



in partnership with



FRANCEUK
BORDER RESEARCH

FIVE YEARS ON

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE PAST AND PRESENT SITUATION
AT THE UK-FRANCE BORDER, FIVE YEARS AFTER THE
PEAK OF THE CALAIS 'JUNGLE' CAMP.**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	03
PREFACE	04
INTRODUCTION	05
CHAPTER ONE WHAT'S THE BACKGROUND TO THE SITUATION IN	08
NORTHERN FRANCE, AND THE CALAIS 'JUNGLE' CAMP?	
CHAPTER TWO WHAT WAS THE CALAIS 'JUNGLE' CAMP LIKE, AND	12
WHAT HAPPENED DURING THIS TIME?	
CHAPTER THREE WHEN, HOW AND WHY DID THE CALAIS 'JUNGLE' CAMP	27
DISAPPEAR?	
CHAPTER FOUR WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THE END OF THE CALAIS	31
'JUNGLE' CAMP?	
CHAPTER FIVE WHY HAS THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN FRANCE NOT	47
BEEN RESOLVED YET?	
CHAPTER SIX WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NEXT?	50
CONCLUSION	53

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DATE OF PUBLICATION

August 2021

AUTHORS

Fae Mira Gerlach
Frances Timberlake
Marta Welander

EDITOR

Luke Buckler

DESK RESEARCHERS

Luke Buckler
Eyovel Ghezai
Fae Mira Gerlach
Marta Welander

FRENCH TRANSLATION

Sophie Drouet

PHOTOS

Andreas Beissel, Abdul Saboor, BBC, Beatrice Lilly, Calais Kitchens, Chris Barrett, Hannah-Sophie Wahle, Help Refugees, Human Rights Observers, Jean-Philippe Huguet, Médecins du Monde, Natalie Stanton, Philippe Huguen, Refugee Info Bus, Refugee Women's Centre, Rob Pinney, Rowan Farrell, Sarah Story, SquatLeMonde, Thomas Laurance

Shutterstock:

Alicia G. Monedero, DesignRage, Dominika Zara, Edward Crawford, Huang Zheng, Luca De Gregorio, Peter Titmuss, Savvapanf Phot, Susan Pilcher

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Me And You Create
www.meandyoucreate.com
hello@meandyoucreate.com

SPECIAL THANKS

Sincere gratitude to the people in displacement who shared their expertise, experiences and humanity with us through the years. Your resilience, resourcefulness and strength are an inspiration to our work.

We express our gratitude to l'Auberge des Migrants for partnering with us on the publication of this report, and for providing a preface.

We are also grateful to the UK-France Border Research project for joining us in producing this report, providing invaluable proofreading and fact checking. Many thanks to Ellen Ackroyd for additional feedback on chapter 4, and to Sarah Story for her support and invaluable photographic material.

Many thanks also to all the individuals who, independently or organised in groups and organisations, continue to show up to defend the human rights of refugees and displaced people, often against all odds.

This report is dedicated to all of those who suffered or perished in the northern France area, whilst searching for peace and safety.



Sunset over the Calais 'Jungle'. Photo credit: Rob Pinney

PREFACE

Almost five years ago today, the French authorities had just finished destroying the “Big Jungle”. Set up in March 2015, this huge camp had welcomed close to 10,000 people and had been an incredible source of cooperation and creativity for both displaced people and volunteers. It was the largest slum in Europe and, consequently, a source of great shame for the French state.

Of course, following the demolition, displaced people returned. The neighbouring United Kingdom remains a desired destination and, for many of them, a “last chance” to find refuge since most of continental Europe has kept its doors closed. As a result, French and British associations have been forced to continue their work: providing material assistance, as well as advocacy, legal aid, child protection and legal action to ensure the respect of national and international law.

For its part, the French government has continued to strengthen the border on behalf of the British government. They pursue a policy of harassing displaced people and the associations helping them: daily evictions from makeshift camps, removal and destruction of property, arrests and abuses aimed to discourage displaced people from coming back and staying at the border, while orders prohibiting the distribution of meals, reprimands, and boulders deliberately placed on food distribution sites aimed to dissuade the people helping them.

Since 2016, the number of displaced people stuck at the border in Calais and Grande-Synthe has kept fluctuating between 400 and 1,500 people. RRE's work and analysis can play an effective role in making sure that public opinion, the media and human rights defenders do not forget the humanitarian tragedy and rights violations happening on a daily basis at the hands of the French authorities, together with the British government.

**François Guennoc, President of L'Auberge des Migrants
August, 2021**

INTRODUCTION

The summer of 2021 marks five years since the peak of the so-called Calais 'Jungle' camp, which first emerged in 2015, with its population reaching approximately 10,000 residents in the summer of 2016.

Following its dramatic dismantlement and the forced eviction of thousands of displaced people from the site in October 2016, the French government, with the backing of its British counterpart, has made every effort to prevent another large informal camp developing and the formation of so-called "fixation points" of individuals settling in the UK-France border zone in northern France.

The end of the Calais 'Jungle' camp did not produce any 'solution' to the migratory situation in this transit point but, rather, contributed to the exacerbation of human suffering, characterised by precarity, rough-sleeping, dangerous and unauthorised border-crossings, and what appears to be excessive police violence. After decades of cyclical appearances of encampments and subsequent evictions of the same, and five years since the Calais 'Jungle' camp, it is evident that the state approach tried so far is simply not viable.



People leaving the Calais camp while fires have started. Photo credit: Beatrice Lilly, Refugee Info Bus

The aim of this report is to, firstly, provide readers with an overview of the political background which led to the build-up of a bottleneck in northern France in the first place and the emergence of the Calais 'jungle' camp. In the following chapters, we seek to illustrate what the camp was like, what happened during the period of time it existed, and how and why the camp was eventually flattened to the ground. We then proceed to summarising the situation and key trends unfolding in the northern France area in the years of the camp's aftermath, from late 2016 until today, including the new depths of crisis brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the subsequent chapter, we seek to address the questions of why the situation has not yet been resolved and why the human suffering in the area persists. We close off the report with a chapter discussing what needs to happen next and provide our concluding remarks.

It is our wish that this report can serve as a starting point for those readers who would like a brief overview of an extremely complex issue and situation; a springboard for further reading. Therefore, we have throughout the report sought to reference further resources as much as possible, including work by academics, journalists, NGOs and INGOs, as well as crucial reports and evidence published by associations operating on the ground. We recognise in particular the importance of the work of Help Refugees/Choose Love, l'Auberge des Migrants, Refugee Youth Service, Human Rights Observers, Project Play, Refugee Women's Centre, Utopia 56, PSM and many others who have documented the situation on the ground over the years.

On that note, we invite you to explore this report and delve into the complex situation before, during and after the time of the Calais 'jungle' camp.



Tent in an abandoned building in the Calais area. Photo credit: Abdul Saboor



"THE PRACTICES REPORTED TO THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR BY RESIDENTS OF THE ENCAMPMENTS AROUND CALAIS ARE A GROSS VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS, SUCH AS THE RIGHTS TO WATER, SANITATION, HEALTH, FOOD, AND TO PHYSICAL INTEGRITY. THE SYSTEMATIC AND REPEATED NATURE OF THESE FORCED EVICTIONS SUGGEST THEY ALSO CONSTITUTE CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OF ONE OF THE MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN FRANCE."

Leilani Farha, Un Special Rapporteur
April 2019

WHAT'S THE BACKGROUND TO THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN FRANCE, AND THE CALAIS 'JUNGLE' CAMP?¹

The violent and hostile situation in the northern France region is primarily the result of French and British migration policies that aim to prevent immigration and restrict access to asylum.

The externalisation and heavy securitisation of the UK's border, begun in the 1990s, and the UK's unwillingness to grant individuals access to its asylum system, has led to the creation of a bottleneck for displaced people in northern France wishing to reach the UK. In tandem, and indeed partly financed by the UK government, French police are tasked with policing and uprooting communities in order to prevent so-called 'fixation points' along the coast. Under the same policy, minimal state intervention providing access to services has been seen over the decades.



The Wall of Calais. Photo credit: Andreas Beissel

¹ Some of this section draws on Marta Welander (2021). 'The Politics of Exhaustion and Migrant Subjectivities: Researching border struggles in northern France in 2016–2019' (unpublished PhD thesis; University of Westminster). Available at: <https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/download/b86314835fccc6e8db5bf536ee7f79212a9eca65249de98c5f88644a1d613294/4690305/Thesis%20-%20Marta%20Welander%20-%20FINAL%20Conferment.pdf>

The UK has gradually externalised its border via bilateral arrangements with France, including the 1991 Sangatte Protocol, the 2003 Le Touquet Treaty, and later agreements. These – and similar agreements with Brussels – enable the UK Government to operate its border controls on French and Belgian soil, granting itself extraterritorial power to deny entry before people reach UK soil, including to those who wish to seek asylum. This has allowed the UK to manage immigration and access to its asylum system from abroad. Individuals seeking to reach the UK continue to arrive in the area, but find themselves blocked from being able to go further.

In parallel, the French government has implemented an equally hostile set of policies that in effect dissuade or, indeed, prevent people from being able to settle even temporarily in the area. The ‘zero fixation points’ policy² announced in 2018 by the then Interior Minister Gérard Collomb named the decades-long pretext for deliberate non-assistance on the part of the government in the worsening situation at the border, as well as the harsh policing of settlements. Increasingly heavy securitisation and surveillance infrastructure has been installed over the years in order to restrict displaced people's access to the ports and train stations, as well as to potential living sites such as woods, industrial zones and abandoned buildings.

Some have described the situation in northern France as ‘forever temporary’,³ highlighting the absurd nature of a situation which is temporary and transitory whilst, at the same time, permanent in nature. It is defined by the repeated destruction and re-emergence of settlements, and continued dispersals, returns, arrivals and departures of displaced people passing through this transit point.

However, rather than these policies having the stated effect of preventing people from arriving or settling in the area, they have simply resulted in worsening living conditions and restricted access to protection for the many migrants who continue to arrive there irrespective of the government strategy.



British Flag behind wire fence and surveillance technology.
Photo credit: Savvapanf Phot / Shutterstock

Settlements created by those blocked at the British border started appearing in the Calais area in the early 1990s, with increased intensity in 1998-1999.⁴ As British immigration management policies, such as the imposition of carrier sanctions,⁵ made it more difficult to cross the border, the number of displaced people sleeping in the streets of Calais and surrounding areas with the hope of reaching the UK started increasing gradually. In 1999, the French government opened a warehouse in Sangatte run by the Red Cross, one mile from the Eurotunnel entrance. It was used as a camp to shelter migrants in response to the growing number of people present in the area.⁶ The Sangatte camp was intended to be able to accommodate up to 600 people at any given time.



A person trying to climb the tall barbed wire fence along the route to the ferry port lost their sweater. Photo credit: Dominika Zara / Shutterstock



Inside the Sangatte camp. Photo credit: www.news.vice.com/en_us/article/qva5n3/remembering-sangatte-frances-notorious-refugee-camp.jpg

² SCNCDH (2021). Avis sur le projet confortant les principes de la république, p. 5-6. Available at: https://www.cncdh.fr/sites/default/files/a_-_2021_-_3_-_situation_des_personnes_exilees_a_calais_et_grande_synthe_fevrier_2021.pdf

³ Reinisch, Jessica (2015). ‘Forever Temporary’: Migrants in Calais, Then and Now in The Political Quarterly 86(4), p. 515-522. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281930404_Forever_Temporary_Migrants_in_Calais_Then_and_Now

⁴ King, N. (2016). No Borders: The Politics of Immigration Control and Resistance (London: Zed Books), p. 103. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/imre.12341>

⁵ E.g., fines for those found to have brought into the UK, knowingly or not, people who did not have ‘proper documents’. See the Immigration (Carriers’ Liability) Act 1987 (available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1987/24/enacted>).

⁶ Reinisch, ‘Forever Temporary’



Sarkozy speaking to two displaced people. Photo credit: www.en.rfi.fr/france/20161027-history-jungle-Calais-1999-2016-pictures

By October 2002, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) had established a permanent presence in the Sangatte camp, providing legal counselling and advice. A population of over 3,000 people was estimated to be present in the area by this time, with an average of 1,700 present in the camp, thus clearly exceeding the maximum intended capacity. The UNHCR and the Red Cross reported that more than 80% of individuals in the area came from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Sudan.⁷ At the end of 2002, due to significant pressure from the UK government, which described the Sangatte centre as a 'pull factor' attracting more people to the area,⁸ Nicolas Sarkozy, then French minister for Home Affairs, announced the camp's closure. This came after two unsuccessful legal proceedings initiated by the private operator Eurotunnel to have the centre closed. A so-called 'burden sharing agreement' followed, in which the UK agreed to take responsibility for approximately 1,000 Iraqi Kurds and 200 Afghans as part of work visa arrangements, while France took responsibility for the remaining 300 individuals in the Sangatte centre.⁹

In the early days of 2003, following the closure of the Sangatte camp, the question of migration at the UK-France border moved out of the spotlight. However, squats and makeshift shelters, named 'jungles' by the communities living in them, soon started to reappear in greater numbers, being periodically evicted and torn down by French state authorities. Local volunteer groups provided hot meals and dry clothes throughout the period, whilst conditions continued to deteriorate in the area.

Two main policy positions started to take shape in France during this period: on the one hand, there was a strong argument being made in favour of providing people with shelter and basic care. On the other, many argued that France ought to make conditions as inhospitable as possible, so as to deter new arrivals.¹⁰ By 2009, a makeshift camp had emerged in the area, hosting 1,000 inhabitants. By the end of the year, it had been completely evicted and bulldozed, and hundreds of

individuals were arrested. Then-UK Home Secretary Alan Johnson welcomed the closure of the camp and said that, "*The measures that we have put in place are not only there to prevent illegal immigration, but also to stop people trafficking. We are working with the French, not only to strengthen our shared border, but that of Europe as a whole.*"¹¹

By July 2009, the group Calais Migrant Solidarity, also known in Calais as the 'No Borders' collective, started documenting and calling out human rights violations. They also started to keep a record of deaths of displaced people. From July 2009 to July 2012, the UNHCR provided legal aid and counselling to individuals in the area; these responsibilities were transferred to the French third-sector organisation France Terre d'Asile in July 2012.



One of the early 'Jungles'. Photo credit: Philippe Huguon

⁷ UNHCR (2002). 'Sangatte: UNHCR establishes permanent presence'. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/3d4fe36e5.html>

⁸ King, *No Borders*, p. 103

⁹ Reinisch, 'Forever Temporary'

¹⁰ Reinisch, 'Forever Temporary'

¹¹ Reinisch, 'Forever Temporary'



One of the early 'Jungles' by the ferry port. Photo credit: Fameflynet.uk.com

In December 2014, the UNHCR reported that there were 2,500 displaced people in the area, compared to around 500 during previous winters. The majority were from countries affected by civil unrest or war, such as Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, and Syria.¹² Most people were sleeping in improvised shelters tucked away in the woodlands, or on abandoned industrial sites and wastelands. Others found shelter in squats or buildings rented by the No Borders activists, whilst others set up tents in the town of Calais, or were hosted by citizens of Calais.¹³ The European director of UNHCR described the situation in Calais with the following words: *"The conditions are totally unacceptable and are not consistent with the kind of values that a democratic society should have"*.¹⁴

In January 2015, the French authorities eventually set up an official reception centre at 'Jules Ferry', a former holiday campsite for children, which was run by third-sector organisation La Vie Active. Initially, it consisted of three large tents, providing overnight accommodation for women and young children, as well as food distributions, clean water, sanitation facilities, and medical care.¹⁵

In March 2015, approximately 1,200 people were evicted from small camps and squatted buildings around Calais and driven out of the town centre. Many of these individuals relocated to a site by the Jules Ferry centre. This was precisely the site which would become the future Calais 'Jungle' camp. In the same month, the British Home Affairs Committee reported:

*"The migrants we met in Calais were overwhelmingly from regions suffering from war, internal conflict, and failure of the state, who would appear eligible to apply for asylum in Europe once they reach a safe destination."*¹⁶

At that time, Doctors of the World estimated that more than 3,000 people were staying in makeshift camps in the area. The organisation described the population as *"often young (15 to 25 years old), male, and travelling alone, [with] growing numbers of women [and] children."*¹⁷ Moreover, the medical NGO reported 'absolutely inadequate' living conditions resulting in a range of health problems including colds and flu, skin conditions, respiratory problems, gastric problems, and so on. Police violence was commonly reported to be perpetrated against individuals in the most visible camps in the northern France area, while those in Steenvoorde, Angres, Norrent-Fontes, and Tatinghem remained relatively under the radar and shielded from police violence.¹⁸

While the Calais 'Jungle' camp has been romanticised by some, it was to soon receive widespread media attention as the *"worst refugee camp in the world."* At its peak in 2016, it would come to host up to 10,000 individuals, with large numbers of volunteers and activists arriving from the UK and various countries worldwide to join in solidarity, to offer support and provide services in the absence of state care.



