

Members of the Hellenic Parliament

Hellenic Parliament
Parliament Mansion
GR-10021, Athens
Greece

October 6, 2020

Subject: Open Letter to Members of the Hellenic Parliament Calling for an Investigation into Border Abuses

Dear Members of the Hellenic Parliament,

We, the undersigned 29 human rights and humanitarian non-governmental organizations, jointly call on you to urgently establish an inquiry into all allegations of unlawful returns of migrants to Turkey, including pushbacks and collective expulsions, at Greece's land and sea borders with Turkey, particularly with regard to allegations of such practices concerning the Evros region and the Aegean islands, as well as alleged violations of Greek, EU and International law on the rights of asylum seekers.

These incidents have entailed other very serious human rights violations such as arbitrary deprivation of liberty, grave breaches of the prohibition on inhuman and degrading treatment, and failure to respect and protect the right to life. Parliament should exercise its oversight authority to investigate these allegations and to determine if the scope of any illegal acts identified amount to a *de facto* government policy at odds with international, European, and Greek law.

We urge you to conduct a prompt, independent, transparent, and effective investigation into allegations that Greek Coast Guard, Greek police and Greek army personnel, sometimes in close coordination with uniformed masked men dressed in black or commando-like uniforms, have been involved in such unlawful returns or other acts that put the lives and safety of displaced people at risk. The investigation should look at those allegations with a particular focus to the events surfaced in 2019 and 2020, as evidenced by the reports relied upon.

Any officer found to have engaged in such illegal acts, as well as their commanding officers, including government officials who have command responsibility for such forces, should be subject to disciplinary and criminal sanctions, as applicable. The inquiry should seek to establish the identity and relation of the masked men and unidentified officers to law enforcement and steps taken to ensure that they are held to account for illegal acts they may have carried out.

Over the years, non-governmental groups and media outlets have consistently reported the unlawful return, including through pushbacks, of groups and individuals from Greece to Turkey by Greek law enforcement officers or unidentified masked men, who appear to be working in tandem with border enforcement officials. An indicative list of reports of incidents is attached to this letter.

Non-governmental groups and media outlets reported in 2020 (reflected in the annex) that Greek Coast Guard personnel, sometimes accompanied by armed masked men in dark or commando-like clothing, have unlawfully abandoned migrants at sea on motor-less, inflatable vessels; violently

transferred individuals from Greek islands, or from the dinghy upon which they were traveling, to such rafts, and then left them adrift near Turkish territorial waters; or reportedly intercepted and disabled boats carrying migrants by damaging or removing the engines or their fuel or puncturing the hulls of inflatable boats.

Non-governmental organizations and the media have also reported in 2020 on persistent allegations that Greek border forces have used violence against and in the unlawful return of displaced people, including in the form of collective expulsions and pushbacks, through the Evros land border with Turkey.

On June 10, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said it was “deeply concerned about persistent reports of pushbacks and collective expulsions of migrants, in some cases violent, at the European Union (EU) border between Greece and Turkey” and called upon Greece to investigate. On August 21, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said it was “deeply concerned by an increasing number of credible reports indicating that men, women, and children may have been informally returned to Turkey immediately after reaching Greek soil or territorial waters in recent months,” and urged Greece to refrain from such practices and to seriously investigate these reports. The Agency earlier released a statement making similar calls, on June 12.

Similarly, in its July report on Greece, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) said it had received reports “that a number of persons newly arrived in the Evros region had been arrested, detained and summarily returned across the land border between Greece and Turkey without being given the opportunity to apply for international protection in Greece.” The WGAD urged authorities “to promptly and fully investigate allegations of such pushbacks, including any acts of violence or ill-treatment that may have occurred during such incidents, and to ensure that such practices do not occur in future.”

On July 6, during a meeting at the European Parliament’s Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) on fundamental rights at the Greek border, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, said that incidents should be investigated. In its new Pact on Migration and Asylum, presented on September 23, the Commission recommended to member states to set up an independent monitoring mechanism, amid increased allegations of violence and abuse at the EU’s external borders.

Despite the numerous allegations brought forward by international and non-governmental organizations and numerous calls for investigation of the alleged incidents, we regret that the Greek government has so far denied these practices and failed to take actions to end those abuses or to genuinely investigate this pattern, assume responsibility, and hold those responsible to account.

During the 6 July meeting at the European Parliament’s LIBE Committee, members of the Greek government refused to comment on those allegations, which they qualified as “fake news,” despite the amount of reports reflected by European lawmakers. Confronted during a CNN interview with a *New York Times* article documenting the issue of pushbacks, published on August 14, Prime Minister Mitsotakis said, “It has not happened. We’ve been the victims of a significant misinformation campaign,” suggesting instead that Turkey was responsible.

The reported practices, including violence, deprivation of liberty, and unlawful returns, violate several human rights norms, including the absolute prohibitions against *refoulement* – the forcible

return of anyone to a real risk of persecution or other serious harm. They violate the prohibitions against inhuman or degrading treatment, arbitrary detention and collective expulsion, as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Greece is a party.

Greece is also bound by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which recognizes the right to seek asylum, guarantees protection from *refoulement* and prohibits collective expulsions. Summary returns do not allow for an adequate assessment of protection needs. Turkey does not meet the EU criteria for a safe third country to which an asylum seeker may be returned, which include respect for the principle of non-refoulement and the right to seek asylum.

We recognize that due to the lack of equitable responsibility-sharing mechanisms among EU member states and other failures of solidarity, Greece bears a significant responsibility among EU member states. We have repeatedly called on EU institutions and member states to implement a meaningful responsibility-sharing mechanism. Nevertheless, this situation does not relieve Greece of its human rights obligations stemming from its domestic, European and international commitments, which include the duty to protect the human rights and dignity of everyone, irrespective of their status as migrant or asylum seeker.

We thank you for your attention to these important matters. We look forward to a continued dialogue.

