



Refugee Rights Data Project (RRDP)
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Her Excellency Ms. Rosemary McCarney
Ambassador
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19 December 2017

Your Excellency,

Re: Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of France, 15 January 2018

On behalf of Help Refugees and the Refugee Rights Data Project (RRDP), we are writing to you in view of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of France, due to take place on 15 January 2018. We are concerned that the human rights of refugees and displaced people in northern France, including the rights of the child, are being systematically violated on French territory.

Findings from RRDP's independent field research throughout 2016-2017¹ have indicated three specific areas of concern: police violence and disproportionate abuse, child protection, and destitution of asylum applicants. Please find further information and related recommendations below.

Police violence and disproportionate abuse

- During RRDP's latest research in Calais, France² we found that 91.8% of respondents had experienced some form of police violence. 72.1% of respondents were experiencing tear gas or pepper spray 'every day' or 'several times a week'. 90.4% of respondents surveyed said they 'didn't feel safe' or 'didn't feel safe at all'.
- In some cases, the police violence appears to have amounted to excessive abuse, e.g. when used against displaced people who posed no apparent threat (e.g. spraying of tear gas or pepper spray whilst people were sleeping, or walking peacefully along the main street). In many cases, it appeared disproportionate and indiscriminate (e.g. breaking of limbs, confiscation or destruction of mobile phones, confiscation of sleeping bags and shoes).
- Among children in Calais, 91.8% had experienced police violence. In Paris, France³ 25% of children had experienced verbal abuse by police, whilst 21.5% had been subjected to physical violence.

¹ For further information about our field research scope and methodology, please refer to the 'Methodology & Limitations' section in each of our reports, available here: <<http://refugeerights.org.uk/reports/>>

² Refugee Rights Data Project (2017) *Twelve Months On*, <http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/RRDP_TwelveMonthsOn.pdf>

³ Refugee Rights Data Project (2017) *Life On the Streets*, <http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/RRDP_LifeOnTheStreets.pdf>

Child protection failure

- In Calais, RRDP's results showed that 98.8% of the children interviewed were unaccompanied. In Paris 96.2% of the children we spoke to were unaccompanied.
- In Calais, 84.3% of children had been told by police to move from where they were sleeping. 84.9% described the incident as 'violent' and 52% said they 'felt scared' when it happened.
- Of the children surveyed in Paris, 50% had been told by police to move from where they were sleeping, without being given a secure alternative. 57.7% described this incident as 'violent' and had been 'scared' when it happened.
- In Calais, France, 72% of minors had been arrested or detained during their time in France. Many explained that they had access to very little water and food in detention, and others reported that they had been held in a cell without a toilet. They had had to relieve themselves on the floor next to their sleeping spot and felt humiliated.
- The research highlights the lack of information and support made available to unaccompanied minors in France, including access to family reunion processes and other legal mechanisms. In Calais, only 16.9% said they access to information about their rights and possibilities to change their situation. A similar percentage, 4.8%, said they have access to information about European immigration laws.
- RRDP's research conducted in Paris revealed an alarming absence of asylum information for children. One 16-year old boy said he had applied for reunification with his family in the UK where he has two sisters and two brothers, but had not had a response and was feeling very confused.
- Due to the alarming lack of protection and tracking mechanisms in place, the children are exposed to heightened risks of sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking.

Destitution for asylum applicants

- During RRDP's research in Paris, France⁴ 74.3% explained they wanted to stay in France and seek asylum there. The vast majority of them were destitute, sleeping in the streets of Paris. 59.6% of respondents told us had been asked to move by police from where they were sleeping. Some 53.9% described this as a 'violent' experience, while 52.5% said they 'felt scared' during these incidents. A large number recounted being kicked or hit with police batons during this relocation process.
- The research indicated a chronic absence of asylum information in Paris, which reportedly left many respondents feeling 'helpless' and 'confused'. One man explained how he had his fingerprint taken for asylum purposes, but hadn't received an update on his application in two months. In the meantime, he is sleeping in the streets.
- 53.2% of respondents said that they were experiencing a health problem at the time of the study. For many, these problems were related to sleeping in freezing conditions without adequate warmth or shelter.
- 11.7% of respondents had heard about another refugee dying in Paris. 45% reported that the death occurred due to the cold conditions experienced when sleeping in the streets. 27.5% cited health problems, 25.5% cited violence and 37.5% didn't know the reason for the death.

⁴ Refugee Rights Data Project (2017) *Life On the Streets*, <http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/RRDP_LifeOnTheStreets.pdf>

Based on these research findings, **we encourage you to consider making the following recommendations to the State of France** during the forthcoming Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on 15 January 2018:

- **Police violence and abuse:** Put an end to police violence and abuse against displaced people. Those officers responsible for abuse must be held to account, and police must be trained and made aware of the prohibition of disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force.
- **Child protection:** Ensure that the child protection failure in Calais and Paris is addressed with urgency. Unaccompanied children in displacement on French soil must be given full access to asylum procedures, shelter, mental and physical health services, family reunification under the Dublin regulations, and other basic services such as access to food, water and sanitation. France must stop placing minors in detention with immediate effect.
- **Asylum accommodation:** Comply with its obligations under the EU reception directive and immediately provide accommodation to all asylum seekers while their claims are being processed by the French State.

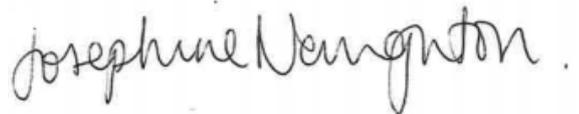
We moreover invite you to consult the recommendations made by [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#), many of which resonate with our research findings and recommendations.

Please do not hesitate to contact us, should you require any further information or clarifications. Many thanks for your time and attention to these important matters.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.



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