A man walks through the 'New Jungle' migrants camp in Calais. Photo credit: www.en.rfi.fr/france/20161027-history-jungle-calais-1999-2016-pictures

¹² UNHCR (2014). 'UNHCR appeals for urgent action to address deteriorating humanitarian situation in Calais'. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/542563199.html>

¹³ See, for instance, Wannesson, P. (2017). 'Calais : Les murs et la ville' in *Raison présente*, 2 (202), p. 67-75 (available at: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-raison-presente-2017-2-page-67.htm>) and Wannesson, P. (2017). 'Calais : Des campements entre répression, adaptation, co-gestion et résistance' in *Migreurop*, Atlas des migrants en Europe: Approches critiques des politiques migratoires (France: Armand Colin), p. 52-53.

¹⁴ Matthew Taylor and Guy Grandjean (2014). 'At least 15 migrants die in 'shameful' Calais conditions in 2014'. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/dec/23/15-migrants-trying-enter-uk-die-shameful-calais-conditions>

¹⁵ Che Ramsden (2015). 'The new Sangatte: rights pushed out of sight'. *Open Democracy*. Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/new-sangatte-rights-pushed-out-of-sight>

¹⁶ Home Affairs Committee (2015). The work of the Immigration Directorates: Calais. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmhaff/902/90202.htm> (quote from section 1, para. 13: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmhaff/902/90203.htm#a3>)

¹⁷ Doctors of the world UK (2015). 'Submission from Doctors of the World UK: The Humanitarian Situation in Calais'. Available at: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/the-work-of-the-immigration-directorates-2014-q3/written/18572.pdf>

¹⁸ See, e.g., Suel, N. (2017). 'Dans la région de Calais, arrestations illégales et humiliations' in *Migreurop*, Atlas des migrants en Europe, p. 126-127.

WHAT WAS THE CALAIS 'JUNGLE' CAMP LIKE, AND WHAT HAPPENED DURING THIS TIME?

With more and more people arriving at the approximately 18-hectare site, an uneven sandy former landfill site in an industrial zone in Calais, and in the striking absence of adequate state provisions, large numbers of individuals soon found themselves in deplorable conditions at the new camp site.



The "dunes" on the edge of the Calais camp. Photo credit: Natalie Stanton

A GROWING CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSE

Within this vacuum, a wide array of organisations and initiatives soon emerged to fill the vital gap left by governments and traditional actors. These included groups like Art Refuge, Belgian Kitchen, Calaid, Help Refugees, Calais Action, Care4Calais, Calais Kitchens, Kitchen in Calais, Refugee Youth Service, Refugee Info Bus, Refugee Community Kitchen, Utopia 56, the Unofficial Women and Children's Centre, the Hummingbird Project, Play4Calais, The Worldwide Tribe, and Jungle Books Library.

These grassroots initiatives joined the small number of larger organisations already operating in the area (Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Doctors of the World, ACTED and Secours Catholique) and the local French associations that had already been present in Calais for a significant period of time (in particular, l'Auberge des Migrants and Salam). Together, these organisations created a unique and organic "architecture of care and dignity".¹⁹

In addition, London2Calais sent regular convoys of aid and support to Calais, Phone Credit for Refugee and Displaced People raised donations to help top up mobile phones, and Legal Shelter offered a space for fundamental legal advice.

The Refugee Resilience Collective, a team of UK narrative psychotherapists, travelled weekly to the camp to offer psychosocial support to residents and volunteers.

The Calaidipedia was an essential online resource for those already on site and those planning to travel to Calais to get involved, offering updates and information on donation and volunteer needs for different groups.²⁰ It has since been archived, but remains an impressive collection documenting the history of the camp and the initiatives and processes within it.



Distribution sign indicating the times for distribution of different items. Photo credit: Hannah-Sophie Wahle

¹⁹ Dan Hicks and Sarah Mallet (2019). Lande: The Calais 'Jungle' and Beyond (Bristol University Press), p. 154.

²⁰ See: <https://www.calaidipedia.co.uk>

THE EMERGENCE OF A 'VILLAGE'

Slowly but surely, the camp turned into a small village or shantytown with an array of shops and social spaces being set up by its residents and volunteers and activists alike. It quickly gained notoriety as the “biggest slum in Europe”. The first school in the camp was opened in July 2015 by volunteers and camp residents providing a space to learn French, English, History and Geography.²¹ In the following month, Jungle Books library was opened by a British teacher, and then run by volunteers and camp residents.²² Zimarco Jones started the Jungle School,²³ also providing schooling in a number of subjects. Volunteers also set up mobile, shelter-based classes, where requested.

Community leaders from each of the main country groups started working together to ensure peaceful relations between camp residents, volunteers and local authorities.

The first fixed aid distribution point was set up in November 2015 to distribute donations from the l'Auberge des Migrants and Help Refugees warehouses. Prior to this, only mobile van-based distributions had been used to supply aid, such as clothes, food, firewood, hygiene products and other essential items.

A number of fixed compounds like Belgian Kitchen, Ashram Kitchen and Kitchen in Calais were set up in the camp, providing reliable food at multiple times during the day. Furthermore, Refugee Community Kitchen (RCK) coordinated pop-up distributions of hot food daily. While RCK initially started with a centralised distribution point, they later coordinated a de-centralised distribution system in different parts of the camp, adapting to a growing population and avoiding the creation of overly



Inside Jungle Books. Photo credit: Refugee Info Bus

long queues. People were also able to collect basic meals from the Jules Ferry centre.

In an effort to ensure dignified, safe and fair distributions, groups like Calais Kitchens and Calais Woodyard – who provided food parcels and fire wood – implemented a ticket system in which, each week at a set time, each shelter in the camp would receive a ticket that could be redeemed for aid appropriate for the number of people living in that shelter. This system was later adopted by other groups providing essential items.

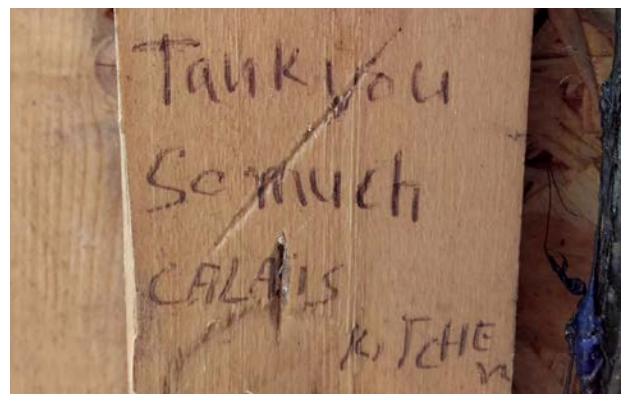
Through the First Aid Caravans volunteer doctors and nurses provided basic medical assistance.

A Welcome Van, set up in 2016, was able to supply welcome packs and essential items, and provide some key information about the structures of the camp, to newly arrived people. Additionally, a volunteer-run van with installed washing machines offered a few individuals a day the possibility to wash their clothes.

Miracle Street set up a bike-based phone charging station.



Jungle Books building. Photo credit: Chris Barrett



A “Thank You” note by a resident for the distribution team of Calais Kitchen.

21. La Voix du Nord (2015). ‘Calais : dans leur camp, des migrants construisent leur école’. Available at: <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/art/region/calais-dans-leur-camp-des-migrants-construisent-leur-ecole-ia33b48581n2940853>

22. Marta Bausells (2015). ‘Calais migrant camp gets makeshift library – and it needs more books’ on The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/24/calais-migrant-camp-gets-makeshift-library-and-it-needs-more-books>

23. BBC (2016). ‘Meet the man who built a school for migrants in the Calais ‘Jungle’’. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-35714129>



Woman at the entrance of the Eritrean Orthodox church. Photo credit: Chris Barrett

Creative projects aimed to highlight the talent, skills and humanity of those living in the camp. These included:

- The Good Chance theatre,²⁴ which built an 11-meter geodesic dome and ran a programme of social and artistic activities. They received support from the Young Vic Theatre, the National Theatre and Royal Court Theatre, who offered materials and equipment.
- Calais Sessions,²⁵ a collective of creatives who travelled to Calais from the UK to work with talented musicians in the camp and record a number of songs.
- Jungala Radio,²⁶ a digital community radio station based in the camp, which provided facilitative training for residents in digital community radio broadcasting and produced a series of radio programmes offering a unique, children-led insight into day-to-day life in the camp.

From the early days of the Jungle, spaces of worship were established. A landmark church stood for many months on the southern land of the camp, providing a space of sanctuary for many Christians in the camp; and several mosques were opened by camp residents, providing not only a space of worship but also a community space and a central point for people to connect and share information. The tannoys of the mosques could double, not only as a channel for the daily calls to prayer, but also as an information sharing mechanism to disseminate verbal messages to camp residents.

There were attempts to provide “safe spaces” for children, young people and women – although, given the overarching lack of security in the camp and the absence of state support, vulnerable groups were always facing considerable risk whilst in the camp.



Children warming themselves by a fire amongst fire destruction. Photo credit: Rob Pinney



Support tent. Photo credit: Chris Barrett

²⁴ Susannah Tresilian (2016). 'Guardian Books Podcast: a special from the Calais Jungle' on The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2016/feb/19/guardian-books-podcast-special-calais-jungle-library-migrant>; Andrzej Lukowski (2017). 'The Journey From the Calais Jungle to the London Stage' on The New York Times. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/06/theater/the-journey-from-the-calais-jungle-to-the-london-stage.html>

²⁵ The Calais Sessions YouTube channel is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKWv2g-8Ns3vViq6OrKH6w>

²⁶ Jungala Radio recordings are available on Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/user-633219146> Also see the radio's website: <https://www.jungalaradio.com/blog>



One of the many restaurants. Photo credit: Beatrice Lilly, Refugee Info Bus



The Peace restaurant. Photo credit: Huang Zheng / Shutterstock



One of the water points installed by volunteers. Photo credit: Sarah Story, Refugee Info Bus

Organisations like the Hummingbird Project, Refugee Youth Service and Art Refuge, in partnership with Médecins Sans Frontières, collaborated on making safe spaces, and offered a creative and therapeutic environment for the most vulnerable young people. They, for example, developed a 'Safe Zone', which only children and authorised adults could access.

Refugee Youth Service led on developing a tracking service for young people in the camp and brought in the NSPCC Trafficking Service to take account of the children going missing every week. Back in the UK, these groups joined forces with Lord Alf Dubs, Safe Passage and others in calling for better protection and legal pathways to the UK for children in northern France.

The Unofficial Women and Children's Centre, spearheaded by Liz Clegg, a former fire-fighter from the UK, provided a space and activities for women, including "beauty days" and rest and leisure activities, but also safe and dignified access to essential items, signposting to health and legal services and so forth.

Individual volunteers with relevant skills supported digging and preparing land for tents, drainage and electricity.

During 2016, a gym and a playground were established by independent volunteers and camp residents collaboratively. Here, camp residents could take part in, and organise, activities such as boxing training and fitness classes.

As mentioned above, small informal businesses cropped up at a similar rate to the volunteer initiatives, mostly arranged along the main "market" street, run by residents of the camp. These offered not only access to food, essential items and access to phone charging, but also a social space as well as, importantly, a source of income

for some of the camp residents. Businesses included barbers, shops, a bike mechanic, bakeries, a nightclub, and multiple restaurants of different nationalities, with some even offering movie screenings.

These businesses remained a central resource for camp residents and an integral part of surviving in the camp until just a few weeks prior to the final eviction, when government officials entered the camp with the order to close all of the essential shop and restaurant infrastructure.

The nature of overcrowded space filled with flammable materials in close proximity to gas bottles and bonfires made fast spreading fire an ever-present risk in the camp. While volunteers were trained in basic fire response and water points and a "volunteer fire vehicle" were set up, this risk was never fully contained and fires devastated considerable areas of the camp during the year.



Container accommodation. Photo credit: Thomas Laurance, Help Refugees/Choose Love

SHELTER / BUILDINGS



One impressive example of the creativity and ingenuity of shelter making in the Calais 'Jungle'. Photo Credit: Refugee Info Bus, Beatrice Lilly



Photo credit: Beatrice Lilly, Refugee Info Bus

People arriving at the camp in 2015 initially survived in tents, highly unsuitable to withstand the autumn and winter weather of northern France. Jungle Canopy and Caravans for Calais were bringing caravans into the camp whenever possible, although their access to the camp was regularly blocked by police officers.

Through a spontaneous process, different national communities variously organised the spaces they inhabited: *"The Sudanese families, for example, had arranged their shelters in groups around communal eating spaces, with separate spaces for cooking together. The Afghans, on the other hand, generally lived more separately, but had set up restaurants along an emerging commercial "strip" for social gathering. The Eritrean community, meanwhile, had established a nightclub in a dome-shaped structure, which doubled as a theatre and gallery during the day."*²⁷

Notwithstanding the limited and rudimentary material and equipment, individual residents would take great pride in using their skills and expressing their creativity when developing and decorating their shelters. One of the prime examples of this architectural ingenuity was the "blue house", a beautiful shelter originally built in the Calais camp by a displaced Mauritanian artist called Alpha.²⁸

Thanks to the tireless efforts of volunteers, camp residents and groups like Calais Builds and Help Refugees, within 6 months more than 1,500 wooden shelters were built enabling the majority of camp residents, including all women, to stay in lockable and (more or less) waterproof shelters. This increased people's security marginally.

This, however, was to change quickly following evictions of parts of the camp and the subsequent continuous police blockade of building material entering the camp (see p.19 below).



Sunset over the Calais 'Jungle'. Photo credit: Rob Pinney

²⁷ Oliver Wainwright (2016). 'We built this city: how the refugees of Calais became the camp's architects' on The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/jun/08/refugees-calais-jungle-camp-architecture-festival-barbican>

²⁸ Wainwright (2016). 'We built this city'.

The French authorities set up 125 white-painted, repurposed shipping containers to accommodate up to 1,500 people next to the Jules Ferry centre. The 'container camp' provided bunk beds, heaters, shared toilet and shower facilities. Many camp residents refused to move into the fenced container camp, distrusting the handprint technology controlling access.²⁹

Later on, the containers would become the backdrop to one of the grossest safeguarding failures by the French authorities when, during the final eviction of the camp in October 2016, over 1,500 children were sent to the container camp, where they stayed until taken to the Centres d'Accueil et d'Orientation pour Mineurs Isolés Étrangers (CAOMIEs). Children were left with no running water, disgraceful conditions in the toilet facilities and a complete absence of official safeguarding measures.



Volunteers and residents building a shelter.
Photo credit: Thomas Laurance, Help Refugees/Choose Love



FURTHER READING

RESOURCES EXPLORING STRUCTURES, ARCHITECTURE AND URBANITY OF THE CAMP

- In-depth explorations of the structures and urbanity of the Calais camp have been conducted by e.g. Volk (2017)³⁰ and Koegler (2017).³¹
- A student-led research project hosted by the Migration Research Group at King's College London provided residents of the camp with disposable cameras to record their daily lives from their own perspectives, which resulted in a research report, article and public exhibition. See Mohseni at al (2017).³²
- An extensive photographic account of the Calais area, accompanied by text narratives and a music disc, was created by Lequette and Le Vergos (2016).³³
- Kate Evans' graphic novel *Threads* gives an intimate and visual insight into early days of the Jungle.³⁴
- *Voices from the Jungle*, published in 2017, recounts the personal stories of camp residents.³⁵
- Numerous efforts aimed at Mapping out the space of the Jungle have been made. See for instance Shearman (2016)³⁶ and Project Fuel (2019).³⁷
- An 'architectural atlas' was created by Architecture for Refugees (2016).³⁸
- For a deeper analysis of the Calais camp in its physical forms, see Hicks and Mallet (2019),³⁹ who explore the site of the "Jungle" through the lens of contemporary archaeology.

