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Paris Police Continue To Harass Homeless Migrants

Stop and Punish Abuse, Provide Accommodation

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500 tents to shelter migrants were set up on Place de la République in Paris on November 23, 2020, before being violently dismantled by police forces. © 2020 Utopia 56

On Monday night, I felt shame and disgust as I watched videos of law enforcement officers from my own country violently [removing](#) people from their tents in Paris' Place de la République, confiscating makeshift shelters and sleeping bags, and violently dispersing them with tear gas and batons. Other videos showed police [escorting](#) them to the outskirts of Paris, far from public view. These people had set up camp in the heart of Paris to draw the authorities' attention to their desperate situation.

In Paris, as in [Calais](#) or [Grande-Synthe](#), asylum seekers and migrants survive in undignified conditions, and are victims of almost daily harassment as police dismantle their makeshift shelters and brutally disperse them without offering alternative accommodation. Last week, police dismantled a makeshift camp in [Saint-Denis](#), a Paris suburb, leaving as many as 1,000 people without shelter. And all of this amid a public health emergency as winter approaches.

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Without social media videos, these shameful acts might have remained invisible. A journalist at the scene was himself violently [attacked](#) by the police. France's Interior Minister described the images as "shocking," but just yesterday, the National Assembly adopted legislation seeking to restrict the dissemination of images depicting police operations, which that same minister and the rest of the government support. The new law, a provision of [the so-called "Global Security" bill](#), could seriously limit the ability of the media and ordinary citizens to document law enforcement abuses, which could lead to impunity for these actions. The provision has yet to be adopted by the Senate. After the images were circulated, investigations were [opened](#) by the General Inspection of the National Police (IGPN) and the Paris Prosecutor's Office.

France should respect its human rights obligations and ensure the respect of the rights of migrants and asylum seekers as well as human and dignified treatment. Instead of mobilizing police officers to confiscate tents and sleeping bags in the middle of the night, French authorities should rally to provide safe accommodation for and respect the dignity of those on the streets.

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