Yours sincerely,

Human Rights Watch
ActionAid Hellas
Amnesty International
ARSIS – Association for the Social Support of Youth
Danish Refugee Council
Equal Rights Beyond Borders
Fenix – Humanitarian Legal Aid
Greek Council for Refugees
Greek Forum of Refugees
Greek Helsinki Monitor
Hellenic League for Human Rights
Help Refugees
HIAS Greece
HumanRights360
International Rescue Committee
INTERSOS Hellas
Josoor
Legal Centre Lesbos
Lesvos Solidarity
Medecins Du Monde – Greece
Mobile Info Team
Network for Children’s Rights
PRAKSIS
Refugee Legal Support
Refugee Rights Europe

Refugees International
Refugee Support Aegean
SolidarityNow
Terre des hommes Hellas

Cc:

Minister for Migration and Asylum, Notis Mitarakis
Minister of Shipping and Island Policy, Ioannis Plakiotakis
Chief of the Hellenic Police, Police Lieutenant General Michalis Karamalakis
Commandant of Hellenic Coast Guard, Vice-Admiral Theodore Kliaris
European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson
President of the European Parliament, David Maria Sassoli
Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), Juan Fernando López Aguilar
Executive Director of Frontex, Fabrice Leggeri
Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, Michael O'Flaherty
The Greek Ombudsman, Andreas Pottakis

Annex I
August 21, 2020 Statement by UNHCR

<https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/16207-unhcr-concerned-by-pushback-reports-calls-for-protection-of-refugees-and-asylum-seekers.html>

UNHCR concerned by pushback reports, calls for protection of refugees and asylum-seekers

August 21, 2020

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, remains deeply concerned by an increasing number of credible reports indicating that men, women and children may have been informally returned to Turkey immediately after reaching Greek soil or territorial waters in recent months.

UNHCR firmly reiterates its call on Greece to refrain from such practices and to seriously investigate these reports, which include a series of credible and direct accounts that have been recorded by the UNHCR Office in Greece and have been brought to the attention of the responsible authorities. Given the nature, content, frequency, and consistency of these accounts, a proper investigation should be launched without further delay.

UNHCR fully respects the legitimate right of States to control their borders and recognizes the challenges posed by mixed migration movements at the external borders of the EU. However, States must guarantee and safeguard the rights of those seeking international protection in accordance with national, European and international law. Every individual has the right for their case to be heard and their protection needs assessed.

“Greece and its people have shown immense solidarity and compassion with thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers who have sought safety in the country since 2015,” said Philippe Leclerc, UNHCR Representative in Greece. “The numbers of refugee arrivals have significantly dropped since then but there are still people who continue to seek protection and asylum in Greece and in Europe,” he said.

“Safeguarding Greece’s borders and protecting refugees are not mutually exclusive. Both are and should be possible. This is not a dilemma but a balance that must be struck,” said Leclerc. “Otherwise, the consequences may be far-reaching and damaging: for the people whose lives and safety may be put at risk; for the upholding of fundamental principles of international and European law; for long-since recognized human rights norms and values, that may be irreparably undermined,” he added.

UNHCR is particularly concerned about the increasing reports, since March 2020, of alleged informal returns by sea of persons who, according to their own attestations or those of third persons, have disembarked on Greek shores and have thereafter been towed back to sea. Worryingly, UNHCR has also received reports and testimonies about people being left adrift at sea for a long time, often on unseaworthy and overcrowded dinghies, waiting to be rescued.

UNHCR has also called for further preventive measures against such practices, for clear rules of process at the border and internal monitoring mechanisms, including through the reinforcement of the role of the Greek Ombudsman.

Saving lives must be the first priority – both on land and at sea. UNHCR acknowledges the challenges faced by frontline states like Greece and calls on EU Member States to demonstrate their solidarity with Greece, particularly through the relocation of asylum-seekers.

Solutions can be achieved through combating smuggling, expanding legal options for migration, and ensuring that all those in need of protection have effective access to it. At the same time, the return of those who, after a formal assessment of their needs, are found not to be in need of international protection is also part of effective migration management and should be consistently addressed and supported.

The right to seek asylum is a fundamental human right. With concerted efforts and cooperation between all concerned states and the EU, managing borders can be achieved and protection concerns of refugees addressed.

Annex II
June 12, 2020 Statement by UNHCR

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2020/6/5ee33a6f4/unhcr-calls-greece-investigate-pushbacks-sea-land-borders-turkey.html>

UNHCR calls on Greece to investigate pushbacks at sea and land borders with Turkey

June 12, 2020

This is a summary of what was said by UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch – to whom quoted text may be attributed – at today's press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is urging Greece to investigate multiple reports of pushbacks by Greek authorities at the country's sea and land borders, possibly returning migrants and asylum seekers to Turkey after they had reached Greek territory or territorial waters.

UNHCR has continuously addressed its concerns with the Greek government and has called for urgent inquiries into a series of alleged incidents reported in media, many of which corroborated by non-governmental organizations and direct testimonies. Such allegations have increased since March and reports indicate that several groups of people may have been summarily returned after reaching Greek territory.

Some 3,000 asylum seekers arrived in Greece by land and sea since the start of March, a precipitous drop from previous months and compared to previous years. Yet, the number of reported pushbacks, particularly at sea, has been rising.

Greece has the legitimate right to control its borders and manage irregular migration while respecting international human rights and refugee protection standards. Controls and practices must guarantee the rights of asylum seekers and they should not be turned away at Greece's borders. The Hellenic Coast Guard has shown exceptional dedication and courage to save countless refugee and migrant lives at sea. However, the present allegations go against Greece's international obligations and can expose people to grave danger.

The right to seek and enjoy asylum is fundamental and all asylum seekers should be provided with access to asylum procedures and protection from refoulement or informal forced return. The coronavirus pandemic has deepened the plight of people fleeing war, conflict and persecution, but people who are forced to flee conflict and persecution should not be denied safety and protection under these circumstances.

UNHCR has been calling on states to manage border restrictions in ways that also respect international human rights and refugee protection standards, including through quarantines and health checks. With the need to reduce risks to public health, UNHCR has been supporting efforts and calling for additional and adequate spaces for a 14-day quarantine.

Annex III
June 10, 2020 Statement by IOM

<https://greece.iom.int/en/news/iom-alarmed-over-reports-pushbacks-greece-eu-border-turkey>

IOM Alarmed over Reports of Pushbacks from Greece at EU Border with Turkey

June 10, 2020

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is deeply concerned about persistent reports of pushbacks and collective expulsions of migrants, in some cases violent, at the European Union (EU) border between Greece and Turkey. International media reports and footage showing the use of marine rescue equipment to expel migrants across the Eastern Aegean Sea are especially disturbing.

IOM, together with partners, are closely monitoring the situation and have received reports of migrants being arbitrarily arrested in Greece and pushed back to Turkey and violence perpetrated against migrants by some border personnel.

The Organization calls on Greek authorities to investigate these allegations and testimonies given by people forced to cross the Greece-Turkey border.

