

# POLICE VIOLENCE



Across Europe, Refugee Rights Europe has documented a number of worrying reports of police violence in the form of physical violence, verbal abuse, the excessive use of tear gas and reports of arbitrary detention, including of unaccompanied minors. In many locations, this violence is reported to take the form of dangerous or life-threatening forms.

## PARIS, FRANCE

Research conducted in January 2018:

- 42% of respondents reported feeling unsafe, with many citing police violence and the precarious living situation.
- 33.8% of respondents had experienced police violence, 86% of which had been subjected to tear gas, 28% verbal abuse and 20.4% physical abuse. Tear gas was reported to be utilised as an intimidation tactic in order to force displaced people to move, without offering alternative accommodation.
- 21.3% of respondents, including minors, had been arrested whilst in France.

## CALAIS, FRANCE

Research conducted in October 2017:

- A striking 91.8% of respondents reported experiencing police violence. This is an even higher percentage than during the time of the Calais camp (75.9%) and during Refugee Rights Europe's research in April 2017 (89.2%).
- Physical violence often took the form of physical beatings with batons, while some respondents reported broken bones as a result of police violence, while others showed researchers open wounds from the violence.
- 71.9% of respondents had been arrested or detained during their time in France, while the detention period ranged from a few hours to up to 45 days.

## VENTIMIGLIA, ITALY

Research conducted in August 2017:

- 40.4% of respondents reported that they had experienced police violence by Italian police while 53.1% had experienced violence at the hands of French police.
- 73.8% of respondents had been arrested since arriving in Europe, where most of these instances of detention seemed to occur during attempted border crossings between Italy and France.
- 100% of the child respondents had been forced back on a train from France to Italy by French police. It is Refugee Rights Europe's understanding that these constitute illegal push-backs; minors arriving on French soil should become the concern of the French authorities.

## Policy recommendations:

European governments, through their Interior Ministries, must provide unequivocal instructions to its police forces not to resort to the disproportionate use of force, excessive use of tear gas and pepper spray, in particular against displaced people who are posing no threat, e.g. whilst being asleep, or in other similar circumstances.

In addition, governments, through relevant agencies, must provide training for border control officials and police forces to ensure awareness of, and compliance with, international human rights obligations and child protection.

European governments, through their local authorities, must put in place a transparent complaints procedure in order to allow displaced people access to justice and redress for violent crimes committed against them.

**The detention of children must end under all circumstances.**