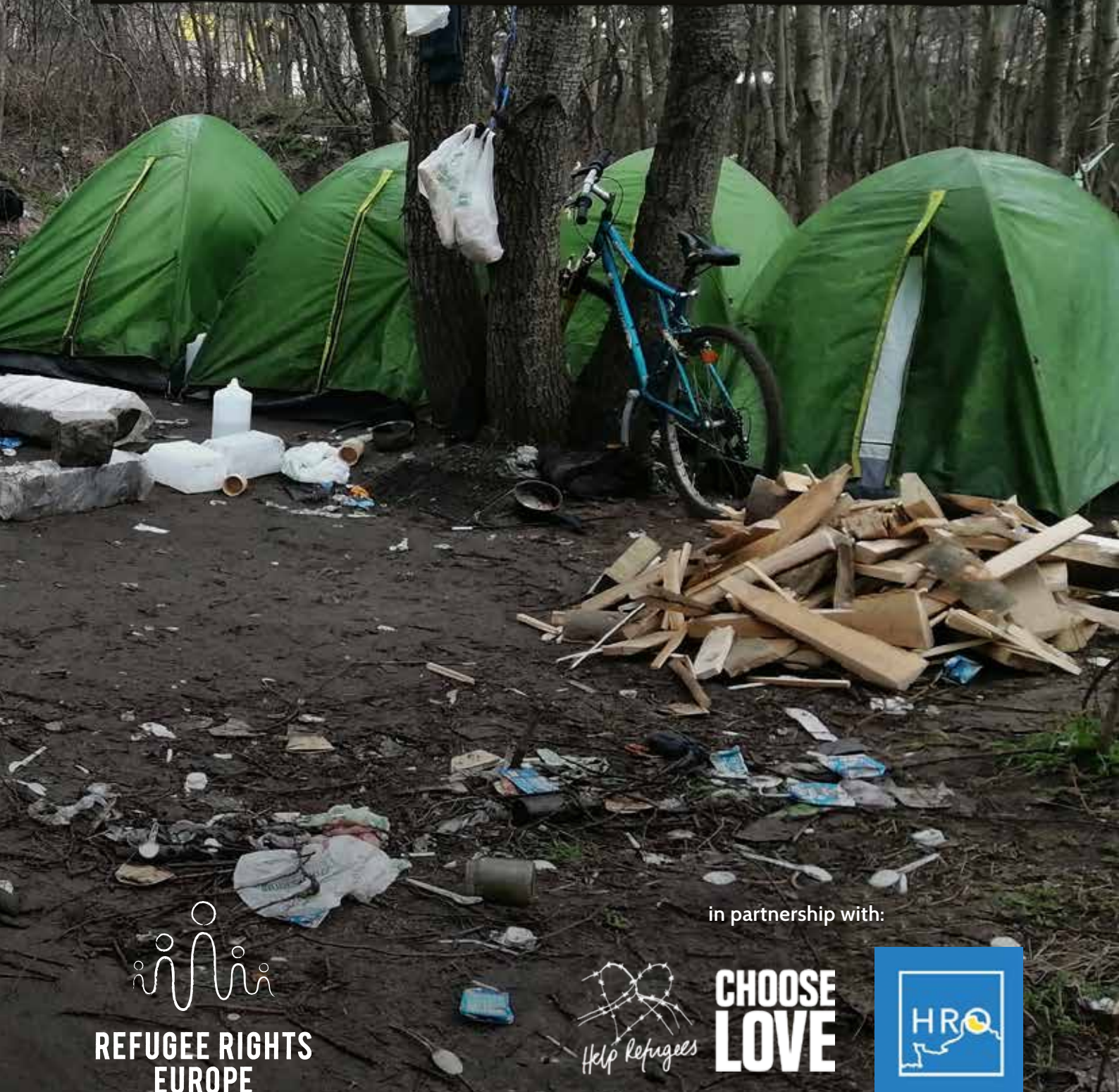


REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PEOPLE

# A BRIEF TIMELINE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN NORTHERN FRANCE



REFUGEE RIGHTS  
EUROPE

in partnership with:



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LOVE**





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### REPORT AUTHORS

Camille Boittiaux  
Fee Mira Gerlach  
Marta Welanders

### DESK RESEARCHERS

Fee Mira Gerlach  
Lizzie Hobbs  
Lauren Ng  
Phoebe Ramsay

### REPORT EDITORS

Alix Dazin  
Helena Eynon  
Josh Hallam  
Ruth Moore  
Jack Steadman

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Pippa Stanton  
Me And You Create  
[www.meandyoucreate.com](http://www.meandyoucreate.com)  
[hello@meandyoucreate.com](mailto:hello@meandyoucreate.com)

### PHOTO CREDITS

See page 41

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And above all, sincere gratitude to the displaced people who took part in our field research. We will continue working tirelessly towards securing a future of safety, dignity and well-being for all.

Photo Credit 1



We warmly welcome any additions to this report from volunteers and other experts on the ground, camp residents and others. Please contact [info@refugee-rights.eu](mailto:info@refugee-rights.eu) if you would like to contribute with additional updates for the next edition.

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# INTRODUCTION

In April 2020, during the unprecedented challenges brought on by the Covid-19 health crisis across Europe, Refugee Rights Europe in partnership with Help Refugees and Human Rights Observers sought to produce an updated version of the summary report originally published to mark the occasion of the two-year milestone since the demolition of the Calais 'Jungle' camp.

This report provides an overview of the human rights situation which has been unfolding in northern France over the past few decades, and which continues today, and reaches new depths of crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to a desk review of news pieces and academic materials, the report draws heavily on from-the-ground updates by Help Refugees, Human Rights Observers and other organisations operating in Calais and Grande-Synthe, as well as several Refugee Rights Europe research reports published in 2016-2018.

This summary report also makes a number of recommendations in its final section. We believe that our recommendations would have the potential to contribute to the transformation of a cyclical and unsustainable state approach to the situation in northern France, characterised by violence, closed communication channels and widespread human rights infringements. We believe that a different reality can and must be possible.







## PHASE ONE

# BOTTLE-NECK SCENARIO AND SANGATTE CAMP 1991-2002

**NOV 1991**

A Protocol is signed between the UK and France concerning frontier controls and policing, co-operation in criminal justice, public safety and mutual assistance relating to the Channel fixed link (also called the Sangatte Protocol). It provides for border checkpoints to be set up by France at the Eurotunnel Folkestone Terminal in Cheriton, Kent, and for border checkpoints to be set up by the UK at the Eurotunnel Calais Terminal in Coquelles, France.

**MAY 1993**

A tripartite agreement is signed by Belgium, France, and the UK. It allows Belgian officers to carry out pre-embarkation immigration controls at London Waterloo International station, and British officials to carry out pre-embarkation immigration controls at Brussels Midi station for passengers travelling on direct Eurostar train services between London and Brussels.

**MAY 1994**

The Channel Tunnel opens, linking Folkestone in the United Kingdom with Coquelles, Pas-de-Calais in northern France.

**MAR 1995**

The Schengen Area is created, which allows people to travel freely between an initial seven European countries, without any passport controls at the borders. The United Kingdom is granted an opt-out.

**1998 - 1999**

The number of displaced people sleeping in the streets of Calais and surrounding areas, with the hope of reaching the UK via the Eurotunnel and the Calais port, increases gradually.<sup>1</sup>



Photo Credit:13

**1999**

The French government instructs the French Red Cross to open a warehouse and centre for refugees and displaced people in Sangatte, one mile from the Eurotunnel entrance, in response to the growing number of displaced people in the area.<sup>2</sup> It is envisaged that this camp could accommodate 600 people.

**2001**

The UK Refugee Council warns that the situation in Calais will continue for as long as differences between the French and British asylum systems prevail, and describes the widely criticised Sangatte centre as the "symptom rather than the cause".<sup>3</sup>

**JUN 2001**

An additional Protocol to the Sangatte Protocol is signed between France and the UK, making provisions for immigration checkpoints to be set up by France in Eurostar stations in the UK and immigration checkpoints to be set up by the UK in Eurostar stations in France.

**OCT 2002**

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) establishes a permanent presence within the Sangatte centre, providing one-to-one legal counselling and advice.

<sup>1</sup> Reinisch, p. 515

<sup>2</sup> Reinisch, p. 515

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/754\\_the\\_situation\\_at\\_the\\_sangatte\\_camp\\_in\\_france](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/754_the_situation_at_the_sangatte_camp_in_france)

## AUTUMN 2002

The UNHCR and The Red Cross estimate a 'roving population' of more than 3,000 people, with an average of 1,700 individuals in the camp at any given time. They estimate that more than 80% originate from Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan, with approximately 100 new arrivals per day. <sup>4</sup>

## 2002

A range of new security measures are put in place in the area, including a double fence, CCTV cameras and more police being instructed to patrol the area. <sup>5</sup>

## END 2002

Under pressure from the UK government, Nicolas Sarkozy, then minister for Home Affairs, announces the closure of the Sangatte centre. As part of a 'burdensharing agreement', the UK agrees to take around 1,000 Iraqi Kurds and 200 Afghans, while France takes responsibility for the remaining 300 Sangatte centre residents. <sup>6</sup>

Photo Credit 11



<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/3d4fe36e5.html>

<sup>5</sup> Reinisch, p. 516

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/2016/10/24/purgatory-a-history-of-migrants-in-calais>; Reinisch, p. 516







## PHASE TWO

# ENCAMPMENTS, SQUATS AND EVICTIONS 2003-2014

2003

Displaced people 'move out of the spotlight' but are to remain in the area over the coming years, with a steady increase in numbers.



Photo Credit 14

OCT 2004

An administrative arrangement is signed by Belgium, France and the UK to extend the juxtaposed controls to Eurostar services between London, and Brussels, with a stop in Lille.

DEC 2006

Creation of a continuous access to health care (PASS) at the Calais hospital (offering a medico-social unit for all people in precarious situations).

END OF 2006

Hundreds of displaced people are living in the "Basroch" marshy area in Grande-Synthe.

