

Calais: this border kills

Documented police violence, June 2009-June 2011



Compiled by Calais Migrant Solidarity of the No Borders network

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Preface

This report details the human rights abuses perpetrated against migrants in Calais, and outlines the politics that underpin them. Observing and directly intervening in gross violations against those seeking sanctuary over the course of two years compelled us to explore all possible avenues to addressing the crisis, including legal ones.

Originally written in French as a dossier of evidence to be submitted to France's new Human Rights Ombudsman, it is at times repetitive and pays close attention to detail. It nevertheless provides a relatively comprehensive record of policing tactics, substantiated by testimonies and other evidence. For practical purposes, that evidence, being largely in audiovisual form, has not been included here.

Since the submission of the dossier and the accompanying evidence, the Ombudsman has called for an inquiry into policing in Calais, the results of which are expected in September.

Contents

1. "Killing us by heart". The mechanics of repression in Calais
 - 1.1 Crude violence: the use of direct physical force
 - 1.2 A programme of harassment: the systematic use of ID checks and arrest
 - 1.3 Making life unliveable: raids and attacks on shelters, food, water, sleep and dignity
2. A shameful history: a chronology of repression
3. Harassment as a political weapon

Calais: this border kills

This report details the violent, even deadly, repression of refugees¹ in Calais at the hands of the police and other apparatus of the French State. It is written by activists from Calais Migrant Solidarity, an organisation which forms part of the No Borders network, and summarises the evidence we have collected in Calais in over two years working here. In that time, apart from what we ourselves have witnessed, we have worked and lived closely alongside refugees and have collected their personal statements and eyewitness accounts. We have also collected substantial video, photographic and audio evidence. Brought together, this material paints a hideous picture of brutality and profound disregard for the common humanity we share, wherever we are born, as well as a disregard for the very laws and values that the authorities claim to uphold.

As a document of cruelty, the reports gathered here speak for themselves. But it is also important to understand the causes and motives for what is happening in Calais. This is not a story of a few 'bad apples'. The repression in Calais is systematic, involving actors from bottom to top, from minor officials and frontline police to the highest authorities, whether they actively participate or merely look away in silence. Brutality and harassment in Calais are deliberate weapons used in the service of French, British and European immigration policy. The idea is a simple one; drive refugees away from the border by making their lives unbearable.

1 By 'refugees', we refer to foreigners who, for various reasons, have had to flee their countries of origin and find themselves living in exile in Calais. They may or may not have sought asylum, attained refugee status, or subsidiary protection. The term as used here therefore covers *de jure* and *de facto* refugees

Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows. In section 1 we examine the workings of the repression in Calais in three categories. First, we examine the way in which the police inflict bodily harm on migrants through assaults such as punches, kicks, as well as the use of batons, tear gas and other weapons. There are also the injuries and deaths that have occurred 'indirectly' during police raids and chases. Yet this crude violence is only the tip of the iceberg.

We then examine the way in which fear and anxiety are maintained through a constant everyday harassment of migrants in the form of repetitive race-based ID checks and unlawful arrests.

Finally, we document how the police work with the local authorities to further undermine physical and mental health by depriving refugees of adequate access to water, food, shelter, sleep, and other necessities of life. Police repeatedly raid dwelling places, destroy shelters, contaminate food and water, take or destroy possessions; from bedding and cooking pots, to money and documents. Through intimidation tactics, they drive people away from facilities such as the charity food distribution or the PASS medical clinic, inflict sleep deprivation with repeated 'drive-by' raids at night, and humiliate people through racist abuse or attacks on religious symbols such as Korans, Bibles and prayer mats.

Section 2 gives a brief chronology of the repression in Calais. We set the scene by looking back at significant events before CMS activists established a presence in the area, starting with the closure of the Red Cross camp at Sangatte in 2002. Then we frame our evidence with a more detailed chronology of major events over the last two years.

Section 3 looks at the different roles of key players in the repression, and raises questions as to the role of various authorities and interest groups. Different police forces, most obviously PAF and CRS, and also local officials working for the Mairie (Town Hall) of Calais, are the most obvious protagonists. But this repression is supported, and indeed instigated, by high level politics. As well as the French state we point out the role of the British Government in the 'clampdown' on migration in Calais. We also discuss the central role of the media, in particular, the British press.

The presentation in these sections is supported by examples and references to the exhibits included in the evidence pack.

References to the supporting evidence

Since starting in June 2009, we have taken great care to record what we have seen. We have gathered accounts of events we have witnessed, as well as other witness statements; and footage we have shot ourselves. Corresponding evidence is indicated with a code such as the following: #1.1.1b.

1. “Killing us by heart”. The mechanics of repression in Calais

1.1. Crude violence: the use of direct physical force

Calais is a violent and dangerous place for migrants. Whether a particular case of violence or physical injury is directly or indirectly brought about by the police, their complicity in the construction of an environment of constant danger is beyond doubt.

This chapter describes 1) direct forms of physical violence carried out by the police, 2) the dangers encountered as a result of police raids and attempts to escape, 3) deaths and injuries sustained in attempts to cross the border or brought about by general precarity and marginalisation, 4) assaults on CMS activists, 5) attacks on migrants by fascists and far right nationalists, and 6) an attempt to understand the frequency and intensity of police violence.

1.1.1. Direct physical violence

At the root of all forms of repression is the threat of violence. As we will describe in more detail in subsequent chapters, much of the repression of refugees in Calais does not require the use of direct physical violence, but when considered necessary, force is used in a systematic manner. Our intention is to demonstrate that this use of violence is not anomalous, but is institutionalised and exists within the range of repressive tactics deemed acceptable.

During the regular raids of migrant squats and ‘jungles’, it is common for arrests to involve the grossly disproportionate use of force. One recent case of note, of which we have video evidence, involves a migrant who had fallen on train tracks fleeing the police, being beaten unconscious while on the ground, before being hauled into an arrest van (3rd February, 2011). When activists arrived on the scene, the police first tried to suggest that they were attempting to help the fallen migrant, but soon sought to get rid of the camera and continued to beat the man as well as another. (#1.1.1a)²



Violent arrest

²Evidence that substantiates the events set out in this report are listed in the annex in which they may be identified by the corresponding code

The justification for such violence often tends to be that the individual evaded arrest or refused to stop when ordered to do so. In one case, activists witnessed a man being beaten and having his head banged against the window of a van for requesting to be allowed to finish brushing his teeth before entering the arrest van (30th November, 2010) (#1.1.1b), and in another example a man was knocked to the floor and beaten for asking to be able to collect his clothes (8th April, 2010) (#1.1.1c).

The presence of activists, especially with recording equipment such as phones, video cameras, and dictaphones, discourages the use of violence by the police to an extent. When the police become aware that activists are filming them harassing migrants, they attempt to block cameras or move beyond the field of view (video of 26.02.2011, #1.1.1d). This could account for the suggestion that physical repression decreased between 2008 and 2009 (#1.1.1e). As the case of the beating by the train tracks shows, there is a degree of reluctance to be seen to be using disproportionate force, although the preferred tactic is often to get rid of cameras first.

Although there is evidence to suggest that the presence of CMS activists reduces the willingness of the police to resort to direct physical violence, beatings do not necessarily take place where they can be witnessed. A witness statement provided by a Palestinian refugee describes how, on attempting to flee an arrest van in a park at around midnight, he was surrounded and repeatedly punched and kicked by around five CRS while being restrained with his face held to the ground (#1.1.1f).

On arriving in the police station the man, who has a history of mental health problems and is therefore arguably more vulnerable, attempted to run away again. He describes how he was once again beaten, *"They took me into a one person cell. Lots of police came into my cell, about 11 altogether, and beat me. They took off all my clothes except for my shirt and underwear."* He was permitted to see a doctor in Coquelles Police Station (5km away – see the map in annexe), but the doctor refused to give a statement or provide him with any written record. After his release he visited a doctor and got a statement confirming his injuries (#1.1.1g).

This is by no means the only record of a migrant being beaten in detention. Beatings are commonplace, and access to medical care often refused. In another case, reported on 23rd of August 2009, an Afghan migrant claims he was badly beaten for requesting to use the toilet (#1.1.1h).

These are just a few examples of police brutality in Calais. We have heard many other accounts of assaults and have seen the bruises people have sustained.

Further, in April 2010, we heard reports from various migrants that while detained, they were subjected to very aggressive interrogation techniques by PAF officers, and that officers were being violent towards migrants who they believed were associated with, or had had contact with, CMS activists (8th April, 2010) (#1.1.1i).

1.1.2. Injuries sustained whilst running from the police

Many of the injuries sustained by migrants come from fleeing the police or security guards. Broken bones are commonplace as migrants jump over walls; as are cuts from climbing over barbed wire fences (#1.1.2a). On two occasions in the last year migrants have lost fingers as their rings have caught on fences they were climbing whilst fleeing the police. In the most recent case the victim was a 12 year-old boy who was attempting to cross the border with his ten year-old brother, when they were spotted by the police and ran (31st January, 2011)(#1.1.2b).

In another recent case, two migrants sustained serious injuries when they fell from the first storey of a building during a police raid. The raid was particularly violent, and after witnessing the arrest of three of their friends, they attempted to escape by climbing down a guttering. The guttering broke, leading to their fall. Both suffered serious facial injuries and one man broke his arm. One claims that some of his injuries, including a broken nose, were the direct result of a police assault and not sustained from the fall (#1.1.2c) (9th February, 2010)



One of the injured Palestinians

There are also numerous cases of injuries sustained running across roads whilst escaping the police (ie. 7th May 2010) (#1.1.2d), and at least one migrant is reported to have drowned in a canal while running from the PAF (22nd February 2011. reported in mainstream press*)(#1.1.2e). The press reported that the police suspected him to be a people smuggler (#1.1.2f).

An interview with a volunteer with Salam³ in the film 'Ce sont des hommes' describes the death in 2009 of an Eritrean woman on the motorway, as she tried to escape the CRS (#1.1.2g).

From the incidents we have documented, it seems likely that injuries sustained fleeing the police are only matched in seriousness or frequency by injuries and fatalities acquired during attempts to cross the Channel. Even if not all these injuries can be attributed directly to the actions of the police, they all occurred within a climate of fear brought about by their constant use of force. As raids are a daily occurrence for migrants in Calais, these dangers are a part of life.

1.1.3. Deaths and injuries sustained during attempts to cross

The most dangerous aspect of life for migrants is trying to cross the English Channel. Injuries are common as migrants fall from the undersides of lorries. On the 17th of April, 2010, a 16 year-old Afghan boy died under the wheels of a lorry as he tried to reach the UK (#1.1.3a). The media did not report the story, and CMS were only made aware through contact with another migrant who witnessed his friend's death. The boy's body was repatriated to Afghanistan (17th of April, 2010) (#1.1.3b). Of course, as others, the police are not directly responsible for the boy's death. Yet these incidents would never occur if migrants were not compelled to use such covert and dangerous methods of entry.

It is impossible to tell how many other cases like this there are, as they tend not to be reported by the media. It is likely that we are only made aware of a small proportion of such tragedies.