²⁹ Matthias Blamont (2016). 'Migrant shelter made of shipping containers opens in France's Calais' on Reuters. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-calais-idUSKCN0UP23R20160111>

³⁰ Volk, S., 2017. Refugee encampments in Calais: Between jungle and city. *Eikasia*, (77). Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339883407_Refugee_Encampments_in_Calais_Between_Jungle_and_City

³¹ Koegler, C., 2017. Precarious urbanity: The jungle(Calais) and the politics of performing the urban. *Postcolonial Text*, 12(3&4). Available at: <https://www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/2309/2125>

³² Mohseni, L., Singh, I., Flores, T. and Hansen, S.S. (2017) *Humans of Calais: a photo essay*. Available from: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/mediterranean-journeys-in-hope/humans-of-c>

³³ Lequette, S. and Le Vergos, D. (2016). *Décamper De Lampedusa à Calais, un livre de textes et d'images & un disque pour parler d'une terre sans accueil*. France: La Découverte.

³⁴ Kate Evans (n.d.). 'Threads: The Calais cartoon'. Available at: <https://www.cartoonkate.co.uk/threads-the-calais-cartoon>

³⁵ Calais Writers (2017). *Voices From the Jungle*. Available from: <https://www.plutobooks.com/9780745399683/voices-from-the-jungle>

³⁶ Shearman, S. (2016). *The cartography of control: Mapping the Calais refugee camp*. Available from: <https://qz.com/710341/the-cartography-of-control-mapping-the-calais-refugee-camp>

³⁷ Project Fuel (2019). *The Calais Jungle Wisdom Map*. Available from: <https://projectfuel.in/calaiswisdommap>

³⁸ Architecture for Refugees (2016). *Map of the camp in Calais - Mapfugees*. Available from: http://umap.openstreetmap.fr/en/map/jungle-calais_71247#17/50.96891/1.90761

³⁹ Hicks, D., and Mallet, S. (2019). *Lande: The Calais 'Jungle' and Beyond*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

EVICIONS AND THE GRADUAL DEMOLITION OF THE CAMP

Given the French government's longstanding policy of seeking to uproot individuals in the area and prevent the establishment of 'fixation points' along the UK border, it came as no surprise that the authorities would seek to eliminate the camp. It did so in several steps, starting in January 2016.

THE 100 METER "BUFFER ZONE"

At this time, bulldozers moved in to clear a 100-meter-wide strip (a "buffer zone") next to the motorway that ran past the camp, intended as an alleged security measure to prevent individuals' access to lorries travelling along the road, to enable the police greater control over camp residents. Volunteers and camp residents managed to move most shelters away from the buffer zone prior to demolition.⁴⁰



Residents and volunteers move a shelter to save it from demolition.
Photo credit: Rob Pinney

DEMOLITION OF THE SOUTH PART OF THE CAMP

A month later, in February 2016, the Calais Prefecture announced its next demolition plans. It was now going to bulldoze the southern section of the camp, stating that this would affect 800-1,000 refugees living in that zone. Organisations on the ground reported that the official estimates were incorrect, and that the actual population of the affected area amounted to at least 3,000 people, including 400 children, 300 of whom are unaccompanied.⁴¹ They also highlighted that three mosques, the largest church, three schools, the Jungle Books library, the Good Chance theatre, the women and children's centre, as well as hot food and aid distribution points, would be affected.⁴²

A court in Lille approved the French government's request to evict the southern part of the camp and, despite protests, legal actions⁴³ and a hunger strike by camp residents,⁴⁴ the demolition started the following month.

While camp residents and volunteers tried to move as many of the wooden structures and caravans as they could to the other part of the camp, many of the shelters were lost to the demolition. Space in the remaining camp rapidly filled with tents and the scarcity of space led to increased stress, even harsher conditions and potential for conflict, and also further increased the risk of fire.



Protesters during the demolition of the camp's South side.
Photo credit: Rob Pinney

⁴⁰ Deutsche Welle (2016). 'French authorities try to create buffer zone at Calais refugee camp'. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/french-authorities-try-to-create-buffer-zone-at-calais-refugee-camp/a-18986588>

⁴¹ Help Refugees (2016). 'Calais statement - our concerns'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/calais-statement-our-concerns>

⁴² Help Refugees (2016). 'Help Refugees statement on Calais eviction'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/help-refugees-statement-on-calais- eviction>

⁴³ BBC (2016). 'Calais 'Jungle' eviction gets go-ahead'. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35663225>

⁴⁴ Oscar Quine (2016). 'Calais Jungle refugees sew mouths shut in protest at camp clearance' on The Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/calais-jungle-refugees-sew-mouths-shut-protest-camp-clearance-a6912806.html>

CAMP POPULATION

The ever-changing and transient camp population was made up of individuals from many different places around the world plagued by war and conflict, deep pockets of protracted crises. Large numbers of people came from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Syria. There was a majority of men and boys, with smaller numbers of women and girls. In the southern part, many family units would reside, whilst some families instead went to stay in the camp in nearby Dunkirk, which for some time was run by MSF with the support of the local mayor, Damien Carême.

In February 2016 a census by Help Refugees, the first of its kind, found that the camp was at the time home to a total of 5,497 residents, including 182 families, 205 women and 651 children, of whom 423 were unaccompanied. The census did not include those in the government-run facilities, such as the Jules Ferry centre and the shipping containers, the latter of which hosted approximately 1,500 people.⁴⁵

The census in April found that 4,946 refugees were living in the camp at the time of the census, including 1,400 in the state-provided containers. 514 children were counted, of whom 294 were unaccompanied. The youngest recorded unaccompanied child was eight years of age, with the average age of minors in the camp being 14.2.⁴⁶ During the following months, the camp population continued to grow consistently and rapidly.

Refugee Rights Europe reports (see info box below) offer a deeper insight into demographics and backgrounds of the population, including information on age, length of time spent in displacement and in the Calais camp, and previously held professions.

In August, the then monthly census by Help Refugees and l'Auberge des Migrants found that the number of residents in the Calais camp had risen to a staggering 9,106 people, including 865 children, of whom 78% were unaccompanied.⁴⁷

One month later, in September 2016, the census found that more than 10,000 people now lived in the camp. It *“also reveal[ed] that the number of unaccompanied minors [had] increased by 51% month-on-month – bringing to 1,179 the number of underage youths in the camp, of which 87% [were] unaccompanied. Of those surveyed for the census, 52% reported issues in receiving accommodation, including waiting times of up to eight months to be offered even temporary shelter by local authorities.”*⁴⁸

In the month of the final eviction, October 2016, civil society groups and academics estimated that there were between 8,000 and 10,000 residents in the camp. Help Refugees estimated the population to be 8,143.⁴⁹



FURTHER READING

REFUGEE RIGHTS EUROPE'S REPORTS RELATING TO THE 'JUNGLE' CAMP

THE LONG WAIT

Filling Data Gaps Relating to Refugees and Displaced People in the Calais Camp.
www.refugee-rights.eu/reports/the-long-wait

UNSAFE BORDERLANDS

Filling Data Gaps Relating to Women in The Calais Camp.
www.refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE_UnsafeBorderlands.pdf

STILL WAITING

Filling Additional Information Gaps Relating to The Calais Camp.
www.refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE_StillWaiting.pdf

STILL HERE

Exploring Further Dynamics of the Calais Camp.
www.refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE_StillHere.pdf

⁴⁵ Help Refugees (2016). 'Calais Camp - Total number of residents revealed for the first time - 423 unaccompanied minors'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/calais-camp-total-number-of-residents-revealed-for-the-first-time-423-unaccompanied-minors>

⁴⁶ Help Refugees (2016). 'Calais Breaking News: 129 unaccompanied minors unaccounted for since demolition'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/calais-breaking-news-129-unaccompanied-minors-unaccounted-for-since-demolition>

⁴⁷ Help Refugees (2016). 'Latest Calais Census'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/latest-calais-census>

⁴⁸ Elsa Buchanan (2016). '10,000 people now live in Calais Jungle migrant camp'. Available at: <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/10000-people-now-live-calais-jungle-migrant-camp-1582103>

⁴⁹ BBC (2016). 'Calais 'Jungle' cleared of migrants, French prefect says'. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-3773848>

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE 'JUNGLE' CAMP

Overall, the human rights situation in the Calais 'Jungle' camp was critical. While European states tend to present themselves as beacons of democracy and human rights, it is clear that these fundamental principles did not apply to the residents of the camp or others trapped in the UK-France borderzone.

Countless human rights provisions contained within the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights were infringed upon, such as the right to life, liberty and security of person (Article 3), freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 5), a guarantee not to be arbitrarily deprived of one's property (Article 17: 2), the right to an adequate standard of living which upholds one's health and well-being (Article 25: 1) and the right to special care for mothers and children (Article 25: 2). In addition, there was an alarming absence of the rights of the child, as contained within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The blatant violations of human rights of the residents of the camp led the Défenseur des Droits (the French Ombudsperson for human rights) to voice their concerns in October 2015, releasing a damning report about the violations.⁵⁰

This was echoed in November 2015 by the Conseil d'État, who urged the French state to establish additional water points, toilets and garbage collection facilities, to clean up the site, to create access for emergency services, and to identify and protect unaccompanied minors. It stated that the living conditions constituted inhuman or degrading treatment by the French state.⁵¹ UNHCR joined by voicing concerns about the conditions for displaced people in Calais and Dunkirk.⁵²

Despite such outcries, the human rights violations and wholly inadequate living conditions and accompanying lack of safety continued throughout the time of the Calais 'Jungle' camp, as outlined in greater detail below.



After heavy rainfall - a flooded area of the camp. Photo credit: Rowan Farrell, Refugee Info Bus

⁵⁰ Défenseur des Droits (2015). 'Exilés et droits fondamentaux : la situation sur le territoire de Calais'. Available at: https://defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rapport_calais_2015.pdf

⁵¹ Conseil d'État (2015). Juge des référés, 23/11/2015, 394540. Available at: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/ceta/id/CETATEXT000031938075>

⁵² UNHCR (2016). 'UNHCR concerned about conditions in Calais and Dunkerque'. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2016/2/56b4ac916/unhcr-concerned-conditions-calais-dunkerque.html>

SANITATION, HEALTH AND LIVING CONDITIONS

Throughout its existence, the camp was not formally recognised as an official refugee camp and, hence, was not subject to international norms of accountability and sanitation in regards to refugee camps. This “informal” status also affected the presence, or rather absence, of larger NGOs, as well as the availability of life-saving services, such as ambulances and fire response, in the camp.

Overall, the conditions in the ‘Jungle’ were extremely precarious, with a terrible level of sanitation and inadequate shelters. Early on, in June 2015, then-French Housing Minister Sylvia Pinel announced that the government would take measures to improve the conditions in the camp, including the installation of street lighting and water points.⁵³ Despite this commitment, basic infrastructure such as water points, latrines and garbage collection remained wholly inadequate for the duration of the camp.

Conditions remained shockingly sub-standard, as highlighted by Dhesi et al. (2015, 2018), whose research showed a lack of facilities for sanitation, safe provision of food, water and shelter and demonstrated how conditions fell short of agreed international standards for formal refugee camps. They highlighted a number of severe environmental health risks, including unsafe levels of bacteria in food and drink, lack of washing facilities and existence of scabies, bedbug and lice infestations, inappropriate living conditions conducive to exposure to heat, damp, cold and high levels of communicable disease, faecal contamination and many other health risks. The same studies further highlighted the “physical risks from unsafe, poorly lit living environments, uncontrolled fire, and violence from other camp residents and the authorities”.⁵⁴ A quantitative survey on health and experiences of violence endured by displaced people in Calais conducted in November and December 2015 painted a similarly grim reality.⁵⁵

A huge majority – 76.7% of respondents – reported to Refugee Rights Europe (RRE), during its large research study in February 2016,⁵⁶ that they had experienced at least one health problem since

arriving in the Calais camp. For the largest proportion, 40.4%, the problem originated due to being subjected to the camp’s ‘unhealthy environment’ – often due to the cold weather, lack of a decent mattress to sleep on, or poor living conditions in general. A further 8.4% said that the issues were caused by ‘a contagious disease spread inside the camp’.



Toilets in the “Jungle”. Photo credit: Hannah-Sophie Wahle

At the time of the research, there were a number of different medical facilities in the camp provided by various charitable organisations and NGOs, including Médecins Sans Frontières and Doctors of the World. Respondents generally spoke highly of these organisations and their staff, explaining that they were working very hard to help. Therefore, the largest proportion, 40% of respondents, described the medical care they received as ‘OK’, while 20.5% noted that the care was ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’. However, a number of those surveyed identified a lack of medical supplies to be a problem. Since the medical organisations operating in the camp were relatively limited in their ability to distribute prescription drugs, many of the camp’s inhabitants said they were given paracetamol – often insufficient to treat their various and complex health issues.



One of the water points in the camp. Photo credit: Natalie Stanton



The camp’s “high street”. Photo credit: Hannah-Sophie Wahle

⁵³ La Voix du Nord (2015). ‘Migrants de Calais : bientôt des points d’eau, de l’éclairage et des sanitaires dans la «new jungle»’. Available at: <http://www.lavoixdunord.fr/archive/recup/region/migrants-de-calais-bientot-des-points-d-eau-de-ia33b0n2891692>

⁵⁴ Dan Hicks and Sarah Mallet (2019). *Land: The Calais ‘Jungle’ and Beyond* (Bristol University Press), p. 36. Available at: <https://library.oxpen.org/handle/20.500.12657/25232>

⁵⁵ Bouhenia et al. (2017). ‘Quantitative survey on health and violence endured by refugees during their journey and in Calais, France’ in *International Health* 9(6):335-342. Available at: <https://academic.oup.com/inthealth/article/9/6/335/4791936>

⁵⁶ Refugee Rights Europe (2016). *The Long Wait: Filling data gaps relating to refugees and displaced people in the Calais camp*. Available at: <https://refugee-rights.eu/the-long-wait>

POLICE VIOLENCE, CITIZEN VIOLENCE AND DEATHS

Camp residents were systematically subjected to high levels of police violence, and the violence was often employed disproportionately. According to RRE's research findings in February 2016, 75.9% of the survey's respondents reported experiencing violence from the police. The results showed a complex picture of sustained police violence towards refugees and displaced people living in the camp. Respondents referred to the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, beatings, and – to a lesser extent – the use of dogs, verbal abuse and sexual violence. Given these details, it can be inferred that victims experienced a spectrum of suffering, ranging from severe pain to comparatively lesser harm.

The most prevalent form of violence reported was the use of tear gas, experienced by 69.9% of respondents. Furthermore, some 42.4% of respondents also told us they had experienced physical violence by police. However, it should be noted that the camp's inhabitants were regularly subject to more than one form of violence at a time. Many also reported that the police response was disproportionate. As one respondent explained: *"We were on our way to Lidl to do some shopping. They attacked me with gas and kicked me in the face with their boots even though I hadn't done anything bad"*.



Young people return without shoes after trying to climb onto lorries. They report their shoes had been taken by police. Photo credit: Rowan Farrell, Refugee Info Bus



Heavily geared CRS officers during the eviction of the South part of the camp. Photo credit: Rob Pinney

The manner and systematic use of tear gas in Calais at the time of the Jungle gave cause for serious concern. RRE's aforementioned study found that 20.5% of respondents had experienced tear gas on a daily basis during their time in the camp, while 42.3% had been exposed multiple times a week. It was often reported that tear gas was not used to disperse a crowd but was targeted towards individuals to ensure maximum impact and damage to that person. For example, one respondent told RRE that two residents were arrested and held in a police van after being found attempting to travel to the UK. Police personnel detonated a tear gas canister in the back of the van, and locked the doors for more than 20 minutes.

Almost half of RRE's respondents – some 49.2% – reported suffering from nonpolice citizens during their time living in the Calais camp. This number is slightly smaller among women, with 45.8% noting that they had experienced this sort of violence. For a total of 29.6%, this took the form of verbal abuse. Many had experienced racist remarks while walking between the camp and the city centre. *"They yell, spit and insult from cars,"* said one respondent; while another reported, *"They hold their noses as refugees go past as if they smell"*. This problem extended to businesses in the Calais area, with a number of people reporting that some shops *"refuse to serve refugees"*.

Some 66.6% of respondents said they had known of deaths in the camp. They cited various causes, including police and citizen violence, fights, unhealthy living conditions, chronic disease, old age, and road traffic accidents while attempting to cross to the UK.



FURTHER READING

RESOURCES DOCUMENTING BORDER DEATHS

INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (2020)

'Deadly Crossing and the militarisation of Britain's borders'

www.irr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Deadly-Crossings-Final.pdf

CALAIS MIGRANT SOLIDARITY (ON GOING)

'Deaths at the Calais Border'

www.calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com/deaths-at-the-calais-border

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Despite relentless efforts by groups like Refugee Info Bus and Legal Shelter (la Cabane Juridique), residents of the camp were left without adequate access to information on their rights, immigration rules and possibilities to change their situation. This was especially worrisome for the large number of unaccompanied minors, of whom a significant number appeared to have had the legal right to be accepted in the UK but did not have access to legal channels or support.