FEB 2003

Adoption of the Dublin II Regulation (EC No 343/2003), establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national.

MAR 2003

Creation of the detention centre of Coquelles.

2003

French president Nicolas Sarkozy signs the Treaty of Le Touquet with Britain, committing to halt irregular immigration to the United Kingdom via Calais.<sup>7</sup> Through juxtaposed border controls, the agreement essentially means that authorities in both the UK and France are entitled to carry out immigration controls in each other's territory at the sea ports.<sup>8</sup>

2003  
ONWARDS

Squats and makeshift shelters are periodically erected and torn down again, locally known as 'the jungles'. Local volunteer groups continue to provide hot meals and dry clothes throughout this period. There are regular 'warnings' that the situation is deteriorating in the area. Two main positions take shape: the argument for giving displaced people shelter and basic care on the one hand, and the view that France ought to make conditions inhospitable so as to deter new arrivals on the other.<sup>9</sup>

2008

L'Auberge des Migrants starts working with displaced people living in Calais, offering aid and support and defending their rights.



Photo Credit 15

JAN 2009

France's immigration minister Eric Besson says that a new Sangatte is "out of the question" because a camp "would create a powerful invitation to new networks of illegal immigration. It would not be a solution to the humanitarian problem. It would be an extra humanitarian problem."<sup>10</sup>

APR 2009

France's immigration minister Eric Besson allows the sub-prefecture of Calais to register asylum claims.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-42723401>

<sup>8</sup> <https://inews.co.uk/news/long-reads/le-touquet-treaty-affects-refugees-calais>

<sup>9</sup> Reinisch, p. 516

<sup>10</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7852621.stm>

Photo Credit 11



**2009**

A makeshift camp with 1,000 inhabitants is bulldozed and 190 people are arrested.<sup>11</sup>

Photo Credit 14



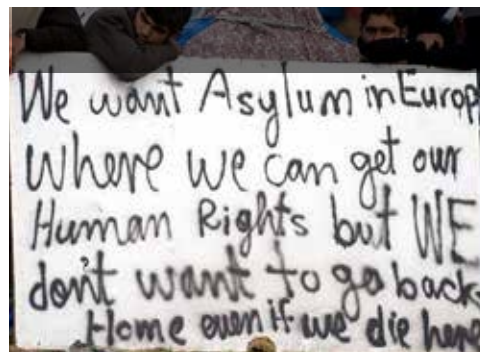
Photo Credit 12



**JUN 2009**

European 'no border' activists set up a week-long protest camp in the area with the intention of confronting the authorities over their treatment of displaced people.<sup>12</sup>

Photo Credit 9



**JUL 2009**

Calais Migrant Solidarity of the 'no borders' networks starts documenting and calling out human rights violations, highlight tragic deaths of displaced people. They organise regular protests, demonstrations and other forms of civic action.<sup>13</sup>

**JUL 2009 - JUL 2012**

UNHCR establishes a permanent presence in Calais, providing legal aid and counselling.

**APR 2011**

Calais Migrant Solidarity releases a video where the police are seen pepper-spraying, being violent, abusive and unprofessional, shown on the French media channel Rue89. They also release a report called "Calais: this border kills", documenting police violence since June 2009.

**JUL 2012**

UNHCR hands over responsibilities to the French non-governmental organisation France Terre d'Asile.

Photo Credit 16



<sup>11</sup>. <https://www.euronews.com/2016/10/24/purgatory-a-history-of-migrants-in-calais>

<sup>12</sup>. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13621025.2013.780731?journalCode=ccst20>

<sup>13</sup>. <https://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com>



Photo Credit 16



## SEP 2012

Creation of a specific reception and care facility for unaccompanied minors in the department of Pas-de-Calais. The emergency reception of children under 15 is the responsibility of the association La vie active, and children over 15 are under the responsibility of the association France Terre d'Asile (FTDA), which opens an accommodation centre in Saint-Omer.

## DEC 2013

The French interior minister, Manuel Valls, visits Calais. He announces the upcoming deployment of a permanent CRS fleet to be composed of 60 officers, a forthcoming meeting with British Home Secretary Theresa May to coordinate immigration policies, and the creation of a "Maison du Migrant", that will not be "a new Sangatte camp".<sup>14</sup>

## 2013

The Dublin III Regulation enters into force. This updated regulation includes EU law stating that families have a right to stay together. This means that refugees legally have the right to join family in another country.<sup>15</sup>

Photo Credit 10



## END OF 2013

Between 300 and 400 displaced people are in Calais.

## AUG 2014

The mayor of Calais, Natacha Bouchart, requests the opening of a reception center in Calais<sup>16</sup>. A few days later, the Prefect of Pas-de-Calais, Denis Robin, declares that he is in favour of this idea, but in the form of a day centre only<sup>17</sup>.

## SEP 2014

During a visit to Britain, French interior minister Cazeneuve calls on the British to help financially with security at the Calais port. The mayor of Calais, Natacha Bouchart, threatens to block the port unless Britain "helps to deal" with the situation.<sup>18</sup>

Natacha Bouchart and Bernard Cazeneuve agree on opening a day centre in Calais for displaced people, and a night shelter specifically for women and children. This decision will later result in the opening of 'Jules Ferry'.<sup>19</sup>

The Telegraph reports that there are up to 1,500 displaced people in Calais.<sup>20</sup>

Photo Credit 16



<sup>14</sup> <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/art/region/creation-d-une-maison-des-migrants-compagnie-de-crs-a-ia33b0n1770093>

<sup>15</sup> <https://openmigration.org/en/analyses/what-is-the-dublin-regulation/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.rtl.fr/actu/debats-societe/calais-la-maire-ump-veut-ouvrir-un-nouveau-centre-pour-migrants-7773830241>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/art/region/calais-le-prefet-favorable-a-un-accueil-de-jour-ia33b48581n2350177>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/sep/03/calais-mayor-threatens-block-port-uk-fails-help-migrants>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/sep/03/calais-mayor-threatens-block-port-uk-fails-help-migrants>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11092376/Calais-migrants-becoming-more-violent-in-attempts-to-reach-Britain.html>

**OCT 2014** The Guardian reports that there are more than 2,500 displaced people in Calais.<sup>21</sup>



Photo Credit 16

**28 OCT 2014** The British Home Affairs Committee takes evidence from the Mayor of Calais, who tells the committee that part of the problem is the failure of the British government to reduce 'pull factors'.<sup>22</sup>

**NOV 2014** Calais Migrant Solidarity releases a report detailing the human rights situation in Calais, highlighting the high levels of violence and precarity facing displaced people in the region. The report outlines a range of unmet fundamental needs (number of meals per day is limited to one, lack of drinking water and poor hygiene conditions) and the absence of descent accommodation, which forces people to stay in makeshift camps and squats or to dwell in the streets. The report suggests that the structural and physical violence in Calais leads to physical and psychological exhaustion.<sup>23</sup>



Photo Credit 16

**DEC 2014** The European director of the UN's refugee agency (UNHCR) describes the situation in Calais as shameful: "The conditions are totally unacceptable and are not consistent with the kind of values that a democratic society should have."<sup>24</sup>

Local charities and the UNHCR report that at least 15 people, including young women and teenagers, have died over the course of 2014.<sup>25</sup>



Photo Credit 16

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/oct/28/calais-migrants-willing-to-die-britain-french-mayor-natacha-bouchart-uk-benefits-france>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/news/141024-calais>

<sup>23</sup> <https://calaismigrantsolidarity.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/synthc3a8se-calais-2-ans-aprc3a8s.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/dec/23/15-migrants-trying-enter-uk-die-shameful-calais-conditions>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/dec/23/15-migrants-trying-enter-uk-die-shameful-calais-conditions>





# THE CALAIS 'JUNGLE' CAMP 2015-2016

**JAN 2015**

The French government sets up an official centre at 'Jules Ferry', a former children's holiday camp. The centre, run by La Vie Active, initially consists of three large tents, with the aim of later providing overnight accommodation for women and young children, as well as essential services such as food distribution, clean water, sanitation facilities and medical care <sup>26</sup>.

Human Rights Watch denounces the violence against displaced people in Calais, accusing the police of harassment and atrocities against displaced people <sup>27</sup>.

**FEB 2015**

Nils Muižnieks, Commissioner for human rights of the Council of Europe, denounces the existence of "deplorable" living conditions and the "persistence of this situation for several years in Calais and its region" <sup>28</sup>.

**MAR 2015**

A total of 52 women and children move into the Jules Ferry centre run by La Vie Active <sup>29</sup>.

**APR 2015**

Around 1,200 people are evicted from squats and camps around Calais, and moved to the site by the Jules Ferry centre. This is the site of the future 'Jungle camp' <sup>30</sup>.

**JUN 2015**

French Housing Minister Sylvia Pinel announces that measures will be taken to improve the situation in the 'new Jungle', including street lighting and water points. <sup>31</sup>

**JUL 2015**

The Telegraph reports that there are more than 3,000 people in the camp. <sup>32</sup>

The first school in the camp is set up by volunteers and camp residents. It provides a space for camp residents to learn French, English, history and geography. <sup>33</sup>

**2 JUL 2015**

The National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH), alerted by several of its members, issues various recommendations in an opinion about the situation of displaced people in Calais. The CNCDH delegation visits Calais in June and is "deeply shocked by the inhuman conditions in which the migrants try to survive and the impasse facing not only these exiles but also the public authorities confronted with problems of an exceptionally complex nature". <sup>34</sup>

Photo Credit 7



**AUG 2015**

The #HelpCalais hashtag goes viral and a group of friends raise £50,000 in a week and partner with L'Auberge des Migrants to expand the aid operations in Calais. This is the beginning of Help Refugees.