³ Salam is a charity that operates in Calais, Dunkirk and Grande-Synthe
<http://www.associationsalam.org/Calais-l-association-Salam>

1.1.4. Assaults on No Borders activists

CMS activists are not immune to police violence in Calais. It cannot be denied that Western (white-skinned) activists are usually spared the extremities of violence suffered by migrants, but treatment can still be violent with minimal justification, legal or otherwise. It is common for cameras to be violently grabbed by police officers, and brutal arrests to be made with apparent impunity and disregard for individuals' safety and rights to medical care (#1.1.4a. CMS have also documented frequent use of tear gas against activists (24th March 2011) (#1.1.4b)



Activists being tear-gased

During an attempt to evict a warehouse legally rented by activists during February 2010, one activist needed 10 stitches after being hit by the CRS. The police had suggested they wanted to negotiate with the legal occupiers of the property, before attacking the activists and smashing the entrance to the building. Many migrants were also left bruised and beaten after this particular assault (February 7th, 2010) (#1.1.4c). Two months later, during a violent raid on Africa house, a photo-journalist was attacked and had stones thrown at him by CRS officers after refusing to climb down from the palette he was standing on in order to document the raid (April 5th, 2010) (#1.1.4d).

More recently, during a raid on Africa House, an activist was snatched from a group and taken behind a police van, where she was violently thrown into the ground, leaving her with a split lip and bruised face. Others recall hearing her screams as they put her in handcuffs but were unable to see and film what was taking place (23rd March, 2011) (#1.1.4e).

Countless videos filmed over the past few years clearly show attempts by police officers to block, remove, or smash cameras used by activists to document the brutality of police actions.

1.1.5. Neo-Nazi and fascist attacks

There have been sporadic periods of fascist attacks on migrants over the past few years. These have primarily taken the form of verbal abuse and stone throwing (26th October, 2009) (#1.1.5a), but more serious attacks have occurred both against migrants and their squats. On the 7th of October, two drunk men set fire to some tents under a bridge. They were discovered as the migrants returned to their homes, and held down until the police arrived to arrest them (1.1.5b).

Another example in the CMS log describes the regular night time attacks by rascists:

“[T]he rock-throwing actually occurs during weekends, and migrants say it’s probably drunkards doing it. They arrive by car, get out, and throw rocks and bottles. Sometimes the migrants throw stuff back, and the thugs just get back to their cars and drive away.”(15th August 2009)

Four fascists received prison sentences on the 12th of November 2010, ranging from six months to 24 months for attacks on migrants, in association with a spate of violent attacks involving the use of metal bars, glass bottles and other weapons. (#1.1.5c)

Although there is no evidence to directly tie fascist activity to the police, on at least one occasion Neo-Nazi graffiti was discovered on the walls of Africa House shortly after a police raid, and many people speculated that it was the work of the CRS. (#1.1.5d)

1.1.6. Fluctuations in the scale and frequency of the violence

Section 2 will set out a chronology of repression in Calais in greater detail, but here we will briefly try and describe some of the trends in physical violence against migrants. The two main considerations are 1) The different CRS units present in Calais and 2) The role of CMS activists in Calais.

Every two to three weeks there is a changeover of CRS units in Calais. The transition period between the units tends to be a quiet period in terms of raids and violent assaults, as one unit is prepares to leave and the next settles in. Sometimes the patterns of raids may change dramatically as tactics adopted by the previous unit are abandoned and new ones employed. This can lead to periods of erratic police behaviour, which could include more or fewer attacks. For example, the de facto arrangement that migrants are not ID checked around the food distribution site (Rue de Moscou) is sometimes broken by new units of CRS, such as by Compagnie (unit) 28 on 11th July 2010. (See also the record from 29th December, 2009: *“The CRS then spent the rest of the day driving round in circles with paper booklets, seemingly trying to work out what they were meant to be doing.”*)

Some of the units are more notorious for their brutality. Compagnie 8 is regarded as being the worst. In August 2009, CMS activists were informed that back in April, Compagnie 8 officers tear-gassed a pregnant woman (recorded in the log on 2nd May 2010). (#1.1.6a) Other reports of Compagnie 8 include that of a migrant being ordered to remove his shoes and walk to an arrest van barefoot in the snow, seemingly for other no reason than to cause him discomfort. We also know of an Eritrean migrant being chased off a rooftop by officers from this unit (2nd May 2010). (#1.1.6b)

The activist presence in Calais is constant but not consistent, with numbers fluctuating throughout the year. Similarly, the relationship with different migrant groups is often uneven and can change quickly. This affects not only the ability of CMS to intervene in police raids, but also the ability to document the true extent of violence and assaults.

1.2. A programme of harassment: the systematic use of ID checks and arrest

The use of direct physical violence is only a small, if particularly crude, part of the everyday campaign of harassment against migrants in Calais. In this section we address a second level of repression through the systematic unlawful use of police ID checks ('contrôles') and arrests.

The police target migrants in Calais by (a) raiding dwelling places, often at night or early in the morning; and (b) patrolling and stopping migrants in the streets, including the train station, shopping centres, and at the charity food distribution site. Both raids and patrols may lead to arrest. Other aspects of raids on dwellings, including illegal entry to buildings and the destruction of shelters and possessions, will be covered in detail in the section that follows.

This section will focus on the following points: (1) Repeated arrests as harassment and the scale of

arrests in Calais; (2) unlawful arrests and improper arrest procedures; (3) arrest of legal asylum seekers and others in possession of valid documents; (4) the targeting of supposedly 'safe' sites such as the charity food distribution and medical clinic; (5) the arrest and treatment of minors, and; (6) racial profiling and ID checks.

1.2.1. Repetition and routine

On Friday 14 May, the CMS arrest log stated that, *"Africa House morning raid, 17 arrests; police came again at 12 noon, 9 more arrests. Palestine House: police came at 2am and 5am, 1 arrest. Police came again at 9pm with 10 arrests and use of teargas. 8 of the arrestees were taken 6km out of town and made to walk back. After they had walked 1km they were picked up and driven back to start again."*

The typical routine is as follows: refugees are either picked up during a raid or in the street; they are taken to Coquelles (5km away) and held for a few hours or overnight, or sometimes for just a few minutes; they may or may not be interviewed and fingerprinted; they are released without any kind of charge; they must walk the 8 kilometre or longer journey back to their shelters; and the same routine might happen all over again the next day, or even just a few hours later. Some refugees are transferred from the police station to the detention centre awaiting deportation, but this only occurs in a small minority of cases. It is not uncommon for refugees in Calais to be arrested repeatedly day after day, or even more than once the same day.

The effect of this standard practice is to create a climate of fear for refugees in Calais. Nowhere is safe: a migrant can be picked up at any moment, whether sleeping, eating, going to or from meals at the charity distribution, at the PASS medical clinic, in the shopping centre, at the train station, just walking in the street or sitting in the park. Arrest in itself is a traumatic experience. Having to walk back from Coquelles day after day, especially if you are sick or injured, is an added strain that is part of for refugees in Calais. Some migrants become very anxious and depressed, and even malnourished: all they can do is stay hidden for as long as possible, too scared to go and get food or water.

CMS arrest data: a snapshot of the problem

The 'arrest log' spreadsheet included in the dossier gives a rough snapshot of the scale of the problem. Over five months, from April to August 2010, we recorded 1,054 arrests, an average of just over 210 per month. In fact this is undoubtedly a gross underestimate of the total, and the true number could have been at least twice this. We only recorded arrests that CMS activists had either (a) witnessed personally, or (b) been informed of through reliable sources in the migrant communities. Where numbers were imprecise, the spreadsheet always uses the lowest estimate. Arrests that could not be verified by trusted sources were not included.

The extent of the underestimate is also seen from the fact that we recorded far more arrests in Africa House (453) than elsewhere, because this is where a number of activists were themselves living throughout this period. There were undoubtedly more arrests taking place in the Pashtun jungle, which at that time was the largest community, but we were only able to reliably confirm 151 of these. Further, the vast majority of recorded arrests were in raids on squats and jungles, whilst we probably considerably underestimate arrest executed during street patrols.

One month in Calais

To give a flavour of the data, here is a summary of the record for May 2010, the month for which we have the most comprehensive data.

Saturday 1 May: 7pm raid on Africa House, 4 arrests

Tuesday 4 May: 8am raid on Africa House, 2 vans of CRS plus one arrest van, 2 arrests

Wednesday 5 May: Morning raid on Africa House, very aggressive, 2 arrests

Thursday 6 May: Evening raid on Pashtun jungle, everyone ran, no arrests; night raid on Hazara jungle, 2 arrests; 9pm raid on Palestine House, 12 arrests; 4 Afghans arrested outside evening food distribution

Friday 7 May: Morning and evening raids on Pashtun jungle, both unsuccessful; night raid on Hazara jungle, no-one taken; raid on Palestine House at 12.30 pm, 5 or 6 taken

Saturday 8 May: Palestine House raided at 1.30am, arrests unknown; No Borders demo, 4 activists arrested and released same day, 5 Pashtuns arrested after demo

Sunday 9 May: 7 arrests in town, 1 Somali, 1 Sudanese, 2 Pashtun, 3 others

Monday 10 May: 3am, 4 people taken outside Africa House

Tuesday 11 May: Africa House raided at 7.30am, 23 arrests; 5 Palestinians arrested trying to cross border

Wednesday 12 May: Palestine house raided at 3am, 7 arrests, everything destroyed

Thursday 13 May: Africa House raid foiled by activists – no arrests this morning! 7 people taken from house next to Palestine House

Friday 14 May: Africa House morning raid, 17 arrests; police came again at 12 noon, 9 more arrests. Palestine House: police came at 2am and 5am, 1 arrest. Police came again at 9pm with 10 arrests and use of tear-gas. 8 of the arrestees were taken 6km out of town and made to walk back. After they had walked 1km they were picked up and driven back to start again.

Saturday 15 May: 11.30 am, several arrestees seen in vans, possibly taken off streets; several Palestinians arrested in street; arrest number unknown.

Sunday 16 May: Africa House raided 8.45pm, one person beaten up.

Monday 17 May: Pashtun Jungle, 4 people arrested in the night.

Tuesday 18 May: Africa House around 8pm, all had documents. At around 8pm, 10 Afghans and 2 Palestinians were arrested in the street.

