres, letter of 18/09/2025

⁴⁸ Grand Port Maritime de Dunkerque, "Dossier de presse : Ensemble célébrons le port de demain", January 20, 2026.

⁴⁹ [Our translations] Sous-préfet de Dunkerque, letters of 30/09/2025, 19/06/2025, and 14/02/2025

⁵⁰ [Our translation] SNCF Réseau, letter of 07/11/2025.

⁵¹ Hexafret in several letters, dated 20/10/2025, 04/07/2025, 06/05/2025, 05/05/2025, 14/02/2025, and 08/01/2025.

⁵² [Our translation] Hexafret, letter of 05/05/2025.

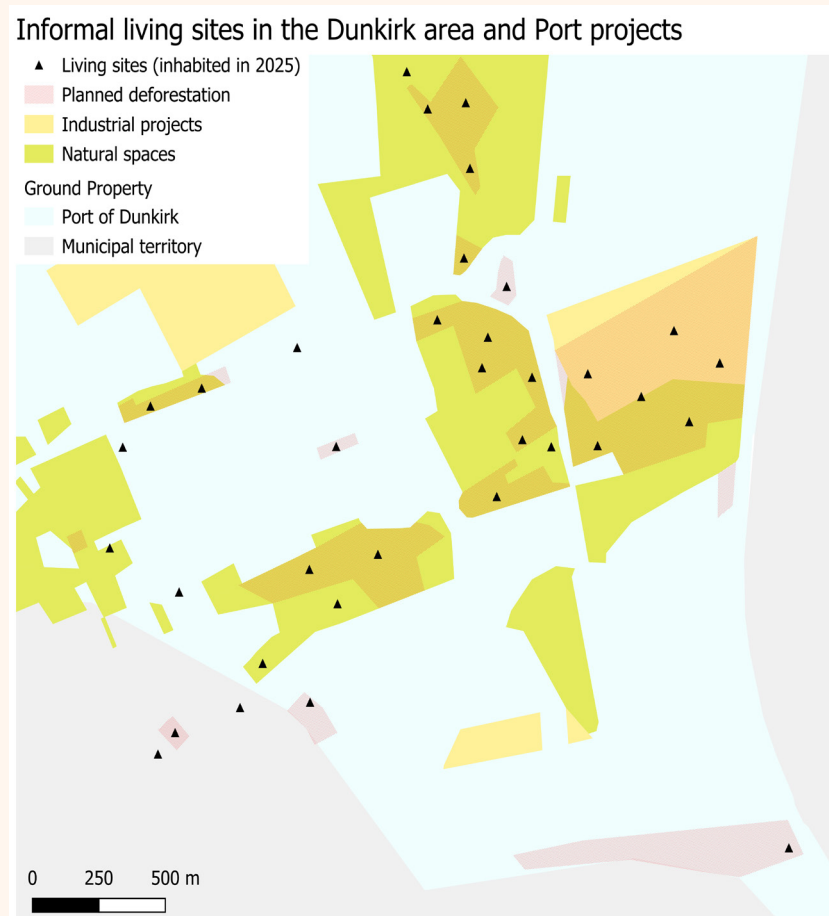
⁵³ [Our translations] Grand Port Maritime de Dunkerque, "Note relative à la sécurisation des emprises occupées par les migrants et stratégie de débroussaillage", November 2025 (received on November 25, 2025 by the TA Lille).

Paradoxes and Consequences of the Zero Fixation Point Policy

Evictions, Deforestation and Environmental Policy

As part of its expansion projects, the Port of Dunkerque has defined a “natural heritage master plan”⁵⁴. **By designating plots of land that it owns as natural spaces, the Port of Dunkirk intends to transform them into natural compensation for the environmental impacts it will have elsewhere.** According to the report submitted as part of the public inquiry for the port’s main expansion project, the CAP 2020 project, this will allow for a “net gain in biodiversity”⁵⁵.

In 2025, almost all of the living sites in the Dunkirk area were located within the spaces designated as natural spaces by the port. The map below represents this overlap. If we add the spaces intended for new industrial installations, these two types of areas – areas concerned either by the environmental management or industrial development projects of the port – cover almost all the places inhabited by people on the move in 2025.



In January 2024, a series of large-scale evictions began targeting a space we will refer to as Living Site 1. It is located in Loon-Plage municipality. Over the course of five months, more than 1,100 people were evicted from this living site. In parallel, deterrence measures were deployed: fences, walls, concertina barbed wire, the turning over of the soil, and intensive deforestation. Today, the site is still inhabited, but in a much less stable manner and in reduced numbers. To make Living Site 1 less attractive, boulders were placed on the path between the site and the organisations’ distribution point. Part of the fence was placed in a way such that it blocked access to a water tank provided by an organisation.

The objective of erasing the presence of people on the move from the site was accomplished. Following operations at Living Site 1, their instigators revelled at their own success. In 2025, the company Hexafret asked the Prefecture to secure another site “on the model of the actions carried out by your services and which have proven effective for [Living Site 1]”⁵⁶.

At the beginning of 2024, in parallel with the evictions at Living Site 1, the consultancy firm Ingérop produced reports for the Port of Dunkirk. These contained maps representing environmental development underway in this same space⁵⁷.



Living site 1 in February 2026. Photo: HRO.

According to documents from the Prefecture, the site has been developed into a compensatory natural space⁵⁸. This is one of the first informal living sites of people in exile to be assimilated and developed into a natural space by the Port of Dunkirk.

During the redevelopment of Living Site 1, the HRO team documented significant deforestation. The felling was undertaken by staff from the Dunkirk Urban Community on land owned by the Port of Dunkirk. The goal was to make space for fences. The deforestation took place 60 metres from what the Port of Dunkirk defined as a compensatory natural space as part of its expansion projects.



The deforested location mentioned above, photographed by HRO in March 2024



by Google in 2026

⁵⁴ In French "Schéma Directeur du Patrimoine Naturel (SDPN)".

⁵⁵ [Our translation] Grand Port Maritime de Dunkerque, "Synthèse et mémoire en réponse de l'enquête publique unique relative au projet CAP 2020", 2023.

⁵⁶ [Our translation] Hexafret, letter of 04/07/2025.

⁵⁷ Préfecture du Nord, Arrêté préfectoral of March 28, 2024 (Projet CAP 2020), Annex 20 (Ingérop Maps).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Trees and vegetation provide the inhabitants of informal living sites with cover, albeit limited, from the weather. **In the Dunkirk area, deforestation is a central element of the French state's policy towards people on the move.** An internal memo from the Port of Dunkirk HRO has had access to, produced in November 2025, describes the port's "clearing strategy":

"The idea is to carry out targeted and consecutive actions in order to dislodge the migrant population zone by zone and subsequently to carry out deforestation/clearing works and security measures preventing reinstallation, following a progressive nibbling approach."⁵⁹

A glaring contradiction emerges. The Port of Dunkirk plans to deforest spaces that it counts in its environmental compensation balance sheet. These spaces constitute part of its promise of "net gain in biodiversity".

Of the 212 hectares where the port plans deforestation to dislodge people on the move, 62 are compensatory natural spaces.

During the public inquiries for the three most important expansion projects of the Port of Dunkerque, the Environmental Authority described the environmental impact assessment commissioned by the Port of Dunkirk as "mediocre"⁶⁰. Regarding the future realisation of compensatory natural spaces, the authority holds that **the absence of a management plan for these spaces provides little assurance as to the effectiveness of the measures. The fact that any deforestation might take place for reasons entirely other than the optimisation of biological values, such as security measures aimed at displacing people, is not mentioned at all in the impact assessments for the port's projects.**

In 2025, the Port of Dunkirk commissioned ecological studies, on an ad-hoc basis, to define the constraints on deforestation within compensatory natural spaces. This information has not been made public. The existence of these studies is known to HRO thanks to the submission of documents by the Nord county Prefecture in a court case at the Administrative Court of Lille in December 2025.

To date, no management plan for compensatory spaces has been published by the port, even though

development has begun and deforestation is a highly recurring event. The Environmental Authority noted this shortcoming in its opinion on the Port of Dunkirk's environmental strategy for the period 2025–2029. The authority is of the view that the only management tool published to date, the natural heritage master plan (SDPN), remains a "black box"⁶¹.

The paradoxes of deforestation reappear. In 2025, the lawyers of the Port of Dunkirk filed an application with the Dunkirk judicial court to obtain an eviction order for a living site. To support their arguments, the lawyers noted that "some tents have been placed in tree clusters causing wild deforestation"⁶². Less than 600 metres away, the Port of Dunkirk itself is deforesting to deter people on the move from settling.

The "wild deforestation" described in the application is located less than 1 km from several of the deforestation measures planned by the Port of Dunkirk as part of its «progressive nibbling» strategy.

As a public industrial and commercial establishment, **the Port of Dunkirk is placed under the administrative supervision of the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy. The port replicates the zero fixation point policy in the same way as the entities of the decentralised French state. It participates in the deterrence policy (evictions, security measures), and in the French state's policy of hostility toward people on the move.**

An old anecdote illustrates how consistent the Port of Dunkirk's policy has been in terms of hostility. In 2010, at a time when some municipalities still offered humanitarian alternatives, in opposition to state policies, the Port of Dunkirk removed a 5,000-litre water tank from its land. The tank had been placed there by the civil society organisation Médecins du Monde for people on the move to have better access to drinking water. **The representative of the Port of Dunkirk at the time summarised the motivation behind the act:**

"We cannot authorise an installation that would tend to perpetuate a site that goes against what the French state is doing in migration matters."⁶³

⁵⁹ [Our translation] Grand Port Maritime de Dunkerque, "Note relative à la sécurisation des emprises occupées par les migrants et stratégie de débroussaillage", November 2025 (received on November 25, 2025 by the TA Lille).

⁶⁰ See: Autorité environnementale, "Avis délibéré sur le projet CAP 2020 du GPM de Dunkerque", May 11, 2023; Autorité environnementale, "2ème avis délibéré sur le projet CAP 2020 du GPM de Dunkerque", August 24, 2023; and F. Bonnet, M. Simoné, C. Hubert & V. Isabelle (IGEDD/CGAAER), "Mission d'appui au préfet du Nord : compensation écologique des projets d'aménagements du Dunkerquois et foncier agricole", July 2024.

⁶¹ Mission régionale d'autorité environnementale (MRAe) Hauts-de-France, "Avis sur le projet stratégique 2025–2029 du Grand Port Maritime de Dunkerque", March 18, 2025.

⁶² [Our translation] Tribunal judiciaire de Dunkerque, GPMD c/ Migrants, Requête aux fins d'expulsion, November 19, 2025.

⁶³ [Our translation] Haydée Sabéran, "L'eau, un bien pas si commun", libelille.fr, August 4, 2010 (republished on the France terre d'asile website)

Invizibilisation of People on the Move and the Consequences on their Living Conditions

In the Dunkirk area, local authorities have historically done very little. Almost all humanitarian provisions for people on the move have been created at the initiative of civil society organisations. Sometimes this has been done in collaboration with certain municipalities in the Dunkirk area, particularly Grande-Synthe. But following the fire at the La Linière humanitarian camp in April 2017, and later the replacement of D. Carême by M. Beyaert as mayor in July 2019, the town of Grande-Synthe aligned itself with the objectives and doctrine of the French state⁶⁴.

Pierre Bonnevalle, author of the most exhaustive report on deterrence policy at the France–United Kingdom border, explains the following:

“In the direct aftermath of the La Linière fire, we observe that a half-security, half-humanitarian apparatus emerged: ‘shelter provision’⁶⁵. Conceived as a mechanism based on the voluntary participation of people on the move, in Grande-Synthe it was negotiated and appropriated to turn it into a mechanism for dismantling living sites. The aim was to address three issues: to offer spaces of respite for people on the move, to reduce their numbers in Grande-Synthe, and to avoid ‘fixation points’. Despite the humanitarian aspirations of the mechanism, the logic of coercive dispersal takes precedence over the will of people on the move, as demonstrated by returns in the days that follow. The French state and the town participate in producing phenomena of waiting, in postponing the moment when people on the move will be able to cross the border. ‘Shelter provision’ displaces, pushes away and disperses people on the move, thereby making their living conditions all the more precarious. In turn, their precarious living conditions legitimise the ‘shelter provision’.⁶⁶”

Non-Existent Humanitarian Services in the Dunkirk Area

The services offered by the French state and local authorities are virtually non-existent.

The French state mandates the association AFEJI to provide shelter in Reception and Situation Assessment Centres (CAES)⁶⁷ from Monday to Friday. For its part, the Dunkirk Urban Community (CUD) installed two water points in December 2023 a few hundred metres apart. These are the only water access points for all the inhabitants, a population fluctuating between 600 and more than 1,600 people.

The rest of the services offered to people on the move are covered by civil society organisations that are not mandated by the state. They operate from a single distribution point, located up to three kilometres from the living sites. They provide cooked food, healthcare, social support, phone charging, and distribution of supplies and clothing.

In order to hold the French state accountable, the associations Refugee Women’s Centre, Médecins du

Monde, Utopia 56, Roots, Salam and Human Rights Observers filed an emergency application for the protection of fundamental freedoms on 18 November 2025 before the Lille Administrative Court. They asked the judge to acknowledge the serious and unlawful infringement of fundamental freedoms committed by the administration within the living sites of people on the move located in the municipalities of Mardyck, Loon-Plage and Grande-Synthe. They called upon the court to order the French state to take immediate and lasting measures to ensure respect for the rights of people on the move present at the border, pending the opening of safe, legal and effective routes to the United Kingdom.