The Jungle Books library is opened by a British individual teacher, and is then run by volunteers and camp residents. <sup>35</sup>

**END OF AUG**

Joint ministerial declaration by the French and British interior ministries reinforcing UK-French co-operation in managing migratory flows in Calais: "Our joint approach rests on securing the border, identifying and safeguarding the vulnerable, preserving access to asylum for those who need it, and giving no quarter to those who have no right to be here or who break the law" <sup>36</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/ch%C3%A9-ramsden/new-sangatte-rights-pushed-out-of-sight>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2015/01/20/france-les-migrants-et-les-demandeurs-dasile-victimes-de-violence-et-demunis>

<sup>28</sup> [https://rm.coe.int/ref/CommDH\(2015\)1](https://rm.coe.int/ref/CommDH(2015)1)

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.lavoixdunord.fr/archive/recup/region/calais-les-femmes-et-les-enfants-migrants-arrivent-ce-ia33b48581n2731676>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/ch%C3%A9-ramsden/new-sangatte-rights-pushed-out-of-sight>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.lavoixdunord.fr/archive/recup/region/migrants-de-calais-bientot-des-points-d-eau-de-ia33b0n2891692>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/11694134/Calais-crisis-illegal-immigrants-shut-down-all-Channel-traffic.html>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.lavoixdunord.fr/archive/recup/region/calais-dans-leur-camp-des-migrants-construisent-leur-ecole-ia33b48581n2940853>

<sup>34</sup> [https://www.cncdh.fr/sites/default/files/15.07.02\\_avis\\_migrants\\_calais\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://www.cncdh.fr/sites/default/files/15.07.02_avis_migrants_calais_en_0.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/24/calais-migrant-camp-gets-makeshift-library-and-it-needs-more-books>

<sup>36</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/455162/joint\\_declaration\\_20\\_August\\_2015.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/455162/joint_declaration_20_August_2015.pdf)



In the meantime, the French interior minister Manuel Valls announces the construction of a 'migrant camp' next to the Jules Ferry centre, with the financial support of the European Union. The European Commission agrees to allocate €5.2 million in emergency assistance funding under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) to set up a tent site offering humanitarian assistance to around 1,500 displaced people, and to support the transport of asylum seekers from Calais to other locations in France. This assistance complements the €266 million granted for the period 2014-2020 to finance long-term actions in the area of asylum, migration and integration and the €3.8 million in emergency funding already granted in 2014 to co-finance the establishing of the "Jules Ferry" day centre.<sup>37</sup>

## SEP 2015

Final eviction of small squats and encampments in the area, sending more people to the Jungle camp.

Help Refugees and l'Auberge des Migrants start its build programme. They go on to build more than 1,500 shelters in the short time period of six months.



Photo Credit 8

## AUTUMN 2015

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

## OCT 2015

The Défenseur des droits (French Ombudsman) releases a damning report about the fundamental rights of displaced people living in the slum of Calais.<sup>38</sup>

## NOV 2015

The first fixed distribution point is set up to distribute donations from the l'Auberge des Migrants and Help Refugees warehouse inside the camp. Prior to this, only mobile van distributions were used.

## END OF NOV

The Conseil d'État urges 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 states that the living conditions constitute inhumane or degrading treatment from the French state.<sup>39</sup>

## 2015 - 2016

A wide array of organisations and initiatives emerge to fill the vital gap left behind by governments and traditional actors, including Calaid, Calais Action, Care4Calais, Refugee Youth Service, Refugee Info Bus, Refugee Community Kitchen, Refugee Women's Centre, The Hummingbird Project, Art Refuge UK, The Worldwide Tribe and the School Bus Project. These grassroots initiatives join the small number of larger organisations operating in the area (Médecins Sans Frontières, Doctors of the World, ACTED and Secours Catholique) and the local French associations already present in Calais (l'Auberge des Migrants and Salam). Good Chance Theatre sets up the dome theatre space. London2Calais sends regular convoys of aid and support to Calais, the Jungle Canopy and Calais Builds bring caravans and shelters, and the Phone Credits for Refugees and Displaced People raises donations to help top up mobile phones.



Photo Credit 5

## NOV - DEC 2015

People are evicted from their shelters to make space for a new state-run 'container camp' next to Jules Ferry; the Good Chance Theatre dome is relocated.

<sup>37</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_15\\_5555](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_15_5555); <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2015/08/31/01016-20150831ARTFIG00226-calais-valls-en-appelle-a-l-europe.php>

<sup>38</sup> [https://defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rapport\\_calais\\_2015.pdf](https://defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rapport_calais_2015.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichJuriAdmin.do?oldAction=rechJuriAdmin&idTexte=CETATEXT000031938075&fastReqId=639341463&fastPos=1>

Photo Credit 5



## JAN 2016

Bulldozers move in to clear a 100-meter-wide strip next to the highway that runs next to the camp, intended as a security measure. Volunteers and camp residents manage to move most shelters away from the buffer zone prior to demolition.<sup>40</sup>

Jeremy Corbyn visits the Calais and Dunkirk camps.<sup>41</sup>

The French authorities set up 125 white-painted shipping containers to accommodate up to 1,500 people next to Jules Ferry. The 'container camp' provides bunk beds, heaters, windows, toilets and showers. Many camp residents refuse to move into the fenced container camper, distrusting the handprint technology controlling access.<sup>42</sup>

Photo Credit 5



## END OF JAN

An estimated 3,000 displaced people are living in the "Basroch" camp in Grande-Synthe.

## FEB 2016

The UNHCR voices concerns about the conditions for displaced people in Calais and Dunkirk.<sup>43</sup>

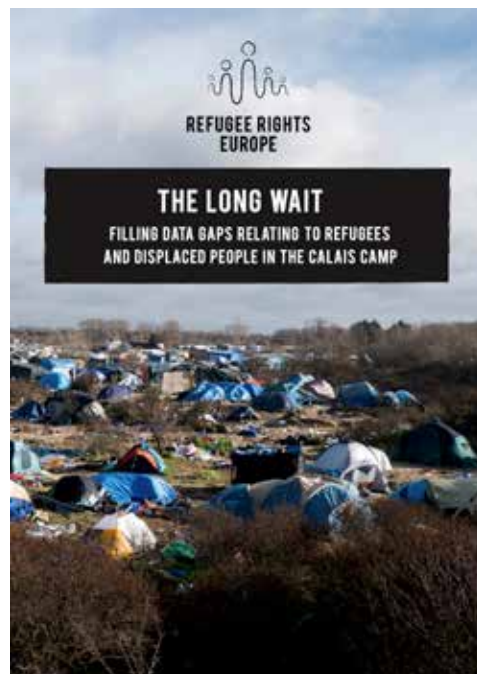
## 12 FEB 2016

The Calais Prefecture announces plans to bulldoze the southern section of the camp.

## FEB 2016

stating that this will affect 800-1000 refugees living in that zone. Organisations on the ground report that this is less than half of the actual population of the affected area, estimating that 3,000 people are living there, including 400 children, 300 of whom are unaccompanied.<sup>44</sup> They also highlight that three mosques, one Orthodox church, three schools, one library and one theatre, as well as hot food and aid distribution points, will be affected.<sup>45</sup>

A census by Help Refugees, the first ever of its kind, finds that the camp is home to a total of 5,497 residents, including 182 families, 205 women and 651 children, of whom 423 are unaccompanied. The census does not include the government-run facilities including Jules Ferry and the shipping containers which host approximately 1500 people.<sup>46</sup>



Refugee Rights Europe (then called the Refugee Rights Data Project) conducts a large-scale research study in the Calais camp, resulting in the report 'The Long Wait'. This is followed by a subsequent report specifically focusing on the situation for women, entitled 'Unsafe Borderlands'. The reports shed light on a wide range of human rights infringements facing 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.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/french-authorities-try-to-create-buffer-zone-at-calais-refugee-camp/a-18986588>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/12117419/Mud-sweat-and-tears-as-Jeremy-Corbyn-visits-migrant-camp-in-northern-France.html>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-calais-idUSKCN0UP23R20160111>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2016/2/56b4ac916/unhcr-concerned-conditions-calais-dunkerque.html>

<sup>44</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/calais-statement-our-concerns>

<sup>45</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/help-refugees-statement-on-calais-eviction>

<sup>46</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/calais-camp-total-number-of-residents-revealed-for-the-first-time-423-unaccompanied-minors>



Groups with special safeguarding needs, such as children, those with disabilities, LGBTQI+, the elderly and women face especially difficult living situations within the camp.

Of the child respondents, the majority of whom are unaccompanied, 61.1% report that they 'never feel safe'. The reasons for this tend to mirror their adult peers - including 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 (89.6%)

The research finds that women are deeply concerned about facing sexual exploitation, particularly at the hands of people-smugglers. Given these risks, it is of great concern that the majority of women are not able to lock their shelter securely at night. Another main point of concern is the provision made for women's reproductive health, a fundamental right of all women and girls, in the camp.



Photo Credit 6

A court in Lille approves the French government's request to evict the southern part of the camp.<sup>47</sup>



Photo Credit 7

## 2 MAR 2016

Twelve Iranian camp residents start a hunger strike; a number of them sewing their lips together.<sup>48</sup>

## MAR 2016

The southern part of the camp is evicted.

La Linière camp in the Dunkirk area opens, constructed by Médecins Sans Frontière (MSF) with the capacity to shelter some 1,500 displaced people who have previously survived in deplorable conditions in an unofficial camp nearby (the "Basroch" camp). The camp is managed by Utopia 56, mandated by the city hall.