Wednesday 19 May: Africa House raided 11am, around 8 taken; Pashtun Jungle raided, arrests unknown; 2 arrests in morning at Hazara Jungle; 5 arrests around 10.30am at Palestine House, tea and sugar stolen, sleeping place messed up

Thursday 20 May: Africa House raided at 8am, 24 people taken; again at 10pm, 7 people taken

Friday 21 May: Africa House raided twice, 2 vans CRS each time, about 8 people taken; Palestine House raided 4am and 8am, arrests unknown

Saturday 22 May: 5 people from Africa House, 3 people in park nearby and 2 from the house

Sunday 23 May: 5 Africans arrested by BCMO, police try to break camera

Monday 24 May: Pashtun Jungle, 14 arrested in early morning raid

Tuesday 25 May: Palestinian House, 3 or 4 arrested in early morning raid; 2 or 3 Somalis arrested near station

Wednesday 26 May: 6pm, 6 or 7 people arrested on train tracks near Africa House, SNCF security with dog joined in with police; 5 arrests at Palestine House at 9pm, bedding and water supply sprayed with chemicals, possibly disinfectant; 9-10am one African arrested at the station

Thursday 27 May: 4 Hazaras arrested, 2 in raid, 2 on the tracks;

Friday 28 May: 7 Africans arrested at train tracks 00.20 am; 4 arrested at Pashtun Jungle at roughly 9am; 7 arrested at Hazara Jungle in 9am raid, tents and food destroyed; 1 arrest at Palestine House at 7 pm

Sunday 30 May: 1 arrest at Palestine House

Monday 31 May: 7 arrests at Africa House; police came twice to Pashtun jungle, arrested 20; 4 Hazaras arrested on way to food distribution; 6 to 8 arrests at Palestine House in 2 raids, people still held in Coquelles at 10pm; 4 others arrested, probably in the park.

A refugee's experience

A written testimony given by an Eritrean refugee in August 2010, for which we also have two corroborative witness statements, describes a typical case (#1.2.1a). The refugee says that he was stopped by CRS on the street by the BCMO (cold weather shelter⁴). He was walking towards the park after breakfast food distribution. He had legally claimed asylum in France and carried with him a document from the Interior Ministry which proved this:

"... it wasn't fair because we was leggaly (sic.) immigrant with paper, I mean apointment paper of Home Ofice in France. Then they just take us to this place Coquelles. They just take our finger print and then they release us. We ask for lift but they ask us to shut our mouth."

The police also refused to give him any release document to show that he had been arrested.

Twice in one day

This excerpt was taken from a witness statement made by a CMS activist following a CRS raid on the Iranian Jungle on 11th August 2009:

"... the cops took the men, despite protests from them that they had already been picked up early that morning. The CRS simply replied that this was 'not possible'. Before the cops arrived the men had been telling us of how there had been 11 arrests at 6am that morning when the police came and woke everyone up and took them all. Twice in one day! They wouldn't even let one man put his bag away in his tent." (#1.2.1b)

Over a year later (the night of 9-10 January 2011), a very similar report shows how little has changed:

"The Iranian house was also raided twice in the night, everyone was arrested and taken to Coquelles police station, then, just after they returned to their squat after walking one hour in the rain, arrested and taken to Coquelles again – including a man who is sick with the flu. It seems sleep is a privilege only for those with papers." (#1.2.1c)

1.2.2 "Because we are police": arrest without justification or due process

The police rarely give reasons for their arrests. They appear to believe that they have the right to arrest anyone, at any time, without needing to explain the legal basis for their actions. As in the Eritrean refugee's testimony mentioned in the section above, arrested migrants are rarely, if ever, given any record of their arrest. In fact we believe that as a matter of routine police do not fill out the proper paperwork for migrant arrestees, knowing that most sans-papiers will be too intimidated to insist on their legal rights. This means that there is no need for them to specify in writing, or indeed verbally, any grounds for arrest.

It seems to be the general rule in Calais that the police feel they do not need to give the slightest

⁴ See the 29 December 2008 edition of the daily *Nord Littoral* newspaper, entitled, 'Migrant ID checks next to the site used by the Town Hall: The BCMO is now open, what a boon for the CRS':

http://www.nordlittoral.fr/actualite/Faits_divers/Faits_divers/article_924709.shtml

justification for their actions. This extends to ID checks and searches, as well as arrests. For example, what follows is a statement by a CMS activist regarding an incident on 11th August 2009:

'One of the CRS saw my bag and told me to open it.

I asked "what are you looking for?"

He said "Just open it."

I said "Why?"

He replied "Because I am a policeman."

I said, "That's not a reason"

But he said "Yes it is." (#1.2.2a)

1.2.3. Documents offer no protection

If the police bothered to give any reason at all for making an arrest, one such justification might be to confirm a person's identity. Under French law, following an ID check in which the person stopped does not provide evidence of their identity, the police can detain them for up to four hours in order to check their identity. But there are strong reasons believe that this does not present a feasible justification for the arrests in Calais, such as the fact that:

- (1) The police repeatedly arrest people whom they have already identified, including those who have been arrested the very same day (see above at 1.2.1).
- (2) The police often refuse to inform migrants or witnesses of the reasons for their arrest, or give a proper record of an arrest (see above at 1.2.2).
- (3) The ID checks are often unlawful in the first place (see below at 2.1.4).
- (4) Lastly, there is substantial evidence to show that the police arrest people carrying valid identity documents, and fail to provide a justification for doing so.

As a typical example, on October 24th, 2009, CMS activists observed the arrest of seven people who were sleeping under bridges along the canal:

"All men arrested had papers, i.e., had applied for asylum in France. Those who have no papers hide in less obvious places. But the police go there, search the people, control the papers then say that something does not match, and have to take the people to police station for further controls. Of course all these men have been brought to the police station again and again. When they arrested 7 they said 'they had enough' and drove off." (#1.2.3a)

A year later, over a period of two months from August to October 2010, the arrest of several people with identity documents were recorded by CMS activists: on 4th August (two Afghans) and 5th August (at least five men of different nationalities with papers, in three separate incidents). (#1.2.3b)

In addition, in August 2010, a refugee of Iraqi origin who does not reside in Calais and in fact has leave to remain in the UK where he is a student, testified that he was picked up by the police when he was travelling through Calais on his holidays.

Three Sudanese men with papers were arrested during a morning raid (around 8.30am) on Africa House, on Wednesday 29th September, 2010. That evening (9.40pm) the CRS also raided the Sudanese Jungle and picked up one refugee who didn't try to run from the police. He believed he would be safe, as he was carrying his Italian passport. The CRS arrested him anyway, claiming that the passport was false. This allegation was later disproved (#1.2.3c). We have never heard of the validity of a white activist's passport being doubted in this way.

On 1st October, two out of three people arrested in a midnight raid on the Pashtun Jungle had immigration paperwork on them. (#1.2.3d)

1.2.4. Nowhere is safe

Nowhere is safe for migrants in Calais, certainly not the temporary shelters they call home, as we will document in depth in section 1.3. One place that might provide a brief respite from harassment is the charity food distribution site. Following an agreement with the Mayor, the police had agreed not to enter the food distribution site in usual circumstances, or to arrest people near the entrance of the site during mealtimes. The first part of this agreement is generally respected, although two people were arrested inside the compound on Thursday 17th March 2011 (#1.2.4a). In addition, the agreement not to arrest outside it is often flouted. The effect of this is particularly severe, as it means that many migrants are scared of coming to eat, knowing that there is a high chance of being arrested on the way to or back from their meals. We will address the issue of food in further detail in section 3.

At 9.45am on 10th August, 2010, during the breakfast food distribution that takes place just outside the gates of the compound, the CRS attempted a rapid snatch raid on people queuing for food. CMS activists and charity workers intervened and managed to prevent any arrests (#1.2.4b). This incident led the charities to file a complaint against the police. Similarly, on 23rd November, 2010, CMS and charity workers physically blocked a CRS raid on people queuing for the lunchtime distribution. (#1.2.4c) However, on Friday 10th December, 2010, the CRS are recorded as having snatched at least three people on their way to breakfast.

During the winter, this became a major hunting ground for police snatch squads, as people walked the one road leading from the BCMO cold weather shelter, where many migrants were spending the night, to the food distribution point for breakfast. (#1.2.4d)

The worst example of this was a major orchestrated raid on the food distribution site at breakfast on 3rd February, 2011. Both PAF and CRS units were present. They parked their cars and vans so as to block the road, and thus exits, either side of the site. The distribution had just finished, and everyone was left outside the compound with the gates closed behind them. (#1.2.4e)

According to the CMS log, "As migrants ran in both directions away from the food distribution center, police got out, grabbed, assaulted and shoved migrants into vans. ... Once all the migrants in the area had been caught or had run away, the vans moved off and began chasing down the migrants who had escaped. Groups of migrants were sprinting together in all directions and the police were chasing after them in their vehicles, then getting out, beating them with their batons and dragging them into the vans."

As well as the food distribution, and the BCMO in winter, another vulnerable site is the PASS clinic, a service which provides free treatment for sick and injured migrants. The clinic does not allow the police to enter its private grounds, but this is not always enough to stop raids, and refugees with broken bones or other injuries present easy targets. In one raid in the afternoon of Thursday 30th September, 2010, police surprised migrants waiting their turn outside the clinic, arresting 11 people. (#1.2.4f)

1.2.5. Treatment of minors

There are a substantial number of minors amongst the refugees in Calais. We have repeatedly seen that age offers no protection from the abuses outlined above.

A few illustrations from the many accounts will suffice. On 4th August, 2010, a 12 year-old Hazara boy was arrested by PAF and 2 undercover police. On 8th August, a number of boys aged 14 - 16 were arrested in a 2am raid on the Pashtun Jungle. A short time later, they were released from Coquelles (5km away), and had to make the walk back which takes approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes. Three of the same boys were arrested again that day at around 3.30pm along with two adults. Once again, they were taken to Coquelles, held for just a few minutes, and had walked back

in time for food distribution (6pm) that evening. (#1.2.5a)

More recently, at 9am on 2nd March 2011, six vans of CRS and PAF raided Africa House and arrested over 20 people. A number of the arrestees were minors, including one 12 year-old. According to the CMS log for the day, *'Activists quizzed the police on whether they truly believed that arresting children was right – and they all answered, "Yes"'*.

In another Africa House raid at 8.15 am on 26th March, 2010, the CRS told activists they were arresting a minor to "get him to safety". We should restate, however, that there is no special provision for the 'safety' of minors; like everyone else they are arrested and released, again and again. (#1.2.5b)

1.2.6. Racial profiling

Police in Calais appear to believe that they have the right to stop and demand identification from whomever they want, whenever they want it. Yet this is not the case, and the vast majority of identity checks in Calais are unlawful. Further, we believe that the police perform ID checks in the area almost entirely on the basis of racial profiling. That is, they routinely stop people who do not look European.

According to Article 78-2 of the Code de Procedure Penale (French code of criminal procedure), the police can demand an identity check if they have grounds to suspect that; -

- (a) a person has committed or is preparing to commit an offence
- (b) they are likely to provide information that would assist a criminal investigation, or
- (c) they are wanted for questioning.

In addition, ID checks can also be carried out to prevent 'public disorder'.

In Calais, identity checks are used as a matter of routine. Since virtually every arrest is preceded by an ID check, and there are other checks that do not lead to arrest, we can infer that the police carry out hundreds of these checks each month. It is clear that these procedures have nothing to do with suspected breaches of the law, and cannot therefore be justified by Article 78-2. It is also clear that migrants, and more generally, black and Asian people, are far more likely to be stopped and asked to produce evidence of their identity than white people. This is a very similar situation to that revealed in a report by the Open Society Justice Initiative⁵, *'Profiling Minorities: A Study of Stop-and-Search Practices in Paris'* (2009), where it was stated that black people were between 3.3 and 11.5 times more likely than white people to be stopped by the police.