According to RRE's research study, based on a survey with 890 camp residents, a concerning 79.3% of respondents reported not having access to advice about their rights or opportunities to change their situation. A similarly high percentage of respondents (74.3%) said they did not have any information about European immigration rules. 77.3% of respondents said they had no opportunities to access any form of education in Calais.

MOTHERHOOD AND GROUPS WITH SPECIAL SAFEGUARDING NEEDS

Groups with special safeguarding needs, such as women going through different stages of pregnancy or motherhood, individuals with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, the elderly and solo travelling women faced especially difficult living situations within the camp. RRE research found that some 73% of women said they felt unsafe in the Calais camp, reporting instances of harassment, threats and violence, and that these occurred with alarming frequency.

The research found that women were deeply concerned about facing sexual exploitation, particularly at the hands of people-smugglers. Given these risks, it was of great concern that the majority of women were not able to lock their shelter securely at night. Another main point of concern was the provision made for women's reproductive health, a fundamental right of all women and girls, in the camp. While Gynecology without Borders offered some access to specialised support, the overall access to reproductive health services remained substandard.



A volunteer facilitates an info session at the Refugee Info Bus. Photo credit: Rowan Farrell, Refugee Info Bus

The situation for pregnant women was incredibly precarious. One respondent reported to RRE in February 2016 that she lost her unborn child due to the detrimental effects of tear gas exposure. Another told us that a woman in the camp had "given birth in the back of a truck". These findings suggest that the maternal health of women in the camp was seriously undermined.



Women entering the orthodox church. Photo credit: Chris Barrett



FURTHER READING

RESOURCES ABOUT WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NORTHERN FRANCE

UNSAFE BORDERLANDS

RRE's report 'Unsafe Borderlands' from 2016 provides an in-depth account of the situation for women and girls in the Camp 'Jungle' camp.

www.refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE_UnsafeBorderlands.pdf

REFUGEE WOMEN'S CENTRE

<https://refugee-rights.eu/2019/11/15/shining-a-light-on-the-needs-of-displaced-women-in-northern-france>

Refer to the Refugee Women's Centre for information about the situation for women and families in the northern France area in the aftermath of the camp.

www.dunkirkrefugeewomenscentre.com

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

The large number of children in the camp, both within families and unaccompanied, were exposed to particular risks and vulnerabilities in and outside the camp.

Age-disaggregated data from RRE's research from February 2016 found that amongst the child respondents, the majority of whom were unaccompanied, 61.1% 'never felt safe'. The reasons for the lack of safety included police violence, citizen violence, fights within the camp, health issues and concerns that the camp could one day be demolished. Alarming, the number of children subjected to police violence (89.66%) was significantly higher than the same figure for adults (73.7%).

Health problems were rife among the camp's children. Some 73.9% experienced health problems since arrival, with 38.7% reporting to RRE that it started due to the 'unhealthy environment' they were living in – in comparison, only 19.3% reported that their health problems started during their journey. Mental health issues were a problem for children, as well as adults, with a number reporting suffering from nightmares and severe anxiety.

UNICEF, who interviewed 60 children in the camp between January and April 2016, publish a report⁵⁷ exposing the extent of the hazardous and dangerous living conditions children and young people were living in and their vulnerability to trafficking, exploitation, violence and abuse.

The report showed that all the children interviewed experienced cold and fatigue as well as barriers to accessing distributed meals

and showers. None of the children they spoke to had access to regular schooling and some reported experiencing mental health deterioration, including depression, mental breakdowns and aggressive and violent episodes (towards self and others). The young people expressed that they feared violence displayed by police, civilian militias and traffickers, as well as sexual assault. The report highlighted the following: *"On most of the sites included in the study, an 'entry fee' is levied by the traffickers before the children are allowed to stay there. The unaccompanied children who are unable to pay find themselves forced to agree to perform laborious tasks for the adults: searching for water, queuing for the showers on behalf of the adults, doing the cleaning around the container whilst they are staying at the temporary reception centre, reselling food collected during distributions at the informal night-time market which operates in the Calais 'jungle', and other such activities."*⁵⁸

Groups engaged with children and young people on the ground frequently highlighted that, despite their best efforts to safeguard children, evictions were heightened moments of vulnerability and, particularly, put children at an increased risk of disappearances. Shockingly, a census by Help Refugees in April 2016 raised concerns that 129 unaccompanied minors could not be accounted for since the eviction of the southern part of the camp the previous month,⁵⁹ highlighting the lack of needs assessment, monitoring and safeguarding by the French authorities. Unfortunately, this observation was repeated in the final eviction of the camp in October 2016.⁶⁰

Organisations like Safe Passage highlighted that a considerable number of unaccompanied minors stuck in limbo in Calais were eligible for family reunification through the provisions of the Dublin III regulations. Despite the treaty having been introduced in 2003, March 2016 saw the first three children transferred from France to Britain.⁶¹ Citizens UK had previously identified 150 children with similar claims.⁶²

During 2016, the British peer and former child refugee Lord Alf Dubs led calls within the British parliament to legislate for children in the 'Jungle' to be relocated to the UK. A reworded version of the motion known as the Dubs Amendment – originally stipulating the relocation of 3,000 children but, having been defeated by the Conservative government despite support from all opposition parties, now applying to an unspecified "specific number" of children⁶³ – was accepted by then-Prime Minister David Cameron before it went to vote in the Commons a second time. Less than a year after it opened, the Government closed the scheme having brought just 350 unaccompanied children to the UK from refugee camps in Europe. This, then-Immigration Minister Robert Goodwill said, met the "intention and spirit" of Lord Dubs' amendment – a statement Lord Dubs disagreed strongly with.⁶⁴ The closure of the scheme was condemned by NGOs, faith leaders and politicians of all colours.⁶⁵ A few months later, facing litigation from the charity Help



A young person in the ruins of the newly demolished south side of the camp.
Photo credit: Rowan Farrell, Refugee Info Bus

⁵⁷ UNICEF (2016). Neither Safe Nor Sound: Unaccompanied children on the coastline of the English Channel and the North Sea. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/publications/neither-safe-nor-sound>

⁵⁸ UNICEF (2016). Neither Safe Nor Sound.

⁵⁹ Peter Yeung (2016). 'Calais 'Jungle': 129 unaccompanied children missing since refugee camp demolition' in The Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/calais-jungle-unaccompanied-children-refugee-camp-demolition-minors-a6965216.html>

⁶⁰ Harriet Agerholm (2016). 'Almost one in three Calais child refugees missing since Jungle camp demolition'. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/calais-jungle-camp-child-refugees-missing-demolition-youth-service-migrants-uk-a7435771.html>

⁶¹ Help Refugees (2016). 'First children in UK from Calais 'Jungle' through Safe Passage legal route'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/first-children-arrive-in-uk-from-calais-jungle-through-safe-passage-legal-route>

⁶² Help Refugees (2016). 'First children in UK from Calais 'Jungle' through Safe Passage legal route'.

⁶³ The proposal was for the "specific number" to be agreed with local authorities, if and when the motion passed, once their capacity for caring for the unaccompanied children was better understood.

⁶⁴ BBC (2017). 'Reality Check: Did government go back on its word on child refugees?'. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-38919873>

⁶⁵ Alan Travis and Diane Taylor (2017). 'PM accused of closing door on child refugees as 'Dubs' scheme ends' on The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/08/dubs-scheme-lone-child-refugees-uk-closed-down>

Refugees for their handling of the Dubs scheme, the Government, which had previously insisted its consultation with local authorities had led to capping the scheme at 350 children, admitted it had made what it described as “an administrative error” when assessing council capacity. Another 130 children would now also be able to benefit from the programme.⁶⁶ Despite Local authorities saying they had further capacity,⁶⁷ calls for the scheme to be reopened were ignored.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND UN EFFORTS DOCUMENTING AND REPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

There were concerns about human rights violations towards inhabitants of the ‘Jungle’ camp from early in its existence – violations that were a continuation of hostilities towards displaced people in the area over the previous decades.⁶⁸ In January 2015, Human Rights Watch released a report calling for an investigation into allegations of police abuse and condemning the inadequate living conditions in which migrants and asylum seekers found themselves in Calais and what they described as the French government’s “inadequate response” to their situation.⁶⁹

In July 2015, the United Nations Committee for Human Rights expressed concern about “continued racial profiling and allegations of police harassment, verbal abuse and abuse of power against migrants and asylum seekers in Calais”⁷⁰.

Recognising a gap in data on the human rights situation in the camp, Refugee Rights Europe (then called Refugee Rights Data Project) headed to the camp in February 2016 for their first large-scale

research study, resulting in the report ‘The Long Wait’. A team of 20 researchers conducted a survey investigating the camp’s demographic composition, potential human rights violations experienced by the people currently living there, and those people’s future aspirations and plans. The data sample collected accounted for 870 individuals, then approximately 15% of the camp’s population of roughly 5,500 people.

The report received immediate attention across UK and international media, including coverage on BBC News. It shed important light on a wide range of human rights infringements experienced by camp residents, including lack of access to information and education, police and citizen violence and lack of access to adequate shelter, sanitation facilities, food and medical care.

The findings concerning violence in particular were mirrored in subsequent reports by other actors. For instance, in the spring of 2016 the United Nations Committee Against Torture raised concern about allegations of excessive use of force by French police in northern France and also noted the existing barriers for victims to make official reports about incidents of police violence.⁷¹

In July 2016, the Bar Human Rights Committee undertook a mission to northern France to investigate repeated allegations of excessive force used by the French police in camps, and the alleged failure by the French police to protect the camps and its residents from violence and threats by organised groups outside the camps. They also aimed to gather information on the issue of access to legal services and adequate information for people in the camps. Its subsequent report⁷² highlighted four primary human rights concerns in relation to policing:



Residents observing a shelter in flames. Photo credit: Rob Pinney

- Use of Excessive force in form of beatings, including beatings with batons, sticks and truncheons, particularly outside of the camp
- Use of excessive force in form of tear gas both inside and outside the camp
- Use of excessive force in the context of evictions and demolitions
- Failure to protect residents of the camps from violence inside the camp (in the main from people-smugglers and traffickers) and outside (right-wing groups and individual “citizen violence”).

⁶⁶ Alan Travis and Amelia Gentleman (2017). ‘UK to take 130 more lone refugee children in Dubs scheme climbdown’ in The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/26/britain-take-130-more-lone-refugee-children-dubs-scheme>

⁶⁷ Jasper Jackson (2017). ‘Home Office decision to end Dubs scheme ‘not backed by evidence’ in The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/06/home-office-decision-to-end-dubs-scheme-not-backed-by-evidence>; May Bulman (2017). ‘Refugee campaigners launch legal challenge over Home Office ‘failure’ to implement Dubs scheme’ in The Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-refugees-dubs-amendment-immigration-act-home-office-legal-challenge-campaigners-a7798776.html>

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Calais Migrant Solidarity (2011). Calais: this border kills: Documented police violence, June 2009–June 2011. Available at: <https://calaismigrantsolidarity.files.wordpress.com/2009/07/dossier-english.pdf>; Calais Migrant Solidarity (2015). Chronologie non exhaustive des contrôles d’identité, interpellations, intimidations, fermetures de squats, etc. subis par les exilés. Available at: <https://passeursdhospitalites.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/chronologie.pdf>; Défenseur des Droits (2012). Décision MDS-2011-113 Du 13 Novembre 2012 Relative Au Harcèlement Constant Et Quotidien À L’encontre Des Migrants Présents De La Part Des Forces De L’ordre. Available at: https://juridique.defenseurdesdroits.fr/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=1397

⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch (2015). ‘France: Migrants, Asylum Seekers Abused and Destitute’. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/01/20/france-migrants-asylum-seekers-abused-and-destitute>

⁷⁰ United Nations Committee for Human Rights (2015). 114 Session (29 Jun 2015 - 24 Jul 2015). Available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=899&Lang=en

⁷¹ UN Committee Against Torture (2016). 57 Session (18 Apr 2016 - 13 May 2016). Available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1011&Lang=en

⁷² Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (2016). Report: Camps at Calais and Grande-Synthe (France): Policing and Access to Justice. Available at: https://www.barhumanrights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/bhrc_calais_report_1.08.16.pdf

WHEN, HOW AND WHY DID THE CALAIS 'JUNGLE' CAMP DISAPPEAR?

In September 2016, then-President Hollande declared that the remaining parts of the camp would be dismantled by the end of the year.⁷³ Once again, civil society actors, in collaboration with camp residents and community leaders, stepped up to ensure that information and advice was accessible to camp residents.

Recalling the fires during the eviction of the southern part of the camp just months before, some volunteers and camp residents trained themselves in rudimentary fire response, whilst water points were set up across the camp in preparation for the looming demolition.



The camp on fire. Photo credit: Sarah Story, Refugee Info Bus

⁷³ BBC (2016). 'France's Hollande: Jungle camp to be demolished by end of year.' Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37469013>



Former camp residents, including children, sleep rough while the camp burns and they wait to be transferred to accommodation centres.
Photo credit: Sarah Story, Refugee Info Bus



Camp residents on eviction day queuing to board the busses.
Photo credit: Edward Crawford / Shutterstock



Residents leaving the Calais camp during the eviction.
Photo credit: Sarah Story, Refugee Info Bus

The authorities announced that access to the camp during the eviction would be limited to those volunteers who are given “access passes”, which was not only a non-transparent process, but also one leading to grievances between different groups.

Approximately 2,000 residents left the camp ahead of the eviction. To prevent the establishment of a new squat, in line with the historic pattern in northern France, police patrolled Calais city centre and there were reportedly increased arrests at the Calais railway station.⁷⁴ Police also raided volunteer camping sites and local hotels with the aim of finding any refugees ‘in hiding’.

On Monday 24 October 2016, the French authorities began the demolition of the camp. Digging machines started demolishing living and community spaces early on the Tuesday. During the eviction, around 6,000 camp residents were sent to temporary reception centres. The remaining people left and relocated to makeshift camps and informal settlements scattered across northern France. Many moved to Paris, Caen, Rouen and Brussels, living in tents on the streets and in parks.

While diggers had started the demolition work, most of the camp was in fact destroyed by flame. While officials blamed the fires on camp residents, “refugees and charities alike reported that young refugees were paid by unknown external parties to start the blaze. Some claimed that the demolition could never have been completed without such measures.”⁷⁵

While much of the worldwide media attention had moved on by 26 October when Calais’ regional prefect Fabienne Buci announces that the camp has been cleared,⁷⁶ many camp residents – including many children – were at this stage sleeping on the streets and under bridges. It was at this point that it became clear to volunteers on the ground that the process was far from over, and that some of their most pressing concerns in advance of the demolition – namely the fear of absent safeguarding strategies – had in fact become reality.

⁷³ BBC (2016). ‘France’s Hollande: Jungle camp to be demolished by end of year’. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37469013>

⁷⁴ Marta Welander and Leonie Ansems De Vries (2016). ‘Calais demolition: ‘mission accomplished’, the politics of exhaustion and continued struggles for mobility’ on openDemocracy. Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/mediterranean-journeys-in-hope/calais-demolition-mission-accom>

⁷⁵ Welander and Ansems De Vries (2016). ‘Calais demolition’.

⁷⁶ David Chazan (2016). ‘Mission accomplished’: Calais Jungle burns to ashes and dust in its final hours’ on The Telegraph. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/26/migrants-start-fires-and-hurl-stones-at-firemen-as-demolition-cr>



CRS presence during an eviction. Photo Credit: Rob Pinney

Amidst a burning camp, hundreds of children were sent to the container camp, where they stayed until being taken to the Centres d'Accueil et d'Orientation pour Mineurs Isolés Étrangers (CAOMIEs) one week after everyone else had left. There was no running water for the children, and a complete absence of official safeguarding measures. Refugee Youth Service and other organisations deplored the abhorrent safeguarding gaps during the eviction: *"Daily dangers to children ranged from poor sanitation conditions; food insecurity; poor access to health care, legal advice and information along with exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse, human trafficking and being subject to police violence."*⁷⁷ The specific facilities for accessing the asylum claim procedure (outreach by official organisations, including OFPRA (France's Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons), and departures by bus to reception centres) were discontinued.



