

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

A significant number of deaths at the border

Between 30th August and 6th October, **ten people are publicly known to have died at the border**, either during an attempt to cross or while waiting to do so. **On 28th September**, an overloaded boat carrying 100 people capsized, **causing three declared deaths, including two women and a 10-year-old child**.

These deaths are not isolated accidents **but the consequence of repressive migration policies in which repeated eviction operations and the lack of access to essential services** (water, food, hygiene, housing, healthcare) create living conditions that drive people to cross the UK-France border in increasingly precarious ways.

Calais and Dunkirk under the spotlight of far-right journalists and influencers

The UK-France border attracts a large number of influencers, especially on X, and of journalists **who write for conservative, right-wing and far-right media**. During the documentation of an eviction, an HRO team met a team from the **Daily Telegraph**, a British newspaper nicknamed 'Torygraph' for its unwavering support of the Conservative Party and its calls for an ever tougher immigration policy.

On 21st September, the newspaper published an article **naming the associations that are active at the border on the issue of migration**, accusing them of helping people on the move to cross the English Channel. In this context, some associations have also observed **the arrival of far-right British influencers**, who **record association members without their consent** and visit the living sites with the aim of **filming and harassing people on the move**.

This **open hostility, which is also legitimised by some national media outlets** like The Telegraph, **leads to criminal acts**. Daniel Thomas, a far-right British activist, for instance slashed a small boat with a knife during a rescue at sea, while a member of the rescue team was still on board. All these elements contribute **to a hostile environment** towards people on the move and towards associations on the ground.



Diphtheria at the border: a health response weakened by the lack of guarantees

On 11th September, **a case of respiratory diphtheria was diagnosed in a person on the move who was living at one of the living sites in the Dunkirk area.** Faced with this potentially lethal disease and its risk of spreading, the associations on the ground mobilised in cooperation with the Regional Health Agency (ARS). **A vaccination campaign** started on 24th September, with continuation planned until at least 9th October (which was in fact completed on 6th October, with between 550 and 600 people vaccinated).

On 16th September, following emails sent by the associations in the Dunkirk area that are not state-mandated, **the prefecture indicated that it would follow the ARS's recommendations and that there would be no evictions in Grande-Synthe in the following days.** However, this suspension was not subject to a formal and lasting commitment: information on the halting of operations is only communicated to associations on request, and **the announced suspension remained limited to the vaccination period.**

The health response, limited to the Dunkirk area, raises many questions: people on the move move regularly between the Dunkirk and Calais areas, **which makes a coordinated approach across the entire northern coastline essential.** Yet, despite warnings from the associations and the ARS, evictions have continued in the Calais area. Since the case was identified and during September, **at least 10 operations have been recorded there, leading to the eviction of 20 living sites.**



A police eviction operation on 22 September at a settlement in Calais.

Moreover, evictions destroy people's bearings, disperse groups and **can lead to the seizure of essential items, such as medication, vaccination records or masks**. They thus complicate the identification of contacts, continuity of care and the monitoring of the vaccination campaign.

Without an equivalent system of health outreach teams, testing and vaccination in the Pas-de-Calais, **how can we ensure that the health risk is addressed and contained?**

A legal challenge to put public health before evictions

Faced with this contradiction, **HRO and Médecins du Monde filed an urgent application for the protection of fundamental freedoms (référé-liberté) with the Lille administrative court on 28th September**. The associations asked the prefects of Nord and Pas-de-Calais **to suspend eviction operations**, including those carried out without a court decision, until the end of the health period defined by the ARS Hauts-de-France.

The application was all the more important because the good practice announced in the Dunkirk area **was neither a formal guarantee nor a sufficient response at the scale of the coastline**. The movement of people between the two areas makes a consistent approach necessary, **while the continuation of evictions in the Calais area directly undermines the prevention efforts under way elsewhere**.

At the hearing on 30th September, the associations stressed **in particular the inadequacy of the prefecture's commitments**, the consequences of forced displacement and **the need to take into account the different eviction procedures**. They also pointed out that **the absence of new diagnosed cases was not, on its own, enough to rule out the health risk**, particularly when testing and follow-up are not provided consistently across the territory.

The rejection of the application: a health emergency that remains unanswered

The administrative court **rejected the request, considering that there was no urgency to rule**. To justify its decision, the judge relied in particular on the absence of new cases, the suspension of evictions announced by the Nord prefecture, and the lack of evidence that operations were planned in the area covered by the vaccination campaign. However, **the decision does not take the Calais area into account** at all in its assessment of urgency, **even though evictions continued there after the case was identified in the Dunkirk area**, and the movement of people between the two areas is well established and was highlighted by both associations in the application.

By concluding that there was no urgency, the judge did not examine whether the continuation of evictions was likely to infringe the fundamental freedoms invoked by the associations. Yet the risk was one of a break in health monitoring, the loss of means of prevention and increased overcrowding, **all factors likely to undermine the control of an epidemic outbreak**.

HRO and Médecins du Monde **have decided not to appeal**. This choice does not mean that the associations consider the decision satisfactory, but it brings this procedure to an end. **The rejection does not address the concerns raised about the continuation of evictions**.

The right to health and the right to life **cannot depend on people's administrative status or social situation.** In a period of epidemic risk, protecting everyone's health means guaranteeing continuity of care, preserving the means of prevention and not undermining health work **through operations that use violence against, traumatise, rob and disperse people.**

September in the Dunkirk area

On 9th September, **a large-scale eviction operation took place in Grande-Synthe**, mobilising at least twenty CRS vans. Some people on the move reported cases of **physical violence and theft of personal belongings to us.**

Beyond these incidents, **these repeated operations contribute to police harassment** that worsens the living conditions of people on the move, who are already deprived of suitable and permanent housing solutions.

HRO was not on the ground to document this eviction: **for two weeks, our team carried out an observation of a bus line** in order to analyse the discrimination and police harassment faced by people on the move on public transport.



Number of evictions in September

At least :



10 police operations leading to the eviction of **20** informal living sites



159 people evicted, **2** of whom were arrested



24 tents seized



84m3 of personal belongings seized (emergency blankets, mattresses, sleeping bags, clothes)

Intensification of the evictions in the Calais area



The police continue their **strategy of harassment** and **have intensified eviction operations** in the city centre of Calais and inside a living site in the north-east of the city. During these evictions, the police **steal the few personal belongings** that people on the move have and **carry out arbitrary arrests**.

After being stripped of their tent, sleeping bag, emergency blanket or phone, **people on the move are offered no alternative accommodation**.