In early December, the state was found liable⁶⁸. The judges recognised failure on the part of the Nord county Prefecture and several local authorities, primarily the town halls of Dunkirk and Loon-Plage. The court ordered them to act within ten days to enable better access to water and hygiene and to set up specific outreach services for unaccompanied minors.

⁶⁴ Plateforme des Soutiens aux Migrant.e.s (PSM) and Pierre Bonnevalle, “l’État français et la gestion de la présence des personnes exilées dans la frontière franco-britannique : harceler, expulser, disperser” 2022, p.233. https://psmigrants.org/documents/8/Rapport_P._Bonnevalle_.pdf

⁶⁵ In this text we have translated the French “mise à l’abri” to the English “shelter provision”. The French term includes the gerund (verbal noun) of the verb “to put”, which in English can be translated to “a putting into”. The term denotes the action of public authorities to offer temporary housing or to relocate people to shelter. The term is also sometimes used to denote a police operation whereby people on the move will be evicted from an informal living site and may be redirected to shelter in Reception and Situation Assessment Centres (CAES in French).

⁶⁶ [Our translation] Ibid

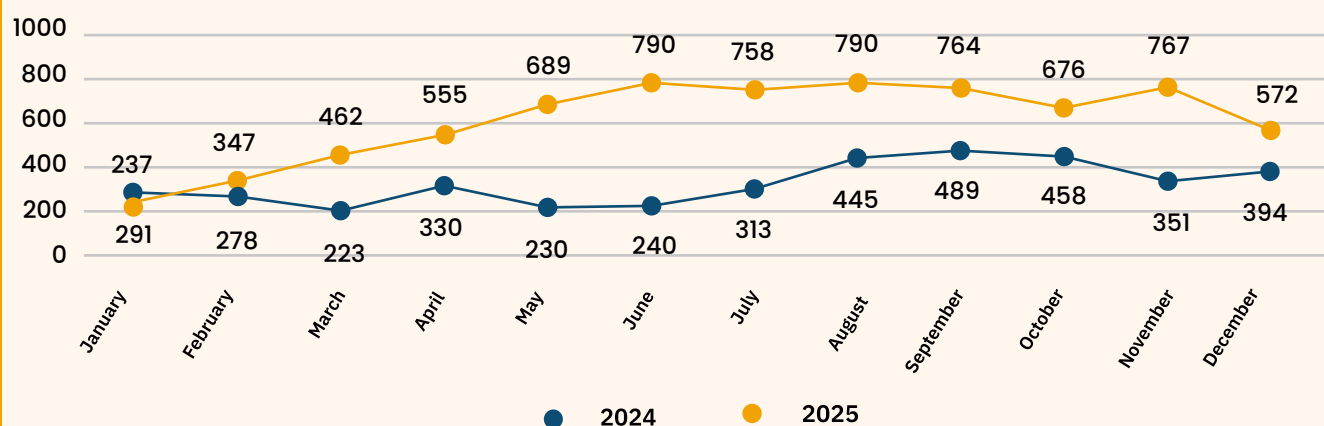
⁶⁷ In French these are called CAES, or “Centres d’accueil et d’examen des situations”. These structures are supposed to provide temporary reception and accommodation and are dedicated to evaluating the social and administrative status of people who wish to claim asylum or are currently in the asylum process (regardless of the specific procedure).

⁶⁸ Gisti, “Dunkerque : L’État condamné pour non-respect de la dignité humaine”, 2025, Online: <https://www.gisti.org/spip.php?article7634>.

Intensification of the Zero Fixation Point Policy

In the spring of 2025, several factors converged. First, the population of people on the move increased. One of the simplest ways to estimate the number of people present is to track the evolution of the number of meals distributed by civil society organisations⁶⁹. Based on the data of the association Salam, which distributes cooked meals four days a week, the increase has been steady since January 2025. Compared to 2024 figures, the gap is particularly significant.

Number of meals distributed by Salam - 2024 / 2025



At the same time, the French state's repressive policy intensified with an increase in the number of evictions from March 2025 onwards⁷⁰. **While the State maintains its stated objective of removing people on the move from this territory, eviction operations have in fact had no impact on the increase or decrease in the number of people present.** Once again, this concrete case dismantles the myth of the "pull factor".

At the macro level, though the zero fixation point policy does not affect the number of people present in the Dunkirk area, it does profoundly impact the living conditions of people surviving in informal living sites. By refusing to offer appropriate shelter for people on the move on the coastline, the French state fails in its duty of protection. This is particularly true for children, who are numerous at living sites in Loon-Plage. **By confiscating and destroying goods necessary for survival, most notably tents and sleeping bags, the state creates fierce competition for scarce resources. By arresting people on the move in a random and arbitrary manner, the state creates a climate of distrust. This leads to reduced recourse to law enforcement services in cases of physical, sexual or psychological violence.**



A group of exiled people evicted and escorted in the Dunkirk area in March 2025. Photo: HRO.

⁶⁹ The figures are always underestimated because many people do not have access to the distribution point, but they do provide a fairly reliable picture of how the situation is developing.

⁷⁰ See 2025 annual note of this report.

Making Visible in Order to Better Make Invisible

The zero fixation point doctrine aims to avoid at all costs another Jungle like the one dismantled in Calais in 2016. The latter was perceived as far too visible, far too costly politically, electorally and in terms of media coverage. The aim is thus to harass, evict and disperse people to make them less visible in the public sphere.

Officially presented as humanitarian “shelter provision” operations, evictions in fact consist of chartering buses to remove people on the move to CAES located far from the coastline. **The French state itself creates dangerous and precarious living conditions on the coast by systematically displacing, destroying camps and personal effects. It then instrumentalises and stages the precarious conditions it has created to justify the urgency of new evictions.** This is how it legitimises and reinforces the discourse of the zero fixation point policy. The game of rendering people invisible takes several forms.

The fact that people on the move walk on railway lines to move around, the basis for numerous complaints from freight companies, and publicly invoked by the Prefecture as a security argument to justify the deterrence policy, is a consequence of attempts to render them invisible. These attempts have led to the imprisonment of living sites within a mesh of fences where there are no safe paths. This imprisonment is a direct result of the absence of a humanitarian policy in the Dunkirk area, and of police operations that have displaced living sites towards these hostile areas.

Waste accumulates around camps because, by destroying them with chainsaws and construction machinery, weekly evictions create mountains of waste. These are not collected by the Dunkirk Urban Community’s cleaning agents. In the area within Loon-Plage municipality where living sites are located – stretching 2 km from east to west – there is only one skip made available to people on the move to dispose of their waste⁷¹. Evictions and security measures are gradually pushing people on the move away from the Port of Dunkirk’s land and towards the town of Loon-Plage. This makes the precarious and unsanitary conditions in which people on the move survive more visible to residents of Loon-Plage.

At a public meeting in Loon-Plage in April 2025, the mayor of Loon-Plage and residents complained about

waste left by people on the move. One resident asked whether the presence of waste was not due to the fact that skips were not being provided. Other residents responded that the customs of people on the move were to blame. The Sub-Prefect of Dunkirk chose to present people on the move as unmanageable individuals who refuse asylum in France and accommodation in CAES and obstinately try to reach the United Kingdom. He justified the inhospitality of the French state’s policy: “We make the territory inhospitable for them, so that they go elsewhere [...] Every week, we conduct operations in the camps so that they are destabilised, do not grow, shrink and stop settling.”⁷²

Administratively, people on the move are perceived and treated as if the state does not have to guarantee their fundamental rights. The Port of Dunkirk is under administrative supervision of the French state, but its land falls under private law. It can therefore have recourse to the *ex parte* order procedure⁷³. This type of procedure allows a single judge to order an eviction without hearing both parties, simply because the bailiff claims not to have been able to identify the inhabitants. In practice, the bailiff systematically presents himself at living sites without an interpreter. This blocks all communication and makes it possible not to identify any occupants.

This method violates the rights of people on the living sites. They are never warned in advance of their eviction: no warning or departure order is given to them before the intervention. They do not know what happens to their belongings that are confiscated. As they are not given any official papers, they have no legal means of defending themselves or appealing.

Today, people on the move very rarely benefit from public policies aimed at improving their living conditions and respecting their fundamental rights. The French state touts the “humanitarian” component of its policy. But what is presented as humanitarian measures is in fact designed to serve the zero fixation point policy. The most eloquent example remains the CAES system⁷⁴, the destination of “shelter provision” operations: they are all located away from the coastline. The same is true for facilities dedicated to unaccompanied minors (UAMs), which have been located away from the coastline since the closure of the FI hotel in Saint-Pol in June 2025.

⁷¹ At the end of 2025, the State was ordered by the Administrative Court of Dunkirk to improve waste collection in the Dunkirk area. A new skip has been added, but waste collection remains inadequate.

⁷² Human Rights Observers (HRO), “press releases”, May 2025. See : https://humanrightsobservers.org/wpcontent/uploads/2025/05/HRO_Communique_de_Presse-1.pdf ; translation by the authors.

⁷³ In France this type of procedure is called “ordonnance sur requête”. They involve a motion in a judicial court without the presence of the opposing party.

⁷⁴ Apart from their use in the “zero fixation point” policy, the Reception and Situation Assessment Centres (CAES) have proven to be profoundly ill-suited to the profiles of those present at the France-United Kingdom border. Strictly limited to asylum applications in France, they effectively exclude those covered by the Dublin III Regulation, those who have already had their applications rejected, and those whose aim is to reach the United Kingdom and who therefore do not wish to apply for asylum in France.

In reality, the public authorities are failing in their duty to protect people. In Dunkirk, the emergency number 115, through which referrals to the public emergency housing services⁷⁵ are made, systematically refuses shelter requests concerning people on the move. These refusals are carried out systematically despite the principle of unconditionality, which is enshrined in the Social Action and Families Code⁷⁶.

From a planning perspective, the rendering invisible of people on the move is even more striking. People on the move are entirely erased from the future of territories in which, according to the co-authors of the zero fixation point policy, they do not belong. When they are considered, it is to imagine how they could cease to be part of the territory.

Take the example of the intermunicipal urban zoning plan of the Dunkirk Urban Community (CUD)⁷⁷, adopted in December 2022 and then modified four times, until very recently⁷⁸. This type of plan is a legal document that structure local policies on urban planning, housing and transport for a period of ten to fifteen years. According to the CUD website, this document “reflects the will of all the municipalities and all the inhabitants of the Dunkirk conurbation to work together to build an ever more dynamic, attractive and pleasant territory to live in”⁷⁹. People on the move are not mentioned once.

Similarly, people on the move do not appear in the impact assessments for the port expansion projects. A keyword search in some twenty official documents relating to the Port of Dunkirk expansion projects confirms their total absence⁸⁰. They are mentioned only in relation to the extension of the anti-intrusion wall intended to prevent them from accessing the port basin. The word «migration» does appear numerous times in this dossier, but it was only the migration of birds that was deemed worthy of attention. It was the interests of birds that was taken into account, not those of humans surviving in the same spaces. In 2025, the French state and local authorities appear to have reached their objectives. People on the move have

been definitively evicted from part of the land needed for the Port of Dunkirk’s development projects. The rest of the land is the target of weekly evictions. **This policy has led to increased hardship for people on the move in the area. At the same time, anger is felt among some town residents neighbouring the living sites. Far from slowing the realisation of their projects, this shift in local public opinion has been instrumentalised by the co-authors of the zero fixation point policy.**

The entire policy of the French state towards people on the move on the northern coastline is oriented towards the objective of eliminating points of fixation. Even the humanitarian aspects serve to disperse and distance people on the move. The zero fixation point policy represents an enormous financial burden whose scale and expenditure remain obscure. According to a United Kingdom House of Commons report, the UK is providing a funding package of 540 million euros for the period 2023–2026. According to the French Ministry of the Interior, this covers 62% of overall costs, including the law enforcement and the reimbursement of costs incurred by local authorities⁸¹. By deduction, the remaining 38% borne by the French state should amount to approximately 331 million euros for the same period.

Only the French state knows the real content of the figures made public. It is not clear whether contracts concluded with private companies are taken into account. This type of expenditure is generally ignored in such reports. The true share borne by the United Kingdom could therefore be significantly lower⁸². There is also an environmental cost that remains obscure, due to the absence of environmental management plans from the Port of Dunkirk. The port is carrying out significant deforestation on its land for the sole purpose of deterrence. **The Port of Dunkirk, a public establishment, replicates the French state’s zero fixation point policy and its opacity.** The impact of deforestation on the effectiveness of its environmental policy remains obscure. This demonstrates the lack of transparency enjoyed by the co-authors of the repressive policy towards people on the move.

⁷⁵ In France, a dedicated emergency accommodation service exists (known as the “Service intégré d’accueil et d’orientation”), which operates the 115 emergency hotline and administers the statutory obligation at the departmental level to provide emergency shelter, pursuant to the Code of Social Action and Families.

⁷⁶ Articles L111-1 à L591-1 of said code.

⁷⁷ Communauté Urbaine de Dunkerque, “Qu’est ce qu’un PLUI HD ?”, online: <https://www.communaute-urbainedunkerque.fr/pluihd>.

⁷⁸ For example, on 30 June 2025, the CUD launched the public hearing of the plan, which involves bringing the PLUI HD into compliance with the development and extension project for the Puythouck retail area located in the municipality of Grande-Synthe.

⁷⁹ [Our translation]

⁸⁰ This study, carried out by HRO, is based on a word frequency analysis conducted using a corpus of 26 official documents available online. This collection includes publications from the Grand Port Maritime de Dunkerque as well as administrative documents (the Environmental Authority’s opinion, prefectural decrees, a summary of the CAP 2020 public inquiry and an opinion on the 2025–2029 strategic plan) relating to the port’s expansion.