The first unaccompanied minors, having previously been left in limbo in the Calais camp, are able to travel safely and legally to the UK to be reunited with their families through the provisions of the Dublin III Regulation.<sup>49</sup> Despite the treaty having been introduced in 2003, these three cases are the first ever to be transferred from France to Britain.<sup>50</sup> Citizens UK have previously identified 150 children with similar claims.<sup>51</sup>



Photo Credit 6

## APRIL 2016

A new census by Help Refugees raises concerns that 129 unaccompanied minors cannot be accounted for since the eviction of the southern section of the camp, highlighting the lack of needs assessment, monitoring and safeguarding by the French authorities. The census finds that 4,946 refugees are still living in the Calais camp, including 1,400 in the state-provided containers. 514 children are counted, of whom 294 are unaccompanied. The youngest unaccompanied child is eight years of age, with the average age of minors in the camp being 14.2 years.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35663225>

<sup>48</sup> <https://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com/page/3/?s=calais>

<sup>49</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/first-children-arrive-in-uk-from-calais-jungle-through-safe-passage-legal-route>

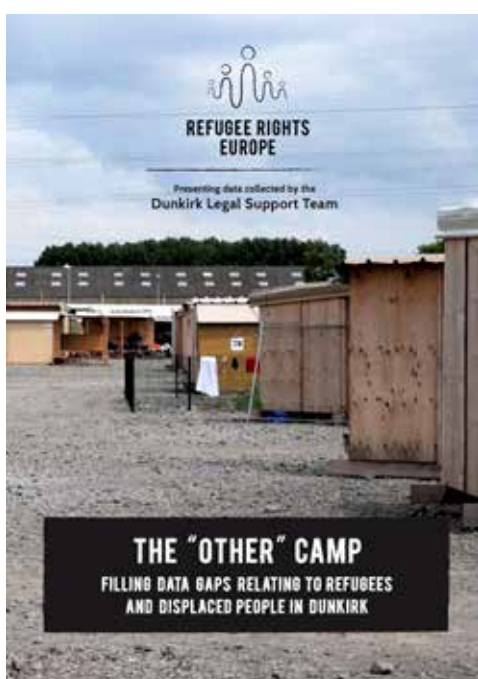
<sup>50</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/first-children-arrive-in-uk-from-calais-jungle-through-safe-passage-legal-route>

<sup>51</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/first-children-arrive-in-uk-from-calais-jungle-through-safe-passage-legal-route>

<sup>52</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/calais-breaking-news-129-unaccompanied-minors-unaccounted-for-since-demolition>

**MAY 2016**

Refugee Rights Europe and Dunkirk Legal Support Team release a report regarding the situation in the Dunkirk camp, entitled 'The Other Camp'. While the experience of police violence reported by Dunkirk residents (42.3%) is lower than in Calais (75.9%), these figures nonetheless indicate a similarly endemic presence of this form of violence against refugees and displaced people in the region. In both camps, there is an alarming absence of asylum information, with 74.3% of Calais respondents reporting that they did not have access to this information compared to 54.4% in Dunkirk. The report warns that any future government decision to shut down the Dunkirk camp without providing a viable alternative is unlikely to be conducive to any sustainable solution for the displaced women, men and children dwelling there.<sup>53</sup>



**JULY 2016**

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) denounces the decision by the government to deny entry to the Dunkirk camp to new adults travelling alone.<sup>54</sup>

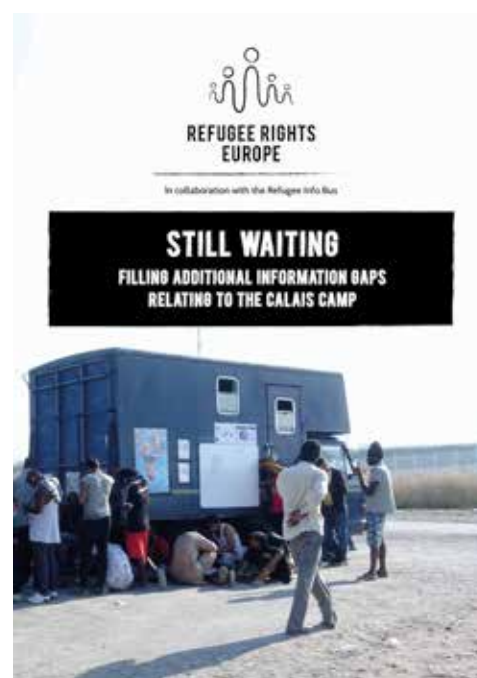


Photo Credit 3

**JUL - AUG 2016**

Refugee Rights Europe conducts the research for the report 'Still Waiting' in collaboration with the Refugee Info Bus. The report identifies that despite the tireless efforts of volunteer organisations in the Calais camp, thousands of displaced people are left without adequate access to information on their rights, immigration rules and possibilities to change their situation. This is especially worrisome for the large number of unaccompanied minors, of whom a significant number appear to have the legal right to be accepted in the UK but do not have access to legal channels or support.

The report also finds that many people, including minors, have been living in deplorable conditions inside the camp for over a year, and warns that even if the camp is to be demolished and its residents evicted, the quest to reach the UK and determination to stay in the area will not change for most respondents.



**AUG 2016**

A new census by Help Refugees and l'Auberge des Migrants finds that the number of residents in the Calais camp has risen to a staggering 9,106 people, including 865 children, of whom 78% are unaccompanied.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> [http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE\\_TheOtherCamp.pdf](http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE_TheOtherCamp.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.msf.org/france-msf-denounces-decision-condemning-dunkirk-refugee-camp-probable-closure>

<sup>55</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/latest-calais-census>





Photo Credit 5

## SEP 2016

President Hollande declares that the rest of the camp will be dismantled by the end of the year.<sup>56</sup>

Construction work begins on a UK-funded wall with estimated costs of £2.3m. The wall is planned to be a 4 meter (13ft) barrier, running for 1 kilometer (0.6 miles) along both sides of the main road to the Calais port.<sup>57</sup>



Photo Credit 7

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) denounces the government decision condemning the Dunkirk camp to probable closure in 2017, warning that "thousands of refugees and migrants will be made vulnerable to destitution and violence as winter approaches."<sup>58</sup>



Photo Credit 3

Help Refugees and l'Auberge des Migrants conduct another census, which finds that more than 10,000 people now live in the Calais camp. It also reveals that the number of unaccompanied minors has increased by 51% month-on-month – bringing to 1,179 the number of underage youths in the camp, of which 87% are unaccompanied. Of those surveyed for the census, 52% report issues in receiving accommodation, including waits of up to eight months to be offered even temporary shelter by local authorities.<sup>59</sup>



Photo Credit 5

## SEP - OCT 2016

Refugee Rights Europe carries out another field study in collaboration with the Refugee Info Bus, highlighting the complex dynamics at play in the Calais camp, where thousands of refugees and displaced people continue to live in squalid, inhumane conditions. The report, 'Still Here', finds that many residents have lived in the camp for one year or more - including around one-fifth of all minors surveyed - despite its unhealthy environment and a chronic absence of basic facilities and services.

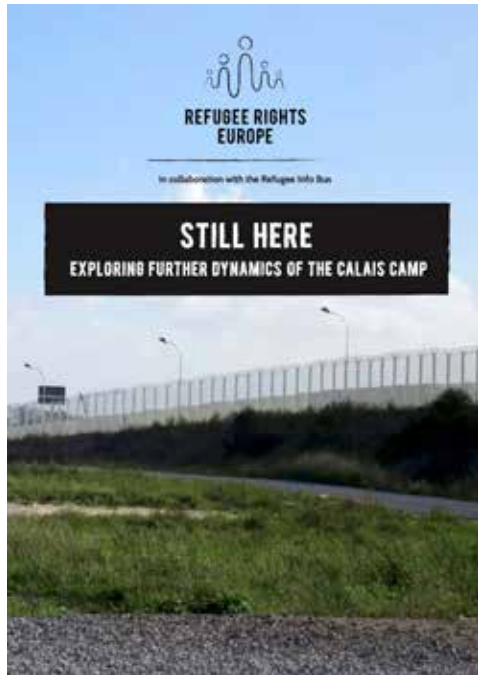
It highlights that the majority of respondents say that they will remain in the Calais area if the camp is evicted - potentially sleeping out on the street. This suggests that demolishing the settlement without presenting a viable alternative will be detrimental both to its residents and to the surrounding local community.

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37469013>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37421525>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.msf.org/france-msf-denounces-decision-condemning-dunkirk-refugee-camp-probable-closure>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/10000-people-now-live-calais-jungle-migrant-camp-1582103>



**OCT 2016**

Civil society groups and academics estimate that there are between 8,000 and 10,000 residents in the camp. Help Refugees estimate that the population is 8,143.



Photo Credit 6

The Calais camp is demolished in its entirety. Around 6,000 refugees and asylum seekers are sent to temporary reception centres. The remaining people leave and relocate to makeshift camps and informal settlements scattered across northern France. Many move to Paris, Caen, Rouen and Brussels, living in tents on the streets and hiding in parks and train stations.

Over 1,500 children are sent to the container camp during the eviction, where they stay until being taken to the Centres d'Accueil et d'Orientation pour Mineurs Isolés Étrangers (CAOMIEs) one week after everyone else has left. There is no running water for the children, and a complete absence of official safeguarding measures. The Refugee Youth Service and other organisations deplore 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."<sup>60</sup> The specific facilities for accessing the asylum claim procedure (maraudes, missions of OFPRA, departures by bus to CAOs) are discontinued.