CMS activists, on witnessing police ID checks on migrants, or when being stopped themselves - which frequently occurs when they monitor or intervene in incidents - have often asked officers to justify their actions. This question is almost always ignored, or answered simply with, *"Because I am a police officer"*.

Occasionally, when activists have continued to demand the grounds for these ID checks, officers have said that in Calais they have a special authority to ID people/arrest people? without specific reason under a special provision of the Schengen Convention. French law allowed for identity checks to be carried out in special zones 20km around borders or ports within the Schengen area, without any suspicion of criminal activity. However, this policy has been deemed illegal by a ruling of the European Court of Justice on 22nd June 2010⁶, due to 'the absence of any condition of behaviour and specific circumstances that establish a risk of public order breach,' Calais is also

⁵ <http://www.mediapart.fr/files/PoliceContr%C3%B4les.pdf>

⁶ CJUE, 22 June 2010, C-188/10 et C-189/10, Aziz Melki & Sélim Abdeli - <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:221:0014:0015:FR:PDF>

insufficiently close to the land border of another Schengen state. It therefore cannot be used as a justification for police actions in Calais.

In addition, the policy is applied on the basis of skin colour and that renders it unlawful on grounds of discrimination.

1.3 Making life unliveable: raids and attacks on shelters, food, water, sleep and dignity

'They treat us like horses. They feed us just enough so that they can chase us.'

(Darfuri refugee, 21st September, 2010)

1.3.1. Raids

Refugees in Calais find shelter where they can, in spaces left abandoned or neglected by French citizens. Some sleep in the park or under the canal bridges. Most live in one of two kinds of dwellings: (a) squats in deserted buildings, of which there are many in the post-industrial landscape of the town; and (b) the 'jungles' or camps made up of tents and makeshift shelters on disused sites and wasteland, usually around the outskirts of the town. (#1.3.1a)

These settlements are not just shelters, but homes. Here people sleep; eat; sit and drink coffee around the fire; play cards; read and study; listen to and play music; dance; wash their clothes; welcome newcomers and visitors; and share food, water, tobacco, conversation, and each others' company. But this life is under constant threat. Police raid the squats and jungles every day and night. A particular settlement may be left alone for two or three days, but never for long. Or it may be targeted with repeated visits, and attacked multiple times in one night.



CRS

These raids raise a number of questions as to their legality. Under French law, the police normally require permission from the owner and/or occupants in order to enter a property, or, failing this, a warrant from the court. CMS activists have witnessed and documented quite literally hundreds of police raids in Calais. We believe that the vast majority of these may have been carried out without authority.

Besides arresting people, when police officers raid they frequently slash or flatten tents; smash windows; throw away or contaminate water; spray bedding with CS gas; and generally destroy or take peoples' personal belongings. This is an everyday reality. During bigger raids, council workers accompany the police to demolish buildings; confiscate tents and belongings in trucks; and/or spray disinfectant and other chemicals, on possessions, including on bedding.

In particularly nasty incidents, activists have returned to Africa House following major raids to find that bedding had been damaged and urinated on, and that walls had been daubed with what appears to be Neo-Nazi graffiti. We have also witnessed damage to Muslim prayer spaces and the desecration of holy books, including a Tigrinyan Bible, and the Koran.

Along with beatings, arrests and identity checks in the street, these raids contribute to a constant state of fear for refugees in Calais. This in itself has obvious effects on peoples' mental health and well-being. Yet raids further undermine bodily and mental health by making it impossible to create stable and hygienic living conditions. For example, since cooking utensils as well as food supplies are regularly stolen or destroyed, it becomes near impossible for migrants to feed themselves adequately.

Finally, to add to the pressure, police employ what can only be described as tactics of psychological warfare, such as repeated nighttime visits with sirens, bright torches and loud music.

A snapshot: raids on Africa House

For more than a year, CMS activists have lived alongside East African refugees in the last two Africa House squats (Squat Pagniez, and the site on Rue Descartes). It is therefore in these communities that we have observed the most raids and in recorded them in the most detail. We also have video and photographic evidence of many of these raids.

We will begin by looking at May 2010, the same month we examined in section 1.2. Africa House here refers to the old squat Pagniez, which was demolished in June 2010.

Police raided Africa House on at least 14 out of 31 days in May. They entered the site on the 1st, 4th, 5th, 11th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 26th and 31st. We have not included the incidents early in the morning on the 10th and 28th, in which the police arrested people outside the house, but did not enter. The timing of the raids varied: the largest operations, involving the most police and largest number of arrests, typically occurred early in the morning raid, usually at around 7-8am. Throughout May there were seven of these morning raids, each with more than one van of CRS present, who were sometimes accompanied by PAF officers. On at least three days (12th, 20th, 21st) there were raids in both the morning and the evening of the same day. (#1.3.1b)

Large morning raids involve advance planning to coordinate the multiple vans which often come from more than one direction simultaneously. During this period at least, it appeared that the CRS were targeting different squats and jungles for major coordinated raids on different days. Thus if Africa House was not hit one morning, it is highly likely that the Pashtun Jungle, the Palestinians or the Hazaras, had been targeted instead. (#1.3.1c) Raids later in the day, either in the evening or at night, were generally smaller, often involving just one police van. They may have been opportunistic raids by the police out on patrol. (#1.3.1d)

By August 2010, Africa House had been recreated in a disused factory, known as squat Thelu, on Rue Descartes, although other Sudanese migrants preferred to stay in what seemed like the greater safety of the Sudanese Jungle, an area of bushes not far from the PASS clinic.

The pattern of raids on the new Africa House remained remarkably similar. According to the CMS arrest log, the new Africa House was raided on at least 15 days in August. These took place on the 6th, 8th, 9th, 12th, 14th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 22nd, 24th, 26th, 28th, 29th and 31st. There were at least eight major morning raids, all taking place around 7-8 am. There were at least four days with multiple raids, often in the morning and evening. (#1.3.1e)



One of the many raids on the new Africa House

Coming closer to the present, by March 2011 little had changed in terms of the frequency and destructiveness of raids, but there were some variations in the police's approach. Where large raids in 2010 were mainly carried out by the CRS with a few PAF in attendance, by spring 2011, the PAF appeared to be taking a lead role, and are now present in greater numbers (#1.3.1f). Notwithstanding the reputation of the CRS for their brutality, in fact the levels of violence actually increased with the PAF-led raids, and were often supplemented with a new edge of psychological cruelty, for example repeated night-time visits into the complex accompanied by very loud music. (#1.3.1g)

In March, raids in which arrests occurred took place on 11 days: the 2nd (9am), 10th (8am), 12th (4am), 18th (after 8am), 22nd (12.30am), 23rd (8.05am), 25th(late morning), 26th (8.15am), 28th (around 7.15 am), 30th (8am), and 31st (around 2.30pm). These raids were often larger in scale than in May or August 2010, involving greater numbers of police. The 2nd March raid saw six police vans deployed, both PAF and CRS. The 10th March raid involved around 30 PAF and CRS officers, with 5 arrest vans coming to take away 37 arrestees (27 Sudanese and 10 CMS activists). On the 18th

March, there was another large raid with both PAF and CRS officers involved, accompanied this time by Deputy Mayor Philippe Mignonet (#1.3.1h). Continuing this pattern of 'major raids of the week', around two dozen PAF and CRS officers came on the 23rd. 30 PAF and CRS officers raided on the 30th, yet again accompanied by Mignonet and other council officials (#1.3.1j).

Besides these raids, a new development consisted of frequent incursions by small groups of PAF, who entered the building without attempting to make any arrests. Such 'visits' occurred on the 4th March (one PAF car drove around with shining headlights after midnight), twice on the 6th (4pm and 9.30pm, that time with a van playing loud music), again on the 7th (at 4pm), early in the morning of the 17th (7.20am and 7.40am), and twice on the morning of the 22nd. (#1.3.1k)

Forced entry

Apart from the routine destruction of personal possessions, during at least two raids in March 2011, doors and other parts of the building were damaged or destroyed. On the 2nd and the 10th, police used a crowbar and sledgehammer to demolish a door of the building (#1.3.1m #1.3.2zs). Residents repaired the door, which was destroyed again on the 18th. During the raid on 31st, the door, roof and interior were all demolished, with bulldozers burying peoples' possessions under a large pile of rubble.

In general, there is a constant process of repairs being carried out on the complex by residents attempting to seal doors and build barricades, which are regularly destroyed anew by the police or council workers.

One absurd incident at Africa House (Rue Descartes) on 19th July, 2010 is worth noting. This time it was workmen sent by the owners (OPHLM) who came to repair the gates to the main entrance to the complex, welding them shut. Later that same morning, CRS and PAF officers raided, using brute force to kick gate open.

Before and after the welding incident, residents tried to keep the gate shut with a chain which was cut by police (e.g. on 26th July – #1.3.1n). Finally, by the end of August 2010, the gates had been removed altogether. We are unsure whether this was authorised by the owners. In effect, the police and municipality treat the site as their property, which they can enter and damage as they wish, without permission of the owners, let alone the residents.

This all highlights the following questions:

- (1) Under what authority are the police systematically entering Africa House and other buildings?
- (2) Under what authority do the police and other workers dismantle the locks, chains, and doors that secure these buildings?
- (3) Under what authority do the police and workers destroy the interiors and other fabric of these buildings?

1.3.2. Clearance: the destruction of homes and shelters

The Pashtun Jungle clearance

There have been countless destructions of migrant settlements in and around Calais. Yet the most high profile event over the past two years was the destruction of the Pashtun Jungle in September 2009. Ordered by the French government and co-ordinated at a high-level, the Jungle clearance destroyed the homes of hundreds of people. Some 278 Pashtuns, 132 of them under 18, stayed in the camp until the end, and were arrested en-masse by between 300-400 CRS, PAF officers, and Gendarmes. They were then released on the orders of a tribunal which ruled that the arrests had been unlawful⁷, while hundreds of other Afghans had left in advance.

⁷ The Afghans were subsequently ordered to be released following a ruling in which they were deemed to have been unlawfully arrested. See, for example, an AFP article dated 25 September 2009, and entitled 'Afghans of Calais

Following a common pattern seen before and since, the Prefect of Pas-de-Calais, De Bousquet, presented the clearance as an action for migrants' own health and safety:

"...We cannot accept this jungle, which is a scandal in terms of the right to sanitation, and in terms of criminality, of whom the first victims are the migrants who camp here".

But of course no attempt was made to rehouse people in more sanitary conditions. On the contrary, after being arrested and released, they were soon back in other even more makeshift and unsafe conditions, only now more scattered and vulnerable to police attacks (i.e. 17 October 2009 #1.3.1n). In fact it's worth noting that the local authority had blocked attempts by charities such as Secours Catholique, Medecins du Monde and Medecins Sans Frontieres to improve sanitation in the Jungle by building showers and introducing effective anti-scabies measures (see section 1.3.4). The frequent police raids on the jungle, including the repeated use of tear gas to contaminate the Jungle's single water pump, illustrate that the welfare of refugees in Calais is not exactly a major concern for the authorities (#1.3.2a).