⁸¹ National Assembly (17^e législature), Minutes of the Committee of Inquiry hearing (Réf. I17cetouq2526010), Online: https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/comptesrendus/cetouq/I17cetouq2526010_compte-rendu.

⁸² See the testimony of researcher Alice Mesnard before the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into the Le Touquet Agreements: National Assembly (17th legislature), Minutes of the Committee of Inquiry hearing (Ref. I17cetouq2526011), Online: https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/comptesrendus/cetouq/I17cetouq2526011_compte-rendu.pdf.

"CLEANING" THE BORDER:

The eviction industry in Calais and Dunkirk areas

"Doing borders" in Calais/Grande-Synthe includes violent evictions of people on the move. An important but neglected actor is the French cleaning company *Apogée Propreté Conseil* (APC, engl. Top-Level Cleaning Consulting). Conducting an ethnographic case study, this article elaborates on **the role of the APC cleaning team to reflect on the border violence orchestrated by the French state**. Embedding evictions within the (EU) border industry, this article argues that **there is state-constructed border secrecy governing the France/UK border**. This leads to think that there is an eviction industry that is as institutionalised as it is obscure.

This article is based on the thesis of a volunteer at **Human Rights Observers**, Paulina Medek, currently studying at the MSc International Master in Advanced Research in Criminology and is possible thanks to the financial support by the Nederlandse Vereniging voor Criminologie.

Researching "doing borders" in Calais and Dunkirk areas

Theory: Evictions as strategy and border industry as mechanism

In the EU, "migration has become business, big business" as Gammeltoft-Hansen (2013, p. 2) puts it. And what about the France/UK border? According to Davies et al.'s (2025) report, "business is booming for companies" (p. 32) involved in the process of bordering the English Channel. This aligns with Lemberg-Pedersen's (2013) insight that borderscapes are "dynamic and multifaceted sites of interventions for public and private actors" (p. 152). **As such, it can be argued that the France/UK border is embedded within a border industry. Evictions in Calais and Dunkirk areas form an eviction industry as elaborated in the following.**

As well-established by activists, scholars and journalists, a defining feature of the border (industry) in Calais and Dunkirk areas is the zero fixation point (or anti-fixation) policy. Through violent evictions every 48 hours in Calais and raids every one to two weeks in Grande-Synthe, **French law enforcement exercises a zero-tolerance policy toward any "fixation points"**. For Tazzioli (2020b), dispersal is a spatial tactic to "scatter migrants across space" (p. 122). Reflecting a "paranoia towards the development of fixation point" (Van Isacker, 2019, p. 617), evictions at the french-british border try to govern "mobility through mobility" (Tazzioli, 2020a, p. 4). **As such, evictions qualify as a governance strategy of dispersal that involves state and non-state actors, namely the French police and the cleaning company APC.**

How do evictions proceed?

To contextualise the analysis, a brief outline on how evictions proceed in Calais and Grande-Synthe is needed, highlighting the key differences between the two sites in relation to APC cleaners.

At the France/UK border, evictions are police operations.

STEP 1 : Typically, a convoy of vehicles arrives at an informal living site to disperse people on the move and dismantle their encampments. Led by police vehicles, the convoy includes vans by APC cleaning company as well as additional vehicles with translators and representatives of other public authorities, such as asylum officials and local politicians.

STEP 2 : Whereas the French police removes people,

STEP 3 : the APC cleaning team “cleans” space through seizing personal belongings.

Between the Calais and Dunkirk areas, evictions differ both in scale and frequency (see annual reports). Convoys consist between eight and forty vehicles, including two to four vans from the clean-up team, as well as additional cars used to transport clean-up staff, and between five and twenty APC employees.

Whilst APC generally uses its own vans to collect and remove items during the majority of evictions in Calais, evictions in Grande-Synthe, on the other hand, involve the use of skips provided by subcontractors to collect the items seized during the operation



Based on this strategy, **the border industry provides the system that brings together diverse actors mutually performing borderwork.** Being outsourced, this borderwork is privatised and includes the “envisioning, constructing, maintaining, and erasing [of] borders” (Rumford, 2008, p. 2). While some scholars analyse the EU border industry from an economic perspective (Andersson, 2014; Isaac, 2024), and others adopt a sociological lens to examine migrant dispersal strategies (Davies & Isakjee, 2019; Tazzioli, 2020b), these two phenomena have not been systematically thought together. Highlighting its relevance, this paper addresses this gap by adopting a socio-economic perspective.

Method: Border ethnography

Between September and November 2025, fieldwork was carried out at Human Rights Observers as part of a research project examining the role of private non-state actors within border industries. For evictions, the French state contracts the cleaning company APC to “do borders”. HRO follows these evictions to document human rights abuses and state violence. A series of interviews was conducted with people involved in the evictions in Calais and Grande-Synthe. This included a wide range of individuals, including volunteers from other organisations, people on the move, APC cleaners, staff from the depot and waste dump, police officers, hotel personnel and many more. The data from the ethnography and interviews is used in this article.

According to a review of the literature, no study has been conducted on the involvement of APC as a private company in EU border control. As such, the options for cross-validation data from the field are limited. This makes each piece of information equally valuable and fragile. Instead of discussing the absurdly massive investments by the UK and France into border technology and police presence that attracted the attention of most border scholars and activists, this article highlights a more neglected aspect of the border industry revolving around Calais and Dunkirk areas: “cleaning operations” by the French police and contracted cleaners.



Eviction industry in Calais and Dunkirk areas

Big or small business? APC as a private, non-state actor

As mentioned before, there is academic consensus that “migration has become business, big business” (p. 2) as formulated by Gammeltoft-Hansen (2013). Accordingly, scholars also presume that the business’ players are big. Across the border industries’ sectors, companies are assumed to be powerful private non-state actors. They are presented as a high-skilled labour force with low replaceability due to their high specification. This mystification culminates in the use of the label unrivalled expert (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2013, p. 159) for companies. However, evictions in Calais and Dunkirk areas present an opposing image.

A retired cleaner says that APC is “the only opportunity to get a job that easily”⁸³. He further explains that APC employees are usually people “broken by life”⁸⁴ with life trajectories of drug abuse and prison sentences. In

line with the low-skilled nature of cleaning work, there is a low degree of professionalisation in APC. During evictions, APC cleaners were absurdly under-equipped: APC cleaners carried wooden pallets with their bare hands whereas the police stood at the perimeter heavily geared-up (with plastic shoe covers and thick gloves) and armed (with weapons). Informal conversations with members of the cleaning team suggest that there is a high staff turnover, and that staff members often have precarious contracts. Further discussions during eviction operations suggested that little information is provided to staff, leaving them in the dark regarding the orders and objectives of their assignments. In short, evictions in Calais do not fit into the image of a “big business” as an unrivalled expert. I propose to understand APC as a fungible non-expert.



APC is a small-scale company of “around 30 employees”⁸⁴ organised in a simple, hierarchical structure. Due to the low-skilled nature of this borderwork, **there is a high degree of replaceability for APC company and its employees.** APC’s responsibility for frequent, smaller evictions in Calais and rarer but larger operations in Grande-Synthe leads to a high turnover of temporary employees. According to a cleaner, APC relies on its self-compiled “list of people to call”⁸⁴ on Monday mornings to request their work for a 7-hour eviction shift the same week. Requiring high flexibility without offering reliability, these temporary workers are employed for a maximum of 4 shifts per month. **This short-term employment is irregular and precarious;** it amounts to a maximum of 28 hours of minimum wage work per month.

⁸³ Our translation from an interview.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Borderscape contracts: APC and the French police

The working hypothesis here is that evictions in Calais and Grande-Synthe areas illustrate a stable and strict division of labour. The French state purchases border services on the (im)mobility of people in exile (Cranston et al., 2018, p. 549). **In Calais and Dunkirk areas, this market divides evictions into two components: the removal of people by the French police and the cleaning and clearing of space by APC.** While the French police retain the monopoly on coercion and remove people on the move, they contract the cleaning company APC to subsequently dismantle their living sites. Without exception, the police never touch personal belongings, according to HRO's observations. **This strict division of labour allows for shifts of accountability. This shifted accountability is manifested in institutionalised but obscure ways through borderscape contracts.**

In border industries, borderscape contracts define the relations between its actors. According to Lemberg-Pedersen (2013), borderscape contracts are the "processes whereby the dissolution, redefinition or re-territorialization of borderscapes is outsourced" (p. 155).

Here, borderscape contracts not only divide labour by specifying responsibilities between contracting parties, but also manifest power relations between different state and non-state actors (Menz, 2013, p. 120). Through the allocation of tasks and the structuring of long-term relationships, these contracts produce borderwork via outsourcing.

At this border, evictions are also subject to outsourcing. There is a contract between the French police and APC company. In addition, eviction operations in Calais and Dunkirk areas "follow a very strict protocol"⁸⁵, according to an APC cleaner. The cleaner adds that the cleaning team is "obligated to wait"⁸⁶ for the French police to remove people on the move from the living site. Then, APC cleaners are allowed to start cleaning and clearing the space. It can be deduced that the borderscape contract and the operation protocol between French state authorities and the cleaning company APC engrain the division of labour on paper.



⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid

De-accountability effect: The French police not only scattering people on the move, but also producing harm

However, borderscape contracts also give rise to the problem of de-accountability effects through state impunity. In the complexity of (sub-)contracting for the division of borderwork, **establishing “real-links”** (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013, p.134) **between state actions and human rights violations turn blurry as they are mediated by private companies.** As such, borderscape contracts serves as a blueprint for power and its diffusion. Here, the contract between APC and the French state clarifies their relation but obscures rights violations. **By engaging in the eviction industry, the French state does not only scatter people through displacement but also scatters harm through outsourcing.**

While one APC employee insists that they “are not doing anything illegal”⁸⁷, another retired cleaner confirms to me that valuable items such as money and phones regularly get “lost along the way”⁸⁸, using air quotes to signal cynicism. The retired cleaner claims that these documents record all the objects that were seized during an eviction. Though APC cleaners are obliged to follow police instructions that include an imposed confidentiality on eviction operations, they are allowed to touch, take and decide over people on the move’ belongings. The cyclical, persisting nature of evictions in the contractual relationship between APC and the French police is reflected in the habitual “signing of papers”, which signals the end of each eviction for HRO.

Evictions in Calais and Grande-Synthe areas show that giving APC just enough power over people on the move’ belongings create an accountability void that enables the French police to act with impunity. When people on the move- or activists on their behalf - raise concerns, the police and APC figuratively point their fingers at each other to shrug off responsibility. Asking for information about the belongings seized during an ongoing eviction proves pointless: the police insist that they do not touch anything to imply that APC knows more about the handling of seized items, while APC claims to report everything to the police and that they cannot disclose any details.

As a result, power diffusion allows for harm diffusion. The transfer of limited, just enough, operational power from the French police to the cleaning company APC results in a loss of accountability within the state/non-state relationship. By dividing labour between the removal of people and the clearing of space, the blueprint of power for the French police increases. **Here, with little responsibility transferred, high accountability is given away.** This is exacerbated with the state-constructed secrecy surrounding evictions.

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Ibid

Border secrecy in Calais and Dunkirk areas

French state as creator of secrecy

Before discussing what cannot be seen, it is important to discuss what can be, or is meant to be, seen. For the France/UK border, some features of its violence are hyper-visible, while others are invisibilised. The border spectacle may be divided into on-scene and off-scene (Andersson, 2014, p. 139). The on-scene spectacle is defined by direct, visible human suffering. This includes images, articles and reports on the destruction of people on the move' belongings and bodies as a result of evictions. This includes images of demolished camps with bedding scattered in the mud and stories of traumatised people reporting on the psychological toll of the zero point de fixation policy. These eye- and ear-catching moments receive comparatively extensive attention. By focusing on people on the move as on-scene victims, this tends to result in a "celebration of violence" (Lindberg, 2024, pp. 7-8).



In contrast, the off-scene spectacle unfolds in indirect, rather invisible and thus less narrated forms of human oppression (Tazzioli, 2021, p. 6). This includes the normalisation of the process of eviction; the convoy of police and cleaners is bureaucratically managed as a routinely deployed exercise of public order. There is a banalisation of violence. This eviction process classifies as off-scene border spectacle, a routinised yet invisible violence, conducted by cleaners as off-scene enforcers. Evictions in Calais and Dunkirk areas build on secrecy. As the evictions proceed behind a security perimeter, the contracted cleaners and their work are rarely addressed. The perimeter ensures that APC's role in "doing borders" is obscured from HROs' attempts to document border violence.



Eviction cycle: APC and other actors

On-scene, people on the move and the police might be considered the main actors. However, there are other relevant side actors that are neglected in border studies (Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 17). To understand the eviction cycle in Calais and Dunkirk areas, it would be misleading to focus on the APC cleaning team without relating them to other eviction actors.

Whilst APC and its cleaning workers are considered to be at the heart of the eviction cycle, there are also actors on the periphery who have an indirect relationship with APC, such as hotel staff providing accommodation for the CRS in Calais and Grande-Synthe areas.

It is important here to distinguish between evictions in Calais and those in Grande-Synthe. In Calais, key actors include municipal staff at “La Ressourcerie du Calaisis” and private staff from the waste management company Opale Environnement. APC workers hand over the seized goods to these two actors, either so that they can be redistributed to other people on the move (at the recycling centre), or so that they can be sorted into different categories of waste (waste management). In Grande-Synthe, where there is no recycling centre, it is assumed that the main actors also include private staff from other waste management companies responsible for collecting the skips filled with items seized during evictions.