Amid heightened health considerations, we urge States to refrain from securitizing borders and implementing migration practices that could compromise the human rights of migrants, including measures such as the construction of border walls, militarizing border patrols or increasing deportations.

IOM also appeals to States to suspend deportations during the COVID-19 pandemic while facilitating voluntary returns when and where possible, particularly for those migrants who, considering the situation, would feel safer back home and express their wish to return.

At all times, priority should be given to ensuring protection-sensitive border management aligned with international law, which respects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants regardless of their migratory status including the right to seek asylum.

While states' sovereign rights – including maintaining the integrity of borders – must be respected, their discretion ends where they overlap with international human rights obligations.

For More information please contact:

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Annex IV

Excerpts on pushbacks from the July 29 Report on Greece of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

The full report is attached at the end of the Annex

Human Rights Council Forty-fifth session

14 September–2 October 2020 Agenda item 3

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Visit to Greece (from 2 to 13 December 2019 upon the invitation of the Government).

6. Pushbacks at the border between Greece and Turkey

87. The Working Group was informed that a number of persons newly arrived in the Evros region had been arrested, detained and summarily returned across the land border between Greece and Turkey without being given the opportunity to apply for international protection in Greece. In some cases, it was alleged that individuals had made previous attempts to cross the border, but had been forcibly removed to Turkey in each case. Pushback practices are not permitted under Greek law and are contrary to the right to seek asylum. The Working Group is therefore of the view that detention for this purpose has no legal basis. The Working Group urges the Government to promptly and fully investigate all allegations of such pushbacks, including any acts of violence or ill-treatment that may have occurred during such incidents, and to ensure that such practices do not occur in future.

88. The Working Group was informed that the European Border and Coast Guard Agency offered an anonymous complaints mechanism. While the Government indicates that no complaints were made through this mechanism in 2019 for irregular pushbacks, the Working Group considers that it may be a useful means of ensuring that any allegations of pushbacks are received and investigated by the appropriate authorities.

Annex V
March 17, 2020 Report by Human Rights Watch

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/17/greece-violence-against-asylum-seekers-border>

Greece: Violence Against Asylum Seekers at Border
Detained, Assaulted, Stripped, Summarily Deported

(Athens, March 17, 2020) – Greek security forces and unidentified armed men at the [Greece-Turkey](#) land border have detained, assaulted, sexually assaulted, robbed, and stripped asylum seekers and migrants, then forced them back to Turkey, Human Rights Watch said today. Top EU officials have praised Greece’s border control measures and [provided support](#) through the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX).

“The European Union is hiding behind a shield of Greek security force abuse instead of helping Greece protect asylum seekers and relocate them safely throughout the EU,” said [Nadia Hardman](#), refugee rights researcher and advocate at Human Rights Watch. “The EU should protect people in need rather than support forces who beat, rob, strip, and dump asylum seekers and migrants back across the river.”

Greece should immediately reverse its [March 1 decision](#) to suspend for one month access to asylum for people irregularly entering the country and to deport them, where possible, to their countries of origin or transit. The Greek Parliament should investigate, and FRONTEX should monitor, any Greek security force abuse and summary deportation of asylum seekers and migrants. EU member states should urgently relocate asylum seekers from Greece to other EU countries and fairly process their asylum claims.

Between March 7 and 9, Human Rights Watch interviewed 21 asylum seekers and migrants, 17 of whom were men and 4 women, in Turkey about how they tried to enter Greece over the land border following the Turkish government’s February 27 announcement that it would [no longer stop](#) asylum seekers and migrants from leaving Turkey to reach the European Union.

Those interviewed and thousands of others have traveled to Turkey’s Pazarkule border gate on the Greece-Turkey border and to the Evros river, which forms a natural border between Turkey and Greece, to the south of Pazarkule. Eight of the interviewees said Turkish police transported them to border villages and showed them where to cross into Greece.

In response, the Greek government reinforced its border with police, army, and special forces, which fired teargas and [reportedly](#) rubber bullets at people who approached the Pazarkule crossing. Two asylum seekers who spoke to Human Rights Watch said that Greek security forces also used live fire to push people back. One of these people, interviewed in a hospital where he was getting treatment, said he was shot in the leg. [According to Turkish officials](#), Greek security forces have shot and killed at least three asylum seekers or migrants, but Human Rights Watch has not verified this number.

All those interviewed said that within hours after they crossed in boats or waded through the river, armed men wearing various law enforcement uniforms or in civilian clothes, including all in black with balaclavas, intercepted everyone in their group. All said the men detained them in official or informal detention centers, or on the roadside, and stole their money, mobile phones, and bags before summarily pushing them back to Turkey. Seventeen described how the men assaulted them and others, including women and children, through electric shocks, beating with wooden or metal

rods, prolonged beating of the soles of feet, punching, kicking, and stomping.

Human Rights Watch also interviewed five Turkish residents of border villages who described how between February 28 and March 6 they had helped care for large groups of people who returned injured and almost naked from Greece saying that Greek security forces had beaten, robbed, stripped, and deported them.

In one case, an interviewee described Greek security forces sexually assaulting his wife when they crossed the border. “They [Greek security forces] tried to search my wife and touched her breasts,” said a Syrian man who was travelling with his wife and children. “Then they tried to take off her headscarf and her trousers. When I tried to stop them, they beat me really badly with their fists, feet, a heavy plastic rod, and a metal stick. They hit my 2-year-old daughter with a heavy plastic stick on the head so that she still has a bruise.” Human Rights Watch saw a bruise underneath the girl’s hair.

In most cases, the interviewees, said that armed men stripped them down to their underwear, including some women, and forced them across the Evros river back to Turkey. Many said that they were passed between various groups, suggesting coordination between police or soldiers and the unidentified men.

In three cases, asylum seekers and migrants said they were forced back to Turkey or handed over to abusive Greek forces by people who did not speak Greek and were not wearing a Greek uniform, though they did not know where they were from. On March 3, 2020, FRONTEX agreed to deploy along the full length of the Turkey-Greece land border but how many forces have been deployed and when remains unclear. On March 13, Human Rights Watch informed FRONTEX about alleged abuse by non-Greek forces and asked about its deployments along the border. On March 16, FRONTEX replied saying that it did not have the requested information and that it would respond as soon as it did.

Some of the interviewees said they tried multiple times to enter Greece and were each time forcibly returned. Taken together, the interviewees described 38 deportation incidents involving almost 4,000 people, although some of these could be double counts.