Refugee Youth Service reports that one-third of the 179 children tracked in October have gone missing since the demolition of the Calais camp.<sup>61</sup>



Photo Credit 6



Photo Credit 6

<sup>60</sup>. <https://www.refugeeyouthservice.net/single-post/2017/10/24/On-This-Day-Unaccompanied-Children-in-Calais>

<sup>61</sup>. <https://helprefugees.org/news/third-children-missing-jungle-closure>





## PHASE FOUR

# DISMANTLEMENTS, VIOLENCE AND HIDING

## NOV 2016 - DEC 2018

### NOV 2016

A Help Refugees report, detailing the situation of unaccompanied minors dispersed to Centres d'Accueil et d'Orientation pour Mineurs Isolés Étrangers (CAOMIEs) after the demolition of the Calais camp, finds an apparent lack of psychological support and a lack of information or misinformation (for both minors and CAOMIE staff) from the Home Office regarding the transfer of minors to the UK. These gaps lead to exacerbated psychological distress and the wish to leave CAOMIEs.<sup>62</sup>

### FEB 2017

UK Home Secretary Amber Rudd announces the end of the "Dubs scheme" after only 350 children have entered the UK through the procedure.<sup>65</sup>

The Dunkirk Legal Support Team, represented by London-based law firm Bindmans, takes legal action against the Home Office, accusing it of "acting unfairly and irrationally by electing to settle only minors from the vast Calais camp that closed last October, ignoring the child refugees gathered in Dunkirk."<sup>66</sup>

More than 1,000 refugees, including 200 children, are sleeping rough on the streets and in wooded areas around Calais and Dunkirk. Only a small percentage are sporadically provided with accommodation.<sup>67</sup>

### WINTER 2016 - 2017

Displaced people return and form informal settlements in the Calais area. Help Refugees reports that since mid-January 2017 the numbers of refugees in Calais have increased drastically again, with between 500 and 1000 people, mostly unaccompanied minors, sleeping in forests and under bridges.<sup>63</sup>

### MAR 2017

Calais mayor Natacha Bouchart announces 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. The ban is later suspended when found to be illegal by a tribunal in Lille.<sup>68</sup>



Photo Credit 1

### DEC 2016

The Défenseur des droits (French Ombudsman) releases a report on the evictions of the Calais and Stalingrad camps. Highlighting a lack of anticipation, lack of coordination, the act of keeping unaccompanied minors isolated from child protection, etc. The Défenseur des droits denounces the state's logic of controlling migratory flows while overriding considerations related to respect for fundamental rights.<sup>64</sup>



Photo Credit 5

<sup>62</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/life-children-calais-jungle-post-eviction-uncertain-future>

<sup>63</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/refugees-heading-back-calais-need-help>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rapp-demantelement-v6.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/12/dunkirk-child-refugees-risk-sexual-violence?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/12/dunkirk-child-refugees-risk-sexual-violence?CMP=tw_t_gu)

<sup>66</sup> [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/12/dunkirk-child-refugees-risk-sexual-violence?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/12/dunkirk-child-refugees-risk-sexual-violence?CMP=tw_t_gu)

<sup>67</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/emergency-accommodation-failing-vulnerable>

<sup>68</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/tribunal-lille-suspended-inhumane-ban-distributing-food-refugees-deeming-illegal>



**APR 2017**

Refugee Rights Europe conducts a follow-up research study resulting in the report 'Six Months On', looking at the situation after the camp clearance. According to the research findings, the situation remains entirely unresolved six months after the demolition of the Calais camp, with a rapidly deteriorating living standards and a wide range of human rights infringements. The report specifically highlights the extent of child protection failures taking place in the Calais 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.

The Grande-Synthe camp (where approximately 1,700 persons are living) burns down, and approximately 80% of the settlement is reportedly destroyed as a result.<sup>69</sup> People are asked to move into accommodation centres (CAO), but an estimated 150 people settled in the woods nearby, called "le Puythouck".

France's Conseil d'état rejects 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.<sup>73</sup>

Human Rights Watch publishes a report on police violence in northern France. This highlights police abuse, the disruption of humanitarian assistance and the harassment of aid workers.<sup>74</sup>

Photo Credit:1



**MAY 2017**

An estimated 250 displaced people are living in Grande-Synthe, in the Puythouck and in the former camp (la Linière). The mayor, Damien Carême, says that there will be no other permanent and formal camp, no water points or sanitary facilities, "no fixation point" in northern France.

**AUG 2017**

Help Refugees and l'Auberge des Migrants publish survey findings suggesting that refugees only get 3.5 hours of sleep per night and of the 76% who had their blankets taking away by the police said that this happens three times a week.

**JUN 2017**

A civil society-led court case against the French state receives a positive ruling, stating that food distributions as well as access to sanitation facilities and essential amenities must be allowed.<sup>70</sup>

**END OF AUG**

Around 400 people are living in Grande-Synthe (le Puythouck). Evictions occur 2 or 3 times a week.

**12 JUN 2017**

The Défenseur des droits denounces once again the inhuman living conditions of displaced people in Calais, after a visit of the camp. He calls for an end to all the fundamental rights violations suffered by exiled people, particularly by minors, which remain unprecedented to this day.<sup>71</sup>

**SEP 2017**

The Refugee Women's Centre in Dunkirk reports that evictions have intensified (in frequency and violence) with the police threatening to arrest anyone trying to stay around the areas of the evicted camps.<sup>75</sup>

**JUL 2017**

The Human Trafficking Foundation releases an independent inquiry into the situation of separated and unaccompanied minors in northern France and other parts of Europe. It finds that police violence has led to a widespread mistrust against the authorities, furthering their vulnerability for exploitation and falling into the hands of smugglers and traffickers.<sup>72</sup>

**19 SEP 2017**

Eviction of 600 people in Grande-Synthe. Three days later, approximately 400 people are once again living in the woods (le Puythouck).

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/04/refugees-dunkirk-camp-fire-all-my-documents-burned-flames>

<sup>70</sup> <http://lille.tribunal-administratif.fr/content/download/104162/1042470/version/1/file/1705379.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> <https://defenseurdesdroits.fr/node/23868>

<sup>72</sup> [https://www.infomie.net/IMG/pdf/htf\\_separated\\_unaccompanied\\_minors\\_report\\_hi-res\\_.pdf](https://www.infomie.net/IMG/pdf/htf_separated_unaccompanied_minors_report_hi-res_.pdf)

<sup>73</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/calais-court-case-ngos-supreme-court-31-07-2017/>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/07/26/living-hell/police-abuses-against-child-and-adult-migrants-calais>

<sup>75</sup> Refugee Women Centre Facebook post, 21 September 2017

## OCT 2017

Refugee Rights Europe conducts a follow-up research study resulting in the report 'Twelve Months On', looking at the situation one year after the camp clearance. According to the findings, the situation remains unresolved and has, in many respects deteriorated further. The report finds an intensified level of police violence and a worsened overall perception of police treatment by respondents, and an overall breakdown of communication. The findings suggest that little, if anything, has been done to address the situation of the several hundred children circulating in the area. The absence of information and support structures for displaced people in the area appears to remain unchanged.

The Refugee Youth Service reports 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".<sup>76</sup>

A ministry-ordered investigation confirms the report 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.<sup>77</sup>



Photo Credit 1

## 16 OCT 2017

Three UN Special Rapporteurs call on the French state to implement long-term measures to provide adequate access to water and sanitation services in Calais.<sup>78</sup>

## END OF OCT

A day centre (consisting of a bus) is implemented in Grande-Synthe by OFII (Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration) and Adoma (organisation mandated by the state), offering tea/coffee/information, and another organisation (AFEJI) mandated by the State is "marauding" on site.

## NOV 2017

In its verdict on the Dubs case, the Royal Court of Justice rules against Help Refugees. Help Refugees announces to appeal the verdict.<sup>79</sup>

## 12 DEC 2017

The mayor of Grande-Synthe, Damien Carême, opens a gymnasium to accommodate approximately a hundred of people. Between December 2017 and May 2018, more than 1,600 people live in the gymnasium. The water point is removed.

## END OF DEC

The Secours Catholique opens a day-centre in Calais, with a specific space for women.

## JAN 2018

Theresa May announces that the UK will take more child refugees from Calais and spend £44.5m on additional security at the French port.<sup>80</sup>

Theresa May and Emmanuel Macron meet in a UK-France Summit in Sandhurst to sign a new Border Treaty, following on from the Le Touquet Treaty of 2003.<sup>81</sup> Eight organisations publish an open letter voicing their concern about the widespread human rights infringements against refugees and displaced people in northern France. Youth in Calais are exposed, as well as the many avoidable deaths occurring at the border.<sup>82</sup>

## FEB 2018

Help Refugees is granted permission to appeal the judgment on our judicial review, challenging the Home Office's interpretation and implementation of the Dubs Amendment.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.refugeeyouthservice.net/single-post/2017/10/24/On-This-Day-Unaccompanied-Children-in-Calais>

<sup>77</sup> <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>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22240&LangID=F>

<sup>79</sup> Help Refugees Facebook page, 2 November 2017

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/macron-may-talks-uk-france-visit-calais-refugees-help-stop-jungle-treatment-immigration-customs-a8166446.html>

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/20180118-france-uk-migrants-calais-sandhurst-treaty-britain-france-agree-new-deal-border-security>

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/macron-may-talks-uk-france-visit-calais-refugees-help-stop-jungle-treatment-immigration-customs-a8166446.html>

<sup>83</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/dubs-appeal>



## MAR 2018

The French state is taking over food provision in Calais, contracting La Vie Active. While organisations like Refugee Community Kitchens (RCK) and Utopia 56 honour this new approach by temporarily pausing their daytime hot food distributions, displaced people refuse the government-funded food. An informal survey conducted by volunteers based at the l'Auberge des Migrants and Help Refugees warehouse finds that 68% of respondents refuse the food because it comes from the same authorities that legitimise violence against them. 42% say that they are frightened by excessive police presence at the distribution sites.<sup>84</sup>



Photo Credit 1

## END OF MAR

There are more than 370 people in the gymnasium in Grande-Synthe. The OFII is marauding every morning to take willing individuals to accommodation centres called CAO and CAES (shelters for asylum seekers whilst their claim is being processed).

## MAR 2018

Evictions occur once or twice a week in Grande-Synthe, tents and all personal belongings are taken by police officers.

## APR 2018

Three UN Special Rapporteurs call out the French government on "inhumane" conditions in Northern France. The experts also call for a cation to end harassment and intimidation of volunteers and members of NGOs providing humanitarian aid.<sup>85</sup>

## MAY 2018

The Refugee Info Bus reports an incident of police in Calais stealing a single shoe from each member of a group of young refugee men.<sup>86</sup>

## 17 MAY 2018

Mawda, a 2-year-old girl, is shot dead in Belgium following a police chase<sup>89</sup>. The policeman was officially charged with involuntary homicide in February 2020.