A shelter on fire. Photo credit: Rob Pinney



The "Jungle" burning. Photo credit: Beatrice Lilly, Refugee Info Bus

⁷⁷ Amanda Regan (2017). 'On This Day: Unaccompanied Children in Calais' (Refugee Youth Service).



"Jungle Finish" Photo credit: Sarah Story, Refugee Info Bus

So, while authorities were celebrating the completion of the demolition, volunteers worked tirelessly amidst the chaos and confusion to provide the basic means of survival through the fence of the now cordoned-off zone, finding accommodation for children in a nearby warehouse and the still-standing Chemin de Dunes school. Volunteers also worked on salvaging any useful goods that could be sent to Greece to assist the crisis for displaced people there.

In the aftermath of the demolition, Refugee Youth Service reported that one-third of the 179 children tracked in October had gone missing since the demolition of the camp.⁷⁸ A Help Refugees report, published in November 2016, detailed the situation for unaccompanied minors dispersed to CAOMIEs after the demolition of the camp, finding an apparent lack of psychological support and a lack of information, or the presence of misinformation, for both minors and CAOMIE staff from the Home Office regarding the transfer of minors to the UK. These gaps led to exacerbated psychological distress and the wish to leave CAOMIEs.⁷⁹

Shortly after, in December 2016, the Défenseur des droits (the French ombudsman for people's rights) released a report on the eviction of the Calais camp, highlighting its many failures: a lack of anticipation, lack of coordination, the act of keeping unaccompanied minors isolated from child protection, and so on. The Défenseur denounced the state's logic of controlling migratory flows while overriding considerations related to the respect of fundamental rights.⁸⁰

While the history of the Calais camp and its eviction is a shameful legacy for both British and French authorities, many former camp



A group of former residents congregate in front of the church before its final demolition. Photo credit: Rowan Farrell, Refugee Info Bus



A group of minors left in the "Jungle" during the eviction. Photo credit: Sarah Story, Refugee Info Bus

residents and volunteers would carry with them what they built and learnt in this space. Many would proceed to form inspiring projects, businesses and initiatives in France, the UK, Greece, the Balkan Route and worldwide – an unmeasurable ripple effect of empowerment, persistence and commitment to the human rights of displaced people in Europe.

⁷⁸ Help Refugees (2016). 'A third of children tracked by Refugee Youth Service have left centres after the Jungle closure'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/third-children-missing-jungle-closure>

⁷⁹ Help Refugees (2016). 'Life for the children of the Calais 'Jungle' post eviction – an uncertain future'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/life-children-calais-jungle-post-eviction-uncertain-future>

⁸⁰ Défenseur des droits (2016). 'Rapport d'observation: Démantèlement des campements et prise en charge des exilés Calais – Stalingrad (Paris)'. Available at: <https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rapp-demantèlement-v6.pdf>

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THE END OF THE CALAIS 'JUNGLE' CAMP?

In the immediate aftermath of the demolition of the Calais 'Jungle' camp, which stood from 2015 to 2016, it very soon became evident that its destruction had done nothing to resolve either the situation in the area or the migratory dynamics at the UK-France border.

Individuals who had left on their own initiative in the lead-up to the clearance of the camp, and many of those who had been removed by state authorities to reception centres across France, soon started reappearing in the northern France area. People were now doomed to survive without even the most basic of infrastructures of the 'Jungle' camp, left to sleep rough and hide away in industrial zones or wastelands, in the outskirts of towns, in forests and woodlands, and under bridges.⁸¹



CRS during one of the many evictions. Photo credit: Human Rights Observers

⁸¹ Help Refugees (2017). 'Refugees are heading back to Calais and we need your help to help them'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/refugees-heading-back-calais-need-help>; Human Rights Observers (2019). Forced Evictions in Calais and Grande-Synthe. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Forced-Evictions-in-Calais-and-Grande-Synthe-ENG-1.pdf>

By mid-January 2017, organisations on the ground estimated that the number of displaced people in the area had reached between 500 and 1,000 people, many of whom were thought to be unaccompanied minors. Throughout the year, the number would remain relatively stable at around 1,000-2,000 people, despite the



One of the informal settlements in northern France.
Photo credit: Médecins du Monde

authorities' efforts to uproot and drive people away. For a detailed overview of the fluctuation of people in the area, consultate Refugee Rights Europe and partners' timeline report.⁸²

While it is impossible in this short chapter to summarise all of the developments and events unfolding in the northern France area in the post-Jungle period, spanning from the end of 2016 onwards, we observe and outline the following key trends that have broadly characterised this era:

- Deteriorating living conditions and the hampering of solidarity and aid work
- Continuous cycles of evictions and the dismantling of living spaces
- Heightened police violence and volunteer intimidation
- Increased vulnerability of unaccompanied minors
- An exacerbation of the situation due to Covid-19



Informal settlement in front of a warehouse during winter. Photo credit: Help Refugees/Choose Love

⁸² Refugee Rights Europe (2020). A brief timeline of the human rights situation in northern France. Available at: <https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/RRE-Northern-France-Timeline-2020.pdf>

DETERIORATING LIVING CONDITIONS AND THE HAMPERING OF SOLIDARITY AND AID WORK

The end of the Calais 'Jungle' introduced an era of further deteriorating living conditions, exacerbated by constant evictions and the dismantling of living spaces, reflecting a sustained attempt by the authorities to prevent the creation of 'fixation points' along the coastline and the prevention of the emergence of another camp.

When Refugee Rights Europe returned to Calais in April 2017 to conduct a major research study in the area six months on from the camp demolition, the organisation found that a large number of former camp residents and new arrivals – including hundreds of unaccompanied children – were sleeping rough in Calais, seeking shelter in nearby makeshift camps, or living on the streets of Paris. Many of the individuals in the area reported that they were still hoping to one day make it to the UK. The situation, RRE reported,

was untenable, with large numbers of individuals who had endured difficult journeys to and across Europe now finding themselves spending extended periods of time sleeping rough. This added to both physical and mental pre-existing health concerns. Without the security of a communal camp or an adequate reception centre in the aftermath of the Calais 'Jungle' camp, the displaced people in northern France found themselves at heightened risk of health problems, exploitation, violence and abuse.

As the distribution points and support systems established in the 'Jungle' camp had now been demolished, organisations and volunteers instead had to rely on mobile distributions to ensure that those sleeping rough in freezing temperatures were supplied with food, drink and the basic means to survive. Established groups thus had to find ways to quickly adapt their work to this new, and increasingly challenging, situation. These groups included, for example, Refugee Youth Service, Refugee Community Kitchen, Care4Calais, Help Refugees, l'Auberge des Migrants, Phone Credit for Refugees, Art Refuge, and Utopia 56.

In addition, new projects emerged within this context, reacting creatively and resourcefully to the ongoing crisis, including Mobile Refugee Support, Refugee Women's Centre (expanding their work from Dunkirk to Calais), School Bus Project, Human Rights Observers, Project Play and Roots (operating in Dunkirk), and more. In December 2017, Secours Catholique opened a day-centre in Calais, which provided a space for organisations to provide their ongoing activities, and which also included a specific space for women. Meanwhile, the Maria Skobtsova Safe House opened its doors in the Calais town, and hosted a small number of displaced people, mainly from Christian communities in the Horn of Africa.

In March 2017 Calais mayor Natacha Bouchart announced a ban on food distribution in the region, forcing organisations to stop the essential provision of nutrition to refugees and displaced people surviving in the area. Organisations on the ground were able to celebrate a small victory in June 2017 when a civil society-led court case against the French state received a positive ruling, stating that food distributions, as well as access to sanitation facilities and essential amenities, must be allowed.⁸³ France's Conseil d'état would, moreover, later reject an appeal by the French authorities, thus reinstating the obligation to provide water points, toilets, showers, daily outreach for minors and departures to accommodation centres from Calais.⁸⁴

In Spring 2018 the French state contracted La Vie Active to provide food in Calais. While organisations like Refugee Community Kitchen and Utopia 56 honoured this new approach by temporarily pausing their daytime hot food distributions, some displaced people refused the government-funded food. An informal survey conducted by volunteers based at the l'Auberge des Migrants and Help Refugees warehouse found that 68% of respondents refused the food because it came from the same authorities that legitimise violence against them. 42% said they were frightened by excessive police presence at the distribution sites.⁸⁵



A mobile distribution during winter. Photo credit: Help Refugees/Choose Love

⁸³ Tribunal Administratif de Lille, Ordonnance du 26 juin 2017, No. 1705379. Available at: <http://lille.tribunal-administratif.fr/content/download/104162/1042470/version/1/file/1705379.pdf>

⁸⁴ Help Refugees (2017). 'France's Supreme Court rules against State in Calais court case'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/calais-court-case-ngos-supreme-court-31-07-2017>

⁸⁵ Help Refugees (2018). 'Refugees in Calais boycott State food distribution'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/calais-state-food-distribution>

One year later, in autumn 2019, Natacha Bouchart announced a ban on food distribution in the region yet again, forcing organisations to stop the essential provision of nutrition to refugees and displaced people in the area. The ban was later suspended when found to be illegal by a tribunal in Lille.⁸⁶



Young people and volunteers during food distribution in 2017. Photo credit: Refugee Rights Europe

Despite immeasurable challenges, the groups operating on the ground would relentlessly work to find new ways to serve the displaced people in the area, working against all odds. However, the conditions in the informal settlements have been rapidly deteriorating throughout the post-Jungle period, with access to appropriate shelter being restricted. In the summer of 2017, after a visit to the camp the Défenseur des Droits denounced once again the inhuman living conditions of displaced people in Calais. He called for an end to all the fundamental rights violations suffered by exiled people, particularly by minors.⁸⁷ In a research report published in October 2017, one year following the demolition of the camp, Refugee Rights Europe⁸⁸ reported that the situation in the area remained entirely unresolved, with rapidly deteriorating living conditions and a wide range of human rights infringements unfolding. The report specifically highlighted the extent of child protection failures taking place in the area, with the majority of minors being unaccompanied, exposed to frequent police violence, including tear gas and beatings, and left without access to information, advice and support. This also meant an exacerbation of risks for minors, victims of trafficking, survivors of violence and other vulnerable groups, who ought to be given access to safe emergency accommodation but who would continue to dwell in the informal settlements.

Other groups, including Human Rights Observers, frequently highlighted shortcomings around sanitation and hygiene and, particularly, waste disposal; for instance:



A displaced person moving their belongings. Photo credit: Abdul Saboor

*"In addition to the structural precarity of these living spaces, there exist problems of sanitation and hygiene. Primarily, the collection and disposal of waste and rubbish is not appropriately managed. Paradoxically, despite a distinct lack of involvement from the authorities on this issue, they have nevertheless used the accumulation of waste as justification for evictions of these living sites. Moreover, the presence of a cleaning team at the eviction of each living site every 48 hours, has not sought to thoroughly alleviate this problem. Rather, the cleaning staff are more concerned with the removal of tents, blankets, sleeping bags and firewood. The accumulation of litter across these living sites, inevitable in situations where many dozens of people are forced to live in the absence of any appropriate waste management, has also led to strained relations with other local residents and neighbours."*⁸⁹

⁸⁶ La Voix du Nord (2019). 'La maire de Calais jugée incompétente pour interdire les distributions de nourriture aux migrants'. Available at: <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/684270/article/2019-12-21/la-maire-de-calais-jugee-incompetente-pour-interdire-les-distributions-de>

⁸⁷ <https://defenseurdesdroits.fr/node/23868>

⁸⁸ Refugee Rights Europe (2017). Twelve months on. Available at: https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE_TwelveMonthsOn.pdf

⁸⁹ Human Rights Observers (2019). Forced Evictions in Calais and Grande-Synthe.



Caravan and shelter in a small camp further away from Calais in 2017. Photo credit: Refugee Rights Europe

Indeed, access to water and sanitation services has remained inadequate over the period, as highlighted by the following:

- In October 2017, three UN Special Rapporteurs called on the French state to implement long-term measures to provide adequate access to water and sanitation services in Calais.⁹⁰
- In July 2018, l'Auberge des Migrants, Plateforme de Services aux Migrants (PSM) and others led a court case against the French state regarding access to water and sanitation facilities. Previously, Refugee Info Bus had reported that French authorities had been consistently blocking access to water for displaced people in the area during the previous three months.⁹¹ The Calais Prefecture increased this access just a few hours prior to the hearing.⁹²
- In March 2019, four associations (DROP Solidarité, Médecins du Monde, Refugee Youth Service and la Cimade) conducted an observation of living conditions for displaced people in the woods of Puythouck in Grande-Synthe and around a gymnasium where people were being sheltered.⁹³ They found that nearly 60% of people interviewed maintained they did not have sufficient access to drinkable water. 80% had no access to a shower and 87% to toilets. More than half of the people indicated that they were not being helped medically with health problems, and the same proportion indicated they did not have enough food to eat. 69% declared not knowing the emergency number 115 could be used to seek shelter.
- In June 2019, France's Conseil d'Etat confirmed the the Dunkirk regional authorities lack of provision for access to water, hygiene and sanitation. It urged the Préfet du Nord to install sufficient

water points, showers and toilets, and to set up official outreach to inform displaced people of their rights.

In May 2019, two displaced people living in Grande-Synthe, along with nine organisations, submitted a lawsuit against the state regarding the deplorable living conditions experienced by refugees. They demanded that urgent steps should be taken to save their dignity and guarantee that their fundamental rights were respected while awaiting arrangements for proper long-term housing. The administrative court ruled against it.⁹⁴

In December 2019 Amnesty International, Médecins du Monde, Médecins sans Frontières, Secours Catholique and la Cimade demanded the opening of a parliamentary enquiry commission in France to highlight the rights abuses taking place and push for accountability. In the same month, another hostile technique of deterrence was trialled when a fence along Route de Gravelines in Calais was built. The mayor's objective was to prevent displaced people from accessing the woodland along the road and from settling on these grounds.⁹⁵

The lack of accommodation solutions would persist even during the winter months, which are often characterised by freezing temperatures. Few of the individuals in the area during the winters in the post-Jungle period are provided with accommodation, and then only sporadically.⁹⁶ For instance, in the winter of 2019, the French government's so-called 'Plan Grand Froid', which is to ensure that all individuals are housed safely, was cancelled in Calais, leaving people to survive in freezing temperatures.

⁹⁰ UNOHCHR (2017). 'La France doit fournir de l'eau potable et des services d'assainissement aux migrants de la « jungle de Calais », disent des experts de l'ONU'. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22240&LangID=F>

⁹¹ Refugee Info Bus, Facebook post, 4 June 2018. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/RefugeeInfoBus/posts/2153498244885592>

⁹² Tribunal Administratif de Lille, Ordonnance du 31 juillet 2018, No. 1806567. Available at: https://gisti.org/IMG/pdf/jur_ta-lille_2018-07-31.pdf

⁹³ La Cimade et al. (2019). Rapport d'observation sur les conditions de vie des personnes exilées sur le site du « Puythouck » et autour de l'Espace Jeune à Grande-Synthe suite aux enquêtes menées du 18 au 22 mars 2019. Available at: <https://www.lacimade.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Rapport-dobservation-GS-2.pdf>

⁹⁴ La Cimade (2019). 'Grande-synthe : la violation des droits fondamentaux des personnes exilées portée devant la justice'. Available at: <https://www.lacimade.org/grande-synthe-la-violation-des-droits-fondamentaux-des-personnes-exilees-portee-devant-la-justice>

⁹⁵ Franceinfo (2019). 'Des grilles anti-migrants installées route de Gravelines, à Calais'. Available at: <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/pas-calais/calais/grilles-anti-migrants-installees-route-gravelines-calais-1765037.html>

⁹⁶ Help Refugees (2018). 'Emergency accommodation centres are failing the most vulnerable in Calais'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/emergency-accommodation-failing-vulnerable>

The UN Special Rapporteur on adequate Housing, Leilani Farha, visited Calais and Grande-Synthe in April 2019. She declared in her report, released in March 2020, that she was:

“Deeply concerned about the housing and living conditions of refugees and migrants in the Hauts-de-France near Calais. [...] The Government has employed several tactics that have led to a vicious cycle of forced evictions, increased homelessness and short-term encampments in places like Calais. [...] While the government utilizes these tactics to deter the growth of informal settlements, they are making already completely unacceptable living conditions even worse. Urgent State action is required to bring the situation in conformity with international human rights norms [...]. The practices reported to the Special Rapporteur by residents of the encampments around Calais are a gross violation of the right to adequate housing and other human rights, such as the rights to water, sanitation, health, food, and to physical integrity. The systematic and repeated nature of these forced evictions suggest they also constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of one of the most vulnerable populations in France.”⁹⁷

The living situation in the post-Jungle period has of course been particularly inadequate for women and girls in the area. In February 2020, Refugee Women’s Centre and Refugee Rights Europe sent a joint letter to the French Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Secretary of State for Gender Equality to address the worsening situation for women and girls in Calais and Grande-Synthe.⁹⁸ They outlined the multiple rights violations seen on a daily basis and called for access to appropriate shelter and healthcare, as well as protection from violence and recognition, in line with the Istanbul Convention, of gender-based violence as a form of persecution.