On March 6, the Turkish President’s communication director, Fahrettin Altun, [condemned](#) reports of Greek border security stripping, beating, and deporting asylum seekers across the Evros river, but Turkey continued to transport people to the border and urge them to cross.

On March 3, senior EU officials met Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the Greece-Turkey land border, praising the government for protecting the border and [referring](#) to Greece as the EU’s “shield.” In later statements, the European Commission president, Ursula van der Leyden, and EU Migration Commissioner Ylva Johansson [said](#) they had emphasized the need to respect fundamental rights, including the [right to asylum](#).

Greece is bound by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which recognizes the right to seek asylum and guarantees protection from refoulement, the forcible return of anyone to a real risk of persecution or other serious harm.

Turkey does [not meet the EU criteria for a safe third country](#) to which an asylum seeker can be returned, which include respect for the principle of non-refoulement. Since July 2019, Turkey has [deported](#) at least hundreds of Syrians from its cities, exposing those forcibly returned from Greece to the risk of onward refoulement to Syria.

Since 2016, Turkish border guards patrolling Turkey's closed border with Syria have killed and injured Syrian asylum seekers and carried out mass summary pushbacks. Most have been returned to Idlib governorate, where Syrian government and Russian forces have recently carried out a new round of [indiscriminate bombings](#), striking civilians, hospitals, and schools, forcing a million people to flee. In 2018, Turkey also [summarily deported thousands of Afghans](#) to their country.

Greece should allow people seeking protection at its borders to enter, and fairly and efficiently assess their asylum claims, Human Rights Watch said. The European Commission should urge Greece to reinstate asylum procedures for people irregularly entering Greece from Turkey, end summary returns to Turkey, and press the authorities to prosecute abusive officials.

FRONTEX should monitor and publicly report on Greek security force compliance with European and international human rights and refugee law, including detention standards, as well as similar compliance by its officers and those contributed by member states. Turkey should not compel anyone to cross the border irregularly into Greece.

“Without EU pressure on Greece to stop these appalling abuses, this cycle of violence will continue,” Hardman said. “But the EU should also help Greece by relocating asylum seekers to the rest of the EU and help Turkey, the world's number one refugee hosting country, by resettling far greater numbers of refugees.”

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants in Turkey; Transports to the Border in February and March

Turkey shelters almost [3.6 million Syrians](#) registered under a “temporary protection” regulation, which Turkish authorities say automatically applies to [all Syrians seeking asylum](#). This reflects the [UN refugee agency's position](#) that “the vast majority of Syrian asylum-seekers continue to ... need international refugee protection” and that “states [should] not forcibly return Syrian nationals and former habitual residents of Syria.”

According to Turkey's [migration authorities](#), almost 115,000 asylum seekers lodged protection claims in 2018, including 70,000 Iraqis and 40,000 Afghans, while [in 2019](#) almost 35,000 Afghans and 15,000 Iraqis lodged asylum claims. In late 2019, Turkey [said](#) it also hosted about 460,000 irregularly present people, including 200,000 Afghans, 70,000 Pakistanis, 55,000 Syrians, 12,000 Iraqis, 12,000 Palestinians, and 9,000 Iranians. It is unclear how Turkey identified these people without registering them.

Until the February 27, 2020, announcement, Turkish border authorities generally prevented foreigners from leaving Turkey irregularly at its EU land borders, reflected in the high numbers of people who resorted to entering Greece in smugglers' boats beginning in 2015. Between January 2015 and March 12, 2020, Turkey's coastguard [reportedly](#) intercepted 186,766 asylum seekers and migrants in the Aegean Sea.

On March 5, Turkey [announced](#) that it was sending 1,000 additional police officers to the border with Greece to prevent Greece from pushing asylum seekers back to Turkey. Turkish media [published](#) photos of what the authorities said were new deployments along the Evros river.

Eight asylum seekers and migrants Human Rights Watch spoke with said that between February 28

and March 6, Turkish police or military had transported them in buses to villages on the Evros river to the south of the Pazarkule border crossing and helped them cross to Greece. They included two men taken from immigration removal centers, one of whom said the authorities threatened to kill him if he did not agree to be taken to the Greek border. Two others said police or military took them to Pazarkule. At 7 p.m. on March 8, Human Rights Watch saw hundreds of foreign nationals getting off five large white coaches without commercial logos parked next to police vehicles in Küplü village, 400 meters from the Greek border.

Abuse by Greek Forces in late February and early March

Between March 7 and 9, two Human Rights Watch researchers interviewed 21 asylum seekers and migrants in Edirne city and near the Evros river to the south of Edirne about abuses that they had faced on the Greek side of the river. Seventeen of them were men and four were women: 7 from Afghanistan, 4 from Syria, 2 each from Morocco, Pakistan, and Senegal, and one each from Azerbaijan, Gambia, Iran, and Iraq.

Interviews were carried out privately and confidentially through male and female interpreters in the interviewees' first language. One person spoke fluent English. They shared their accounts voluntarily, and without remuneration, and consented to Human Rights Watch collecting and publishing their accounts without using their names.

Their accounts confirm patterns that Human Rights Watch documented in similar situations in [2008](#) and [2018](#). In mid-2018, the [Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture](#) said it had received "several consistent and credible allegations of pushbacks by boat from Greece to Turkey at the Evros River border by masked Greek police and border guards or (para-) military commandos." And in November 2018, the Council of Europe's [human rights commissioner called on Greece to investigate allegations](#) of Greek abuses at Turkey's border, in light of information pointing to "an established practice."

Interception and Detention

All of those interviewed said that armed men, and in one case a woman, in uniform or in black or other civilian clothes intercepted everyone in their group within one to 10 hours after they had crossed the Evros river. They said the men were armed with handguns, rifles, metal bars, and wood or plastic batons.

Ten of the interviewees described 19 occasions in which men they thought were police stopped them, because they were wearing blue, grey, or dark uniforms. Five interviewees described six incidents in which men they thought were soldiers stopped them, because they wore green or beige camouflage uniforms. Five others said that they were stopped by men wearing black or other civilian clothes. One person said he was stopped by four armed men and a woman in black with the German flag on their sleeves and one man in black with the Swedish flag on his sleeve and that they handed him and others over to men in black with balaclavas.

In the two other cases, asylum seekers described men in black and balaclavas speaking English and French who said they were from France, and men in camouflage uniforms who spoke what sounded like German, who abused and deported them to Turkey.