@elio_j_

Building on this, it is argued that the eviction process carried out by APC employees – though seemingly straightforward if understood as the seizure of belongings – involves uncertainty, randomness, and strategic secrecy (Marmo, 2023, p. 1549). Depending on the evictions site, people on the move face different realities between by either having the possibility to replace their own bedding items with others at the ressourceurie (Calais) or not as all belongings are sent directly to the waste disposal (Grande-Synthe). Depending on the police’s chef d’opération of the eviction, different items are selected, and they are treated differently. The police “strategy” varies among many factors in its approach (emptying tents or collecting full tents) and number (taking some or all tents).

Although, a “solution of replacement” arguably exists in Calais in form of the Ressourcerie, this is accompanied by state-constructed uncertainty. Assuming that there are police instructions, APC cleaners categorise belongings as either reusable or disposable. If reusable, the assumption would be that items are transferred to the public Ressourcerie. However, people on the move consistently report that they are unable to recover their original personal belongings. Instead, they are provided with “another set” of tent, blanket and tarp. Moreover, the numbers of (sleeping) items seized during evictions do not correspond to those available at the Ressourcerie. This discrepancy is also due to the use of a private waste disposal. Relying on Opale Environnement, APC contracts another private company to sort and recycle ‘waste’ found at evictions sites. **The categorisation between reusable and disposable belongings operates as a tool of definitional power.**

There is no transparent communication regarding the eviction strategy itself. This unpredictability must be understood as strategic opacity, just as the sorting and handling of personal belongings is. Both those being evicted and researchers are denied access to essential information: there is no access to public procurement contracts, such as the one obtained by APC from the

state, nor to the links and distribution of orders between the police and APC. **Given the silence imposed on the subject of evictions, borders function as a state-controlled arena where violence is exercised with complete impunity** (Mountz & Hyndman, 2006, p. 459). **Not only is it impossible to speak with APC staff and no information is provided during deportations, but the deportation cycle is also characterised by secrecy even outside of deportations.** Those working for state-employed and state-mandated bodies, APC and the recycling centre, have expressed fears of losing their jobs when asked questions as part of research such as this.

In this regard, De Genova (2012) argues that **the “border theatre” allows the state to fictitiously simplify the complex reality of migration and violence at the borders** (p. 493). **By creating gaps in information, the French state establishes a border secrecy that defines the cycle of deportations.** It can therefore be argued that these informational gaps create a grey area regarding executive power within both the APC society and the French police. Consequently, the French state pursues a policy of ignorance (Proctor, 2008, p. 6) towards people on the move and those who, out of solidarity, attempt to understand them and defend their rights.

SPOTLIGHT ON - LA CAPUCHE MOBILISÉE:

AN ASSOCIATION WHOSE ACTIVITIES ARE SHAPED BY EVICTION OPERATIONS AT INFORMAL LIVING SITES IN CALAIS

Who is La Capuche Mobilisée ?

La Capuche Mobilisée is an association under the French 1901 law, active in Calais since January 2025 to fill a critical gap in meeting the material needs of people in exile following the departure of an association that had been providing the same services. **La Capuche Mobilisée** works to build a dignified and sustainable response to urgent material needs. In Calais, this takes the form of services that ensure both social and environmental sustainability: distribution of essential items (tents, sleeping bags, etc.), laundry washing, and the collection and reuse of abandoned clothing and camping equipment. At the same time, they work in collaboration with other actors at the border to challenge governments, counter systems of oppression, and demand dignified reception conditions for people in situations of exile.

What work does La Capuche Mobilisée do?

La Capuche Mobilisée also distributes tents, tarpaulins and sleeping bags three times a week to people living on the streets in Calais. The team also helps to keep the free shop at the Maison d'Entraide et de Ressources (M.E.R) running by supplying stock and carrying out sorting work.

The activities of La Capuche Mobilisée in figures, from 1 January to 31 December 2025

DISTRIBUTION OF:



3345 Tents



3189 Sleeping bags



1016 Tarpaulins



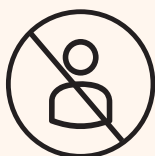
249 Blankets

THIS CORRESPONDS TO:



6690

people who were able to benefit from a material distribution operation



12198

people who could not receive equipment at the time they requested it and/or when they repeated the request but were still on the waiting list



594

people who informed the association that their tent had been confiscated during a police operation

LA CAPUCHE MOBILISÉE ALSO MANAGED TO RECOVER:

168kg of clothing from informal living sites

1313 tents **4001** sleeping bags

103 tarpaulins from festivals

On average, the people concerned waited 6.5 days before obtaining a tent during 2025. This figure increased during the winter season, particularly from October onwards, with an average waiting time of 10 days.

What challenges does La Capuche face on a daily basis?

Despite the unconditional right to emergency accommodation under French law, the solutions provided by the authorities are largely insufficient for the tens of thousands of people who reach the northern coastline each year. Over the 12-month period, between 500 and 2,000 people are forced to sleep rough in the Calais area, in informal living sites. The solutions proposed by the State, particularly during the winter period, are wholly inadequate: the Severe Cold Weather Plan (Plan Grand Froid – PGF) was implemented for only 18 nights, and the 115 emergency accommodation hotline is saturated.

Regarding the distribution of tents, tarpaulins and sleeping bags, **La Capuche Mobilisée** operates through a system of individual requests by telephone, as well as a referral system coordinated with the other field-based organisations. It is impossible to meet all requests, which is why the association has introduced a waiting list.

Waiting times increase with the arrival of new people at informal living sites or in the Calais area, and above all during evictions: over the winter, because of these operations, waiting times reached up to 16 days. As one member of La Capuche team explained: “we have many cases where people sign up to the list, wait for days, collect the tent from us, and then after a few days come back because the tent they had to wait all that time for has been destroyed or confiscated by the authorities. And this causes frustration because people have to go through the whole registration and waiting process again from the beginning (registering, waiting, etc.).”

Following major eviction operations, referred to by the State as “operations to bring people to safety”, attempts at a response are put in place in coordination with other associations to organise emergency distributions. In practice, these distributions are still not enough to meet demand.

On Tuesday 30 September 2025, the largest living site in Calais was evicted. Many people found themselves on the streets, without suitable accommodation solutions. **La Capuche mobilisée**, with the help of Care4Calais and Utopia 56, carried out emergency distributions of camping equipment in order to mitigate the consequences of the eviction. However, that very morning, Human Rights Observers (HRO) witnessed the confiscation of at least 65 tents by the cleaning company APC, contracted by the State, as shown in this photograph.



At the end of November 2025, the largest living site in Calais, located near the hospital, began to be targeted by eviction operations. Two police operations took place, involving numerous seizures of equipment (more than 90 tents confiscated according to HRO observations, as well as more than 30 tarpaulins). Repeating this endless cycle, distribution associations such as **La Capuche mobilisée** tried to organise themselves to respond to needs that were far greater than the available stock.



DISCRIMINATION IN ACCESS TO TRANSPORT FOR PEOPLE STUCK AT THE BORDER

In Calais, essential transport hubs, specifically the central bus and train stations, have been repurposed from public utilities into primary sites for the enactment of restrictive border policies. Displaced people are subjected to discriminatory racial profiling, manifesting in arbitrary identity checks, ticket inspections, invasive searches and arrests. By restricting access to transport, the state exacerbates the vulnerability of displaced populations, limiting their access to welfare, basic resources, and asylum. This strategy upholds a colonial logic that identifies racialised bodies as inherently suspicious, prioritising securitisation over humanitarian support, and creating a racialised hierarchy of access to rights.

“

“There are always a lot of police at the central station to catch people – on the train and the bus. They come looking and then they take people. They are there morning, night, afternoon – all the time. They ask for your ID and they gave me a paper to leave France. I had to run away from them to escape.”

Yousef (testimony collected by Humans for Rights Network in September 2025)

”

Calais is a city characterised by heightened police activity, exercising constant surveillance of public transport hubs. Throughout 2025, Human Rights Observers (HRO) documented the systematic deployment of CRS (French riot police) and other police units to Calais’s central train station and across Calais’ bus network, **targeting people on the move with arbitrary harassment and in doing so generating a climate of fear and insecurity**. These checks were often carried out on **an entirely discriminatory basis**: people racialised as non-white⁸⁹ were held back and subjected to ticket and ID checks whilst white passengers were allowed to board seamlessly. **This violates principles of non-discrimination** protected by the French penal code⁹⁰, the French constitution⁹¹, European human rights law⁹², and international human rights conventions⁹³. The bus network plays an essential role in access to medical treatment, welfare, and the provision of both food and non-food items like tents. The train network is also an essential lifeline for people on the move due to the geographical distribution of French state services. Emergency accommodation and centres for unaccompanied minors are located far from Calais, **supporting the state’s mission to prevent points of fixation and keep displaced people away from the coast**. Additionally, the state-run facilities that enable access to the asylum-seeking procedure are situated in Lille⁹⁴. Therefore, anyone living in Calais that wishes to apply for asylum, submit documents, or attend important meetings regarding their asylum application, has no choice but to travel to Lille by train.

Instead of providing access to these services, our observations show that the French state chooses to pursue of a strategy of securitisation which replaces care and support with harassment and detention, preventing people on the move from exercising their fundamental rights to shelter, asylum, welfare, movement and non-discrimination.

To document the systematic nature of this discrimination, HRO conducted an intensive observation mission at the train station from 1 to 12 December 2025. The results of this observation, along with our findings of harassment on the Calais bus network, are analysed in this article with insights from critical security studies, surveillance studies, and critical border literature to explore how these police operations infringe upon the human rights of people on the move. **It will show how the discriminatory surveillance of displaced people at public transport hubs in Calais can be directly linked to colonial techniques of managing colonised populations, and demonstrate that surveillance does not in fact provide security, but determines racialised identities and generates a permanent sense of insecurity to enforce social order. This can be seen as a form of social warfare to control people on the move, who are seen to pose a threat to this social order by their mobility itself. This policing is therefore reflective of a structural racism that differentially allocates rights depending on skin colour.**



⁸⁹ "Racialised population" is defined by the League of Rights and Freedoms as follows: "Racialised refers to a person who belongs, in reality or in perception, to a group that has undergone a process of racialisation. Racialisation is a political, social and mental process of othering (Report of the Montreal Police Service, 'Racial profiling and police stops: analysis of stopping practices and their discriminatory effects' "(2019)). This definition was adopted by the Superior Court of Canada in the case of Joseph-Christopher Luamba v. Attorney General of Quebec (2022, QCCS 3866).

⁹⁰ Article 225-1.

⁹¹ Article 1.

⁹² Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

⁹³ Article 2(1) and Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 2(2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

⁹⁴ The Guichet Unique de la Préfecture de Lille is located in the Prefecture du Nord in Lille. This is the one-stop counter where asylum seekers from the Nord and Pas-de-Calais regions go to register their asylum application, have identity checks, and start the formal asylum process. Moreover, the SPADA (First Reception Structure for Asylum Seekers) in Lille provides initial reception, guidance, and support for asylum seekers and schedules appointments at the guichet unique for formal registration. There is currently no SPADA in Calais.

Train Station Observations

Methodology

Over a 10-day period, HRO carried out an intensive data collection mission observing police and security activity at the train station, focussing particularly on the prevention of access to trains to and from Lille. From Monday 1 to Friday 12 December 2025, 2 to 3-hour shifts were carried out in pairs from 05:15 to 18:50, with each pair subsequently submitting a report on noteworthy incidents. The data collected was then compiled and analysed and will be presented below.

The mission was principally observational in nature. Therefore, no photos or videos were taken and interactions between observers and the police, SNCF agents or security agents, were limited to identity checks initiated by the police. Interactions with people who wanted to board a train were only recommended if they did not interfere with the observation mission and if they were possible, with the language barrier serving as a key obstacle. This approach explains the very limited number of people identified as asylum seekers, which is likely well below the actual number.

Findings



During the observation sessions, observers noted the presence of law enforcement officers (national police, CRS riot police, border police) both throughout the station and on the forecourt. Over the 10 days of observation, a police presence was observed at least once during 43 of 50 shifts, or 86% of the shifts observed. During this time, 149 trains departed from Calais Ville station towards Lille (direct or via a connection offered by the SNCF connect website). **This is significant because of the dissuasive effect heightened police presence has on people wishing to seek asylum, who do not yet have the right to stay in France and may fear being arrested.**

Access to trains to Lille

A key finding is that **intensified ticket checks on trains to Lille hinder access to asylum procedures for those without financial resources**. Of the 96 direct trains to Lille observed, 31 were subject to ticket checks on the platform. Trains to Lille were the most frequently targeted for systematic ticket checks⁹⁵ on departure from Calais Ville station. Among all observed departures, 32% of trains bound for Lille Flandres were subject to such checks, compared with 29% of trains to Amiens, 28% to Paris, and fewer than 25% of trains to other destinations. As a result of these checks, we observed at least 198 people prevented from boarding their desired train, including 142 people for trains bound for Lille and 15 for trains to Hazebrouck (possible connection for Lille). Among these, at least 14

people had submitted an asylum application or had a summons to appear at the Prefecture in connection with an asylum application⁹⁶. **Lack of transport can have serious consequences for asylum applications, as individuals risk being penalised for missing mandatory meetings or failing to submit essential documents.** Without volunteer support, they cannot explain these absences to the authorities. Testimonies indicate that, without the asylum seeker's allowance that only begins over a month after registration, many cannot afford train tickets costing over €21, making travel impossible. Therefore, **the lack of transport options between Calais and Lille for displaced people directly restricts their ability to exercise their fundamental human right to seek asylum.**

⁹⁵ "Systematic ticket checks" refer to the checking of train tickets for all passengers wishing to board the train in question.

⁹⁶ As noted in the methodology section, the observational nature of the mission accounts for the very limited number of individuals identified as asylum seekers, which likely vastly underestimates the true figure.