Photo Credit 1

France's National Assembly passes a controversial immigration reform law, establishing that people found to have entered France unlawfully could face up to one year in prison, while asylum seekers will have just two weeks to appeal the decision on their case if their claim is rejected.<sup>87</sup>

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

<sup>84</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/calais-state-food-distribution>

<sup>85</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22917&LangID=E&utm\\_source=NEWS&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=The%20Refugee%20Brief%20-%20External%20Subscribers&utm\\_campaign=HQ\\_EN\\_therefugeebrief\\_external\\_180404](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22917&LangID=E&utm_source=NEWS&utm_medium=email&utm_content=The%20Refugee%20Brief%20-%20External%20Subscribers&utm_campaign=HQ_EN_therefugeebrief_external_180404)

<sup>86</sup> <https://mailchi.mp/ababb70750c0/refugee-youth-service-newsletter-april-2018>

<sup>87</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/how-macrons-new-immigration-bill-affects-refugees-and-asylum-seekers>

<sup>88</sup> Refugee Info Bus Facebook page, 29 May 2018

<sup>89</sup> <https://medium.com/thedigitalwarehouse/mawda-2-years-old-shot-in-belgium-91a91bf5be5e>

## MAY 2018

According to the Refugee Info Bus, forced evictions take place 3-5 times a week. Personal belongings, tents, medication and other items are confiscated, often without the presentation of a 'réquisition' (a document to validate the police operation).<sup>90</sup>

## 24 MAY 2018

The gymnasium opened by the mayor in Grande-Synthe is evicted. 450 people are sheltered in accommodation centres (CAO/CAES). A few days later, 250 people are back, living in a new site called "Air Liquid", next to a factory. The site is classified as "SEVESO" (site containing large quantities of dangerous substances). The site is regularly evicted.

## JUN 2018

The Refugee Info Bus documents an incident of CRS officers refusing to comment on why they are not wearing their identification (RIO) numbers, despite a supposed legal obligation to do so.<sup>91</sup>

The Refugee Info Bus reports that French authorities have been consistently blocking access to water for displaced people in the area during the previous three months.<sup>92</sup>



Photo Credit: 4

## END OF JUNE

In Grande-Synthe, the mayor sets up a garbage collector, 6 chemical toilets and a water point on one site.

## JUL 2018

Volunteers of the Refugee Women's Centre in Dunkirk are retained by the police for four hours. They further report that the police operating in and around the camp have barred access to "foreign volunteers" and express their concerns about a deteriorating relationship with the police and authorities in Dunkirk.<sup>93</sup>

L'Auberge des Migrants, Plateforme de Services aux Migrants (PSM) and others lead a court case against the French state regarding access to water and sanitation facilities. The Calais Prefecture increases this access just a few hours prior to the hearing.<sup>94</sup>

The Refugee Women's Centre in Dunkirk reports that the number of displaced people settled in Grande-Synthe has grown to almost 500, with nearly 40 families living in the forest.<sup>95</sup>

## 6 JUL 2018

The French Constitutional Council delivers a landmark decision, ruling that the so-called "crime of solidarity" (délit de solidarité), which criminalises a person who facilitates the irregular entry, should not be applied to any act provided for humanitarian purposes.<sup>96</sup>

## AUG 2018

L'Auberge des Migrants, Help Refugees, Utopia 56 and Refugee Info Bus release a report regarding the widespread and multifaceted harassment and intimidation of volunteers and aid workers in Calais and Dunkirk.<sup>97</sup>

Displaced women in the Grande-Synthe camp organise and stage a protest against the scheduled upcoming eviction and for the provision of suitable and adequate accommodation that is allocated in a dignified and respectful manner, and which does not involve the destruction of people's belongings.<sup>98</sup>

## 24 AUG 2018

Eviction of approximately 1,000 of people in Grande-Synthe.

## 28 AUG 2018

The Salam warehouse in Grande-Synthe, from which the Refugee Women's Centre operates, is burnt down, destroying all stock and storage space.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Refugee Info Bus Facebook page, 24 May 2018

<sup>91</sup> Refugee Info Bus Facebook page, 28 June 2018

<sup>92</sup> Refugee Info Bus Facebook page, 4 June 2018

<sup>93</sup> Refugee Women's Centre Facebook page, 6 July 2018

<sup>94</sup> [https://gisti.org/IMG/pdf/jur\\_ta-lille\\_2018-07-31.pdf](https://gisti.org/IMG/pdf/jur_ta-lille_2018-07-31.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> Refugee Women's Centre Facebook page, 17 July 2018

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.ecre.org/france-court-decision-is-a-triumph-for-solidarity>

<sup>97</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Police-Harassment-of-Volunteers-in-Calais-1.pdf>

<sup>98</sup> Refugee Women's Centre Facebook page, 26 August 2018

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.dunkirkrefugeewomenscentre.com/single-post/2018/08/30/Warehouse-fire-emergency-donations-callout>



**SEP 2018**

Eviction of the Grande-Synthe camp. Help Refugees reports that over 400 people, including 60 families and nearly 100 children, are taken onto buses destined for accommodation. According to reports, two of these buses return to Grande-Synthe later due to a lack of space in the accommodation centres. Many people are left on the streets without accommodation. One person on the bus tells aid workers that they have been driven around for eight hours with no access to food and water before being told to get off the bus.<sup>100</sup> The mayor of Grande-Synthe calls for the establishment of temporary reception centres on-site.<sup>101</sup>

**13 SEP 2018**

A water point is put in place in the Puythouck area by the mayor of Grande-Synthe.

**SEP 2018**

The Refugee Women's Centre in Dunkirk reports that there are 600 people, including 18 families, sleeping around the area of the recently evicted camp without access to water or basic sanitation, except when provided by aid workers.<sup>102</sup>

A former volunteer of l'Auberge des Migrants is convicted 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.<sup>103</sup>



Photo Credit 1

**OCT 2018**

Approximately 1,000 people are living in Grande-Synthe, in the Puythouck area.

**3 OCT 2018**

The body of a displaced person is found in the Calais port. The death has reportedly been caused by drowning in an attempt to cross the channel to reach Britain. L'Auberge des Migrants subsequently report that 60 displaced individuals have lost their lives at the border since 2015.<sup>104</sup>

The Court of Appeal in Britain rules that the British government acted unlawfully by not giving reasons to children refused entry to Britain under the Dubs Amendment. The judgement is the result of a two-year-long legal action taken by charity Help Refugees, represented by Leigh Day, to ensure that children considered for transfer under the Dubs scheme are treated fairly.<sup>105</sup>

**OCT 2018**

In an update from the ground, the Refugee Women's Centre reports that the municipal police counted 1,300 displaced people in Grande-Synthe, constituting the biggest increase since the destruction of the La Linière camp during April 2017.<sup>106</sup>

Mobile Refugee Support reports that there are continuously rising numbers of displaced people in the Dunkirk area, finding over 350 tents, some sheltering families with children as young as one-year-old, spread over the patch of woodland of just two square kilometres. They further report increased police presence and surveillance suggesting that upcoming dismantlements may be planned.<sup>107</sup>

L'Auberge des Migrants reports that there are approximately 500 people in Calais, with an increase in recent weeks.<sup>108</sup>

Help Refugees report that the conditions in the Grande-Synthe area is "as bad as ever". They report that French police fired chemical agents into the nature reserve during a food distribution on 17 October, forcing mothers with babies as young as three-months-old to flee.<sup>109</sup>

Two years on from the demolition of the Calais 'Jungle' camp, Refugee Rights Europe returns to Calais to investigate the status quo, and finds that the situation is deteriorating at rapid pace, with no plausible resolution in sight. Local groups report the sustained decline in people's mental health, witnessing that many now appear to have reached the point of exhaustion. Precarity and destitution is the norm, with volunteers and aid organisations working relentlessly to fill critical gaps and alleviate human suffering.

<sup>100</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/dunkirk-evictions/>

<sup>101</sup> L'Auberge des Migrants Facebook page, 6 September 2018

<sup>102</sup> Refugee Women's Centre Facebook page, 13 September 2018

<sup>103</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/lauberge-volunteer-calais-convicted-tweet>

<sup>104</sup> L'Auberge des Migrants Facebook page, 11 October 2018

<sup>105</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/news/dubs-court-case-ruling-home-office-october-2018>

<sup>106</sup> Refugee Women's Centre Facebook page, 3 October 2018

<sup>107</sup> Mobile Refugee Support Facebook page, 7 October 2018

<sup>108</sup> L'Auberge des Migrants Facebook page, 16 October 2018

<sup>109</sup> <https://helprefugees.org/volunteer-blog/some-would-call-this-hell-conditions-for-refugees-in-grande-synthe-are-as-bad-as-ever/?fbclid=IwAR3gOX9tmRUUqmCtHgQJkDw4UV2E7ozh32yeZfKE5Q8ZU17hY9QP7mY1eE>

Photo Credit 1



**12 DEC 2018**

In Grande-Synthe, the mayor opens an indoor space (called CCP) for families.

**27 DEC 2018**

A gymnasium is opened by the mayor in Grande-Synthe. Around 120 people are sheltered inside. Approximately 100 people are still living in the woods, being regularly evicted.

Photo Credit 4



**23 OCT 2018**

Eviction in Grande-Synthe of around 2,000 displaced people living in the Puythouck area<sup>110</sup>. The water point is removed.

**26 OCT 2018**

More than 200 people are back in Grande-Synthe.

**31 OCT 2018**

No buses today to drive people to accommodation centres. Families and associations go to the sub-prefecture in Dunkirk to ask for accommodation. Four displaced people and a representative of the Refugee Women's Centre are able to speak with the sub-prefect. By the end of the day, 60 people are sheltered.

**NOV 2018**

400 people are living in Grande-Synthe.

**END OF NOV**

In Grande-Synthe, an organisation mandated by the state (AFEJI), is marauding on site to take willing individuals to accommodation centres. A water point and a garbage dump are implemented by the mayor in the Puythouck.

<sup>110</sup>. [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2018/10/23/pres-de-2-000-migrants-evacues-d-un-campement-a-grande-synthe\\_5373222\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2018/10/23/pres-de-2-000-migrants-evacues-d-un-campement-a-grande-synthe_5373222_3224.html)







# SECURITISATION, INTENSIFIED DISMANTLEMENTS AND DEFOLIATION

## JANUARY 2019 – PRESENT

28 FEB 2019

The European Court of Human Rights, in the case of Khan vs. France, states that the public authorities did not do everything in their power to fulfill their obligations related to taking care of unaccompanied minors during the clearance of the 'Jungle' camp in October 2016, and condemns the non-enforcement of the judgment of the Children's Judge. It added that the circumstances in which Mr. Khan lived for six months, combined with the above-mentioned facts, constitute inhuman and degrading treatment, as prohibited by Article 3 of the ECHR.<sup>111</sup>

- More than half the people indicated they did not have enough food to eat
- Nearly 69% declared not knowing the emergency number 115 to seek shelter.