Greek authorities have [said](#) that police officers wearing dark blue uniforms work at police stations; border patrol police officers wear military camouflage uniforms. FRONTEX guards wear their national uniforms with a blue armband with the EU flag.

Interviewees said the men who stopped them in Greece arrived in police cars, pick-up trucks, white vans without windows or signs, or larger green or camouflage trucks that appeared to be military trucks. Sixteen said they were held on the roadside or in forests for between half an hour and four hours after being apprehended, while five said the armed men took them to unofficial detention centers. They described the detention locations as small houses, small compounds, and partially built houses and said they were detained there between two and five hours. In one case, a man said men wearing uniforms marked “police” held him in a metal container with about 50 other people for 18 hours without water or access to a toilet.

No one registered those interviewed, they said, and their detention appears to have been arbitrary and incommunicado.

On March 10, the *New York Times* [reported](#) on a detention center a few hundred meters from the border village of Poros, four kilometers east of the town of Feres, which it concluded Greek security forces had used to detain asylum seekers and migrants in early March before returning them to Turkey. On March 11, the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, [said](#) she would discuss the center with the Greek authorities.

Beatings and Abuse

Seventeen of those interviewed said the men detaining them physically abused them or others, including women and children. Eight said police were responsible for ill treatment, three identified soldiers, three spoke of men in black and balaclavas, and three said men in other civilian clothes mistreated them.

A 31-year-old Syrian man and 22-year-old Syrian woman from Idlib with three daughters ages 2, 4, and 6 said that they crossed to Greece on March 5, where men in camouflaged uniforms who they believed to be Greek soldiers took them and 40 others to a small compound. The man described what happened next:

They [Greek security forces] tried to search my wife and touched her breasts. Then they tried to take off her headscarf and her trousers. When I tried to stop them, they beat me really badly with their fists, feet, a heavy plastic rod and a metal stick. They hit my 2-year-old daughter with a heavy plastic stick on the head so that she still has a bruise. Then they gave my wife an electric shock on her wrist and shoulder and one of the men pointed a gun at my head. They beat many of the other men [in the group] and forced all of them to take off almost all their clothes. They took our phones, money and passports. After two hours they took us in one truck back to the river where a man in a boat in black with a balaclava went back and forth [across the river] until all of us were back in Turkey.

A 33-year-old man from Afghanistan who said he crossed to Greece on March 1 explained:

I crossed in a boat with about 60 others including families. Turkish police made sure there were no Greek police on the other side of the river. We walked for about eight hours and then the Greek police found us and took us to a half-built house. They stripped us men down to our underwear and they slapped, kicked, and beat us with wooden sticks. They didn't show any mercy and beat some of the women and children, too. They took our phones, money, bags, and clothes and held us there for five hours. They brought other refugees to that building. When there were about 300 of us, they took us back to the river and put us on small boats back to Turkey.

A 25-year-old Syrian man with a heavily bandaged right arm said that he crossed to Greece on March 2 in a group of about 200 people and that they walked through forests and villages for two hours:

Suddenly a transit van and a pick-up truck arrived with about eight men. Four were in civilian clothes and all of them had beards. Some others were wearing a patchy camouflage with black boots and others were wearing a green uniform with beige boots. They all had big guns, that looked bigger than a Kalashnikov. They stopped us and took our bags, money, and phones. Some of us tried to hold onto our things so they punched and kicked us, including women. They threw me to the ground and one of the men stomped on my right hand about ten times. After they sent us back to Turkey, a Syrian doctor did surgery on my hand to repair a severed nerve.

A 30-year-old Pakistani man in a group of 20 described their arrival during the first week of March:

All of us have tried to cross to Greece every day for the past week. Each time the Greek police catch us and strip us of our clothes, beat us, give us electric shocks to our upper body, and steal whatever we have with us and then send us back. Each time we find locals in Turkey who give us clothes. Today, they beat two of the men in our group so badly on the soles of their feet that an ambulance in Turkey picked them up in this village and took them to a hospital.

Theft, Stripping, and Summary Deportations

Fourteen of the people interviewed described 20 incidents in which the armed men who had stopped them stripped them of their possessions, including personal identification documents, money, telephones, and bags. Seven said the police took their belongings, seven said it was men in black, five said soldiers took their belongings and one said it was men in other civilian clothes.

Eleven people described 15 incidents in which men detaining them stripped them of their clothes down to their underwear, including three who said women were also stripped, and then forced them back across the border.

A 32-year-old man from Afghanistan said Turkish police drove him and 300 others to a border village with Greece, where they crossed on February 29. He said that men in various uniforms and civilian clothes intercepted them after two hours and held them for half an hour at the side of the road:

After about 30 minutes, three big trucks arrived. The drivers and some other men on the trucks were wearing dark blue uniforms and had sticks that give electric shocks. As the men forced us on the trucks, they told all of us men to take off our clothes, except for our underwear. They beat the men who didn't want to strip. Then they took us to the river and forced us onto inflatable boats back to Turkey.

The 21 interviewees described 38 deportation incidents involving almost 4,000 people. This includes eight groups of an average of about 50 people deported in the last two days of February and thirty groups deported in the first seven days of March, including 22 groups of an average of about 50 people, seven groups of an average of about 200 and one group of about 1,000 people.

All interviewees said that armed men walked or drove them back to the Evros river, in military trucks, pick-up trucks or in other civilian vehicles. There the armed men ordered them onto small boats controlled by men in camouflage uniforms or civilian clothes that went back and forth until they had transported the entire group back to Turkey. Some said that some of the armed men watched the Turkish side of the border with binoculars during the deportation.

Shooting Live Ammunition

Media reports [say](#) Turkish officials have accused Greek security forces of shooting and killing at least three people during the first week of March. These [possibly include](#) a Syrian man who was [killed](#) on the Greek side of the Evros river the morning of March 2.

On March 10, a lawyer with the Istanbul Bar Association's Human Rights Center said she had petitioned the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to order Greece to allow asylum seekers to enter Greece and to stop using live fire and teargas against them, based on the reported March 2 killing.

A Senegalese asylum seeker told Human Rights Watch that shortly after he had crossed the Evros river on the morning of March 2 with about 300 people, Greek security forces fired shots at the group and he saw two men who he thought were Syrians fall to the ground. He ran away and did not see what happened afterward.

The Bar Association lawyer also said that the Turkish prosecutor's office had opened an investigation into the killing of a Pakistani man on March 4 at the Pazarkule border crossing. The lawyer said the Office of the Governor of Edirne Province referred to the man's death in a March 4 news release. It [said](#) that at 11 a.m., Greek border forces at the Pazarkule crossing had used "teargas, plastic bullets and live bullets" against asylum seekers and had injured six people, one of whom died later that day.