Discriminatory targeting of racialised individuals

We observed **clear racial profiling in the conduct of ticket and identity checks, with racialised people disproportionately targeted and subjected to heightened scrutiny, harassment, and control.** We observed five ticket check operations that specifically targeted racialised individuals only, whilst those perceived as white were able to access the platforms or trains unobstructed. Three of these occasions were for trains bound for Lille and one was a train bound for Arras with a possible connection to Lille. As a result of these checks, around 10 people were unable to board the trains.

Over the 10 days of observation, 23 identity checks were observed. On seven occasions, all passengers

leaving a train were subjected to an identity check. Observers requested the legal basis for these checks on two occasions and were told they were carried out under requisitions from the Public Prosecutor. On 10 occasions, however, only racialised people were subjected to identity checks, including one occasion when an observer was also checked because they had approached the checkpoint. Therefore, excluding two other occasions where only the observers were checked and four identity checks linked to altercations, 59% of the remaining identity checks targeted racialised people only. This reflects a **disproportionate suspicion of racialised bodies and a structural racism that discriminatorily imposes additional barriers to public transport for those racialised as non-white.**

Arrests

Over the course of the 10 days, we observed **at least 18 arrests of racialised individuals** (following 7 different checks), **with no arrests of white individuals.** Seven people were arrested during four systematic checks at the entrance or exit of a train, during which all passengers had their identity checked. Following this check, those who could not prove their right to reside in France were arrested. Another identity check operation took place at the exit of a train arriving from Paris, during which all racialised individuals were subjected to identity checks, as well as two white individuals (but not all white people were checked). As a result of this single check, nine people of colour were arrested, including four who appeared to be minors according to observers. Two other racialised individuals were arrested following two separate checks targeting only these individuals. **These arrests represent the criminalisation of mobility for people on the move who are disproportionately affected or targeted by identity and ticket checks due to their skin colour, severely restricting their access to asylum procedures and other essential services.**



The Bus Network: Surveillance and Racial Profiling

The themes of high police presence, racial discrimination, constant surveillance and harassment are supported by our findings across the Calais bus network throughout the year. Particularly on days with weather conditions favourable for attempts to cross the Channel, the central Calais bus station is characterised by enhanced policing aiming to control mobility and carry out arrests.

Intensified surveillance has been reinforced by policy measures introduced in January, establishing routine police patrols on three bus lines in the Calais area. These deployments were implemented following requests from coastal mayors and the French Minister of the Interior, Bruno Retailleau, and are officially justified as intended to “reassure passengers”⁹⁷ in response to a perceived climate of insecurity⁹⁸. Notably, these measures have been introduced despite the absence of reported serious incidents, highlighting a discrepancy between institutional narratives of insecurity and the lack of documented offences.

Due to the irregular and unpredictable timeline of these police operations, we are not able to produce quantitative statistics on the number of ID checks or arrests, but some notable incidents allow us to draw patterns in police tactics, particularly regarding the use of racial profiling as a means of criminalising mobility.

Surveillance and harassment

We documented many instances, including on 5 March, 17 March, 13 May, 20 May, 18 July among others when racialised passengers wishing to access the bus had their nationality questioned by police before being allowed to board. We documented several occasions where the police boarded alongside people on the move, such that they could follow them to their destination or throughout the city. **In this way they are placed under constant surveillance whilst attempting to exercise their freedom of movement.**

This surveillance, and the permanent threat of arrest it imposes, generates fear and insecurity, as observed by HRO teams on 7 October and 5 November 2025. On 7 October, 12 people were arrested at the Calais bus stop

waiting for the bus to Boulogne and on 5 November at least 11 were arrested upon the arrival of the bus 423 from Gravelines. On both examples given above, the incidents were marked by **racial profiling, arbitrary intrusive bag and body searches, and the arrest of passengers without identity documents.** On the 7 October, at least 17 police officers menacingly circled a group of displaced people waiting for the bus. In a seemingly arbitrary manner, police officers singled out individuals, demanded their passports and arrested those who could not produce them. **In this way, the bus station has become a site of border and immigration enforcement, extending the discriminatory practices of immigration policies that privilege the movement of some over others.**

Racial profiling

Our observations show that these controls are directly linked to skin colour, as tourists perceived as white are not subjected to the same levels of scrutiny. On 14 May 2025, a bus driver admitted to a policy of saving eight seats specifically for ‘locals’ to prevent them complaining. **In practice, skin colour is the primary metric for this social sorting, granting white passengers privileged access while racialised passengers were often boarded later or aggressively forced to the back of the bus.**

On several other occasions, passengers perceived as non-white were circled by police and held back whilst white passengers were permitted to board the bus first. On 13 May the HRO team observed directly how four white passengers were allowed to board before a group of racialised people, who were held back by the police. Likewise, on 30 June, a group of people on the move were restrained by police whilst English tourists were allowed to board the bus first without obstruction. Later the group of displaced people were searched before being allowed onto the bus, with the police shouting aggressively throughout. This is therefore not a question of nationality; the English tourists were allowed to board first as a direct result of the privileges granted to them by their skin colour. On 18 July, we witnessed a group of displaced people board the bus under surveillance of the police. When 3 young white people arrived, the police shouted aggressively at the displaced people sitting at the front of the bus, forcing them to move to the

back to allow the white teens to sit down. **Instead of providing more buses to fit the demand, the police determine who has the right to access the bus based on their skin colour, reserving separate sections for white passengers.** Critical border scholars (Aizeki, Mahmoudi & Schupfer, 2023; Balibar, 2004; Maggs, 2020; Ticktin, 2023; Walia, 2021) have referred to the European border regime as a system of 'global apartheid', and **the extension of the border's discriminatory segregationist logic to public transport reflects an increasing acceptance and institutionalisation of apartheid-like policies that make access to rights dependent on skin colour.**

The policing of mobility in Calais is also shaped by gendered assumptions about threat and risk. Observers documented several instances in which women were allowed to board buses first or were separated from male passengers during police interventions. In one case, on 5 November, police directed women exiting a bus to one side while men were led to the other. The women were allowed to leave while the men were searched and at least 11 were arrested. This left a pregnant woman distraught after being separated from her husband, with no idea where he was being taken. **These practices reinforce far-right discourses that frame foreign men in particular as threats to social stability, attempting to reestablish a patriarchal, racialised understanding of white normativity and social order.**



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⁹⁷ Translation from French to English. Original version: "rassurer les usagers"

⁹⁸ Migrants: des patrouilles de police dans les bus du Calais pour "rassurer les usagers", ici.fr, accessed April 15, 2026.

Analysis: Power Through Insecurity

The observations at the train and bus stations show how police operations disproportionately target people on the move attempting to access public transport and systematically employ racial profiling to determine access based on skin colour. **This reifies race as an objective quality attached with suspicion, supporting colonial logics of population control and governance, and guiding the production of insecurity amongst displaced people as a form of social warfare against unmanaged mobility.**

Critical security scholars (Aradau et al., 2015; Kinacioglu, 2023, Klimburg-Witjes et al., 2020, Martins & Jumbert, 2022) have shown that **processes of securitisation do not simply respond to insecurity but actively produce it to justify forms of governance and control.** The surveillance of the public transport systems, combined with discriminatory harassment, racial profiling and arbitrary detention, generates insecurity for people on the move, worsening existing instability and restricting access to essential services. Each journey becomes uncertain, overshadowed by the possibility of identity checks, harassment, or arrest. By actively worsening the stability of displaced people, rather than alleviating their vulnerability, the state increases its power and control over them by rendering them dependent on limited resources, unable to access stable accommodation, and effectively immobilised at the border. Continuing the logic of containment and long histories of criminalising vagrancy and poverty that have informed modern state-building processes (Hall, 2013; Foucault, 1977; Wacquant, 2009), **this reaffirms the state's monopoly over the legitimate means of movement** (Torpey, 1998), seeing mobility itself as a threat to be countered. In this way, the state "prioritises securitisation over human rights" (Aizeki, Mahmoudi & Schupfer, 2023: 1), deliberately violating the rights of people on the move to reassert its own power over the social order and its control over permitted forms of existence.



@Veronica Gennari

The construction of race and colonial techniques of social sorting

Much existing surveillance literature has historically overlooked the colonial histories of surveillance and the unequal ways in which it affects racialised populations. **The surveillance technologies used within the contemporary European border regime are, however, genealogically linked to techniques developed during the era of colonial conquest** (Madörin, 2022: 13). Early systems of identification and monitoring, including biometric technologies and passport controls, were first implemented in colonial territories to monitor, classify, and control colonised populations before later being introduced within Europe itself (Breckenridge, 2014; Browne, 2015; Go, 2023; Madörin, 2022; Sengoopta, 2003). **The surveillance practices observed in Calais must therefore be understood as part of this historical continuity and as informed by “long-standing patterns of racial categorisation and control”** (Walia, 2023: 14). The targeting of racialised populations within transport infrastructures reflects the persistence of colonial logics that construct certain bodies as inherently suspicious or threatening, justifying control.

Police surveillance denies the subjectivity of people on the move and constructs their identities as racialised objects of suspicion in “an attempt to deny [their] capacity for humanness” (Browne, 2015: 98). As Fanon (1952) argued, **this “overdetermines”⁹⁹ the identity of the displaced people under observation whilst establishing the white gaze as a neutral position of power.** At both the bus stop and the train station, racialised passengers are subjected to additional ID checks and ticket inspections. **Race is therefore constructed as an objective marker of criminality or suspicion. This legitimises the discriminatory “social sorting”** (Lyon, 2003) of populations between those deemed deserving or undeserving of state protection and the allocation of resources. By affirming the objectivity of racial distinctions, the state justifies the continued production of inequality that sustains the current order, revealing how ‘racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires’ (Melamed, 2015: 77). In this way, discriminatory police surveillance in transport hubs in Calais enables **the fabrication of inequality and the production of race itself**, carrying out the border’s fundamental function of “maintaining a hierarchy of humanity” (Ticktin, 2023: 45).

Importantly, this process operates even when surveillance practices appear formally neutral. This is shown in the fact that, during our observation mission at the train station, we observed the arrest of 7 racialised people during systematic checks but no arrests of white passengers whatsoever. Under the guise of equal application, ID and ticket checks disproportionately punish asylum seekers, who are more likely to lack documents or funds, using bureaucratic and administrative controls to restrict their movement and block access to protection. **In this way, the formal equality of systematic checks in fact masks and entrenches a deep structural inequality, protecting a social order that marginalises racialised communities and concentrates wealth, power and privilege among others.**

Following Neocleous (2025), in understanding police power as a form of social warfare, we can see **how the policing of transport hubs in Calais now serves as an extension of the militarisation of borders, redeploying inherited imperial policing practices** (Go, 2023) **to counter insurgent mobility and reaffirm state power.** This functions by reducing collective humanity to individualised units of threat and disempowers collective agency by splitting communities, denying solidarity, and destabilising living conditions. It pacifies society by reinforcing racial boundaries that identify those who can be dispossessed while simultaneously constructing others as deserving of protection and security. In this way, **police discrimination protects structural inequalities, affirms white normativity as the dominant social order, and itself generates the need for further investment and securitisation.**

⁹⁹ Translation from French to English. Original version: “surdétermine”

Conclusion

HRO has witnessed systemic racial discrimination that sees white people afforded privileged access to transport, whilst people racialised as non-white are prevented from accessing these services, forced into separate sections, subjected to invasive body searches, or arrested. Our research shows that trains to and from Lille are particularly targeted, negatively impacting those seeking to apply for asylum or even preventing them from doing so. Surveillance imposes state power by racialising and gendering objects of surveillance and reducing them to dehumanised security threats, thus justifying enhanced intervention. In this sense, the surveillance of transport hubs in Calais **constitutes part of a broader system in which insecurity is deliberately produced and managed to sustain an unequal social order. These dynamics must be understood within the wider historical context of border regimes shaped by colonial forms of control and the demands of racial capitalism, where surveillance and policing have long been used to hierarchise human value, regulate movement, and actively reinforce inequality.** The policing of public transport hubs in Calais reproduces racial distinctions to deny racialised people “one of the most basic freedoms – mobility” (Aizeki, Mahmoudi & Schupfer, 2023: 1). **In the words of Ida Danewid (2023: 61), however, “in the end, borders, like race, are cruel fictions” and “those fictions can, and indeed must, be abolished”.**



SPOTLIGHT ON - THE YEAR 2025 IN THE BOULOGNE REGION:

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS BY THE ALORS ON AIDE (AOA) COLLECTIVE

The Alors On Aide collective is made up of citizens living along the Opal Coast, from Wissant to Hardelot. The collective provides assistance to people on the move who have arrived on the coast after attempting to cross to England. It supplies essential material aid: food, water, spare clothing...

The observations, information, and analyses presented below are drawn from an interview with a member of the collective, Sylvie. They shed light on the situation in the Boulogne area in 2025, a territory where HRO is not active, unlike the Calais and Dunkirk areas. **This discussion highlights the ongoing practices of surveillance, discrimination, and violence perpetrated by the state against people on the move across the coastline.**

Evolution of informal living sites in the Boulogne-sur-Mer area

The establishment and development of informal living sites in the Boulogne region are heavily dependent on weather conditions. In 2025, in contrast to 2024, the favorable windows for crossings were shorter, which limited the establishment of permanent camps. These became more temporary and mobile. Living sites were more concentrated around the Écault Forest and Neufchâtel-Hardelot, while Wimereux and Ambleteuse were less affected than before.

Members of the collective have also observed a shift in where people are living toward the vicinity of train stations, which has led to the emergence of new enforcement services, notably railway security. This has resulted in further evictions, such as the one on October 8, 2025, when people were removed from their living sites

without being offered alternative housing solutions and were then directed to another informal camp located on private property.