In sum, despite widespread outcries by civil society and rights watchdogs, living conditions have continued to deteriorate consistently. Indeed, persistent acts of uprooting and fencing off potential living spaces continued throughout 2020 and 2021, consisting of the defoliation of living spaces and the use of spikes, barbed wire, fences and walls to prevent people from setting up camp. A key component of this state strategy consists of evictions, as discussed in the next section.



A woman by her tent. Photo credit: Help Refugees/Choose Love

⁹⁷ UNOHCHR (2020). Visit to France – Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context. March 2020 (A/HRC/43/43/Add.2). Available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/43/43/Add.2>

⁹⁸ Refugee Women’s Centre (2020). ‘Letter to French ministers: RWC highlights the worsening situation for women and girls on the northern French coastline’. Available at: <https://www.dunkirkrefugeewomenscentre.com/single-post/2020/02/12/letter-to-french-ministers-rcw-highlights-the-worsening-situation-for-women-and-girls-on>

CONTINUOUS CYCLES OF EVICTIONS AND THE DISMANTLING OF LIVING SPACES



Police guarding the dismantlement of an informal settlement in the woods. Photo credit: Abdul Saboor

In its attempt to prevent 'fixation points' in the area, the authorities have been denying people access to adequate shelter and hampering aid work through an intimidating presence at distribution points and in community spaces. Importantly, soon after the demolition of the Jungle camp, the state authorities would also set in motion a ceaseless cycle of evictions and the dismantling of informal living spaces.

In the early days of the post-Jungle period, individuals sleeping rough in woodlands and under bridges would be woken up in the middle of the night and told to leave. They would sometimes be sprayed with chemical agents and/or administered beatings or kicks. As soon as informal settlements with tents and tarps started emerging, the authorities would resort to more drastic measures, which took the shape of routine, regular evictions, whereby an entire living site would be cleared, tents, sleeping bags and other belongings being slashed, seized and disposed of, whilst the inhabitants were driven away – only to settle in a different location nearby, or to return a few hours later to the exact same spot.

In response to these continued acts of dispossession and confiscation, volunteers and aid groups on the ground would start working ceaselessly to counteract the damage done – by providing new supplies of tents, sleeping bags, mobile phones, and other essentials to the individuals in the area. In the process, the groups would constantly be stretched to their limits, with charitable supplies

being next-to depleted, requiring constantly renewed financial and material donations to survive.⁹⁹

Within this context, the inter-associative initiative Human Rights Observers (HRO) was formed in 2017. The aim was to observe, record and denounce the evictions and associated state violence and call for alternatives. The HRO project reported that there were at least 803 forced evictions of displaced people in Calais and Grande-Synthe between 1 August 2018 and 1 June 2019, creating abject living conditions and forcing people to seek even more dangerous routes to reach the UK.¹⁰⁰ In the same report, the organisations illustrated the routine evictions as follows:

"Four living sites are targeted by these evictions; two on one morning, and the second two the following morning, after which the cycle returns to the first two sites. Each site is thus evicted every 48 hours. On exceptional occasions, evictions have also taken place in the afternoon, without prior notice. Such evictions have led to the confiscation of numerous personal belongings and tents, given that many people are absent from their living site at this time. Every morning, a convoy of vehicles arrives at one of these living sites. [...] The forces of law and order present are generally armed (including CS gas, batons, guns and sometimes flash-balls). A cleaning team is also present at each eviction."¹⁰¹

A subsequent HRO report highlighted that the number of evictions in Calais had doubled from 452 in 2018 to 961 in the following year.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Welander (2021). The Politics of Exhaustion and Migrant Subjectivities: Researching border struggles in northern France in 2016–2019. PhD thesis. University of Westminster. Available at: <https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/item/v4659/the-politics-of-exhaustion-and-migrant-subjectivities-researching-border-struggles-in-northern-france-in-2016-2019>

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Observers (2019). Forced Evictions in Calais and Grande-Synthe.

¹⁰¹ Human Rights Observers (2019). Forced Evictions in Calais and Grande-Synthe.

Despite nationwide lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic (discussed below), HRO reported that a total of 1,058 evictions from living sites were carried out in Calais and Grande-Synthe in 2020. HRO explained:

“In Calais, the public authorities carry out two types of evictions: smaller regular evictions that take place every forty-eight hours and large-scale evictions on an irregular basis. In Grande-Synthe, the frequency of evictions fluctuates between one and three times a week, with each eviction resulting in the total destruction of the living sites.”

This could be viewed as highlighting that law enforcement actors are not present in the area for protection purposes, but rather to implement and enforce a systematic harassment of people on the move in the area.¹⁰³ The same trend would continue into 2021, with no end in sight.

In addition, a noteworthy shift in 2020–2021 compared to previous years was the increased occurrence of forced sheltering operations as an integral part of larger-scale evictions. As detailed in the 2020 HRO annual report, in addition to the already coercive practice that is the destruction of living spaces and possessions, during sheltering operations people are often surrounded by police and forced onto buses, and subsequently taken to reception and examination centres (centres d'accueil et d'examen des situations, CAES). In such situations, refusal to get onto these buses can result in an arrest. One of the biggest forced sheltering operations took place on the



Police presence during food distribution in 2017, a situation which soon escalated into violence. Photo credit: Refugee Rights Europe

29th of September 2020, when approximately 40 buses were present and around 800 people were forcefully removed from their living spaces and placed on these buses as part of a so-called sheltering operation.¹⁰⁴

Another two large-scale eviction and forced sheltering operations took place in late February 2021, during which 126 persons were taken charge of by police and directed to CAES centres. Meanwhile, approximately twenty people were sent to detention centres (centres de rétention administrative, CRA). According to HRO, individuals were forced to board buses to the CEAS without information, making the operation “unlawful and inefficient.”¹⁰⁵ Only days later, groups working on the ground confirmed that large numbers of the individuals who had been dispersed through the operations had already returned to the area once again.¹⁰⁶

In theory, as part of the specific purpose of this operation in providing accommodation for people, a social diagnosis should be carried out beforehand in order to assess individual needs and differing levels of vulnerability, as prescribed by the law.¹⁰⁷ For example, an unaccompanied child should be offered a different type of accommodation to that proposed to an adult man. However, in practice, such a census or preliminary social diagnosis is rarely carried out, resulting in a situation whereby unaccompanied children and other at-risk groups are not offered appropriate accommodation, which can worsen their already vulnerable situation. During certain forced sheltering operations, unaccompanied children are sometimes placed on the same buses as adults and can sometimes be sent to adult reception centres. Once again, rather than safeguarding and protecting vulnerable groups, the authorities that carry out these forced sheltering operations often violate basic fundamental human rights as part of the generalised state strategy of deterrence.



A man sitting by a fire in an improvised shelter. Photo credit: Abdul Saboor

¹⁰² Human Rights Observers (2020). Annual Report 2019: Observation of human rights violations at the UK-French border. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HRO-eng-rep2019.pdf>

¹⁰³ Human Rights Observers (2021). Annual Report 2020: Observations of state violence at the French-UK border: Calais and Grande-Synthe. Available at: <http://www.laubergedesmigrants.fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Summary-HRO-2020-AnnualReport.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ Based on inter-associative data collected during the operation; see Human Rights Observers (2021). Annual Report 2020.

¹⁰⁵ Anne-Diandra Louarn (2021). 'Calais : 146 migrants expulsés dont 20 placés en rétention lors de deux opérations de police' on InfoMigrants. Available at: <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/30521/calais-146-migrants-expulses-dont-20-places-en-retention-lors-de-deux-operations-de-police>

¹⁰⁶ Welander (2021). The politics of exhaustion and juxtaposed controls: harmful migration governance at the Franco-British border without end in sight' on GuitiNews. Available at: <https://guitinews.fr/around-the-world/2021/04/28/harmful-migration-governance-uk-france-border>

¹⁰⁷ Amnesty International et al. (2020). The failure of French authorities to respect, protect and guarantee the rights of at-risk unaccompanied children (UAC) at France's internal land borders (French-Italian, French-Spanish and French-British). Available at: <https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Failure-Of-French-Authorities-To-Respect-Protect-Guarantee-Rights-Of-At-Risk-UAC.pdf>

In sum, the high risk of arrest in the case of non-compliance, the lack of accessible and reliable information regarding the destination of these buses, as well as the absence of individualised accommodation options, are some of reasons this type of sheltering operation is often termed as precisely 'forced'. The parameters of such an operation disregard the consent of the people concerned, and rather than provide adequate and appropriate accommodation, are mostly used as a way to disperse and remove people from the border area. This system is also used as a political tool to portray the French state in a better light: simultaneously 'solving' the problem of people staying at the UK-France border, as well as supposedly ensuring their access to shelter. However, the evictions and accompanying forced sheltering operations remain ineffective since the dispersed people tend to simply return shortly thereafter. Indeed, it is to be noted that the practice of continuous evictions and dismantling operations does not appear to prevent the emergence of informal settlements in the area; instead, the result has been that many individuals and communities have simply returned a few days later, while others have been driven to new sleeping spots and into further hiding. Others yet again have set up camp in places such as Steenvoorde, Angres, Norrent-Fontes, and Tatinghem – whilst some have found their way into the town centre of Calais, finding temporary shelter under bridges.



Sleeping bag by a road. Photo credit: Andreas Beissel

Moreover, as the French non-profit CNDH Romeurope argues, "By making their living sites more precarious, evictions contribute to perpetuate the existence of squats and informal living places, against which they [the authorities] claim to fight. This maintenance of precariousness also amplifies prejudices, racism and stigmatisation."¹⁰⁸



FURTHER READING

DETAILED REPORTS RELATING TO EVICTIONS

For further information and detailed reports relating to evictions, please refer to the following resources:

HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVERS (2019)

'Forced Evictions in Calais and Grande-Synthe'

www.helprefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Forced-Evictions-in-Calais-and-Grande-Synthe-ENG-1.pdf

HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVERS (2020)

'Annual Report 2019: Observation of human rights violations at the UK-French border'

www.helprefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HRO-eng-rep2019.pdf

HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVERS (2021)

'Annual Report 2020'

www.laubergedesmigrants.fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/HRO-2020-Annual-Report_All.pdf

PROJECT PLAY (2020)

'Evictions: Practices that violate children's rights at the Franco-British border'

www.df428edc-01fe-41b8-8bb5-b090f26e398c.filesusr.com/ugd/6fd156_4865186c5f264ad6b5c139962958df6c.pdf

¹⁰⁸ CNDH Romeurope (2017). '20 propositions pour une politique d'inclusion des personnes vivant en bidonvilles et squats'. Available at: https://www.romeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Rapport_2017_20-propositions-1.pdf

HEIGHTENED POLICE VIOLENCE AND VOLUNTEER INTIMIDATION

Police violence and intimidation against both displaced people and volunteers has been endemic in the aftermath of the Calais 'jungle' camp. Displaced individuals have over the years reported experiencing beatings, tear gas exposure, and pepper spraying on a regular basis. Researchers have documented "broken limbs, as well as scarred faces and hands [...], broken teeth, smashed glasses, and runny eyes from tear gas."¹⁰⁹ While police violence oftentimes takes place during episodes of displaced people's attempts to reach the UK – or during the evictions described in the previous section – it also occurs within completely unrelated situations. When Refugee Rights Europe conducted field research in Calais six months on from the demolition of the 'jungle' camp, it noted that police violence appeared to be endemic in the area. The research team witnessed numerous instances of the authorities taking a heavy-handed approach against displaced people, including in the contexts of food distributions. Based on its survey conducted with 213 displaced people, RRE reported that 89.2% of all respondents said they had experienced police violence during their time in Calais and the surrounding region. Of these, 84% had experienced tear gas, 52.7% other forms of physical violence, and 27.7% verbal abuse.¹¹⁰

RRE's research findings from another study twelve months on from the demolition of the camp, based on 233 surveys, suggested that a staggering 91.8% had experienced police violence. This was an even higher percentage than during the time of the Calais camp (75.9%) and during RRE's aforementioned research in April 2017 (89.2%). Of these respondents, 50.5% said that the violence had taken the form of physical violence, while 23.1% described it as verbal abuse and 90.1% tear gas or pepper spray.¹¹¹



Police vehicle in front of an informal settlement by a roadside.
Photo credit: Human Rights Observers



A shoe left behind in an informal settlement. Photo credit: Andreas Beissel

Throughout the post-Jungle camp years, organisations and watchdogs have consistently highlighted this trend of police violence, including but not limited to the following:

- **JULY 2017**

Human Rights Watch published a report highlighting police abuse, the disruption of humanitarian assistance and the harassment of aid workers.¹¹²

- **OCTOBER 2017**

A ministry-ordered investigation confirmed reports on police violence in northern France, highlighting the "abusive use of tear gas" and "disproportionate, even unjustified, use of force" by police in Calais and surrounding areas.¹¹³

- **APRIL 2018**

Three UN Special Rapporteurs called for action to end harassment and intimidation of volunteers and members of NGOs providing humanitarian aid. The experts also called out the French government on "inhumane" conditions in northern France overall.¹¹⁴

- **JUNE 2019**

A report by Amnesty International highlighted the plight at the hands of the authorities of those human rights defenders who individually or collectively provided humanitarian aid, and advocated for the rights of displaced people, regardless of their legal status, in northern France.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Welander (2021). The Politics of Exhaustion and Migrant Subjectivities.

¹¹⁰ Refugee Rights Europe (2017). Six Months On. Available at: https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE_SixMonthsOn.pdf

¹¹¹ Refugee Rights Europe (2017). Twelve months on.

¹¹² Human Rights Watch (2017). "Like Living in Hell": Police Abuses Against Child and Adult Migrants in Calais. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/07/26/living-hell/police-abuses-against-child-and-adult-migrants-calais>

¹¹³ Charles Diaz et al. (2017). 'Evaluation de l'action des forces de l'ordre à Calais et dans le Dunkerquois'. Ministère de l'intérieur. Available at: <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Publications/Rapports-de-l-IGA/Rapports-recents/Evaluation-de-l-action-des-forces-de-l-ordre-a-Calais-et-dans-le-Dunkerquois>

¹¹⁴ UNOHCHR (2018). France urged by UN experts to take effective measures to bring water and sanitation services to migrants. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22917&LangID=E>

¹¹⁵ Amnesty International (2019). Targeting solidarity: criminalization and harassment of people defending refugee and migrant rights in northern France. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR2103562019ENGLISH.PDF>



Six police officers surround the RRE research team in 2017 and demand passport details and information about the study. Photo credit: Refugee Rights Europe



CRS during one of the many evictions. Photo credit: Human Rights Observers

As mentioned briefly in the previous section, the years following the demolition of the Calais 'Jungle' camp have seen aid and food distribution activities being hampered intermittently, with food distribution areas being regularly fenced off or blocked off with boulders. Meanwhile, volunteers and activists have faced harassment, fines, and overall impediments to their activities.¹¹⁶

Following several incidents of intimidation of those supporting displaced people in the area, l'Auberge des Migrants, Help Refugees, Utopia 56 and Refugee Info Bus released a report in August 2018 regarding the widespread and multifaceted harassment and intimidation of volunteers and aid workers in Calais and Dunkirk.¹¹⁷

Just one month later, in September 2018, a former volunteer of l'Auberge des Migrants was accused and investigated by the French state of defamation for posting a critical photo of French police with a sarcastic comment on Twitter. Organisations on the ground as well as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch voice strong concerns about the unprecedented intimidation of aid workers and volunteers.¹¹⁸

The same year, a Help Refugees volunteer supporting a group of migrants was arrested and charged with contempt and assault on a police officer. Thanks to video evidence, the volunteer was acquitted at trial and three police officers were investigated, including the brigadier who accused the volunteer of assaulting him.¹¹⁹ The brigadier was charged with forging evidence against the volunteer.¹²⁰ In reality, as shown in the video, it was the volunteer who was pushed by the officer, over a barrier into a motorway slip road as a lorry passed.¹²¹

Human Rights Observers in northern France has been documenting precisely the harassment of volunteers and activists in the area over the past few years, highlighting very high levels of 'criminalisation of solidarity'. During 2020 HRO reported 190 instances of police harassment of human rights defenders. The harassment took many forms, including police using their personal phones to film and/or photograph volunteers; grabbing, pushing or tripping volunteers; threatening volunteers with arrest; verbal intimidation (including using volunteers' names without having carried out an ID check); encircling volunteers or separating them from each other; restricting movement of volunteers and their vehicles; and what could be described as sexual harassment: sucking a banana in front of a volunteer; commenting that a volunteer "smelled good". According to HRO, instances of harassment have only increased in 2021, with 251 reports so far, including police making sexually explicit comments and gestures; requesting nude photos of volunteers; restricting of movements; verbal harassment; and pushing of volunteers.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Welander (2021). The Politics of Exhaustion and Migrant Subjectivities.