On March 9, Human Rights Watch interviewed a hospitalized Pakistani man who said that Greek border guards shot him in the leg near the Pazarkule border crossing on March 1 while he was standing in Turkey about 200 meters from the Greek border gate. His doctor said he had been injured by a bullet that shattered inside his leg.

On March 4, a Greek government spokesperson [said](#) that Turkey had "fabricated fake news ... concerning alleged injuries from Greek fire" and [repeated](#) the claim during the following days on

social media. On March 5, Turkish media [reported](#) that the Turkish authorities were “preparing a case for the European Court of Human Rights over Greece’s treatment of asylum seekers trying to cross from Turkey.

Turkish Villagers Providing Help

Human Rights Watch interviewed five Turkish people living in border villages near the Pazarkule border crossing on March 8 who confirmed the accounts of violence. They said that every night dozens or hundreds of men, women, and children would return after attempting to cross into Greece, often nearly naked, describing in broken Turkish that they had been beaten, robbed, stripped, and pushed back by Greek security forces. The villagers said they saw back and head injuries and a broken leg.

They also said that for many years, asylum seekers and migrants had passed through their villages, crossed to Greece and been pushed back to Turkey but that the numbers had been relatively low. They all said that the numbers pushed back had significantly increased between February 28 and March 6, after buses brought dozens or hundreds of people to the village each night.

One man in a border village said:

Every night since February 27 buses with migrants have arrived in our village. They stay in mosques and other buildings and cross the river [to Greece] in inflatable boats. In early March we sometimes heard gunshots from across the river. We saw them come back stripped and cold and beaten. Some had what looked like broken legs and one woman was limping badly. Some had bad wounds on their head. Most of them had stripes across their backs where they had been beaten. Men were stripped to their underwear. We always saw groups returning with men stripped. The majority spoke Turkish and they told us that the Greek soldiers caught them and put them in camps where they took their phones and money. This has always been happening, maybe once every month, but not like now, with so many people and every night.

A man in another village said:

Last week groups of dozens and up to 100 people arrived and went to Greece. When they returned, we saw men and women stripped down to their underwear and some men were totally naked. Some spoke Turkish and said the Greeks had pushed them back. We saw injuries across their backs, like red stripes, and they had bruises on their cheeks and split lips. We offered them food and drink and clothes. What else could we do?

Recommendations

Greece, the European Union, and Turkey should take a number of urgent steps to address the abuses at the Greece-Turkey border, Human Rights Watch said.

Greece should allow people seeking protection at Greece’s borders to enter and have their asylum claims assessed fairly and efficiently. It should also reverse its decision to summarily return asylum seekers to Turkey without registering their asylum applications. The authorities

should promptly investigate in a transparent, thorough, and impartial manner whether the Greek police and border guards have committed abuses against, and collective, extrajudicial expulsions of, asylum seekers and migrants in the Evros region. The authorities should urgently investigate reports of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials and hold those responsible to account.

Members of Greece's parliament should urgently establish an inquiry into all allegations of collective expulsions, pushbacks, and violence on Greece's land borders with Turkey. The Greek Parliament should exercise its oversight powers to investigate the abuses and determine whether they amount to a concerted policy.

The European Commission should urge Greece to reinstate asylum procedures for people irregularly entering Greece from Turkey, end all summary returns to Turkey, and press the authorities to prosecute abusive officials. It should also tie its support for border management to Greece to its commitment to guarantee the right to seek asylum and open legal proceedings against Greece with a view to referring the case to the European Court of Justice if Greece fails to effectively resume access to asylum.

The EU and its member states should urgently expand the numbers of Syrian refugees to be resettled from Turkey to Europe and relocate asylum seekers from Greece to other EU countries, which should process their asylum claims equitably, fairly, and humanely.

FRONTEX should monitor and publicly report on Greek security force compliance with European and international human rights and refugee law, including detention standards, as well as compliance by its own officers and those contributed by member states. It should also urgently review whether its mandate allows it to be deployed in Greece while Greece has suspended the asylum procedure for arrivals from Turkey and has [said](#) it will summarily return asylum seekers to Turkey.

Annex VI
July 16, 2020 Report by Human Rights Watch

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/16/greece-investigate-pushbacks-collective-expulsions>

Greece: Investigate Pushbacks, Collective Expulsions
EU Should Press Athens to Halt Abuses

(Athens, July 16, 2020) – [Greek](#) law enforcement officers have summarily returned asylum seekers and migrants at the land and sea borders with Turkey during the Covid-19 lockdown, Human Rights Watch said today. The officers in some cases used violence against asylum seekers, including some who were deep inside Greek territory, and often confiscated and destroyed the migrants' belongings.

In reviewing nine cases, Human Rights Watch found no evidence that the authorities took any precautions to prevent the risk of transmission of Covid-19 to or among the migrants while in their custody. These findings add to growing evidence of abuses collected by nongovernmental groups and media, involving hundreds of people intercepted and pushed back from Greece to Turkey by Greek law enforcement officers or unidentified masked men over the last couple of months. Pushbacks violate several human rights norms, including against [collective expulsion](#) under the European Convention on Human Rights.

“Greek authorities did not allow a nationwide lockdown to get in the way of a new wave of collective expulsions, including from deep inside Greek territory,” said [Eva Cossé](#), Greece researcher at Human Rights Watch. “Instead of protecting the most vulnerable people in this time of global crisis, Greek authorities have targeted them in total breach of the right to seek asylum and in disregard for their health.”

Human Rights Watch interviewed 13 victims and witnesses who described incidents in which the Greek police, the Greek Coast Guard, and unidentified men in black or commando-like uniforms, who appeared to be working in close coordination with uniformed authorities, violently pushed migrants back to Turkey in March and April 2020.

Six of those interviewed said Greek police officers rounded up people in the Diavata camp for asylum seekers in Thessaloniki, 400 kilometers from the land border with Turkey. This is the first time Human Rights Watch has documented collective expulsions of asylum seekers from deep inside Greece, through the Evros river.

Six asylum seekers, from Syria, Palestine, and Iran, including a 15-year-old unaccompanied girl from Syria, described three incidents in March and April in which Greek Coast Guard personnel, Greek police, and armed masked men in dark clothing coordinated and carried out summary returns to Turkey from the Greek islands of Rhodes, Samos, and Symi. All of them said they were picked up on the islands soon after they landed, placed on larger Coast Guard boats, and once they were back at the sea border, were forced onto small inflatable rescue rafts, with no motor, and cast adrift near Turkish territorial waters.