A feeling of insecurity is generated from these extremely precarious conditions, including tensions present within the Grande-Synthe community. This feeling is accentuated by the fear of being evicted every day from their living areas. In fact, since December 2018, the eviction operations are relentless and have intensified. Often accompanied with the destruction of personal belongings, they further destabilise people's existence.

MAR 2019

A civil society-led court case against the French state receives a positive ruling, stating that the eviction which occurred in Grande-Synthe the 19th of September 2017 was illegal.<sup>112</sup>

APR 2019

UN Special Rapporteur on adequate Housing, Leilani Farha, visits Calais and Grande-Synthe. She declares in her report, released in March 2020 that she is "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".<sup>114</sup>

Photo Credit: 20



END OF MAR

4 associations (DROP Solidarité, Médecins du Monde, Refugee Youth Service and la Cimade) conduct an observation of living conditions for displaced people in the woods of Puythouck and around the gymnasium<sup>113</sup>. The results are as follows:

- 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 in case of health problems

<sup>111</sup>. <https://www.cncdh.fr/fr/actualite/arret-khan-contre-france-la-france-condamnee-par-la-cour-europeenne-des-droits-de-lhomme>

<sup>112</sup>. <https://www.lacimade.org/evacuation-illegale-a-grande-synthe-le-prefet-du-nord-condamne>

<sup>113</sup>. <https://www.lacimade.org/rapport-conditions-vie-personnes-exilees-grande-synthe>

<sup>114</sup>. Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to adequate standard of living and to non-discrimination in that context on her visit to France, March 2020 (A/HCR/43/43/Add.2) <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Housing/Pages/HousingIndex.aspx>



**7 MAY 2019**

Two displaced people living in Grande-Synthe, along with nine organisations, submit a lawsuit against the state regarding the deplorable living conditions experienced by refugees. They demand that urgent steps are taken to save their dignity and guarantee that their fundamental rights are respected while awaiting arrangements for proper long-term housing. The administrative court rules against it.



Photo Credit 19

**JUN 2019**

Publication a report by Amnesty International: "Solidarity: criminalization and harassment of people defending refugees and migrants rights in northern France". This report highlights the plight of those human rights defenders who individually or collectively provide humanitarian aid, and advocate for the rights of migrants, regardless of their legal status, asylum-seekers and refugees in northern France<sup>115</sup>.

**21 JUN 2019**

France's Conseil d'Etat confirms the authorities' lack of access to water, hygiene and sanitation provisions. It therefore urges the Préfet du Nord to install sufficient water points, showers and toilets, and to set up marauders to inform displaced people of their rights.

**END OF MAY**

The CCP, where around 70 people (families) are living is evicted. Most of the families are directed to the gymnasium.

**JUN 2019**

A new report by Help Refugees, L'Auberge des Migrants, Human Rights Observers and Refugee Info Bus reveals that there were at least 803 forced evictions of displaced people in Calais and Grande-Synthe, near Dunkirk, 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 <sup>116</sup>.

This report proves the current policy focused on preventing any 'fixation points' of migrant communities to be a failure. Indeed, despite 803 evictions between August 2018 and June 2019, there are still over 1,000 displaced people present in the area, of which 255 are unaccompanied minors and 277 are people in family units.



Photo Credit 19

**END OF JUL**

There are currently more than 800 people in Grande-Synthe. This includes 200 people sleeping in a gymnasium (provided by the local Mayor) and more than 500 tents pitched on the grounds surrounding it. There are also communities sleeping in the woodlands of Puythouck.

**AUG 2019**

Mitra Zerang Sagha is the first victim found drowned after an attempt to cross the Channel.<sup>117</sup>

**4 SEP 2019**

An administrative court in Lille rules that the eviction of 800+ people inside and around the gymnasium in Grande-Synthe is now authorised to take place at any time.

<sup>115</sup>. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR2103562019ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>116</sup>. <https://helprefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Forced-Evictions-in-Calais-and-Grande-Synthe-ENG-1.pdf>

<sup>117</sup>. [https://mobile.francetvinfo.fr/monde/europe/migrants/elle-etait-tres-joyeuse-et-parlait-avec-tout-le-monde-qui-etait-mitra-zerang-sagha-la-migrante-iranienne-retrouvee-noyee-dans-la-manche\\_3749713.html?fbclid=IwAR3ozNYTmNrZsSLRuK1eE9o7r47Ujck4Y7KGksi\\_kYSwhma1QEnVfQTHYAM#xtor=AL-79-%5Barticle%5D-%5Bconnexte%5D&xtref=https://fr.news.yahoo.com/%C3%A9tait-tr%C3%A8s-joyeuse-parlait-monde-135339752.html](https://mobile.francetvinfo.fr/monde/europe/migrants/elle-etait-tres-joyeuse-et-parlait-avec-tout-le-monde-qui-etait-mitra-zerang-sagha-la-migrante-iranienne-retrouvee-noyee-dans-la-manche_3749713.html?fbclid=IwAR3ozNYTmNrZsSLRuK1eE9o7r47Ujck4Y7KGksi_kYSwhma1QEnVfQTHYAM#xtor=AL-79-%5Barticle%5D-%5Bconnexte%5D&xtref=https://fr.news.yahoo.com/%C3%A9tait-tr%C3%A8s-joyeuse-parlait-monde-135339752.html)

17 SEP 2019

In Grande Synthe, an eviction of displaced people is carried out by the state and municipality without any real alternative solution.



Photo Credit 17

4 DEC 2019

Amnesty International, Médecins du Monde, Médecins sans Frontières, le Secours Catholique and la Cimade are demanding the opening of a parliamentary enquiry commission in France to highlight the rights abuses taking place and push for accountability<sup>122</sup>.



Photo Credit 17

SEP 2019

Around 1,000 men, women, children and unaccompanied minors are living in precarious and unsanitary conditions inside and around a gymnasium opened by the previous municipality in December 2018. Around 800 people are estimated to have been transferred in approximately 25 buses going to CAO and CAES all over France.

17 DEC 2019

80 displaced people are rescued while trying to cross the Channel<sup>123</sup>.

18 DEC 2019

Damien Carême, French MEP and former Grande-Synthe mayor, sends an open-letter to Emmanuel Macron<sup>124</sup>.

OCT 2019

Calais mayor Natacha Bouchart announces a ban on food distribution in the region, forcing organisations to stop the essential provision of nutrition to refugees and displaced people in the area<sup>118</sup>. The ban is later suspended when found to be illegal by a tribunal in Lille<sup>119</sup>.

19 DEC 2019

A fence along Route de Gravelines in Calais is built. The mayor's objective is to prevent displaced people from accessing the woodland along the road and from settling on these grounds<sup>125</sup>.

NOV 2019

A man dies from carbon monoxide poisoning in his tent<sup>120</sup>.

Local organisations stage a protest outside the Urban Community of Dunkirk, to demand that the state provide access to suitable accommodation and sanitation facilities, and to put an end to evictions.

END OF DEC

70 displaced people are rescued by the French and British authorities while trying to cross the Channel<sup>126</sup>. In 2019, a total of 2,500 displaced people were rescued while trying to cross the Channel<sup>127</sup>.

DEC 2019

79 displaced people have been found after crossing the Channel in 5 small boats<sup>121</sup>.

<sup>118</sup>. <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/pas-de-calais/calais/migrants-calais-distributions-repas-suspendues-centre-ville-plusieurs-semaines-1742641.html>

<sup>119</sup>. <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/684270/article/2019-12-21/la-maire-de-calais-jugee-incompetente-pour-interdire-les-distributions-de?fbclid=IwAR0iCndeltxWhfCYdFnLT03t4YQLgoEC3UILLGU5N9p3GRAmyjnlE2qLHJl>

<sup>120</sup>. <https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/20583/calais-sous-le-choc-apres-la-mort-d-un-jeune-migrant-nigerien?klk=opop&fbclid=IwAR0KuRPjo8HibCYyxq6qpAlglOK4TsQVPNUlHtURtjN1ZR1LEbrg4bayjNk>

<sup>121</sup>. <https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/21328/pres-de-80-migrants-arretes-par-les-autorites-britanniques-alors-qu-ils-traversaient-la-manche>

<sup>122</sup>. <https://www.lacimade.org/presse/nous-demandons-une-commission-denquete-parlementaire-pour-le-respect-des-droits-des-personnes-exilees-a-nos-frontieres/>

<sup>123</sup>. [https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/21636/pres-de-80-migrants-interceptes-dans-la-manche-en-une-matinee?fbclid=IwAR1etlzhR\\_PMxnvPtfVQPAQdgPFzDEGp4qeKHiyAXI5yITGkc3BNuwScGmo](https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/21636/pres-de-80-migrants-interceptes-dans-la-manche-en-une-matinee?fbclid=IwAR1etlzhR_PMxnvPtfVQPAQdgPFzDEGp4qeKHiyAXI5yITGkc3BNuwScGmo)

<sup>124</sup>. L'Auberge des Migrants Facebook page, 18 December 2019

<sup>125</sup>. <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/pas-de-calais/calais/grilles-anti-migrants-installees-route-gravelines-calais-1765037.html>

<sup>126</sup>. [https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/21777/plus-de-70-migrants-secours-en-une-nuit-dans-la-manche-entre-le-pas-de-calais-et-l-angleterre?fbclid=IwAR15dwHIVjibG6E6BxkiNBDzDO-ozxn44h5H7\\_2483oidL-nvz112Ck8k](https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/21777/plus-de-70-migrants-secours-en-une-nuit-dans-la-manche-entre-le-pas-de-calais-et-l-angleterre?fbclid=IwAR15dwHIVjibG6E6BxkiNBDzDO-ozxn44h5H7_2483oidL-nvz112Ck8k)

<sup>127</sup>. [https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/societe/traversees-de-la-manche-par-les-migrants-ca-augmente-parce-que-ca-marche-selon-les-associations-1577982781?fbclid=IwAR3BeeGUX19LGoY3Yx4eGOLFJ9vLNgVv\\_nQqbnglgvRwVCLXykfzLIgn1Ag](https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/societe/traversees-de-la-manche-par-les-migrants-ca-augmente-parce-que-ca-marche-selon-les-associations-1577982781?fbclid=IwAR3BeeGUX19LGoY3Yx4eGOLFJ9vLNgVv_nQqbnglgvRwVCLXykfzLIgn1Ag)



Photo Credit 17



22 JAN 2020

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

WINTER 2019

In Calais, the Plan Grand Froid is not activated, despite the very cold conditions<sup>128</sup>. This is the first time since 2017 that the Plan Grand Froid has not been opened over the winter period in Calais.