Nonetheless, numerous, smaller, temporary camps continue to pop up from time to time. The Écault Forest remains a central hub, particularly because it serves as a departure point for crossings. Additionally, other camps are developing in the dunes, which are protected areas where organizations have chosen not to intervene. This lack of direct observation leaves a blind spot, where accounts from people on the move indicate repeated acts of violence.

Accounts of everyday police violence

Testimonies collected by the collective describe numerous instances of violent police practices in these hard-to-reach areas, highlighting the impunity of police officers. Sylvie mentions “numerous night-time evictions” as well as “the use of stun grenades,” as reported by residents of the camps. They also describe being woken up by night-time police interventions, including “by the police’s flashlights.” According to Sylvie, these living sites “rarely last more than two or three days” due to constant surveillance: drones, patrols, and frequent police interventions that prevent anyone from settling in.

Documented incidents confirm these accounts of violence against people on the move. On July 7, 2025, the use of tear gas in the Écault Forest was filmed by various organizations. On July 10, near Wimereux, acts of vandalism were observed, including the slashing of tents and life jackets. These practices contribute to establishing a climate of fear. Sylvie points out that, during the month of July, “couples were separated with the men taken away by police, leaving the women alone”, thus exacerbating people’s vulnerability and trauma.

A key finding stands out from these observations: the intensity of violence appears to correlate with the absence of witnesses. Sylvie points out that in areas where organizations are not involved, repressive practices by police officers seem to be more frequent and more brutal. Such asymmetry suggests a differentiated approach to managing public spaces, where visibility plays a role in regulating police behavior.

Evictions from living sites and violent dispersal tactics

AOA collectives have observed frequent police interventions in living sites but emphasize their unpredictable nature, making it difficult for people on the move, who already find themselves in highly vulnerable situations, to anticipate them. Some practices amount to particularly restrictive dispersal strategies. Sylvie describes “mobile traps”¹⁰⁰ set up between the beaches and the train station. She reports having seen “groups of people on the move being herded, forced to sit on the ground, surrounded by vans and armed law enforcement officers.” Volunteers are not allowed to intervene in these situations, even when people are in distress: “sometimes they are extremely thirsty, there are children...” These excessive control measures force people to walk several kilometers – sometimes 3 to 4 km – to reach train stations, explains Sylvie. Such spatial management of mobility amounts to a logic of physical and psychological exhaustion.

Excessive police presence and changes in surveillance systems

For several years now, the Boulogne area has been undergoing a transformation marked by an increased law enforcement presence: the gendarmerie, the military, maritime patrols, drones, and convoys of Republican Security Companies are reshaping the landscape. Sylvie describes “an incredible military presence” in Boulogne-sur-Mer: “With the Abeille Normandie ship pointed at the beach, the drones, the buggies, Frontex circling our homes all night long, convoys of police cars and vans... it feels like we’re living in a war zone. The plane flies low at night, between midnight and 5 a.m.” This intensified activity is coupled with a shift in methods: more technological surveillance (drones) and less direct human presence in certain areas, such as the dunes. The analysis suggests a transition towards remote, more diffuse yet omnipresent surveillance, which allows for continuous monitoring while limiting the visibility of interventions.

Discrimination and obstruction in train stations and on public transportation

Discriminatory practices extend to transport settings, particularly at train stations. Sylvie recounts incidents that occurred in 2025 in which railway police prevented a group of people on the move from boarding trains without individually checking their tickets. These individuals were treated as a homogeneous group, presumed to be without valid tickets, which constitutes an arbitrary and illegal practice.

Other situations highlight the absurd nature of institutional management. Following rescue operations at sea, people are dropped off at the port of Boulogne without any assistance in getting to the train station, even though they are required to do so. They are not provided

with any material assistance or psychological support, despite being often exposed to traumatic experiences related to shipwrecks. Sylvie describes: “We pick them up in a poor state. We force them to go to the train station while they sometimes have lost all their belongings. Some get on the train with nothing, then are forced to get off at the next station because they don’t have a ticket.”

In addition, explicitly discriminatory measures have been observed, such as the ban on undocumented men from using public showers set up on Wimereux Beach during the summer. A letter sent to the town hall by the collective on July 18 has gone unanswered.

¹⁰⁰ A restrictive police cordon designed to prevent people from moving outside a defined perimeter. These are violent, shocking and repressive incidents, often employed by law enforcement during demonstrations.

ACCESS TO RIGHTS :

A PATH PAVED WITH OBSTACLES AT THE FRENCH-BRITISH BORDER

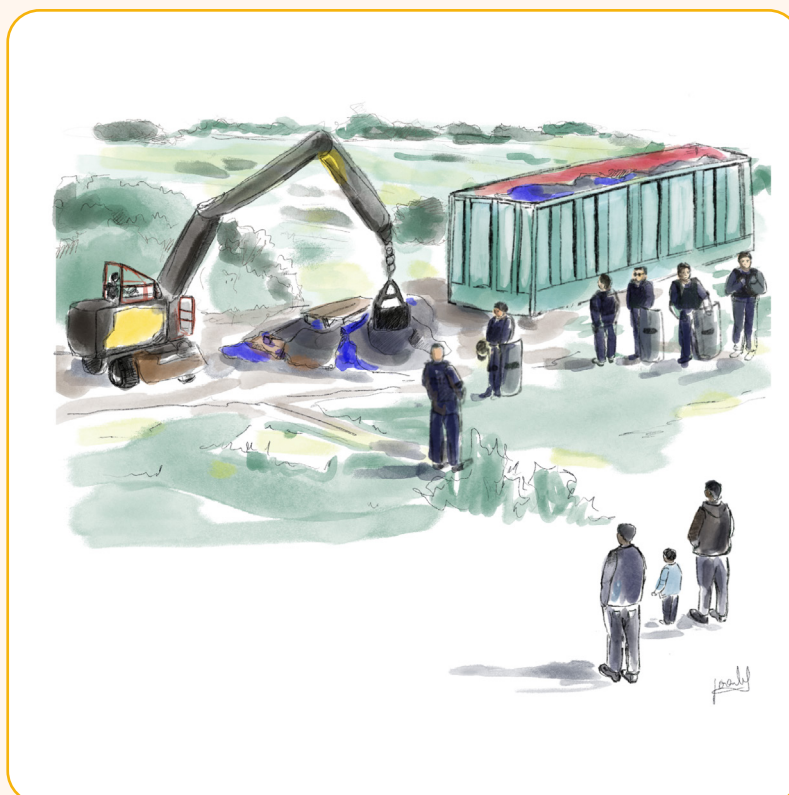
For some, the law is a tool that can be used to resist and defend oneself. For others, it is a tool at the service of the powerful, perpetuating the systems of oppression that permeate our society. The reality is a complex mix of these two premises: whilst the law can be used to make some progress and secure a few safeguards, it remains the privilege of an elite and is difficult for novices to navigate. **Apart from the difficulty in understanding and navigating it, it is hard to access if one does not speak French, if one cannot read it, or if one is not familiar with the codes and practices of this field:** legal aid, solicitors, judicial or administrative judges, magistrates' courts or district courts, the Code of Civil Procedure on Enforcement, summary proceedings for withdrawal... Finally, the justice system is not free from racial and class biases that create obstacles for those seeking justice¹⁰¹.

Thus, on the northern coast, as in any other place where vulnerable people have to deal with the judicial system and the courts, people in exile face a blind spot: a lawless zone. Here, as in the city's "priority neighbourhoods" or the colonies before them, the law is manipulated at will, twisted to serve repressive and harassing policies, distorted to ensure that the "manhunt" carried out at this border for over 30 years can continue with complete impunity.

The highly relative concept of respect for the home

Whilst 350,000 people live on the streets in France¹⁰², on the northern coast between 1,000 and 2,500 people survive in encampments. **On bare plots of land, tents and structures made of wood and pallets form informal living spaces.** In theory, these places should be regarded as the homes of the people living there¹⁰³ and should therefore benefit from the special protection attached to them. In practice, these informal living sites are not recognised by the authorities and receive no specific protection.

Worse still, in order to implement the notorious "zero fixation points"¹⁰⁴ policy, the authorities treat these places as undesirable and do everything in their power to wipe them off the map¹⁰⁵.



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In this context, eviction procedures disregard the rights of the inhabitants: whether through dubious legal manoeuvres or the use of emergency procedures, the residents of the land have very little chance of defending themselves in court to secure even a delay before being forced to leave¹⁰⁶.

For example, the law stipulates that when a plot of land is occupied by people who do not own it, the owner may seek their eviction. The standard procedure, also laid down by law, requires a bailiff to visit the occupied site and identify the residents. The owner then applies to the court for the eviction of these people and informs the aforementioned inhabitants that legal proceedings are underway against them. From that point on, they can find a lawyer, take the necessary steps to obtain legal aid and prepare a defence. The judge then decides whether or not to grant the individuals a period of time to vacate the premises (Articles L411-1 et seq. of the Code of Civil Enforcement Procedures).

However, when it comes to foreign nationals, undocumented migrants and non-native speakers living on land near the French-British border, every legal exception is invoked to deprive residents of their right to a fair trial and to expedite deportation procedures¹⁰⁷.

In practice, this means that the judicial officer arrives alone at the living site, accompanied by the police to

ensure their safety. In one of the eviction reports obtained by HRO, the bailiff claims to have been unable to identify the residents, as they “did not speak his language” or were “hiding from his view”. **So why didn’t he bring an interpreter along?**

Because when the occupants cannot be identified, the landlord can initiate the procedure for an order on application: a judge is presented with a request for eviction; the occupants are not informed of this and are therefore unable to defend themselves. The decision is then made swiftly: the lot will be evicted and the order will remain valid for 3 to 6 months. **Therefore, as long as the lot is occupied they can be evicted at any time with the assistance of the police.**

At 7.30 am on the day of the eviction, when the CRS officers arrive with torches in hand, equipped with helmets, shields and weapons, the residents learn that proceedings are underway and that they are to be evicted from their homes. As none of the residents had been identified beforehand, the procedures set out in the Code of Civil Enforcement Procedures are disregarded: inventory of property and information on how to recover it, details of the judge competent to hear any challenge, etc. Residents therefore have no access to information on how to assert their rights and the procedures that can be taken.



¹⁰¹ Cécile Vigour, Bartolomeo Cappellina, Laurence Dumoulin, Virginie Gautron. “Les rapports des citoyen.nes à la justice expériences, représentations et réceptions”. Actu Recherche, 2021, 11, pp.8. hal05206684.

¹⁰² Foundation for Housing for the Disadvantaged, The State of Poor Housing in France, Annual Report 2026 #31, p. 10.

¹⁰³ Charter for the Respect of the Rights and Dignity of Residents of Informal Settlements.

¹⁰⁴ Bonnevalle P. (2022), Rapport d’enquête sur 30 ans de fabrique politique de dissuasion [Report on 30 Years of the Political Construction of Deterrence], pp.220.

¹⁰⁵ Witter, L. (2023), La Battue, Chapter 3: “Zero Point of Fixation”, éditions du Seuil.

¹⁰⁶ “In Calais, deportations every other morning ‘for as long as it takes,’” France Inter, January 12, 2021.

¹⁰⁷ Human Rights Observers, “Deportation of Exiles: Segregation in Access to Justice?”, Mediapart Blog, May 31, 2024.

Without these documents, it is difficult to know what to challenge, how, before which court, against whom, and the deadline. As non-native speakers without access to a stable internet connection, obtaining the decision or the bailiff's documents is virtually impossible. It is necessary to identify the competent judge, be able to contact the court, or know the bailiff's name. HRO has been unable to obtain these court decisions, despite the law of 23 March 2019¹⁰⁸ making them public.

Once these obstacles have been overcome, if at all, **the judges set levels of evidence that are impossible for people in exile to meet.** Consequently, proving that one is a resident of the land from which they have been evicted proves to be extremely difficult. In 2019, during a procedure challenging an eviction that had already taken place, a judge dismissed the application by residents of the land in question, stating that "[the witness] does not, however, claim to have personally observed that, prior to 12 September 2019, [the applicants] habitually lived on the plots belonging to the urban community [...] nor to have witnessed their eviction from those plots"¹⁰⁹. In a similar case in 2021, a judge in Dunkirk stated this time that "while the applicants recounted having

arrived earlier at the site subject to eviction, none of the witnesses were able to meet [the applicant residents] on the day of the evictions or on the preceding days, so that neither their status as occupants [of the land] nor even their presence on the premises during or prior to the operations is supported by any evidence in the file"¹¹⁰. The judges therefore state that the statements drawn up by the associations and the residents of the site are not sufficient to prove that the persons concerned do in fact live on the encampment.

With regard to the seizure of belongings, a practice that HRO has documented for many years, the Lille Administrative Court ruled in December 2025 that "even if, during certain evictions, some migrants who were not in the vicinity of their camps were unable to retrieve some of their personal belongings, it has not been established, in the absence of a sufficient number of precise and consistent testimonies, that this situation is of a systematic nature constituting a serious and manifestly unlawful infringement of these persons' right to property and dignity".¹¹¹



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In addition to these emergency procedures, there is the use of flagrante delicto investigations, a controversial legal mechanism that effectively deprives residents of any possibility of defending themselves or protecting their homes. The owner (public or private) of the occupied land files a complaint upon discovering the occupation of their property. On this basis, the public prosecutor opens an investigation into the offence of gathering with the intention of establishing a dwelling, even a temporary one, on land belonging to another person (Article 322-4-1 of the Criminal Code). A police operation takes place as part of this investigation to “put an end to the offence”, and national police officers and/or CRS officers are deployed. They are accompanied by members of a cleaning company as well as interpreters commissioned by the Prefecture. They proceed to an initial settlement and deploy: the police establishes a security perimeter whilst the cleaning staff indiscriminately seizes tents and personal belongings, which are, in most cases, destroyed. This procedure is repeated at various other living sites. The residents, who often wait a few hundred metres away for the operation to end, re-establish themselves at the exact same spot once the convoy has left. **Around 48 hours later, this procedure is repeated on the same sites.** In Calais, around 87% (see 2025 annual report) of evictions are carried out on these grounds.