Pashtun Jungle after the clearance

Africa House demolition

Another major clearance was the demolition of Africa House (Squat Pagniez) in June 2010. Again, this was clearly an action carefully coordinated by the authorities. In this case the main instigator was the Mairie (Town Hall), working with the landlord, EPF. The house was evicted for a final time on 14th June, and security guards remained on site to prevent re-entry before demolition began on 21st June (#1.3.2b).

released', which stated that 'French judges have quashed the decision to detain dozens of migrants, primarily Afghans, who were arrested on Tuesday following the clearance of the "jungle" of Calais, according to judicial sources'.
<http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2009/09/25/01011-20090925FILWWW00491-des-afghans-decalais-liberes.php>

The squat was home to approximately 100 African refugees. Many among them had claimed asylum in France, and so were legally entitled to housing from the French government. Again, demolition was justified (in a letter from the regional director of EPF) under the pretext that the building was unsafe and unsanitary. Once more, no alternative accommodation was provided by the authorities, who simply made residents' lives more precarious by throwing them onto the streets. (blog post, 21st June 2011, #1.3.2c)

The daily grind

Alongside these major clearances, Calais is the site of an ongoing campaign of clearance and destruction waged against refugees' shelters. Below are a selection of such incidents recorded in the CMS log:

20th August 2009: Tents in the Hazara Jungle completely destroyed. (#1.3.2d)

21st August 2009: Hazara jungle dwellings again destroyed, and an irritant chemical was sprayed over belongings. Cooking utensils were contaminated, and the absence of running water in the camps made cleaning their equipment especially difficult (#1.3.2e)

27th August 2009: Hazara Jungle raided once again. The main shelter was destroyed and the ruins sprayed with tear gas. On the same day the Palestinian squat was also attacked and a shelter partially dismantled causing a head injury. The police claimed to be retrieving stolen wooden pallets from which the Palestinians had created their shelters. (#1.3.2f)

11th September 2009: Iraqi Kurd Jungle, found 'deserted and destroyed with only a pile of bags remaining.' (#1.3.2g)

22nd September 2009: Pashtun Jungle is cleared in a great media spectacle. The 276 Afghans arrested are released on the orders of a court.

2nd October 2009: Demolition of Eritrean squat, the day Immigration Minister, Eric Besson, visits Calais. (#1.3.2h)

8th October 2009: Camp at the Paul Devot warehouse at the docks evicted by 15 vans of CRS and sealed off with security in place. (#1.3.2j)

15th October 2009: Sudanese camp in the woods cleared. Possessions smashed inside Eritrean squat. Camps under bridges also cleared. (#1.3.2k)

29th October 2009: All camps under bridges cleared. (#1.3.2m)

2nd November 2009: At a meeting called by Medecins du Monde, the charity informed CMS activists they have dropped a plan to distribute tents to migrants (#1.3.2n)

4th November 2009: Squat Pagniez (at this time known as Ethiopian House, later Africa House) raided by at least 10 vans of police. Blankets and belongings were destroyed. (#1.3.2p)

10th November 2009: Sudanese camp destroyed. "New Pashtun Jungle" is being regularly attacked with shelters destroyed. (#1.3.2r)

15th December 2009: African squat "evicted", mattresses, blankets and other belongings taken and dumped in skips. (#1.3.2s)

15th January 2010: Shelters destroyed in the Hazara jungle. (#1.3.2t)

17th March 2010: Tents and bedding cleared from where 50 or more migrants have been camping outside the shut BCMO cold weather shelter. (#1.3.2u)

13th April 2010: All tents and bedding cleared from inside Africa House and chemicals sprayed by council workers. Possessions taken include mobile phones, money and documents, including one refugee's Italian passport. (#1.3.2v)

28th April 2010: Pashtun camp on disused train tracks outside Calais destroyed. (#1.3.2w)

14th May 2010: Hazara camp destroyed. (#1.3.2x)

19th May 2010: Palestinian squat trashed, Koran desecrated, sugar and tea taken, water poured away, rubbish thrown on top of bedding. (#1.3.2y)

28th May 2010: Hazara jungle destroyed once again. (#1.3.2z)

14th June 2010: Africa House evicted, demolition begins on 21st June. (#1.3.2za)

10th July 2010: Hazara Jungle destroyed again. (#1.3.2zb)

29th July 2010: In raid a on Africa House (Rue Descartes) police take personal papers, urinate on peoples' bedding and pour oil in sleeping areas. (#1.3.2zc)

4th August 2010: Tents destroyed and bedding taken at Pashtun camp. (#1.3.2zd)

26th August 2010: Glass smashed over sleeping areas at Africa House. In raid on Iranian Jungle everyone is arrested, including two sick women. When they return, all their personal belongings have disappeared, including their clothes, shoes, tents, blankets, three mobile phones and a camera. (#1.3.2ze)

7th September 2010: In a raid at Africa House, police pour cooking oil over the stairs, in bags and on sleeping bags. A bible written in Tigrinya (language of Eritrea) is found with its pages torn out, covered in oil and thrown in the dirt. (#1.3.2zf)

18th September 2010: More destruction at Africa House raid: windows and glass smashed, bedding tear-gased, chemical solvents and varnish spilled in room where CMS activists slept (#1.3.2zg)

28th September 2010: Tents slashed in Kurdish Jungle, rendering them unusable. (#1.3.2zh)

30th September 2010: Plastic shelters slashed at Pashtun camp on train tracks. (#1.3.2zj)

4-6th October 2010: Council workers are in Africa House every day clearing out interiors, but are respecting people's personal belongings. (#1.3.2zm)

25th November 2010: All water containers destroyed at Pashtun camp. (#1.3.2zn)

12th January 2011: Africa House raid, doors ripped from hinges, barricades dismantled, (#1.3.2zo)

24th January 2011: More doors destroyed and CS gas sprayed in Africa House (#1.3.2zp)

29th January 2011: Tents destroyed in Hazara jungle. (#1.3.2zr)

2nd February 2011: Doors and staircases smashed in Africa House ((#1.3.2zs)

3rd February 2011: Hazara tents destroyed again (#1.3.2zt)

31st March 2011: Bulldozers carry out major destruction at Africa House, burying many personal possessions under enormous pile of rubble (#1.3.2zu – see the footage at #1.3.1a to compare it to its initial state).

4th May 2011: Town hall employees throw everyone's possessions (sleeping bags, tents, personal belongings), which were on the roof of Africa House, into a truck destined for landfill. The same operation is carried out again on 31st May (#1.3.2zv).



A CRS officer poses in the Hazara Jungle amidst the shelters he and his colleagues have just destroyed

1.3.3. Food, water, and fire

“Tonight we sleep thirsty”. (Africa House resident after raid, 18th September 2010)

One particular target for destruction during raids are migrants’ supplies of food and water. This became clear to CMS activists early on, even prior to the eviction of the Pashtun jungle (September 2009), where the single camp water point was repeatedly and purposefully contaminated with tear gas. (#1.3.3a)

On 20th and 29th August 2009, activists saw twice the police at that same water pump, but the officers left when they realised that they were being observed. Later, after activists finally left, the CRS returned a third time and contaminated the pump with tear gas.

“Victims of the pepper-sprayed water point told us that the water burned on their faces and that they had a burning pain inside their chests after drinking the water, not knowing it was poisoned.” (#1.3.3b)

Since then, it has become common practice in raids for food to be ruined; for scarce water supplies to be thrown away or contaminated; for water containers to be sabotaged; and for cooking pots and utensils to be taken or damaged. As settlements are often far from sources of water, refugees have to walk long distances carrying water for drinking, cooking and washing. Consequently, police attacks on water supplies and containers are a brutal and soul-destroying way of undermining migrants’ physical wellbeing and draining their energy.

Another critical resource in the camps is wood, which provides the only source of heat and fuel for cooking. The police regularly scatter wood piles or pour water or chemicals over them.

These practices are so much part of everyday life for refugees that they come to expect it, while CMS activists have tended only to log particularly blatant examples, some of which are noted in the 'daily grind' section, above.

1.3.4. Hygiene

Given the conditions set out above, it is hardly surprising that refugees in Calais suffer from numerous health complaints and epidemics. The lack of water makes it near impossible to maintain good sanitation in settlements. Malnutrition, sleeplessness, anxiety, fear and depression weaken bodies and increase susceptibility to disease. As mentioned, many also endure beatings from the police, and sustain injuries whilst running from them or trying to cross the Channel (see section 1.1).

The case of the scabies (mis)treatment

To give a picture of the health situation amongst the communities in Calais, we can draw on the analysis presented in Migreurop's 2009 report⁸. The Migreurop report cites the work of the Collectif Interassociatif Santé, which found epidemics of scabies and boils, *“that had not been seen in France for dozens of years”*. It cites an article written in Le Monde on 26th June 2009, which discusses, *“a catastrophe that is impossible to eradicate...complaints such as diabetes, asthma, bronchitis, or tuberculosis can no longer be treated – the patients who are too weak don't dare come.”*

One nurse sums up, *“Migrants are reduced to living like animals, and no-one gives a damn about it. People call the SPA (Société de Protections des Animaux) for a cat. For these people, nothing. They are treated like rats.”*

The combination of a lack of washing facilities and the rapid rise in the numbers of refugees in

⁸ Migreurop, 'Les Frontières Assassines de l'Europe', October 2009: <http://www.migreurop.org/article1489.html>

Calais led to the outbreak of a scabies epidemic in the first quarter of 2009, amongst other health problems (including other skin conditions and secondary infections from injuries).

In Spring 2009, Médecins du Monde conducted a diagnosis and planned a joint operation with Médecins sans Frontières and other local charities designed to treat all migrants in the area as well as their living spaces, and to conduct a health assessment for each migrant.

However, several days ahead of the planned eradication programme, the prefecture announced its intention to carry out its own operation, leading to the cancellation of the NGO project. Yet it transpired that only a fraction of the migrants were offered treatment under the state-led initiative; that living spaces were arbitrarily and inconsistently treated; and that no migrants would be given a health check as proposed by Médecins du Monde.

Consequently, the approach was entirely symptom-based rather than preventative: if people were itching, they might be entitled to anti-scabies treatment, despite the fact that there is an incubation period of three weeks before any symptoms actually appear. Sprays were also given to migrants to treat bedding, clothes and their shelters, but without clear explanation as to how to use them. Some migrants used them on themselves and continued to sleep in infected bedding, and no action was taken to see that all those sleeping in the same shelters were treated (#1.3.4a).