END OF DEC

Grassroots organisations launch a petition "a tent is not a shelter" asking for unconditional and appropriate accommodation<sup>129</sup>.

Photo Credit 19



END OF JAN

At least 47 families are currently living in Grande-Synthe, in addition to 600 men in the nearby area, in derelict buildings.

Photo Credit 18



END OF 2019

There have now been a total of 142 evictions in Grande Synthe and 961 evictions in Calais throughout 2019<sup>130</sup>.

JAN 2020

The United Kingdom ceased to be a member of the European Union. During the transition period that is set to end on 31 December 2020, the arrangements for juxtaposed controls remain unchanged.

Photo Credit 17



FEB 2020

Refugee Women's Centre and Refugee Rights Europe send a joint letter to the French Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Secretary of State for Gender Equality to the worsening situation for women and girls in Calais and Grande-Synthe<sup>131</sup>.

Living conditions in the informal settlements are some of the worst that have ever been witnessed, with access to appropriate shelter restricted. This poses particular problems for victims of violence, who should be able to access safe emergency accommodation immediately.

<sup>128</sup>. [https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/687902/article/2020-01-01/calais-pourquoi-malgre-le-froid-les-migrants-ne-sont-toujours-pas-mis-l-abri?&poolrelease&fbclid=IwAR37QEK18gKVRjIH-IYB9-\\_w\\_UQEtMlevmO2BM-3s48wlcZ4SAMUbR1BtI](https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/687902/article/2020-01-01/calais-pourquoi-malgre-le-froid-les-migrants-ne-sont-toujours-pas-mis-l-abri?&poolrelease&fbclid=IwAR37QEK18gKVRjIH-IYB9-_w_UQEtMlevmO2BM-3s48wlcZ4SAMUbR1BtI)

<sup>129</sup>. <https://www.change.org/p/pr%C3%A9fet-du-nord-pas-de-calais-monsieur-le-pr%C3%A9fet-du-pas-de-calais-ne-laissez-pas-les-sans-abris-dehors-pendant-l-hiver?fbclid=IwAR07cZQYdnzMOYjyBGjuaf5rIDfpaRa1lqwh1Uy3QKEhGUicApnDDyqVs>

<sup>130</sup>. [https://helprefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Les-Expulsions-de-Terrain-a%CC%80-Calais-et-Grande-Synthe-FR.pdf?fbclid=IwAROFMT5bhNHEmgs4O\\_q3KQeBhyCG5xdwT0FE6pBicouCAkJLbWjIW1PhuOU](https://helprefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Les-Expulsions-de-Terrain-a%CC%80-Calais-et-Grande-Synthe-FR.pdf?fbclid=IwAROFMT5bhNHEmgs4O_q3KQeBhyCG5xdwT0FE6pBicouCAkJLbWjIW1PhuOU)

<sup>131</sup>. <https://www.dunkirkrefugeewomenscentre.com/single-post/2020/02/12/Letter-to-French-ministers-RWC-highlights-the-worsening-situation-for-women-and-girls-on-the-northern-French-coastline>

8-11  
FEB 2020

Emergency accommodation is opened by the Préfet du Nord to shelter displaced people during the Ciara storm, in both Calais and Grande-Synthe. 3 days later, the gymnasiums are closed, knowingly leaving hundreds of displaced people homeless<sup>132</sup>.

4 MAR 2020

Local organisations organise an awareness raising action in Dunkirk, bringing together several organisations working with displaced people to meet the people of Dunkirk and to start a dialogue guided by the question: "There's hundreds of people living outside in Dunkirk, how does that make you feel?" Those who wished could sign a petition demanding that the Préfet respect fundamental human rights and guarantee access to shelter for all<sup>133</sup>.



Photo Credit 18

16 MAR 2020

French President, Emmanuel Macron, has announced a 15-day lockdown across France with people confined to their homes (extended by 15 days until April 15).

Local organisations have sent an open-letter to French authorities, asking for immediate measures for displaced people in relation to the Covid-19 situation<sup>134</sup>.

18 MAR 2020

Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing says that governments "must take urgent measures to prevent anyone falling into homelessness and ensure access to adequate housing for those without". She adds "Housing has become the front line defence against the coronavirus. Home has rarely been more of a life or death situation"<sup>135</sup>.

19 MAR 2020

Local authorities announce that they will implement strict 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"<sup>136</sup>. However, the measures do not respond adequately to the current humanitarian crisis on the ground in northern France and, for the most part, such measures have in fact not been implemented.



Photo Credit 17

23 MAR 2020

In Calais, la Vie Active suspends hot food distribution for displaced people.



Photo Credit 17

25 MAR 2020

Faced with the outbreak of Covid-19 and the lack of protections in place for those living and working in the Grande-Synthe and Calais camps, Refugee Community Kitchen has to take the difficult decision to suspend its ground services<sup>137</sup>.

<sup>132</sup> <https://www.lacimade.org/episode-de-la-tempete-ciara-termine-retour-a-la-realite-pour-les-exiles/>

<sup>133</sup> Refugee Women's Centre Facebook page, 4 March 2020

<sup>134</sup> <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hautes-de-france/coronavirus-associations-reclament-mesures-urgentes-migrants-1801446.html>

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25727&LangID=E>

<sup>136</sup> <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hautes-de-france/coronavirus-quelles-mesures-etat-prend-il-aupres-migrants-calais-grande-synthe-1802114.html>

<sup>137</sup> L'Auberge des Migrants Facebook page, 25 March 2020



**27 MAR 2020**

Refugee Rights Europe, Help Refugees, Refugee Youth Service, l'Auberge des Migrants, Refugee Women's Centre and Secours Catholique Hauts-de-France send an open-letter to EU/UN/CoE targets regarding the urgent need for an adequate Covid-10 response in northern France<sup>138</sup>.

**END OF MAR**

Since the beginning of lockdown measures in France, 45 evictions have occurred in Calais<sup>139</sup>.

**3 APR 2020**

In Calais, 93 displaced people have been taken into accommodation centres by the authorities.

**6 APR 2020**

In Grande-Synthe, about 30 people are taken into accommodation centres by the authorities. Departures to accommodation centres will be organised every morning at la Linière.

**7 APR 2020**

Showers are installed in la Linière (Grande-Synthe) by the mayor and the Communauté Urbaine de Dunkerque.

**APR 2020**

Organisations in Calais, Grande-Synthe and across France continue to desperately call for an adequate response to the Covid-19 situation in relation to people in displacement.

<sup>138</sup>. <https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Open-Letter-Urgent-need-for-an-adequate-Covid-19-response-in-northern-France.pdf>

<sup>139</sup>. <http://www.laubergedesmigrants.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Rapport-mensuel-Calais-mars.pdf>









# CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The UK's juxtaposed border arrangements and increased security measures have created a 'bottle-neck' scenario in northern France, whereby 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 for people to try and get to the UK at any cost. Yet at the same time the same border security arrangements further diminish people's ability to reach the UK safely, which means that people are trapped in an untenable situation. Unless structural reform occurs, where legal pathways are opened up to allow individuals to access the UK asylum system,

individuals will continue to take life-threatening risks in order to cross the channel. No building of walls and erection of fences is going to stop displaced people from trying the journey when they feel they have no other option – safe and legal alternatives must therefore be explored by the UK Government.

Meanwhile, the conditions in Northern France, which are currently characterised by precarity, police violence (including the regular use of tear gas, intimidation tactics and sleep deprivation), detention, and the obstruction and criminalisation of aid, must be replaced by humane reception conditions for prospective asylum seekers along with other efforts to ensure access to the asylum procedures and effective status resolution.



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Indeed, after decades of encampments and evictions, 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. It is high time for meaningful change. In light of this, Refugee Rights Europe, Help Refugees and Human Rights Observers are urgently call on the French and UK governments to find new, constructive solutions, including:

- A non-violent approach adopted as the default position by French authorities, and a de-escalation of the tense situation for refugees and displaced people in northern France.
- Where the UK places its border control facilities and wields legal powers, there ought to also be the possibility of placing an asylum claim, in line with rights enshrined in the 1951 Geneva Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 14).
- For particularly vulnerable groups such as victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors, LGBTQ+ persons and disabled persons, for whom delays in accessing the system pose even greater dangers, identification and accelerated transfers would be made available.
- On the French side, an implementation of dignified, unconditional and uninterrupted reception solutions in key locations where displaced people are present is urgently needed. These solutions must meet people's vital and fundamental needs (including access to accommodation, food, drinking water, hygiene facilities, medical and psychological care, reliable legal information and social support).
- Additional means must also be mobilised in order to inform, orient, welcome and provide dignified support to displaced people in these reception facilities.
- All evictions from camps must to stop immediately, along with an end the harassment and intimidation of volunteers and charities providing displaced people with humanitarian aid.

The success of the abovementioned approach can only be effective if the discretionary clauses provided for in Articles 17 and 18 of EU Regulation No. 604/2013, known as "Dublin III", are applied. These clauses allow a State, for humanitarian reasons (due to the state of vulnerability of the persons concerned or the family ties they may have in France) 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, far from causing people give up their migratory project in search for safety, dooms them to a perpetual and convoluted journey, an impossible integration into the 'system', and living conditions so hard and desperate that they seriously impact on people's physical and mental health.



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