¹¹⁷ L'Auberge des Migrants et al. (2018). Calais: the police harassment of volunteers. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Police-Harassment-of-Volunteers-in-Calais-1.pdf>

¹¹⁸ Help Refugees (2018). 'Calais volunteer's conviction for Tweet sets a dangerous precedent'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/lauberge-volunteer-calais-convicted-tweet>

¹¹⁹ Amnesty International (2020). 'France: Prosecution of police who assaulted Calais camp volunteer sends message against impunity'. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/06/france>

¹²⁰ Kim Willsher (2020). 'French police charged with forging evidence against UK aid worker' in The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/10/french-police-charged-with-forging-evidence-against-uk-aid-worker>; Eric Dussart (2021). 'Faux procès-verbal à Calais: prison avec sursis requise contre trois CRS' in La Voix du Nord. Available at: <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/1033016/article/2021-06-22/un-avec-sursis-requis-contre-un-crs-pour-faux-proces-verbal-calais>

¹²¹ Amnesty International (2019). Tom Ciotkowski. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK9OibkVbVo>

¹²² For further information, please refer to HRO's monthly and annual reports, available at: <http://www.laubergedesmigrants.fr/fr/lassociation/collectif-hro/publications-hro>

INCREASED VULNERABILITY OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS



Minors in a field in Northern France. Photo credit: Abdul Saboor

Following the eviction of the Calais 'Jungle' camp, the situation for unaccompanied minors would start deteriorating further, as safeguarding and protection systems were essentially lacking within the deterrence-based approach adopted by the state – this despite national and international obligations to uphold the rights of the child.

An independent inquiry by the Human Trafficking Foundation in 2017 found that police violence has led to a widespread mistrust against the authorities, furthering minors' vulnerability to exploitation and falling into the hands of smugglers and traffickers.¹²³ They wrote: *"The inquiry learnt that a safe route does not act as a pull factor and what draws children to the UK is our language, our respected education system, children's family ties, sport, and an open job market. There are "push factors"; not just from terror in their home country, but also as a result of the violence they experience at the hands of the police in France, or bullying and violence on their journey. Safe legal routes mean that smugglers and traffickers have fewer opportunities to exploit children, their prices fall, and they may turn to more profitable forms of criminality."*

In October 2017 Refugee Youth Service (RYS) reported from Calais: *"Children are facing poor sanitation conditions, food insecurity, poor access to health care, legal advice and information along with exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse, and human trafficking and being subject to police violence on a daily basis."*¹²⁴

RYS reiterated a similar warning in April 2018, stating that minors in northern France were sleeping rough in woodlands and continued to face poor sanitation conditions and poor access to health care, legal advice and information. They raised alarm bells regarding exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse, human trafficking and minors being subjected to police violence on a daily basis. According to their estimates, the displaced population in the area had remained stable, with around 600 individuals, including an estimated 100 unaccompanied minors. Interventions from the French state increased, with a frequent clearing of camps, destruction of tents and the use of tear gas – including against sleeping minors.¹²⁵



Child playing with her doll. Photo credit: Abdul Saboor



Children in an informal settlement. Photo credit: Thomas Laurance, Help Refugees/Choose Love

¹²³ Christine Beddoe (2017). Nobody deserves to live this way: An independent inquiry into the situation of separated and unaccompanied minors in parts of Europe. Human Trafficking Foundation. Available at: https://www.infomie.net/IMG/pdf/htf_separated_unaccompanied_minors_report_hi-res.pdf

¹²⁴ Amanda Regan (2017). 'On This Day: Unaccompanied Children in Calais'. Refugee Youth Service. Archived at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rmlGkIZOvHgcqAsdDySWplspOu0Im4-2/view>

¹²⁵ Refugee Youth Service Newsletter April 2018. Available at: <https://mailchi.mp/ababb70750c0/refugee-youth-service-newsletter-april-2018>



A girl in an informal settlement in La Linière. Photo credit: Jean-Philippe Huguet. Medecins Du Monde

Despite the surge of vulnerable refugee children returning to northern France following the demolition of the Jungle camp, then-UK Home Secretary Amber Rudd announced the end of the 'Dubs Scheme' in February 2017 after only 350 children had entered the UK through the procedure.¹²⁶ This would be the beginning of a long legal and political struggle:

- **NOVEMBER 2017**

In its verdict on the Dubs case, the Royal Court of Justice ruled against Help Refugees' challenge that the Government should allow more unaccompanied child refugees into the UK. Help Refugees announced that it would appeal the verdict.¹²⁷

- **FEBRUARY 2018**

Help Refugees was granted permission to appeal the judgment on the judicial review, challenging the Home Office's interpretation and implementation of the Dubs Amendment.¹²⁸

- **APRIL 2018**

Following lobbying led by Safe Passage campaigners, 201 members of the House of Lords voted in favour of Lord Dubs' amendment to the EU Withdrawal Bill, against 181 who voted as 'Not Content'.

- **3 OCTOBER 2018**

The Court of Appeal in Britain ruled that the British government acted unlawfully by not giving reasons to children refused entry to Britain under the Dubs Amendment. The judgement was the result of a two-year-long legal action taken by Help Refugees, represented by Leigh Day, to ensure that children considered for transfer under the Dubs scheme were treated fairly.¹²⁹

- **22 JANUARY 2020**

Decision of the UK Parliament to regress on its responsibilities to child refugees in Europe separated from their families. MPs had already voted down Lord Dubs' amendment to the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement obliging the government to ensure the continuation of family reunification for unaccompanied refugee children.

¹²⁶ Alan Travis et al (2017). 'Archbishop and Tory MPs criticise closure of child refugee scheme' in The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/09/tory-mps-join-criticism-of-amber-rudd-over-child-refugees>. See also: Mark Townsend (2017). 'Women and children 'endure rape, beatings and abuse' inside Dunkirk's refugee camp' in The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/12/dunkirk-child-refugees-risk-sexual-violence>

¹²⁷ BBC (2017). 'Charity loses Dubs amendment legal challenge over child refugees'. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41845115>

¹²⁸ Help Refugees (2018). 'Permission granted to appeal the 'unlawful' closure of the Dubs Amendment'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/dubs-appeal>

¹²⁹ Help Refugees (2018). 'Government broke law by not giving reasons for Dubs children rejections, court finds'. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/news/dubs-court-case-ruling-home-office-october-2018>

In October 2020, a collective of organisations (Amnesty International, la Cimade, Médecins du Monde, Médecins sans Frontières, Secours Catholique, Help Refugees/Choose Love, Refugee Rights Europe, Refugee Youth Service, Anafé and Safe Passage) published a damning report highlighting the violations of the rights that children suffer at French borders, including in northern France.¹³⁰ The organisations argued that France must double its efforts to protect them, in line with its legal obligations. The same organisations submitted evidence to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in relation to France's

breaches of its obligations in terms of the protection of isolated minors at the borders.

In three separate research reports published by Project Play in 2020 and 2021,¹³¹ the group highlighted a number of grave and persistent violations of children's rights occurring on a daily basis. Project Play, moreover, documented the wholly inadequate state response to protect vulnerable children, including:



A police officer in northern France. Photo credit: Andreas Beissel

- An absence of child protection facilities and services
- A widespread lack of access to reliable, comprehensive, age and language appropriate information for families and children
- Insufficient and inadequate protection for unaccompanied children
- The fact that evictions result in "real obstructions with regards to accessing food, sanitation, shelter and the bare minimum standards of child protection"
- Numerous barriers in place which prevent children from accessing education



FURTHER READING

REPORTS REGARDING THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN THE NORTHERN FRANCE AREA

Over the years in the aftermath of the 'Jungle' camp, Refugee Rights Europe and several other organisations published evidence reports focusing on the particularly difficult and hazardous situation children found themselves in. A few noteworthy examples include:

REFUGEE RIGHTS EUROPE (2019)

Children Stuck in Limbo. Examining the Vulnerability of Unaccompanied Minors in Northern France.
www.refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/RRE_ChildrenInCalais-web.pdf

HELP REFUGEES, REFUGEE RIGHTS EUROPE, REFUGEE WOMEN'S CENTRE, REFUGEE YOUTH SERVICE, SAFE PASSAGE (2019).

Left Out in the Cold. The Vulnerable Children on Britain's Doorstep and the Urgency of Post-Brexit Family Reunion Rules.
www.refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/RRE_LeftOutInTheCold.pdf

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ET AL. (2020)

The failure of French authorities to respect, protect and guarantee the rights of at-risk unaccompanied children (UAC) at France's internal land borders (French-Italian, French-Spanish and French-British).
www.refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Failure-Of-French-Authorities-To-Respect-Protect-Guarantee-Rights-Of-At-Risk-UAC.pdf

PROJECT PLAY (2020)

Overview of The Barriers to Education Facing Children in Northern France.
www.df428edc-01fe-41b8-8bb5-b090f26e398c.filesusr.com/ugd/6fd156_387db228935b4922847617e1add870c.pdf

¹³⁰ Amnesty International et al. (2020). The failure of French authorities to respect, protect and guarantee the rights of at-risk unaccompanied children (UAC) at France's internal land borders (French-Italian, French-Spanish and French-British). Available at: <https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Failure-Of-French-Authorities-To-Respect-Protect-Guarantee-Rights-Of-At-Risk-UAC.pdf>

¹³¹ Project Play (2020). Overview of the barriers to education facing children in northern France. Available at: https://df428edc-01fe-41b8-8bb5-b090f26e398c.filesusr.com/ugd/6fd156_387db228935b4922847617e1add870c.pdf; ---- (2020). Evictions: Practices that violate children's rights on the Franco-British border. Available at: https://df428edc-01fe-41b8-8bb5-b090f26e398c.filesusr.com/ugd/6fd156_4865186c5f264ad6b5c139962958df6c.pdf; ---- (2021). Barriers to accessing child protection in northern France. Available at: https://df428edc-01fe-41b8-8bb5-b090f26e398c.filesusr.com/ugd/6fd156_6a56b00d63814ecf8259e8242829ef7b.pdf

AN EXACERBATION OF THE SITUATION DUE TO COVID-19

The global Covid-19 pandemic meant yet another exacerbation of the crisis for displaced people in northern France. During this time, the violations of fundamental rights observed in this area have been worsening. As reported by Refugee Rights Europe, l'Auberge des Migrants, Human Rights Observers and Choose Love in October 2020, the settlements in Calais and Grande-Synthe are characterised by inhumane and unsanitary conditions, where access to drinking water, food, hygiene, health care and information is too often hampered or non-existent and police violence commonplace.¹³²

Even during the pandemic, the long-standing fight against 'fixation points' has continued to be a key priority for public authorities. According to associations operating in Calais and Grande-Synthe, during the first Covid-19 confinement period in France there were at least 1,200 displaced people living in a street situation in Calais, and around 400 in Grande Synthe, if not more. This included families with children as well as unaccompanied children (UAC).¹³³

The local authorities announced that they would implement measures regarding the Covid-19 situation – in particular, measures of *“communication with the migrant population, guaranteed access to*

*water and soap to allow for the compliance with guidelines, support to ensure the continuity of operations by state actors and associations, and the care and confinement of migrants with Covid-19 symptoms.”*¹³⁴

However, during the pandemic the authorities have not responded adequately to the humanitarian crisis on the ground in northern France and, for the most part, such measures have in fact not been implemented.

Instead, people's daily lives have throughout this period been characterised by evictions, police violence and violations of fundamental rights, with insufficient and intermittent access to food, shelter, water, information, and so forth. While these violations continue, the Covid-19 pandemic reinforces this group's acute vulnerability and urgent need of protection. Covid-19 sheltering operations have been insufficient and inadequate across the time period, with many people still requiring safe accommodation. While forced evictions are already in contravention of international human rights law, the continuation of these practices during Covid-19 have subjected displaced people to even greater trauma and distress. The practice also further limits individuals' ability to practise strict social distancing and hygiene practices.



Police overseeing the dismantlement of an informal settlement. The bin bags are filled with mattresses, blankets, tarps and tents. Photo credit: Abdul Saboor

¹³² Refugee Rights Europe et al (2020). 'Facing Multiple Crises. On the treatment of refugees and displaced people in northern France during the Covid-19 pandemic'. Available at: <https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/facing-multiple-crises-report.pdf>

¹³³ Ibid.

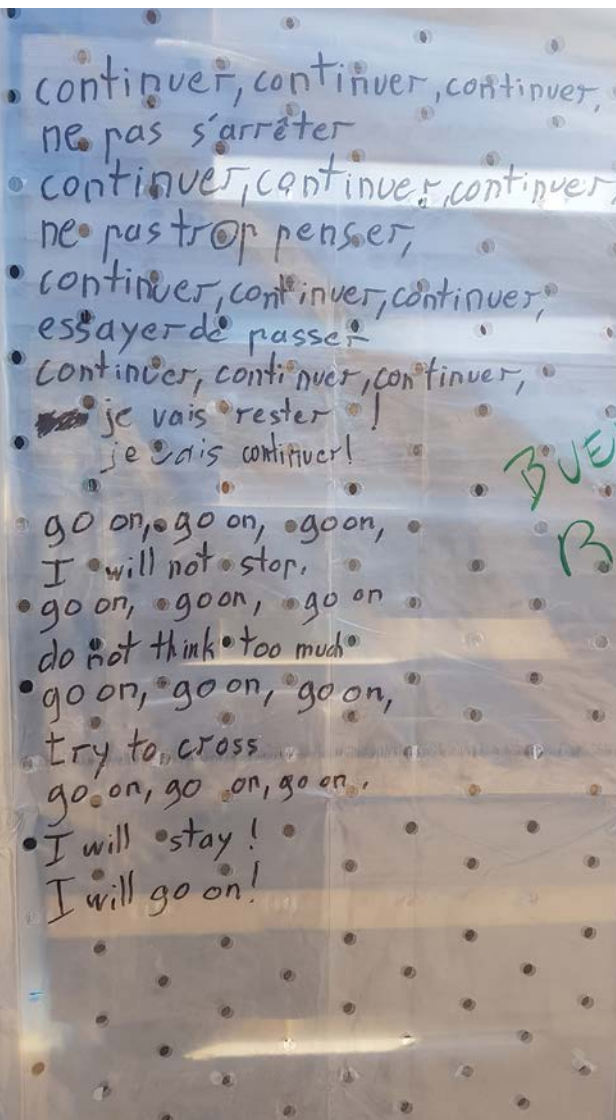
¹³⁴ Franceinfo (2020). 'Coronavirus : quelles mesures l'État prend-il auprès des migrants à Calais et à Grande-Synthe ?'. Available at: <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/coronavirus-quelles-mesures-etat-prend-il-aupres-migrants-calais-grande-synthe-1802114.html>



Photo credit: Abdul Saboor

During the Covid-19 period, the associations operating on the ground adapted their work in order to continue to work to support the displaced communities. For instance, the Calais Food Collective played an essential role in responding to food needs of the people in the area during this time, in particular during the first lockdown in 2020. The group purposely became highly mobile and distributed dry food packs to adapt to the situation in which other organisations - both state-mandated and grassroots - were unsure of their ability to provide meals for people and as such had to pause or reduce their services despite a high demand for food.¹³⁵ This is just one of many examples of how civil society flexibly and resourcefully adapted its approach in response to the pandemic.