Hygiene as a weapon: the battle for the showers

The story of the 2009 anti-scabies operation illustrates an ongoing conflict between the organisations seeking to tackle the health crisis in Calais (PASS, Médecins du Monde, Médecins sans Frontières, and others), and the French authorities who actually exploit the rhetoric of hygiene as cover for the campaign against the refugees there. As we saw above (1.3.2.), the clearance of the Pashtun Jungle and Africa House (Squat Pagniez) are other clear examples of this. Another case in point is the ongoing struggle over shower facilities. Following the Prefecture's anti-scabies operation, the showers at the PASS clinic, one of the few measures to maintain hygiene in the camps, were removed.

There are now extremely limited shower facilities managed by the charity Secours Catholique in bungalows provided by the Town Hall. These were only won from a long bureaucratic process which involved waiting for months on end for permission from the local authorities. Finally, the showers were built in December 2009. However, the night after their opening they were destroyed in an arson attack, for which no-one has been arrested or prosecuted. They were rebuilt but vandalised again in March 2011. Since the Town Hall was unwilling to pay for repairs, they have remained unusable.

The appalling sanitary conditions in the cold weather shelter are also worth noting. Despite 100,000 Euros in central government funds being allocated to improve conditions in the 2010-11 so-called 'cold weather programme' (#1.3.4b), the washing facilities in the building remain off bounds to migrants. The 100 or so refugees who slept there through the hardest nights of winter had to share a single chemical toilet outside.

Raiding the sick

In section 1.2.4. we discussed the police practice of raiding the grounds of the PASS clinic to arrest sick and injured people waiting for treatment, without permission and in spite of protests from the medical workers. More generally, the CMS log contains numerous examples of injured migrants being arrested and subjected to the same brutalising treatment given to other refugees.

Examples include a man on crutches with two broken legs who was made to walk back from Coquelles barefoot in the snow (27th November 2010 – #1.3.4d); an Iranian refugee with the flu who was arrested twice in one day and made to walk back each time in the rain (10th January 2011

– #1.3.4e). The kind of treatment refugees can expect from the emergency services is also worth mentioning; for example, on 18th January 2011, activists had to call six times before an ambulance was actually sent to collect a man who had fallen seriously ill at Africa House. (#1.3.4f)

Another issue is the widespread refusal of medical treatment to detainees in Coquelles. CMS activists as well as refugees have had direct experience of this. For instance, on 12th August 2010, an activist who was arrested and knocked unconscious, and went on to exhibit signs of concussion, was given no medical treatment despite persistent requests (#1.3.4g). We suspect that refugees experience even worse treatment in custody.

1.3.5. Racial and religious abuse

Racist incidents

We believe that the brutal policy implemented by representatives of the state in Calais is sustained by a culture of institutional racism. At times this latent racism comes to the surface in incidents involving explicit racial abuse. In the presence of CMS monitors with cameras, the police tend to be on their guard. Yet a few examples recorded in the CMS log indicate that this deeper problem exists.

In April 2010, following a CRS raid on Africa House, activists discovered graffiti written on the wall using soap that had been donated by volunteers. The markings included a swastika and possible nationalist symbols. (#1.3.5a)

A Sudanese refugee informed us that, following a raid at Africa House on 14th May 2010, the CRS taunted the African migrants living in the complex by making monkey noises. (#1.3.5b)

At about 10.10pm on 19th May, two drunk French men in civilian clothing drove up to Africa House in a black sports car, registration number AE-152-TE. They approached a group of four African migrants, and told one of them, *"We are police, and you are black"*. They searched him aggressively, pushed him around and punched him a number of times. They then got back in the car and drove off, but stopped again further along the street when they saw two Sudanese men returning from the shops, carrying two bottles of wine in a plastic bag. According to them, they jumped out of their car, flashed their guns and police ID, and proceeded to search the two migrants very aggressively, pushing them against the car and deliberately smashing one of the wine bottles on the ground. (#1.3.5c)

On Wednesday 9th March 2011, in Palestine House, CMS activists were shown a Palestinian flag that had been ripped to shreds following a raid. (#1.3.5d)

Attacks on religion

One Rastafarian refugee living in the Ethiopian squat informed CMS activists that the police had forcibly cut off his dreadlocks (August 14th 2009 – #1.3.5e).

In the old Africa House (Squat Pagniez), residents had constructed a Muslim prayer area, lined with mats, and cordoned off by a low wooden barrier. This area was repeatedly defiled by raiding police. According to Sudanese residents, the police trampled on and kicked the prayer mats during a CRS raid on 14th May, 2010. (#1.3.6f)

During a night-time raid on Palestine House on 18-19th May the same year, the CRS threw a Koran across the room in front of Palestinian refugees, took the tea and sugar, emptied the water containers, and tipped a giant metal shelving unit covered in dusty, dirty broken scrap metal over people's bedding. (#1.3.6g)

After a raid on Africa House on 7th September, 2010, we discovered a Bible written in Tigrinya (language of Eritrea) which had had pages torn out, been covered in cooking oil and thrown in the

dirt. (#1.3.6h)

During the month of Ramadan in August-September 2010, police repeatedly raided the Sudanese Jungle at sunset, knowing that this was the time when the refugees gathered to break their fast. (#1.3.6j)

1.3.6. Sexual harassment

There are few female refugees in Calais, and we have not as of yet collected evidence of sexual abuse and harassment of those who do arrive. However many CMS activists are women, and many have experienced sexual harassment from the police. Our experience in Calais gives us no reason to hope that female refugees receive any better treatment.

On 13th September 2010, a female activist who was sitting on a bench in a corridor of Coquelles police station was forced to listen to two CRS officers as they stood over her, laughing and discussing how they wanted to have sex with her. When other arrestees overheard and began to complain, four policemen dragged the activist away to a cell on her own (Weekly round-up, below Friday 17th September #1.3.6a).

During a violent raid on Africa House on 26th November 2010, CRS officers abused two female activists calling them "dirty whores", "bitches", and "ugly" in French. (#1.3.6b)

In another Africa House raid, this time on 5th January 2011, female activists were searched by male officers despite repeated protests. (#1.3.6c)

On 27th January, female activists were sexually harassed by PAF officers outside Africa House. As recorded on video, one officer, to the laughter of his colleague, tells a female activist to wait for him to return and "treat her severely" ("tu vas manger sévère"). When she says that she finds him disgusting, he replies that she will indeed see that he is a disgusting pervert ("un gros dégeulasse"). (#1.3.6d)

1.3.7. Night visits and other PSYOPS tactics

As documented in section 1.3.1. (see the video), one disturbing development is the use of tactics reminiscent of military Psychological Operations ('PSYOPS'), for instance causing sleep deprivation by driving into Africa House at night whilst flashing lights and playing very loud music. While these techniques seemed to be on the rise amongst PAF officers in recent times, they have been recorded since the start of the CMS presence in Calais; on the evening of 23rd August 2009, the second day of Ramadan, the log documents the CRS 'cruising around the jungles', with 'lights, short siren beeps and staring and laughing.' (#1.3.7a)

On May 14th 2010, at the old Africa House (Squat Pagniez), CMS activists witnessed the CRS drive up to the squat five times flashing their lights on and off over the course of a few hours. (#1.3.7b)

These 'false raids' are a cheap tactic on the part of the police, as they make refugees run any officers even having to leave their vehicles. It also appears to be a source of continual entertainment for the police.

1.3.8. Manhunt: Calais, the video game

For some officers, the daily violence that is the repression in Calais provides an opportunity to vent deep resentment and aggression, perhaps of a racist or fascist nature.

But it seems that others are simply not aware of the full consequences of their actions.

During a raid on Africa House on 21st January 2011, CMS activists watched police officers posing for photos on the rooftop, with their guns drawn. "*It's just a game*", one officer told an activist. (#1.3.8a)

An Afghan refugee once informed activists that when he was arrested, the police praised him for his speed, saying it was a pleasure to chase after him. (# 1.3.8.A)

To end this chapter, it is illuminating to contrast the way in which these tactics of repression are perceived and experienced on different sides. A raid, a beating, another arrest, another sleepless thirsty night, the destruction of shelter: for refugees these are part of a succession life-threatening and life-sapping moments, hours, days and nights that can turn Calais into a living hell. Conversely, for some police officers at least, Calais may be no more than a huge video game they can play in 3D.

2. A chronology of repression

This section gives a brief timeline of significant events. It should be noted that raids, arrests, violence, and the destruction of property are daily occurrences, and are not mentioned here unless considered particularly noteworthy.

-2000: The controversy of Sangatte

The Red Cross-run centre for migrants in Sangatte comes under political and media pressure in UK. The British press begins a campaign to demonise migrants attempting to enter the UK via the Channel Tunnel. Migrants attempt to storm the fence surrounding the site. The British Home Secretary David Blunkett, and the then French Immigration Minister Nicholas Sarkozy, use the opportunity to push for a tighter border regime. Blunkett champions the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill.

- 2003: Sangatte closes

Under pressure from the UK, Sarkozy closes the Sangatte centre. Despite hundreds of people relying on the centre for their wellbeing and shelter, they are now left out on the streets. Migrants move towards central Calais and begin sleeping rough. The first 'jungles' and squats are created.

- April 2009:

The French Immigration Minister, Eric Besson, pledges to shut down the Pashtun Jungle in Calais that is home to hundreds of 'illegal' migrants seeking to reach Britain

He claimed that the migrants would not, however, be abandoned, and that they would be offered food, showers and information on claiming asylum.⁹

- June/July 2009: The British media offensive

A campaign, led by the Daily Mail, makes repeated reference to 'hordes' of violent asylum seekers, attacking passing travellers and laying siege to the Channel Tunnel. Even the police in Calais, not renowned for their sympathy for the plight of migrants in Calais, make criticisms of articles published by British tabloids, arguing that, "*We should be wary of English newspapers because they tend to use specific incidents to make generalisations.*" The Daily Mail had in fact fabricated a statement from the PAF, encouraging passing tourists to, "*...keep their windows and their doors closed until they are safe at ferry terminal*".¹⁰

- 15th August 2009 : Scabies operation co-opted

The Médecins du Monde and Médecins sans Frontières scabies operation is called off. The council thwarts the operation until their own programme has ended. The council's operation has since come under criticism (see part 1.3.4) and the interference with the MdM operation was

⁹www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/euro...

¹⁰www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-120103...

arguably an attempt to undermine efforts to improve the living conditions of migrants in Calais.

- 8th September 2009: Long-term camp at Angres is destroyed

82 police officers arrest 85 migrants in a camp near the A26, while the trees surrounding the camp are pulled down. The migrants living there are 'allowed' to each take 1 bag containing their belongings; everything else is burned. The camp had been there since 2007.

- 12th September 2009: Kurdish Jungle cleared

Only a few bags, some containing papers and ID cards, remain following the clearance of the Kurdish Jungle.

- 4th September 2009: Interview with Immigration Minister Eric Besson

Besson applauds the work done so far in dismantling the camps, and reiterates his plan to continue the offensive, with an avowed intention to dismantle the 'jungle' by the port before the end of the year. This has to be done, he claims, to *"send a clear message that they can no longer reach England via Calais"*.