Residents of informal settlements have limited access to legal remedies and respect for their homes, as their rights are regularly and deliberately violated.

Discriminatory identity checks: a well-established reality that persists

At Calais-Ville station, the scene has become commonplace. Refugees go there every day, often to catch a train to Lille to apply for asylum. All around them, there is a massive police presence: CRS vans parked at all times, national police patrols, border police officers. Identity checks follow one another. The same people are tirelessly stopped, checked and searched. Others, perceived as white, continue on their way without being bothered. The discrimination is unspoken but is plain to see.

In December 2025, HRO and other organisations carried out two weeks of monitoring at Calais-Ville station to document barriers to accessing public transport and discriminatory practices by law enforcement officers.

Our findings are sadly predictable and merely confirm a reality that is already well established: discriminatory identity checks persist despite the recommendations of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH)¹⁰⁸. The Rights Defender, in a 2025 study, established that “young men perceived as Black, Arab or North African are four times more likely to be stopped than the rest of the population, and twelve times more likely to be subjected to an ‘extensive’ stop (pat-down, search, taking to the police station, etc.)”¹⁰⁹. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance had already expressed concerns in 2022 about the persistence of discriminatory checks and abusive behaviour on the part of the French police¹¹⁰... systematic and discriminatory checks targeting people of colour and those in vulnerable situations:

“ When we try to get the train, or even when we go near to the train station, police can take you for 24 hours. The first time I arrived in Calais from Paris, I was trying to leave the station. They asked me if I had a paper from the prefecture – the one you have to give your fingerprints for – and I didn’t so they took me to the police station. They brought a translator and said it’s a regular thing, and a normal procedure, to stay there for 24 hours. They gave me papers to sign and didn’t explain what they were. I found out afterwards that the papers said I agreed to leave France after a month or apply for asylum”¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁸ Section 33 of Law No. 2019-2022 of March 23, 2019, on the 2018–2022 Program and Justice Reform.

¹⁰⁹ Boulogne-sur-Mer Regional Court, December 4, 2019, Case No. RG19/00328.

¹¹⁰ Dunkerque Judicial Court, July 12, 2022, Case No. RG21/00022.

¹¹¹ Administrative Court of Lille, December 4, 2025, No. 2511276

¹¹² Opinion on the prevention of abusive and/or discriminatory identity checks, No. 81, Official Journal of the French Republic No. 0054 of March 4, 2017.

¹¹³ Press Release, Rights Defender, Trust Between the Police and the Public: Findings from a Survey of the General Population Focusing on Identity Checks and Complaints Filed, June 24, 2025.

¹¹⁴ ECRI, Report on France (sixth monitoring cycle), adopted on June 28, 2022, published on September 21, 2022, Council of Europe.

¹¹⁵ Testimony collected by the Human Rights Network in September 2025 (anonymous)..

Identity checks are, however, subject to legal safeguards. They are governed by Articles 78-1 et seq. of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP). They may be carried out by most members of the police force, but always under the authority of a judicial police officer (OPJ). **Their purpose is clear: to verify people's identities, check whether they have identification documents, and, if necessary, consult police records to ensure they are not wanted**¹¹⁶.

In principle, an identity check may only be carried out on a specific legal basis:

- Where there is suspicion of an offence (judicial police);
- To prevent a breach of public order (preventive check, administrative police);
- At the request of the public prosecutor;
- In certain border areas, particularly within a 20 km radius of the internal borders of the Schengen Area (in this case, the Franco-Belgian border);
- Or within a 10 km radius of ports and border crossing points, such as around the port of Calais.

However, as is all too often the case, the law provides a framework, but practice goes beyond it.

Practices that leave no trace, and therefore no evidence

Although conducted within a legal framework, identity checks are, in practice, often discriminatory, as they target marginalised individuals and racialized persons¹¹⁷.

But how can one prove that they were stopped because of their appearance?

Identity checks leave no mandatory record: no systematic report, no receipt, no recording. **They take place in the street, sometimes out of the way, often without witnesses**¹¹⁸. Even when there are witnesses, proving that the decision to carry out the check was based on physical appearance is difficult.

Although, in theory, the burden of proof regarding a discriminatory stop is shared, in practice it falls primarily on the person subjected to the stop. It is up to them to provide preliminary evidence, after which it is up to the State to prove that the stop was not discriminatory. If it fails to do so, it may be held liable¹¹⁹. By way of illustration, in a 2025 judgment¹²⁰, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) considered a combination of factors in ruling that a check was discriminatory: statistical reports, third-party testimonies, etc. It is then up to the State to rebut this presumption of discriminatory checks by demonstrating the existence of "objective

circumstances" that justified the identity check.

However, this process is based on a profound asymmetry. On the one hand, the authorities have the means to act and access to information, whilst the police is not required to keep any written record. On the other hand, the person being checked often has nothing with which to prove the discriminatory nature of the check they have undergone.

The situation is paradoxical: discriminatory identity checks are illegal and reprehensible, yet almost impossible to recognise and condemn.

In the Calais and Dunkirk regions, this problem is exacerbated by the border context. The authorities regularly invoke the extended powers associated with the protection of the European Union's external borders and the fight against illegal trafficking. **The law serves as a justification for these widespread and extensive identity checks.** Under the guise of "the investigation and prevention of offences linked to cross-border crime"¹²¹, it provides the government with a legal justification for control practices that are often discriminatory. **Thus, the more the territory is presented as an exceptional zone in terms of "security" concerns, the more routine identity checks become, and the less they can be challenged.**

Discrimination acknowledged... but never described as ‘systemic’

The French courts acknowledge that discriminatory identity checks may exist, but continue to deny their systemic nature. This position serves to further obscure the reality of discriminatory identity checks. For example, the Court of Cassation¹²², in a 2016 ruling, rejected any characterisation of discriminatory checks as a systematic practice, citing several factors: checks limited to the area of the station where a train associated with ‘irregular immigration’ networks was operating, carried out in the name of the fight against cross-border crime, and restricted to a duration not exceeding six hours. More recently, the State Council, in its 2023 decision¹²³, acknowledged that discriminatory checks may be “proven” and “not isolated”, but nevertheless asserted that they cannot be qualified as “systematic”. In the same decision, the State Council, France’s highest administrative court, echoed the argument of the Minister of the Interior¹²⁴ that the number of complaints recorded regarding discriminatory checks was “extremely low”¹²⁵.

However, it itself acknowledges that “this data does not reflect the full extent of discriminatory identity checks”, particularly due to “the difficulty in proving such cases and the victims’ resignation or lack of information”¹²⁶, linked to “the lack of administrative traceability of identity checks”¹²⁷. Thus, although it acknowledges “the impossibility of [...] determining their number and motive”, it refuses to recognise the “systemic” or “widespread”¹²⁸ nature of discriminatory identity checks.

To the same effect, a study shows that only 8% of people who have experienced discriminatory police stops, including racial profiling, verbal abuse and physical brutality, take legal action¹²⁹. In criminology, this is referred to as the “dark figure”¹³⁰ of discrimination, a grim term denoting the gap between offences actually committed and those recorded by the judicial authorities. The National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) itself uses this expression in its reports on racism¹³¹.

“It’s not right what the police did. But we’re not going to complain. Who are we going to complain to?”¹³²

¹¹⁶ For more information on identity checks, see the guide by Tous et Toutes Migrant·e·s, *Borders Under Control*, February 2025, available here: https://psmigrants.org/documents/228/Guide_Tous_Migrants_Des_frontiers_sous_contr%C3%B4le_2025.pdf (accessed March 11, 2026).

¹¹⁷ “Racialized population” is defined by the League of Rights and Freedoms as follows: “Racialized refers to a person who belongs, in reality or in perception, to a group that has undergone a process of racialization. Racialization is a political, social, and mental process of othering (Report of the Montreal Police Service, ‘Racial Profiling and Police Stops: Analysis of Stopping Practices and Their Discriminatory Effects,’ (2019))”. This definition was adopted by the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of Joseph-Christopher Luamba v. Attorney General of Quebec (2022, QCCS 3866).

¹¹⁸ Findings of the Paris Court of Appeal, June 24, 2015, Case No. 13/24255: “Considering that the issue in this case arises from the fact that the contested check did not result in the drafting of any report, was not recorded, nor was a receipt issued; that, as established, the law governing identity checks that do not result in the finding of an offense does not provide for any obligation of traceability; that this situation therefore constitutes an obstacle to judicial review, which in itself is likely to deprive the person concerned of the possibility of effectively challenging the measure in question and its potentially discriminatory nature, and runs counter to the case law developed by the European Court regarding Article 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights concerning the right to an effective remedy”.

¹¹⁹ Court of Cassation, November 9, 2016, No. 15-25.873.

¹²⁰ ECHR, Case of Seydi and Others v. France, Application No. 35844/17, June 26, 2025.

¹²¹ Section 78-2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

¹²² Court of Cassation, First Civil Chamber, May 25, 2016, No. 15-50.063.

¹²³ Council of State, Ass., Amnesty International France et al., October 11, 2023, No. 454836.

¹²⁴ Conseil d’État, Ass., Amnesty International France et autres, 11 octobre 2023, n° 454836, considérant 24.

¹²⁵ For more on this topic, see the statistics compiled by the Rights Defender, 2024 Report – PoliceCommunity Relations, Volume 1, “The Experience of Filing a Complaint,” June 2025.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Press Release, Rights Defender, *Trust Between the Police and the Public: Findings from a Survey of the General Population Focusing on Identity Checks and Complaints Filed*, June 24, 2025.

¹³⁰ J.-P. Doucet, Dictionary of Criminal Law, entry “Chiffre noir” online: https://ledroitcriminel.fr/dictionnaire/lettre_c/lettre_c_chi.htm.

¹³¹ CNCDH, 2022 Report on the Fight Against Racism, Antisemitism, and Xenophobia, “The Essentials,” <https://www.cncdh.fr/sites/default/files/2023-07/Les%20Essentiels%20Rapport%20Racisme%202022.pdf>

¹³² Testimony collected by the Human Rights Network in September 2025.

The institutional message is clear: “discrimination exists, but it remains the exception”. This stance is yet another example of the tendency to invisibilize discriminatory identity checks.

For example, in a 2016 ruling¹³³, out of thirteen contested identity checks, the Court of Cassation found only five to be discriminatory. The matter was brought before the ECHR¹³⁴, which ruled against France for violating Articles 14 (principle of non-discrimination) and 8 (right to private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Yet, here too, only one of the six cases examined was deemed discriminatory.

How, then, can one defend oneself against a screening that leaves no trace? How can one account for something that, by its very nature, cannot be documented?

Identifying the competent judge: a maze of jurisdictional powers crippling action

Added to these obstacles is a structural difficulty: which judge should the case be brought before? The administrative or judicial court?

When an identity check is challenged on the basis of the Code of Criminal Procedure, it generally falls within the jurisdiction of the judicial court, as it constitutes a judicial police operation. But the litigation is complex: one must demonstrate gross negligence, establish the discriminatory nature of the check, meet particularly demanding standards of evidence, cope with the absence of a written record of the check by police, and have the time, energy and financial resources to embark on such proceedings. **Referring the matter to a civil court is very often a dead end when it comes to discriminatory identity checks.**

Given the situation, various organisations have sought to address the issue from a structural perspective before the administrative court. The aim was no longer to challenge isolated cases of discriminatory checks targeting people of colour, but to secure recognition of the existence of a widespread phenomenon and to obtain regulatory measures, such as the introduction of a check receipt for law enforcement officers¹³⁵. However, in its 2023 ruling,

the State Council refused to order the State to change its practices. It considered that the requests made “involve the relationship between the executive and legislative powers or the conduct of international relations”¹³⁶. Furthermore, it held that it was not its role to determine public policy regarding identity checks.

The separation of powers is an essential safeguard. But it should never become a refuge in the face of repeated violations of fundamental rights.

As such, the judicial judge deals with cases on a case-by-case basis, whilst the administrative judge refuses to consider a “systemic” approach in the name of the separation of powers.

When a person is repeatedly stopped and searched on the basis of their skin colour or appearance, they are not disputing the police’s authority to carry out such checks. They are simply asking that equality before the law shall be respected, including in public spaces. However, as long as identity checks leave no record, they will remain difficult to challenge and are therefore unlikely to change.

The question of interest in taking action

Before any substantive analysis, the judge verifies **the admissibility of the appeal**. This requires, in particular, that the person bringing the proceedings can demonstrate a “standing to bring proceedings”. In the border context, this condition of admissibility constitutes a particularly difficult hurdle to overcome.

Under both French and European law¹³⁷, a claim is admissible only if the claimant can establish **the status of “victim”**. This requires having been personally and directly affected by the reported breaches¹³⁸. The law thus excludes action in the public interest: it is not sufficient to denounce a breach of law in order to bring a case before a judge.