Another asylum seeker described a fourth incident, in which the Greek Coast Guard and unidentified men dressed in dark uniforms wearing balaclavas used dangerous maneuvers to force a boat full of

migrants back to Turkey.

On June 10, the International Organization for Migration [reported](#) that they had received allegations of migrants being arbitrarily arrested in Greece and pushed back to Turkey and asked Greece to investigate. On June 12, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) investigate multiple reports of pushbacks by Greek authorities at the country's sea and land borders, possibly returning migrants and asylum seekers to Turkey after they had reached Greek territory or territorial waters.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Greek government instituted nationwide restrictions on public movement from March 13 until early May. Migrants and asylum seekers were locked down in some camps, mainly on the Greek islands, where restrictions on freedom of movement continue, and where the closing of government offices has left them in legal limbo.

Human Rights Watch sent letters to the Greek police and the Greek Coast Guard on June 29, presenting authorities with a summary of findings but received no response. The Greek Coast Guard indicated they would reply but at the time of publication, we had received no communication.

Greek judicial authorities should conduct a transparent, thorough, and impartial investigation into allegations that Greek Coast Guard and Greek police personnel are involved in acts that put the lives and safety of migrants and asylum seekers at risk, Human Rights Watch said. Any officer engaged in illegal acts, as well as their commanding officers, should be subject to disciplinary sanctions and, if applicable, criminal prosecution.

The Greek parliament should urgently establish an inquiry into all allegations of collective expulsions, including pushbacks, and violence at the borders, and determine whether they amount to a de facto government policy.

The Greek Ombudsman, an independent national authority, should examine the issue of summary and collective expulsions, and issue a report with recommendations to the Greek authorities, Human Rights Watch said.

The European Commission, which provides financial support to the Greek government for migration control, including in the Evros region and the Aegean Sea, should urge Greece to end all summary returns and collective expulsions of asylum seekers to Turkey, press the authorities to investigate allegations of violence, and ensure that none of its funding contributes to violations of fundamental rights and EU laws. The European Commission should also open legal proceedings against Greece for violating EU laws prohibiting collective expulsions.

On [July 6](#), during a debate at the European Parliament on fundamental rights at the Greek border, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, said that incidents should be investigated and indicated that the European Commission may consider a new system to monitor and verify reports of pushbacks amid increased allegations of abuse at the EU's external borders. The Commission should take concrete measures to set up an independent and transparent investigation in consultation with members of civil society, Human Rights Watch said.

Everyone seeking international protection has a right to apply for asylum and should be given that opportunity.

Returns should follow a procedure that provides access to effective remedies and safeguards against refoulement – return to a country where they are likely to face persecution – and ill-treatment, Human Rights Watch said.

“Greece has an obligation to treat everyone humanely and not to return refugees and asylum seekers to persecution, or anyone to the real risk of inhuman and degrading treatment or worse,” said Cossé. “Putting a stop to these dangerous incidents should be a priority for the Greek government and the European Commission as well.”

Sea Pushbacks to Turkey

Between May 29 and June 6, 2020, Human Rights Watch interviewed six men from Iran, Palestine, and Syria, and one 15-year-old unaccompanied girl from Syria, who were in Turkey and who described three incidents in which they said the Greek Coast Guard, Greek police officers, and unidentified men in black or commando-like uniforms coordinated summary returns from Symi, Samos, and Rhodes in March and April. In the fourth incident, the Greek Coast Guard and unidentified men in uniforms wearing balaclavas used dangerous maneuvers to force the boat full of migrants back to Turkey from the Aegean Sea.

Marwan (a pseudonym), 33, from Syria, said that on March 8, the Greek Coast Guard engaged in life-threatening maneuvers to force the small boat carrying him and 22 other passengers, including women and children, back to Turkey:

“[W]e saw a Greek Coast Guard boat. It was big and had the Greek flag on it.... They started pushing back our boat, by creating waves in the water making it hard for us to continue.... It was like a battle – like living in Syria, we thought we were going to die.”

In the three cases involving summary returns of people who had reached land, Greek law enforcement officers apprehended them within hours after they landed, and summarily expelled them to Turkey. All of those interviewed said that they were forced first onto large Coast Guard boats and then onto small inflatable rescue rafts, with no motor, and cast adrift near the Turkish sea border. In all cases, they said the Greek officers stole people’s belongings, including personal identification, bags, and money.

These findings add to growing evidence of abuses collected by nongovernmental groups, including [Alarm Phone](#) and [Aegean Boat Report](#), and the reputable German media outlet [Deutsche Welle](#). Human Rights Watch was able to identify 26 reported incidents published by others, that occurred between March and July, involving at least 855 people. In 2015 Human Rights Watch [documented](#) that armed masked men were disabling boats carrying migrants and asylum seekers in the Aegean Sea and pushing them back to Turkish waters.

Karim (a pseudonym), 36, from Syria, said that he arrived by boat to Symi island on March 21, along with approximately 30 other Syrians, including at least 10 children. He said that the Greek police approached the group within hours after they arrived. They explained that they wanted to claim asylum, but the officers detained them at an unofficial port site and summarily returned them to Turkey two days later, he said. They were taken on a military ship to open water, where the asylum seekers – including children and people with disabilities – were violently thrown from the ship's deck to an inflatable boat:

[T]hey [Greek police] put us in a military boat and pushed us [from the deck] to a small [inflatable] boat that doesn't have an engine. They left us on this boat and took all our private stuff, our money, our IDs. We were on the boat and we were dizzy. We were vomiting. They [the Greek Coast Guard] didn't tell us anything.... [W]e were in the middle of the sea. We called the Turkish Coast Guard. They came and took our boat.

Karim and his extended family were detained in the Malatya Removal Center in the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey, and in three other detention centers in Turkey, for seven weeks. They were released on May 7.

In another incident at the end of March, 17 men and women and an unaccompanied girl from Iran, Palestine, and Syria were intercepted on a highway on the island of Rhodes, an hour after landing and forced back to the shore. They were detained in a tent for two days, without food and water, and then forced onto what they believe was a Greek Coast Guard boat on the third day, then dumped at sea in a small motor-less rescue raft. Human Rights Watch gathered four separate witness statements about the same incident, in which interviewees gave similar accounts. The Turkish Coast Guard rescued them.