- 22nd September 2009: Destruction of the Pashtun Jungle

278 Pashtuns are arrested during the operation to clear the Jungle, nearly half of whom are under the age of 18. A joint declaration, *'Destroying the Jungles: a false solution'*, is released by local NGOs.

A public statement, signed by charities including La Belle Etoile and Salam (which distribute food on a daily basis in the town), as well by as groups such as Amnesty International and Médecins du Monde, condemns the government's pledge to clear the 'jungles', arguing that it ignores the deeper flaws in European immigration policy, and could have the effect of 'leaving migrants in the hands of criminal networks'. The statement also condemns the 2002 decision to close the Sangatte refugee camp.

A press release by the Calais Sub-Prefect of Police claims that the clearance of the 'jungles' is necessary to protect the rights and sanitation of migrants who had been living there.

- 29th September 2009: Migrants in Calais go on hunger strike

11 migrants start a hunger strike in protest against the conditions in Calais and against Dublin II returns to the first point of entry into the EU. Benjamin, a 38 year-old asylum seeker from Iran, says:

"The police tell us we cannot be here but we have nowhere to go. The world is ignoring us so we are making our suffering public by going on hunger strike in full view. Tourists moving through the port and exercising their freedom of movement will be forced to see our lack of freedom until Western governments work together to offer us somewhere to build a new life safely."

- 2nd October 2009: Destruction of Eritrean HouseThe destruction of Eritrean House begins. Up to 150 migrants, mostly Eritreans and Ethiopians, had been staying in the squat near the port.



Destruction of the Eritrean House – note the council workers in overalls

- 6th October 2009: First Anglo-French charter deportation is cancelled

The first joint charter flight to Afghanistan is cancelled after Paris withdraws its co-operation in the face of protests from refugee support groups. The flight was scheduled to set off from the UK, stopping in Lille to pick up Afghans detained in France, large numbers of whom had been arrested during the raids in Calais.

- 7th October 2009: Eviction of port 'jungle' commences

The camps near the docks are cleared of migrants and workers erect fences to prevent people from re-entering. These camps had been around for years, and, although on private land, they weren't causing anyone trouble. Possessions are destroyed and many migrants are arrested during the raid.

- 20th October 2009: Another charter flight postponed following protests

A flight scheduled to deport an anticipated 50 Afghans is cancelled after demonstrations at the airport in Lille. The flight takes place a day later, touching down in France to take just 3 detainees to add to the 25 who had been put on the flight in the UK.

- 31st October 2009: Médecins du Monde prevented from distributing tents to migrants

MdM had planned to distribute tents with their logo printed onto them, in an attempt to dissuade the police from confiscating or destroying them. They backed down, apparently from pressure from the prefecture who made it clear that this would present no barrier to the policy of destruction.

- 18th November 2009: Hunger strike in Coquelles detention centre

Six Afghan men begin a dry hunger strike in Coquelles detention facility, refusing food and water. They are pressed to apply for asylum in France and threatened with deportation to Afghanistan if they don't comply. The hunger strike lasts 5 days.

- 15th December: Cold weather shelter opens for the winter

The cold weather shelter has room for around 150 people to sleep, but only opens nights when the temperatures drop below zero.

- **24th December 2009: Showers intended for migrants destroyed in arson attack**
A shower facility is destroyed in an arson attack, one night after their official opening celebration. Secours Catholique had fought for a year to have the showers built.

- **15th January 2010: Hazara Jungle destroyed**

Eight or nine migrants are arrested and all of the shelters destroyed.

- **19th January: Migrants protest over closure of cold weather shelter**

Fifty police officers in riot gear crack down on peaceful protest by migrants demanding respect for their basic rights. Around 100 migrants had set up camp outside of the closed shelter. The migrants are encouraged to leave the area, and are advised to return to the sites of previous camps. However, the police later raid and arrest those without documents. By noon the following day, the new camp where people had been encouraged to go, has been destroyed in a large raid.

- **28th January 2010: CMS activists open the Kronstadt Hangar, autonomous space for all**

The Kronstadt Hangar, a rented warehouse, opens to all. Activists plan to use it for information sharing, discussions, and practical solidarity. In their press release they state:

'The space...is NOT to be a new Sangatte. No band-aid such as Sangatte could suffice to deal with the horrors undergone by the thousands who seek protection or survival from authoritarianism or capitalist wars while arbitrary national borders remain in place.'

- **5th February 2010: Kronstadt Hangar is blockaded by police**

Around 100 migrants and activists are forced to break through police lines to enter the building. The police, in full riot gear, form a ring around the site threatening the migrants inside with mass arrest.

- **6th February 2010: Police try to block access to Kronsadt Hangar for a second time**

At around 6pm, while many migrants have left the building for the daily food distribution, the police once again attempt to block access to the premises, sealing all three roads leading up to it. Once again, migrants and activists successfully breach the police blockades and enter the building. One activist needs 10 stitches from a facial injury sustained during clashes with the police .

- **7th February 2010: The CRS evict and damage Kronstadt Hangar**

On Sunday evening, 75 CRS forcibly evict the Hangar by smashing through the glass doors, trashing possessions inside, and welding the entrances shut.

- **11th February 2010: 50 arrested in massive raid on Africa House**

At about 9am the police raid and arrest around 50 migrants in the complex. They confiscate blankets and cooking utensils.

- **17th February 2010: Kronstadt Hanger re-opened as a private space**

After the Mayor of Calais declared that the space is not fit for public use, the hangar is reopened for members of SOS Soutien aux Sans Papiers. Article 1 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights is painted on the front door.

- **19th February 2010: Police block access to the Hanger again**

- **20th February 2010: SOS Soutien aux Sans Papiers launch legal challenge**

SOS Soutien aux Sans Papiers, the group officially renting the hangar, file a legal challenge against the closure of the hangar on the basis that it was being run as a private space, and that only members of the organisation were being allowed entry. The judge dismisses the case, ruling that

only the person whose name is on the lease can enter. The judge states that it is not in the public interest for the space to remain open, citing security and public order concerns.

- 16th March 2010: Another demonstration broken up by police

Around 50 migrants, who had been camped near the closed cold weather shelter, stage a demonstration over its closure and consider embarking on hunger strike. Police Nationale and CRS officers break up the demonstration, arresting over 20 people, and successfully dissuade migrants from launching another hunger strike.

-17th April 2010: 16 year-old migrant dies trying to cross border

Ramadhin, a 16 year-old Afghan, dies trying to cross the border whilst hidden beneath a truck departing from the ferry port of Loon Plage, Dunkerque.

- 28th May 2010: Hazara Jungle destroyed again

- 2nd June 2010: Police plan to evict Africa House

The CRS launch a large raid on Africa house and begin surveying the site for a planned demolition. Workmen are present in the day fencing off the property to minimise the possible escape routes.

- 13th June 2010: Arrests at food distribution site

Police have been regularly arresting people in and around the food distribution point, breaking a de facto agreement with the charities that work there. One migrant tries to evade arrest and is badly beaten on the ground.

- 14th June 2010: Africa House evicted

After an announcement is published in the local newspaper, the police evict Africa House. More fences are erected and permanent security guards with dogs are stationed on site.

- 21st June, 2010: Demolition of Africa House begins

The demolition of Africa House finally begins, one day after 'World Refugee Day'.

- July 2010: Salam go on holiday

For the month of July, Salam, one of two charities who have permission to distribute food to migrants, go on holiday. A nutritionist has stated that, a single meal per a day, would mean an intake of as little as 850 calories, which is less than half the daily recommended amount. CMS are criticised by the Mayor for planning their own food hand outs.

- 29th July 2010: New Africa House gates welded shut by council, then broken open by police

The new Africa House is in an abandoned warehouse complex owned by OPHLM. Council workers arrive on the morning of the 29th to weld the gates shut, with the justification that their efforts to secure the site mean that they cannot be held liable for any claims made against them should injuries be sustained on the property. Migrants and activists agree to this, as it would also provide a degree of protection from raids. Within a few hours however, the police arrive and manage to kick open the gate in order to drive into the courtyard.

- August 2010: Ramadan evening meals disrupted by police raids

Police raid the Sudanese Jungle every evening before their Ramadan meal. During Ramadan Muslims do not eat during daylight hours, and they had been saving their meals from the food distribution to eat together after sunset.

- 9th September 2010: Eid celebrations held by migrants and activists

A party is held at Africa House to celebrate the end of Ramadan. Migrants and activists eat, play

music, and dance together around a large bonfire. To everybody's surprise the police do not raid.

- 13th September 2010: Massive raid on Africa House targets CMS activists

Around 20 CRS and 30 PAF officers raid Africa House. All 12 activists present are arrested and sustain minor injuries in the process. The conduct of the police remains violent at the police station.

- 12th October 2010: Fascist attacks increase in frequency and four receive jail sentences for attacks on migrants

Four Neo-Nazis appear in court over attacks on migrants, each receiving jail sentences of between 6 and 24 months. In the previous week there were unrelated racist attacks against migrants.

- 3rd December 2010:

The charity, Salam publicly criticises the arrest of migrants travelling to and from the cold weather shelter.

- 22nd February 2011: 24 year-old drowns in canal during police pursuit

On the evening of 22nd, an Afghan with an Italian passport falls into a canal and drowns whilst fleeing the police. The prefecture claims that he was a people smuggler.

- 30th March 2011: Bulldozers move in to destroy New Africa House

Internal walls and floors of Africa House are destroyed, leaving skeletal structures and rubble mixed up with personal possessions. It is expected that the rest of the building will be shortly flattened. Amongst the belongings buried in the rubble were essential ID cards and other personal documents.



Large raid on a new jungle, 20.01.10

3. The politics of repression in Calais

"I came from my country to escape war, hoping to find freedom in Europe. But we have come from one war to another war."

H., Darfuri refugee, April 11 2011

The repression in Calais is not simply a matter of a few 'bad apple' police officers who 'go too far'. The repression in Calais is systematic, involving actors from bottom to top, from minor officials and frontline police to the highest authorities in France - and beyond. In this section we outline the roles these different actors play, and the relationships between them. We believe that brutality and harassment in Calais are deliberate weapons used in the service of French, British and European immigration policy. The aim is to drive refugees away from the border by making life there unliveable.

Section 3.1. examines the unique role that Calais has come to play in the politics of immigration on the Franco-British border over more than a decade. Initially responding to pressure from the British side, in the context of a UK media campaign that has demonised migrants 'swamping' Britain, both governments announced a clear intention to 'cleanse' the town of 'illegal' and supposedly unwanted immigrants. Section 3.2. discusses how this political pressure translates into repressive police action through a direct chain of command: from President Sarkozy, and ministers like former Immigration Minister Eric Besson, via the Prefect and Sub-Prefect, right through to the police. Section 3.3. looks at how local politicians, such as the virulently anti-migrant Mayor Natacha Bouchart, competed with one another for a tougher stance on immigration. Section 3.4. questions the role of local land owners in the attacks on migrant dwellings.

This chapter merely sketches out the politics behind the war on migrants being waged in Calais. Many questions remain unanswered, some of which are outlined in section 3.5.