On the northern coast, most of the displaced people are trying to reach the United Kingdom. Their daily lives are dominated by the urgent need to survive: finding somewhere to sleep, retrieving a tent after being evicted, accessing water and food, keeping warm, and attempting a crossing. **In this unstable environment, the idea of initiating uncertain legal proceedings seems disconnected from the reality they face.**

The length of these proceedings further increases this disconnection. Appeals can drag on for several months, or even years, whilst in the meantime their living spaces are regularly cleared and sometimes rendered uninhabitable. Thus, the outcome of the dispute often has no practical effect for the person concerned. For example, the Winterstein judgment of the ECHR¹³⁹, which resulted in a ruling against France following an unlawful eviction, was delivered nearly nine years after the events took place. **This time lag reduces the direct incentive for exiled persons to bring a claim.**

To address these time constraints, emergency procedures exist in administrative law, such as the “référé-liberté.” **The judge must then find both an emergency and a serious and demonstrably illegal infringement of a fundamental freedom**¹⁴⁰. The presence of individuals directly affected helps demonstrate the urgency of the situation and the reality of the infringement of their fundamental freedoms. **This condition of emergency is nevertheless particularly difficult to meet and is rarely fulfilled in practice**¹⁴¹. Even when both conditions are met, the administrative judge remains free to reject the request¹⁴². Without an identified plaintiff, the infringement of rights often remains abstract.

Added to these obstacles are material and financial constraints. Bringing a case before a court involves following a complex procedure, finding a lawyer, and gathering evidence. As noted earlier, the lack of access to administrative documents and the difficulty of gathering evidence constitute major obstacles.

Furthermore, the funds granted to cover legal costs remain modest. In the November 2025 lawsuit regarding the living conditions of people on the move in Dunkirk, the administrative court awarded 1,500 euros to all the plaintiff organisations. The risk of financial loss or non-reimbursement of legal costs is high.

In this context, associations often serve as an alternative option to pursue such legal disputes.

However, their capacity to act remains restricted by legislation. Associations cannot simply act in the public interest to denounce a violation of the law but must demonstrate a genuine “interest in acting”. This criteria is strictly monitored by the administrative judge, who verifies that the contested decision does indeed infringe upon the interests the association defends according to its bylaws. As for the judicial judge, they assess this criterion in light of the association’s social purpose and, in certain cases, the authorizations provided for by law.

Sometimes, this standing is recognized. In the litigation concerning the situation of displaced persons in Dunkirk, the administrative court ruled that several organizations had standing to sue because they were actively assisting the displaced persons present on the coast. The judge further clarified that the absence of a mandate from the individuals concerned was not sufficient to establish a lack of standing.

These decisions remain fragile, however. In many disputes concerning migration policies, courts adopt a more restrictive interpretation and dismiss the associations’ petitions on the grounds of lack of standing. Furthermore, this admissibility requirement limits the ability of associations to bring all types of cases, as certain violations of the law can only be challenged if a sufficiently direct statutory interest can be identified.

Thus, on the Northern coast, those directly affected can rarely bring legal action themselves, while the associations handling these cases often face the limitations of procedural law.

¹³² Court of Cassation, November 9, 2016, No. 15-25.873.

¹³³ ECHR, Case of Seydi and Others v. France, Application No. 35844/17, June 26, 2025.

¹³⁴ ECHR, Case of Seydi and Others v. France, Application No. 35844/17, June 26, 2025.

¹³⁵ In this regard, see the following recommendations from the Rights Defender, “Identity Checks: What Does the Law Say and How Can We Put an End to Discriminatory Checks?”, Feb. 15, 2024, available online at: <https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/contrôles-d'identité-que-dit-le-droit-et-comment-mettre-fin-aux-contrôles-discriminatoires-565>

¹³⁶ State Council, Ass., Amnesty International France et al., October 11, 2023, No. 454836, para. 26.

¹³⁷ Article 34 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

¹³⁸ As noted in ECHR, Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland, Application No. 53600/20, para. 487.

¹³⁹ ECHR, Winterstein et al. v. France, Application No. 27013/07.

¹⁴⁰ Article L521-2 of the Code of Administrative Justice: “Upon receiving a request to that effect justified by urgency, the judge presiding over summary proceedings may order any measures necessary to safeguard a fundamental freedom that a public-law legal entity or a private-law body responsible for managing a public service has, in the exercise of one of its powers, seriously and manifestly unlawfully infringed. The judge presiding over summary proceedings shall render a decision within forty-eight hours.”

¹⁴¹ Adalys Avocats, “Interim suspension proceedings: conditions and challenges in application” (2021).

¹⁴² For example, the State Council, in its decision of June 15, 2001, No. 230637, stated: “Considering that it follows from the aforementioned provisions of Article L. 521-1 of the Code of Administrative Justice, as clarified by the parliamentary debates preceding the adoption of the law of June 30, 2000, that even when the conditions set forth in that article are met, it is incumbent upon the judge hearing the application for interim relief to assess whether, on an exceptional basis, it is nevertheless appropriate not to order the suspension of the enforcement of the contested decision or of certain of its effects.”

Despite the difficulties, there are glimmers of hope

It is essential to continue using law as a mean of defence. Because the laws still allow it, and nothing prevents us from pursuing other courses of action simultaneously.

Although they are modest and on an unsatisfactory scale, victories do exist!

In 2025, the residents of an abandoned warehouse in the Calais area secured a five-month respite before being evicted from their shelter. The building's owner attempted to invoke the emergency procedure under the Order on Application, claiming he could not identify the residents. Nevertheless, thanks to the mobilization of some of them, the owner was forced to resort to "normal" procedure: informing the residents of his intention to evict them, giving them the opportunity to hire a lawyer, build a defence, and present it at the hearing. Consequently, the judge granted the residents a three-month deadline to vacate the lot and refused to suspend the two-month grace period applicable to all residents under Article L.412-1 of the Code of Civil Enforcement Procedures. The residents were thus granted a five-month reprieve before being evicted¹⁴³, five months in a place not facing eviction every 48 hours, with access to water and electricity.

On November 18, six organizations, including HRO, filed a lawsuit against the authorities in the Lille Administrative Court to secure the implementation of

measures ensuring respect for the fundamental rights of residents of informal settlements in the Dunkirk area. These organizations called for improved access to water and sanitation (toilets, trash collection, showers, water stations), food distributions, access points for electricity, better access to healthcare, and an end to the destruction of personal belongings during evictions... Three judges visited the encampments to assess the situation firsthand. The ruling was issued on December 4, 2025: the Lille Administrative Court ordered the State to take urgent measures for the displaced people in the Dunkirk area. The court ordered authorities to act within ten days to ensure the distribution of containers suitable for carrying drinking water, install toilets at or near the living sites, set up safe and daily-accessible showers, organize widespread waste collection at the encampments, and establish an outreach program for minors¹⁴⁴.

While victories may be few and far between each year, they nonetheless represent valuable gains for residents of informal settlements. They are small moments of respite fought for in the face of a well-oiled system, and proof that legal tools can be mobilized despite the obstacles erected by authorities and the judicial system.

¹⁴³ Calais Magistrates' Court, April 11, 2025, Case No. RG25/00005.

¹⁴⁴ Administrative Court of Lille, December 4, 2025, No. 2511276.

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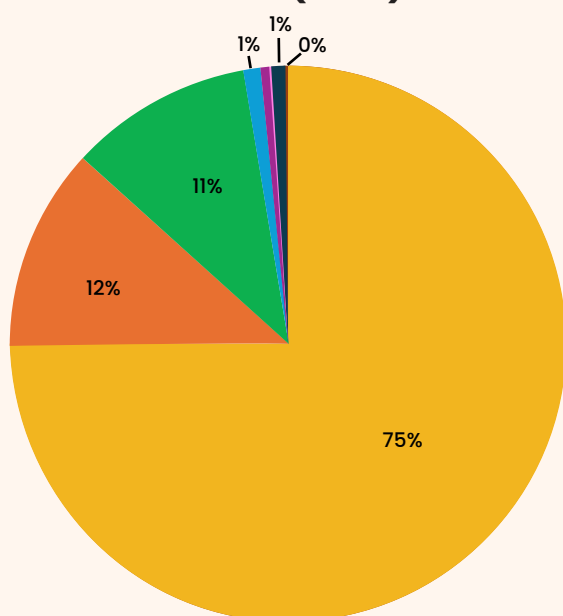
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FINANCES

Documenting and denouncing state violence at the border isn't free. In 2025, Human Rights Observers spent 167.747 € to cover its operating costs.

Expenditures 2025 (euro)



- **Human Resources** : remuneration for employees and interns that allow this project to exist, including welfare grants to support their mental health
- **Running Costs**: administrative fees, rent for a collective housing unit dedicated to volunteers, rent for an office, purchase of supplies and other goods.
- **Operational Costs**: fees dedicated to the observation of police operations, including some communication and advocacy costs
- **Communication and advocacy costs**
- **Strategy and collective action workshops**
- **Outreach activities**
- **Judicial fees**

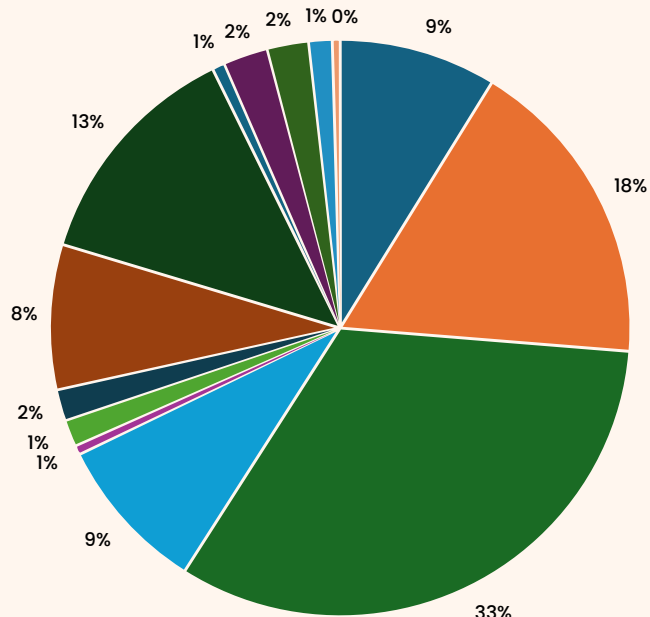
As in past years, spendings allowing the structure to work were entirely covered by private funds. Between the 1st of january and the 31st of december 2025, **Human Rights Observers** raised 228.196 €. Of these :

Incomes 2025 (euro)

87% come from private foundations, which are vital for the stability of our association : CCFD-Terre Solidaire, Un Monde Par Tous, Fondation pour le Logement des Défavorisés, La Poule Rousse, MASS Action, Lush France, Paris bar association Solidarité, Lille bar association, Toulouse bar association, Haella Foundation, For Refugees, Romeurope.

13 % come from individual donations collected on Hello Asso during the years or through fundraising campaigns.

- CCFD-Terre Solidaire
- Un Monde Par Tous
- Fondation pour le Logement des Défavorisés
- La Poule Rousse
- Herts for Refugees
- For Refugees
- Haella
- Barreau de Paris Solidarité
- Fonds propres (donations from private individuals)
- Romeurope
- Mass Action
- Lush FR (previous years)
- Barreau de Lille
- Barreau de Toulouse



We are grateful to all our donators, without whom this project would not be possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Beyond the figures, the mission of Human Rights Observers is only possible thanks to **the invaluable work of volunteers**. The commitment of those on the front line in the field, directly contributing to data collection, is **essential to documenting and denouncing state and police violence at the border**.

In 2025, 22 volunteers and 15 unpaid short-term interns (less than 2 months) took part in carrying out HRO's activities, both through observation work and through the association's broader operational work. **This represented 8,043 hours of work**. Each member of HRO, through their commitment, skills, and previous experiences, made a contribution to the association that, while difficult to quantify financially, is indispensable to HRO.

Furthermore, as the members of the board of directors are also volunteers, they likewise contributed their own expertise to the implementation of HRO's missions, both in their roles as board members and in collaborative projects carried out alongside the team on a daily basis.

Thanks to all the associations present in the Calais and Dunkirk areas and along the entire northern coastline:

Alors On Aide, Opal'Exil, Utopia 56, the Migrant Support Platform, L'Auberge des Migrants, Project Play, Calais Appeal, Calais Food Collective, La Capuche Mobilisée, Woodyard, Refugee Community Kitchen, CHIP, Secours Catholique Pas-de-Calais, Médecins du Monde, Médecins Sans Frontières, FAST, ROOTS, No Border Medics, Refugee Women Center, Mobile Refugee Support, Help for Dunkirk, Kaleidoscope, Care for Calais, Salam, AMIS, ECPAT, Emmaüs, the Dunkirk Human Rights League, MRAP, and many others.

Thanks also to our partners, such as the Observatoire des Expulsions, the Border Violence Monitoring Network, Cross Border Forum, Violences policières.fr, the Coordination des Actions aux Frontières Intérieures, Anafé, and Parallax, who fight alongside us **to make visible and denounce state violence in France and at other borders across Europe**.

Finally, thank you to everyone who contributed to the production of this report: thank you for the time dedicated, for your professionalism, commitment, energy, motivation, and availability.

Thanks to Emilie Giuly for the graphic design.



HOW TO SUPPORT US ?

To continue documenting and denouncing the violence committed by the State against people in exile at the Franco-British border, HRO needs your support. There are many ways to help us:

Become a member of the association via HelloAsso, here, or by scanning the QR code.



Make a monthly donation



Make a one-off donation.



Donate equipment or other items in kind

(vehicles, computers, mobile phones, cameras, video equipment, microphones, furniture for the association's offices or volunteer accommodation, etc.).

All donations, regardless of their form, are tax-deductible up to

66%.



You can also join us as a volunteer, whether by contributing to field activities or by putting your skills or specific expertise to use.

Don't hesitate to get in touch with us at:

recrutement@humanrightsobservers.org

Finally, be sure to follow us on social media, visit our website, share our publications, and make use of our data:

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