However, to make matters even more challenging, there has also been an intensified criminalisation of volunteers under the pretext of Covid-19 restrictions. Many organisations, including HRO and Utopia 56, have received several fines during the different lockdowns, as their work was not recognised as “essential work.” In a similar vein, a food ban decree was issued in September 2020 under the pretext of Covid-19, prohibiting the distribution of food and water in certain parts of Calais.¹³⁶ While previous food ban decrees had always been ruled illegal when reaching the tribunal level, the September 2020 decree was renewed and has since been renewed 12 times. Each time it has been renewed, new parts of Calais have been made inaccessible to organisations distributing food and water, generally under the pretext that such distributions create large groups of people and as such, pose a considerable health risk despite all organisations abiding by the recommended health guidelines. Civil society and grassroots organisations initially responded to this by organising a protest march: close to 70 different organisations and members of displaced communities marched together to protest this food ban decree. Since then, organisations have had to constantly adapt their distribution points, and at times have faced fines and police harassment. This decree serves as an attempt by the state to push people away from the border area and shrink the space for solidarity and humanitarian aid - and this during a critical period when the latter is perhaps more desperately needed than ever before.



Poem on a shelter in a small camp outside of Calais, 2017.
Photo credit: Refugee Rights Europe



An abandoned sleeping spot. Photo credit: Refugee Rights Europe

¹³⁵ Calais Food Collective (2021). One Year of The Calais Food Collective. Available at: <https://calaisfood.wixsite.com/calaisfood/post/27-03-21-one-year-of-the-calais-food-collective>

¹³⁶ Le Monde (2020). 'Calais : la justice maintient l'arrêté interdisant la distribution de nourriture aux migrants'. Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2020/09/22/calais-la-justice-maintient-l-arrete-interdisant-la-distribution-de-nourriture-aux-migrants_6053194_3210.html; ECRE (2020). 'France: Ban on Food Distribution in Calais City Centre Appealed to Council of State, Police Dismantles Makeshift Camp'. Available at: <https://ecre.org/france-ban-on-food-distribution-in-calais-city-centre-appealed-to-council-of-state-police-dismantles-makeshift-camp>

WHY HAS THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN FRANCE NOT BEEN RESOLVED YET?

As outlined in Chapter One, the UK's policy of border securitisation and blocked access to asylum, and the French government's denying of people's basic rights at the border, are at the root of the situation in northern France.

Despite ongoing implementable calls for change,¹³⁷ the UK has continued to contribute to this permanent crisis in northern France through political and financial pressure. As a result, vulnerable individuals trapped in northern France are left in situations of violence and exploitation, subject to inhumane conditions and regular evictions, and must continue to rely on dangerous and irregular journeys to reach UK soil.



UK authorities inspecting a dinghy on the Kent shore. Photo credit: Susan Pilcher / Shutterstock

¹³⁷ E.g., Refugee Rights Europe (2020). Time for Change: On the need for safe and legal pathways to the UK. Available at: https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/RRE_PP_NewWaysAccessUKAsylum-2020.pdf



UK Border force vessel. Photo credit: Peter Titmuss / Shutterstock

This approach taken by both the UK and French Governments in response to displaced people arriving in northern France to reach the UK is costly, ineffective and unsustainable. Rather than acknowledging the root causes that drive people into dangerous migration routes – of which Britain’s own border securitisation policies¹³⁸ have been shown to form an integral part – the UK Home Office has continued the counter-productive and, indeed, deadly approach that has defined much of its own domestic immigration policy: deterrence, surveillance and removal.

Whilst the demolition of the Calais ‘Jungle’ gave way to a relative silence on the question of the UK-France border, during 2019–20 there has been increased political and media attention on the situation as a result of an increase in the number of small boats crossing the English Channel. Despite the broad media coverage of this issue, however, the primary policy response from the UK government has appeared woefully uninformed and short-sighted: to continue to pour money into reinforced security measures in France as well as to further restrict access to its asylum procedures, particularly for those arriving via Europe¹³⁹.

At exorbitant costs to the taxpayer, the UK’s policy response to small boat crossings in the Channel has arguably failed to achieve all of the government’s self-declared goals of reducing reliance on irregular migration pathways, avoiding loss of life at sea, and fighting trafficking. It is thus clear that such an approach has only been successful in paying lip service to a hard stance against migration, whilst failing to address the issue in a way which could achieve long-term solutions. As a result, the policies pursued have only inflamed criticism from all sides of the political spectrum, and have exacerbated already catastrophic and inhumane conditions for displaced people trapped at the UK border.

In parallel, the French Government has pursued its attempt to dissuade or prevent migrants from settling along the coastline. This attempt is composed most notably of regular police evictions of living sites, as well as tolerance of police violence and harassment.¹⁴⁰ A perennial denial of access to basic rights such as water, sanitation and shelter is also used as a dissuasion factor.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ UK Parliament (2019). Responding to irregular migration: A diplomatic route. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmcaff/107/10703.htm>

¹³⁹ Refugee Rights Europe (2021). The UK’s Policy Response to Small Boat Crossings. Available at: https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/RRE_BoatCrossingsInTheChannel-Timeline.pdf

¹⁴⁰ See, e.g., Human Rights Watch (2017). “Like living in Hell”: Police abuses against child and adult migrants in Calais. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/france0717_web_3.pdf; L’Auberge des Migrants et al. (2018). Calais: The police harassment of volunteers. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Police-Harassment-of-Volunteers-in-Calais-1.pdf>; Human Rights Observers (2019). Forced Evictions in Calais and Grande-Synthe. Available at: <https://helprefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Forced-Evictions-in-Calais-and-Grande-Synthe-ENG-1.pdf>; Amnesty International (2019). Targeting Solidarity: Criminalization and Harassment of People Defending Refugee and Migrant Rights in Northern France. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR2103562019ENGLISH.PDF>; Human Rights Observers (2020). Observation of human rights violations at the UK-France Border: Annual Report 2019. Available at: <http://www.laubergedesmigrants.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HRO-eng-rep2019.pdf>; Human Rights Observers (2021). Observations of human rights violations at the France-UK Border: Calais and Grande-Synthe. Available at: http://www.laubergedesmigrants.fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/HRO-2020-Annual-Report_All.pdf; CNCDH (2021). Avis sur le projet confortant les principes de la république.

¹⁴¹ Human Rights Observers (2021). Observations of State Violence at the French-UK Border: Calais and Grande-Synthe.

There have been concerted efforts to remove people from the coastline areas or, indeed, remove them from the country altogether, both of which are financially and politically incentivised by the UK Government.¹⁴² Each new French Government appears to want to announce the end of the visible disaster at the border,¹⁴³ pressured by the British as well as by local right-wing politicians.¹⁴⁴

In 2021, with the UK's new status as a non-EU state, we continue to witness a continuation of both governments' misinformed and inhumane immigration politics. The French authorities have stepped

up both police evictions and harassment,¹⁴⁵ as well as harsh measures to intercept and prevent boat crossings.¹⁴⁶ The British Home Secretary has meanwhile continued to place ever harsher restrictions on the right to asylum and to freedom of movement,¹⁴⁷ even though the Home Office's policies have a long track-record of contributing to increasingly dangerous migration journeys across the Channel whilst also inadvertently strengthening the hold of smugglers and traffickers over people attempting to claim asylum and be reunited with friends and family in the UK.¹⁴⁸



An informal settlement in an abandoned building. Photo credit: Jean-Philippe Hugué, Médecins du Monde

- ¹⁴² Under various bilateral agreements France has agreed to provide accommodation away from the Calais and Dunkirk areas. See, e.g., the 2015 ministerial declaration Managing Migratory Flows in Calais: Joint Ministerial Declaration on UK/French Co-operation (available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/455162/joint_declaration_20_August_2015.pdf) and the 2018 Sandhurst Treaty (available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674885/Treaty_Concerning_the_Reinforcement_Of_Cooperation_For_The_Coordinated_Management_Of_Their_Shared_Border.pdf).
- ¹⁴³ Sarkozy in 2017 (see Matthieu Goar (2016). 'A Calais, Nicolas Sarkozy compte « régler le problème de la jungle à la fin de l'été 2017 »'. Le Monde. Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2016/09/22/pour-nicolas-sarkozy-les-migrants-sont-des-degats-et-la-france-est-submergee_5001577_4854003.html); Macron in 2018 (see Hélène Berkaoui (2018). 'Emmanuel Macron à Calais : un discours ferme sur l'immigration'. Public Sénat. Available at: <https://www.publicsenat.fr/article/politique/emmanuel-macron-a-calais-un-discours-ferme-sur-l-immigration-81483>).
- ¹⁴⁴ Caroline Mortimer (2016). 'Calais Mayor says France should reconsider treaty stopping migrants entering UK via Channel Tunnel'. The Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-immigration-le-touquet-treaty-border-control-calais-mayor-france-migrants-a7101776.html>
- ¹⁴⁵ Peter Yeung (2021). 'Like torture: Calais police accused of continued migrant rights abuses'. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jan/13/like-torture-calais-police-accused-of-continued-migrant-rights-abuses>
- ¹⁴⁶ May Bulman (2021). 'The tragedy of a newborn refugee who died as her family tried to reach safety'. The Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/refugee-baby-death-france-calais-b1808163.html>
- ¹⁴⁷ Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (n.d.). 'Explained: Priti Patel's plans for the immigration system'. Available at: <https://www.jcwi.org.uk/explained-priti-patels-plans-for-the-immigration-system>
- ¹⁴⁸ Foreign Affairs Committee (2019). Responding to irregular migration: A diplomatic route. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmcaff/107/10702.htm> (see specifically section 2, para. 9ff: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmcaff/107/10705.htm#_idTextAnchor010)

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NEXT?

Many actions of resistance have been taken over the years to improve the situation at the UK-France border, including by displaced people themselves, by civil society organisations, by citizens, and by some authorities.



"I will never give up." Note on the remains of one of the restaurants in the Calais camp. Photo credit: Sarah Story, Refugee Info Bus

However, as outlined above, the situation has continued to degrade on many fronts. In order to provide long-term improvements to the situation for displaced people at the border, there are large structural and political changes that need to take place. Below we outline the main calls that advocates, including those living in or working on the border zone, have issued over the years.

Firstly, the extremely hostile state approach of uprooting, camp evictions and violence implemented by the French Government must cease. It should be replaced by a more constructive approach of implementing dignified, unconditional and uninterrupted reception solutions in key locations where displaced people are present. Accommodation structures must meet people's vital and fundamental needs (including access to food, safe drinking water, hygiene facilities, medical and psychological care, reliable legal information and social support). Additional means must also be mobilised in order to sufficiently welcome, inform and orient displaced people in these reception facilities and their local area.

It is important to underline that reception solutions will only work if they are accompanied by a "freeze" on evictions from camps and encampments. For as long as this incessant form of destabilisation and violence continues, displaced people will be prevented from having the time, mental space, support and information necessary



UK flag painted on pavement. Photo credit: DesignRage / Shutterstock



A family with young children in the woods in northern France. Photo credit: Refugee Women's Centre



Flowers in the sea off the Calais coast, in memory of those who died at the border. Photo credit: Andreas Beissel

to envisage entering French asylum procedures, pursuing their onward journey to seek protection in the UK, or other options open to them. Instead, people are left in a perpetual state of stress and trauma, increasing the likelihood of falling victim to misinformation, trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

It is also within France's power to address some of the fundamental reasons that people find themselves stuck in the border zone and feel unsafe to seek protection in France. Lack of reliable information, negative experiences of reception in France, and fear of being removed under the Dublin III Regulation¹⁴⁹ if having previously passed through another European country are among the factors that dissuade people from entering French asylum procedures. There have been strong calls for France to apply Articles 17 and 18 of the Dublin III Regulation (known as 'Dublin III') to displaced individuals trapped in northern France. The discretionary clauses in these articles allow a State, for humanitarian reasons (due to the state of vulnerability of the persons concerned or the family ties they may have in that State) or in the light of particular circumstances, to decide to examine a request for asylum under the jurisdiction of another State. Currently, the strict application of this regulation without use of these discretionary clauses – that is, to try to dissuade people from being in France, using Dublin III to remove them to a country they had been in before arriving – far from causing people to give up their migratory journey in search for safety, dooms them to a perpetual and convoluted wandering, an impossible integration, and living conditions so hard and desperate that they seriously impact people's physical and mental health. Applying the articles to people in northern France would effectively mean the Government could fully consider people's asylum applications and do away with ineffectual removals to other European countries.

¹⁴⁹ Marion MacGregor (2020). 'The Dublin Regulation – your questions answered'. InfoMigrants. Available at: <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/25622/the-dublin-regulation-your-questions-answered>

In parallel to French accountability for the situation for displaced people, the UK must also assume responsibility for its externalised border. As outlined in Chapter One, the bilateral border agreements between the two countries allow the UK to operate its immigration controls beyond its own territory without any corresponding human rights duties, such as to hear the asylum claims of those who seek protection at the border in line with the 1951 Geneva Convention, and, by trapping people at the border, have created a pervasive state of human insecurity in northern France. In order to address this point, the UK Government ought to rewrite, or revoke, the juxtaposed control arrangements with France.

In anticipation of this, additional solutions are needed in order to ensure the reinforcement of safer pathways to protection in the UK, enabling people to claim asylum without having to take irregular journeys. Options for this that have been proposed include: a humanitarian or asylum visa system accessible both globally and from the border; expanded family reunion procedures; and complementary migration pathways (e.g., community sponsorship, education opportunities, employment opportunities, and so forth).

The vast amounts of funding committed by the UK Government to border security and surveillance, which have led only to an increased

risk for those crossing the border and, indeed, loss of life, must be re-directed towards legal aid and humane reception conditions.

At the same time, the UK Government ought to cease the misleading public narrative campaign aimed at denigrating and delegitimising the arrival of asylum seekers. There is no legal precedent by which asylum seekers are obliged to seek asylum in the "first safe country" they travel through, nor by which they may be criminalised for irregular arrival through a 'safe third country'.

In carefully reconsidering their ineffective and costly strategy at the border, by seeking constructive avenues for collaboration and by assuming their respective legal and moral responsibilities, the UK and French Governments could put an end to the perpetual violence suffered by displaced people at this border. This would avoid the insalubrious and undignified camp living conditions which have also become a political embarrassment for both States; would more effectively reduce reliance on dangerous irregular migration pathways that by extension fuel the business model of smugglers and traffickers; and better uphold international and European law vis-à-vis the rights of people on the move.



Message on the Jungle Books library shelter. Photo credit: Sarah Story, Refugee Info Bus

CONCLUSION

Five years on from the authorities' announcement of 'mission completed' – signalling that the final eviction of the 2015-2016 Calais 'Jungle' camp had been concluded – it is clear that the situation at the UK-France border remains unresolved and has become increasingly untenable and inhumane.

With the 'Jungle' camp as our central focus, we have demonstrated in this report how the UK's juxtaposed border arrangements, combined with an unforgiving approach of uprooting and harassment by the French state, have led to the creation of a bottleneck scenario in northern France which is in urgent need of a new approach.



Tents in mud. Photo credit: Rowan Farrell, Refugee Info Bus

The hostile climate appears to deter prospective asylum seekers from wanting to stay in France, with liminal and precarious conditions acting as a strong impetus driving people towards the UK. Yet at the same time, the same border security arrangements further diminish people's ability to reach the UK safely, trapping people in an entirely untenable situation.

The report opened with an introductory overview of the political background which led to this build-up of a violent and inhumane border zone. We then sought to explain the context within which the 2015-2016 Calais 'Jungle' emerged – growing out of a vacuum and in response to the lack of an adequate state response. It slowly but surely turned into an extraordinary phenomenon: a vast self-organised camp or 'shantytown' built on an abandoned wasteland by displaced people, volunteers and activists, soon to be filled with restaurants, places of worship, schools and other communal spaces. The report then explained why and how the camp was eventually flattened to the ground, and outlined the key trends unfolding in the area in the years of the camp's aftermath.

Importantly, we have sought to address the question of why the situation has not yet been resolved, and why the violence and

suffering in the area persists, and what could be done differently. Indeed, after many years of encampments and evictions, people coming and going, and in face of the unprecedented challenges posed by the Covid-19 crisis, it is evident that the state approach tried so far is simply not working to resolve the situation.

It is therefore our deepest hope that structural reform will one day occur. It is time for a new era characterised by humanity and peace, with humane reception conditions for displaced people in the area, along with other efforts to ensure access to safety and effective status resolution in whichever country these individuals feel most safe, secure and able to start over again.

It is clear that no building of walls and erection of fences is going to stop displaced people from trying to find a safe and viable future, and the sooner a just response to human mobility is found, the sooner we will see an end to the violence, suffering and exhaustion witnessed in the northern France area, five years on from the Calais 'Jungle' camp.



Banner hung up next to one of the early 'Jungles'. Photo credit: SquatLeMonde

REFUGEE RIGHTS EUROPE
refugee-rights.eu

L'AUBERGE DES MIGRANTS
laubergedesmigrants.fr

FRANCE-UK BORDER RESEARCH
franceukborder.org