3.1. Border politics

In the 1990s the term "refugee" acquired different connotations. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc led to a wave of civil wars from the Balkans to Afghanistan, and war meant refugee migration from the East to perceived safety in Western Europe. But by the end of the decade political and media rhetoric around these arrivals had undergone a pronounced shift. Refugees, once exiles from Nazi and Soviet tyranny, were now considered 'asylum cheats' in the UK, or 'clandestine immigrants'¹¹ in France, trying to use refugee status as cover for apparently illegitimate economic demands.

Britain's colonial history, ties of language, the existence of established immigrant communities, and a perception that Britain is a welcoming safe haven for refugees, led to the UK becoming a target destination for many. Pressure in the UK for a clampdown on migrants in Calais began to build towards the end of the 1990s, stoked by the right-wing British press. In 2001 this rhetoric became focused on the Sangatte refugee camp, opened by the Red Cross to accommodate refugees sleeping rough around Calais. By the end of 2002, Sangatte was thought to house approximately 1,600 people at any one time. Many were from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan.

According to a study of the British press during the last three months of 2002, carried out by the human rights organisation Article 19, 73 of the 308 articles on immigration in the main British media outlets focused on Sangatte¹². The Daily Mail and Express printed 21 stories each, with

¹¹ See the report of Louis Guedon to the Assemblée Nationale, 18 December 2003, quoted in Migreurop 2009

¹² What's the story? Sangatte: a case study of media coverage of asylum and refugee issues", Article 19, 2003:

headlines such as *'Siege of Calais'*, and *'Britain, Bogus Asylum-Seekers and why enough is enough'*. They widely quoted bizarre and alarmist statistics, such as the claim from anti-immigrant pressure group Migration Watch that 1 in 20 of the population of London were asylum seekers. In the discourse about migration both within and between the French and British Governments, the kind of coverage and imagery used by the British media would certainly have informed discussions around the closure of Sangatte.

On the French side, Sangatte did not present the same controversies, so long as refugees only used it as a temporary base en-route to England. As documented by Migreurop, the French authorities took various measures to discourage refugees from claiming asylum in France, and only in June 2009 did the sub-prefecture of Calais actually begin to register asylum applications. And it was only in May 2009 that the UNHCR began working with the NGO France Terre d'Asile to give migrants in Calais information on how to claim asylum in France.

Sangatte was closed in December 2002, in a deal struck by the then Interior Minister Sarkozy and his British counterpart David Blunkett. For three years before, according to Sarkozy, Sangatte had "poisoned" relations between Britain and France. Following the closure, in February 2003, the two governments signed the Touquet Treaty in which British border guards were mandated to patrol on the French side of the border in Calais port.

However, the tension over migration policy between the two countries persisted. According to Migreurop, the Touquet Treaty failed to materially stem the flow of migrants entering the UK. The closure of Sangatte itself did little or nothing to reduce the numbers of refugees heading towards the UK. They were simply pushed back into the streets, squats and jungles of Calais.

A significant step in the co-operation between the two governments only came with the 'administrative agreement of 6th July 2009', an elaboration of the Touquet Treaty. In the new Agreement, the UK committed to finance new high-tech surveillance systems in Calais and elsewhere on the French side. France formally agreed to work on eliminating 'concentrations of foreigners illegally present at the border and its vicinity'. For Migreurop, this more co-operative French stance was merely an acknowledgement of a new reality, as, *'it became evident that the United Kingdom itself had managed to make migrants' crossings more difficult'*. The worry, then, was that the refugees clustered at Calais would get stuck on the French side of the Channel and present a permanent problem for the French authorities.

The first fruits of this agreement was the destruction of the Pashtun and other 'jungles' in September 2009, as documented in this report. Again, the British media added fuel to the fire, as the Daily Mail and Express reminded readers of the events of 2002.

The jungle destructions of 2009, conceals the reality of migration in Calais and the numbers involved. If there was an increase in the number of refugees in Calais from autumn 2008-summer 2009, reaching its height with 1, 200 people, this had dropped rapidly to around 600 by mid-September. The destructions were a contributing factor, and numbers stabilised to approximately 400 from October 2009 to May 2010, when they fell still further. The growing number of Afghans turning to Scandinavian countries, and the increasingly difficult journey from Libya to Italy have led to the decline in the numbers reaching Calais, yet this has been obscured by the fact that tougher security checks at the Franco-British border have left people stranded for many months on end in Calais.

The authorities in Calais opportunistically attributed this drop in numbers to the effectiveness of the highly-publicised wave of destructions. But the lives caught up in this propaganda offensive

were real.

Weapons of dissuasion

As Eric Besson admitted in 2009, 17,000 migrants were arrested in Pas-de-Calais in 2007 (in actual fact, there were 17,000 arrests, with many of the same people being arrested repeatedly); yet only 41 of these were deported back to their countries of origin¹³. These figures destroy the pretence that the systematic ID checks and arrests that take place in Calais are part of a deportation process. Instead, they function as 'weapons of dissuasion', critical aspects of a campaign of harassment and intimidation that acts as a warning to migrants heading to Calais.

The claims that the policy of destroying homes are based on a concern about the health and sanitation of the migrants living in them are quite clearly untrue. Asylum-seekers are meant to be provided accommodation, which as a minimum should involve shelter in a CADA (Centre d'Accueil pour Demandeurs d'Asile), of which there are none in Calais. The vast majority of those who claim asylum in Calais still live in squats and jungles.

The weapons of dissuasion have two edges. On the one hand, the repression meted out in Calais by the French state comes direct from orders from the UK, set out in the 2009 agreement, the primary aim of which is to dissuade migrants from trying to cross to the UK.

Yet at the same time, as security checks at the border tightened and life for asylum seekers in the UK was made more difficult, the French government sought to dissuade refugees from seeking asylum in France. Thus from the French perspective, the repression serves two objectives: not simply improving relations with Britain, but ensuring that migrants are not tempted to seek sanctuary in France.

While there are some tensions between the respective governments' objectives, they complement each other in many respects. Both want to make refugees' lives in Calais unbearable in order to discourage settlement. More importantly still, both want the message of repression to spread and to deter future refugees from even reaching in France. Crucially though, when it comes to their own citizens, both governments want to render the migrants in Calais and the conditions in which they are made to live, invisible.

3.2 From the President to the police: central authority

The orders for repression go directly from national government to the police. The policy of cleansing Calais and the surrounding area of 'illegals' comes from the central government. The former Immigration Minister (a post now reconfigured as the Minister of the Interior and Immigration), Eric Besson, played a critical role in the development of the current policy, along with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, as seen during the destruction of the Pashtun Jungle. These orders are administered locally by the Prefect of Nord Pas-de-Calais and the Sub-Prefect of Calais, who are in direct command of the police forces stationed in the area.

Besides the large number of PAF operating in the area, Calais is perhaps the only French town of its size to maintain a permanent presence of CRS riot police, drafted in from other regions on a rota with each shift lasting two or three weeks. Whilst in Calais, CRS compagnies (units) sleep in barracks, but work from the PAF complex in Coquelles, where they work under the PAF Commandant.

Beyond direct control of the policing of migrants, the Prefecture/Sub-Prefecture have various other means of wielding repressive power in Calais. The prefecture has an effective system of control over the work of the charities in Calais through the 'délit de solidarité', or offence of solidarity.

¹³ (cf Migreurop p70)

While much of the work done by the charities could be considered illegal, the prefecture rarely uses the law against them. All the same, the law against solidarity is a threat continually held over the charities, setting out the limits of 'acceptable' assistance.

The prefecture is also represented in a number of important bodies, such as the property developers OPHLM and EPF, which we discuss below.

3.3. The Mayor and local authorities

The current Mayor of Calais, Natacha Bouchart, is a member of the ruling UPM party and a personal friend of the President. In her public statements on the matter, she adopts an even more extreme discourse than either Sarkozy and Besson.



Natacha Bouchart, the Mayor of Calais

The local authority's most obvious role in the situation is the deployment of municipal workers to support the police in the 'jungle' clearances and the destructions of dwellings (see section 1.3.). Yet the Mayor has a number of other strings to pull, such as representation and pressure on local land-owning bodies; power over funding for the charities; and control of health and safety policies in properties across the town. Finally, the Mayor's influence as a public figure and spokesperson is considerable, setting the tone of the discourses on migration in Calais.

Bouchart is not considered a likely contender for next year's mayoral elections. But how much can we really expect migrants' conditions to change with another Mayor? While Bouchart's Communist Party predecessor was not as outspoken on the issue of migration, nor did he actively oppose central government policies against them.

This contrasts with the role played by other leftist mayors in the region, such as at Norrent-Fontes, Grande-Synthe, or Steenvoorde, where some support - if minimal - has been provided for refugees. It is likely that the political pressure exerted in Calais against anyone who stands against central government policy on this issue is considerably harsher than elsewhere.

3.4. Control of land

Much of the land on which migrant 'jungles' and squats are located is owned by the local authority (the Mayor, or the regional council) or by semi-autonomous property developers such as EPF and OPHLM. These land-owning organisations therefore play an important role in the repression in Calais, facilitating police raids and destruction by giving them access to the property.

Under French law, the police need permission from the owners before entering a property, unless they have reason to believe that a criminal offence is in the process of being committed, in which case access without permission is deemed necessary. However, the police in Calais have repeatedly refused to show any paperwork granting them permission from either the owners or the courts to enter squats (cf. 1.3). This raises the question of whether property owners are aware of the raids taking place on their land, and to what extent they co-operate with them.

Again, it may be that in Calais the political stakes are so high that bodies like OPHLM and EPF are not willing to take the risks associated with non-cooperation, whatever their director's personal views.

3.5. Unanswered questions

The situation set out above supports the theory that the daily repression in Calais is the result of political decisions taken at the highest levels, both nationally and internationally (a fuller account would also explore role of European-wide migration policy). There is a clear link between these high-level political decisions and changes in the conditions for migrants on the ground. And we have seen a clear chain of command which translates political decisions into repressive action. However, when it comes to identifying exactly where decisions are made about the strategies adopted in Calais, at this stage we can only flag up questions that need further investigation.

- Who gives the orders for race-based ID checks and repeated arrests? The Commandant of PAF? The Prefect or Sub-Prefect? The Immigration Minister or President?
- Who gives the orders for the systematic destruction of shelters and personal possessions? Are we simply seeing the continued implementation of Besson's 2009 programme for the destruction of the jungles?
- Is there a command, and at what level, to arrest and harass people claiming asylum in France?
- At what level are 'extreme' practices, such as beatings, contaminating water supplies, urinating on or smashing glass over bedding, ordered or condoned?
- What is the role played by property developers such as OPHLM, EPF, or the regional and municipal councils in facilitating or demanding raids and the destruction of their properties?

And of course, regardless of whether or not high-ranking officials such as the Prefect or the French President do not personally give the orders for these measures, does that really absolve them of responsibility? Who bears greater responsibility; the police officer who throws a punch or slashes a tent, or the politician who commands repression, and never attempts to stop and check how the order is carried out?

