Tuesday 10th June 2025

**Input from Calais Food Collective: Externalization of migration at the UK-France border and the impact on the human rights of migrants in Calais, northern France.**

## Calais Food Collective

Calais Food Collective (CFC) is an association which provides food and water for displaced people at their informal living sites around Calais, as well as organising litter picks and undertaking varied advocacy activities, primarily around water access and waste management. We have been active on the ground in Calais since 2020 and registered as an official organisation since 2021.

## Cooperating states

The UK and France have had a long history of bilateral treaties as well as border control agreements which involve funding commitments, including the Sangatte Protocol (1991), the Treaty of Le Touquet (2003), the Sandhurst Treaty (2018), and the UK-France Joint Leaders' Declaration (2023).[1] The externalisation of the UK border into northern France and the collaborative efforts of the UK and France to prevent small boat crossings violates the rights of displaced people to claim asylum in the country of their choice, a right which is protected under the The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, to which the UK and France are both signatories too.

## Focus and Scope of CFC's contribution

A wide variety of externalisation measures are being strategically implemented in Calais and the surrounding areas in an attempt to prevent people on the move from taking irregular migration routes to enter the United Kingdom from France. These include the militarisation of the coastline to prevent attempted embarkments by small boat, the use of immigration detention, and a wide range of tactics which can be grouped together under the 'zero point of fixation policy'. As our work primarily involves supporting displaced communities at the informal living sites in and around Calais, we will choose to focus on actions taken by the relevant authorities under the broad 'zero point of fixation'

[1] Unauthorised migration: Timeline and overview of UK-French co-operation - House of Commons Library

policy, as we witness these measures and their impacts at the living sites on a daily basis. The overarching goal of the zero point of fixation policy is to prevent the establishment of informal settlements by migrants, following on from the dismantlement of the 'Calais Jungle'in October 2016.

This submission offers a focused perspective on the implications of the externalisation measures pursued jointly by the UK and France on the human rights relating to WASH, and specifically the human right to safe drinking water, a right recognised by the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council as part of binding international law in 2010.[2]

While broader legal and geopolitical analyses of externalisation measures are beyond our scope, we recognise the critical importance of these frameworks in shaping on-the-ground realities. For a comprehensive overview of the legal context and treaty developments underpinning these externalisation measures, we recommend the report "Twenty Years of Franco-British Border Agreements" by Free Movement.[3]

## 'Zero point of fixation' externalisation measures in Calais, northern France

### Evictions



*Police carry out an eviction at an informal living site (November 2024).*

One of the most prominent measures under this policy is the continuous evictions of informal living sites every 48 hours. All informal camps where people live 'outside' (e.g. in wooded areas, grasslands, or under bridges in the city centre) are subject to these 'regular' evictions. Informal living sites in squatted building, for example in abandoned warehouses, are not subjected to the 'regular' evictions but are subjected to other, less frequent, eviction processes. During regular evictions, police form a 'convoy' of vehicles which drive from living site to living site conducting evictions. They are generally accompanied by a 'cleaning team' who are licensed to seize tents, sleeping bags, and other personal belongings, as well as deconstruct makeshift infrastructure.

### Refusal to provide permanent or semi-permanent infrastructure

Another element of this policy is the refusal by the local authorities to provide any form of permanent or semi-permanent infrastructure that would dramatically improve access to WASH for people on the move residing at the informal living sites. Notably, local authorities refuse to install taps to provide permanent, reliable access to clean water within closer vicinity to the various living sites, which would greatly improve water access for people on the move in Calais. Local authorities in Calais also refuse

[2] Document Viewer
[3] https://freemovement.org.uk/twenty-years-of-franco-british-border-agreements/

to provide adequate, organised solutions for waste management at the living sites, despite repeated calls over a number of years from NGOs, citizens initiatives, volunteers, and local people. It is notable that the provision of permanent or semi-permanent infrastructure is resisted by the local authorities despite the benefits that could be brought to the living conditions and human rights situation for displaced communities, as this approach would be in contradiction to the goals set out in the zero point of fixation policy approach.

### Hostile architecture

Hostile architecture is actively pursued by the Calais town hall authorities as a tactic to prevent displaced communities from settling in certain spaces, as well as to hinder the ability of NGOs to reach and provide support to these communities. The most commonly employed hostile architecture measure employed by the local authorities from 2023-25 has been the installation of boulders to render certain areas inaccessible. For example, in March 2023, the Calais town hall installed several hundred boulders to block off an exposed area of grass on Quai de la Gironde in the city centre, as well as blocking off a sheltered area under one of the bridges in the area, in an effort to prevent displaced people from sleeping in the area in tents.[4] At the same time, the town hall used boulders in a targeted manner to block access to an off-road track used by CFC to access a water point for daily maintenance and refilling. Following this incident, we were forced to move our water point to a location which was notably less accessible for the displaced people using it as a primary water source. This tactic has intensified with further installations of boulders in the city centre at Quai Andrieux in November 2024. Though the city centre of Calais has been a notable target area for hostile architecture, it is not the only area subjected to such measures. Another recent example is the installation of boulders on a plot of land which has been used consistently by NGOs to carry out distributions.[5] The small plot of land was in the immediate vicinity of a well-established living site, inhabited by the displaced Eritrean community in Calais for many years.

### Obstruction to work of NGOs

Further to hostile architecture, the local authorities take additional measures to obstruct the work of NGOs. CFC's water project involves the installation and maintenance of 1000L water tanks in close proximity to the living sites inhabited by displaced communities in and around Calais. This approach is undertaken in an effort to provide reliable and permanent access to clean water, a need which is vital due to the inadequacy of the state-mandated approach to water provision for people on the move. Incidents of water tanks being emptied and seized by Calais town hall authorities have been recorded by CFC on at least 10 occasions since 2023. Further to this well-established practice by the Calais town hall authorities, there have recently been allegations from people on the move of purposeful police sabotage of water points.

[4] Calais: rocks against migrants - POLITIS
[5] In Calais, large rocks prevent food distributions for migrants - InfoMigrants



*Calais town hall authorities seize a water point installed by CFC in the Calais town centre area (November 2024).*

**Human rights implications**

The externalisation measures outlined above, pursued within the remit of the 'zero point of fixation' policy, create a situation where people on the move in northern France are denied sufficient access to the human right to water and, concurrently, the human right to health. Notably, CFC have recorded incidents of people on the move drinking from unsafe water sources such as rivers and stagnant ponds following the seizure of water tanks from their living sites by Calais town hall authorities.

Below we include a short excerpt from our partner Solidarités International's annual *Observatory on Access to Water, Hygiene and Sanitation* on the north coast of France. In the opus for the 2024/25 observatory they analyse the WASH situation for people on the move in northern France according to the UN criteria of availability, physical accessibility, affordability, quality, safety and acceptability. Though this annual edition is yet to be published, annual editions detailing evaluating and reporting on the WASH situation for displaced communities can be found online.[6]

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**Although a basic service is provided by the authorities in the Calais area, it fails to meet the needs of exiled people living on the streets, particularly when measured against national and international standards, especially the UN criteria on the human right to water.**

The criteria for the right to water were defined by the United Nations when access to safe drinking water and sanitation was officially recognized as a human right. Created by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, these criteria aim to ensure universal access to water that is available in sufficient quantity, safe, physically accessible, economically affordable, and culturally acceptable, including for people experiencing homelessness.

[6] Observatory-on-access-to-water-hygiene-and-sanitation-2023-North-coast-of-France.pdf

- **Availability**

In terms of availability, both the quantity of water and the number of facilities provided are insufficient given the number of homeless people living in Calais. When compared to the recommendations made by the Water Coalition, LVA (La Vie Active) does not meet the needs of those living in the Nord-Littoral area.

- **Physical accessibility**

One of the major challenges is the lack of physical accessibility to water and hygiene services. In Calais, evictions—which occur on average every other day—force exiled people to shelter in increasingly remote locations, cutting them off from state services. This is especially true for smaller communities, who may face inter-community tensions, internal discrimination, or coercive isolation that prevent them from safely accessing areas where aid is concentrated. In 2024, the distances exiled individuals must travel to access these services make effective access almost impossible.

**Tarek, Syrian, in Calais for more than 20 days**
*"I have to take detours beyond the 1.5 km between the water point and my camp because there are police on the main path. They might stop me."*

**Ria, 20, Kuwaiti, in Calais for 2 months**
*"My father and brother fetch the water. The jerrycans are too heavy for me to carry."*

Finally, systematic evictions, which often involve the theft or confiscation of tents and personal belongings, hinder access to LVA distributions. Indeed, evictions often occur at the same time as distributions. Exiled people are then forced to choose: collect water or protect their belongings.

In 95% of cases, evictions on Rue de Judée coincide with LVA distributions.

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In October 2023, France announced that it had accepted the following recommendations issued by the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR):

***185 - Take measures to improve water sanitation conditions and ensure permanent and safe access to sanitation facilities for all***

***186 - Redouble efforts to provide drinking water, sanitation services and emergency accommodation for migrants***

***342 - Guarantee access to drinking water for all populations in overseas departments and regions, as well as for migrants and asylum seekers in the north of France.***

However, since accepting these recommendations, no additional measures have been implemented by the authorities to improve access to water (and WASH more broadly) for displaced communities in Calais. Conversely, the various ‘zero point of fixation’ measures continue, blocking people on the move from accessing their human right to an adequate amount of clean drinking water, in turn constituting a violation of the human right to health.