Leila L. (a pseudonym), 15, a Syrian girl traveling alone, said:

On the third day, it was night, we don't know what time, they told us to move ... they looked like army commandoes and they had weapons with them. There were six of them, wearing masks ... they pointed their weapons at us. We were pushed in a horrible way and they pushed our bags in the sea. Before getting on the first boat, they took everything from us – our phones, our IDs, our bags ... everything, apart from the clothes we were wearing. We were very scared. Some people were vomiting. Think what you would feel if you're in the middle of the sea and you don't know what would happen to you. We stayed between two to three hours [in the sea]. The boat had no engine. It was a rescue boat. It was like a dinghy. After two to three hours, the Turkish Coast Guard drove us to shore.

In another incident, Hassan (a pseudonym), 29, a Palestinian refugee from Gaza, said that the police apprehended him and his group of approximately 25 people about three hours after they arrived on the island of Samos, during the third week of March. He said the police took them to the shore, where another group of police and Greek Coast Guard officers were waiting:

The Greek Coast Guard put us in a big boat.... We drove for three hours but then they put us in a small boat. It was like a raft. It was inflatable and had no motor. Like a rescue boat they keep on big boats in case there is an emergency. They left us in the sea alone. There was no food or water. They left us for two nights. We had children with us....

Hassan said that a Greek Coast Guard boat came back on the third day, threw them a rope, and "drove around for two hours in the sea," leaving them closer to Turkish waters. The Turkish Coast Guard rescued them.

Video footage analyzed by Human Rights Watch from an incident that allegedly took place in the sea between Lesbos and Turkey on May 25, shows what appears to be women, men, and children drifting in an orange, tent-like inflatable life raft while three other rafts can be seen in the background. The rafts appear to be manufactured by the Greek company Lalizas, which according to [publicly available information](#) is a brand that the Greek Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy purchases. The person speaking in the video alleges they were placed on those rafts by the

Greek Coast Guard to force them back to Turkey.

Human Rights Watch contacted the Lalizas company through email with questions on the use of the life rafts by the Greek Coast Guard, but received no response.

In its June 10 statement, the International Organization for Migration notes that “footage showing the use of marine rescue equipment to expel migrants across the Eastern Aegean Sea are [sic] especially disturbing.”

Collective Expulsions Across Land Border

In May, Human Rights Watch interviewed six men from Afghanistan who described five separate incidents in which they were summarily returned from Greece to Turkey in March and April. They gave detailed accounts of the Greek police apprehending them in the Diavata camp, a reception facility in Thessaloniki.

They said the police took them to what they thought were police stations that they could not always identify or to an unofficial detention site that they said was like a small jail, close to the Greek-Turkish border, robbed them of their personal belongings including their ID, phone, and clothes, and beat them with wooden or metal rods – then summarily expelled them to Turkey.

In one case, a 19-year-old man from Kapisa, in Afghanistan, gave Human Rights Watch a photo of injuries – red strip-like marks across his back – he said were caused by beatings by people he believed were police officers.

Reporting by Human Rights Watch and other groups suggests that collective expulsions of people with documents allowing them to be in Greece, from deep inside the mainland, appear to be a new tactic by Greek law enforcement.

Five of the men had obtained a document from police authorities in Thessaloniki granting the right to remain in Greece for up to 30 days. While the document is formally a deportation order, the person should have the chance to apply for asylum during the 30-day period if they wish to and the document may, under certain circumstances, be renewed.

The men said they had either not understood their rights or had been unable to apply for asylum, or to renew this document, due to Covid-19 related shutdown of government institutions. They said that before they were returned to Turkey, in the weeks following the nationwide lockdown due to Covid-19, they saw Greek police forces visiting the Diavata camp almost daily to identify and return to Turkey residents whose documents had expired.

Greece suspended the right to lodge asylum applications for those who arrived irregularly between March 1 and 31, following tensions on the Greek-Turkish land borders at the end of February due to a significant and rapid increase in people trying to cross the border. The [Emergency Legislative order said that these people](#) were to be returned to their country of origin or transit “without registration.”

Making the situation worse, the Asylum Service [suspended services](#) to the public between March 13 and May 15 to protect against the spread of the Covid-19 virus. During this period, applications for

international protection were not registered, interviews were not conducted, and appeals were not registered. The Asylum Service resumed full operations on May 18 but [the Greek Council of Refugees](#), a non-governmental group providing legal assistance to asylum seekers, said that no new asylum applications had been lodged by the end of May with the exception of people under administrative detention.

[Greek law](#) requires authorities to provide for the reception of third-country nationals who are arrested due to unlawful entry or who stay in Greece under conditions that guarantee human rights and dignity in accordance with international standards. During the reception and identification procedure, authorities should provide socio-psychological support and information on the rights of migrants and asylum seekers, including the right to apply for asylum, and refer vulnerable people such as unaccompanied children and victims of torture to social services.

Mostafa (a pseudonym), 19, from Afghanistan, said that in mid-April, Greek police rounded him up from Diavata camp, took him to a police station near the camp, and then transferred him to another small detention site near the border, where he was detained for a night, then forced onto a boat and expelled to Turkey:

When they [the police] came to check my papers [at Diavata camp] I told them I couldn't renew them because the office was closed but they didn't listen to me.... They didn't allow us any time. They just took us to the bus and said: "We will take you to renew the papers." They were beating us the whole time.... [T]hey took us to the police station near the camp, there were more people, 10 people altogether.... [T]hey kept us in the rain for a few hours and then they transferred us to the border. There were two children with us – around 15 or 16 years old.... When they took us to the police station, they took my coat, I was just with pants and a t-shirt and then at the border, they took these too. They took everything, my money, ID, phone.

Mostafa gave the following description of the detention site near the border and the secret expulsion that followed:

It was like a small police station. There were toilets. There were other migrants there. It was around four and a half hours away from the border. They carried us in a bus like a prison. We stayed in this small jail for one night, no food was given. It was at 10 or 11 o'clock at night when they took us to the border. I crossed with the boat. There were 18 people in one boat. It took six or seven minutes – then we arrived on the Turkish side. [T]he police were standing at the border [on the Greek side] and looking at us.

Two men giving accounts about two separate incidents, said that the police took them to an unofficial detention site near the border. They described the detention locations as "small jails" and said they were detained there for a day or two.

Four out of the six asylum seekers said that Greek security forces had abused them, throughout their summary deportation, beating them with heavy metal, plastic, or wooden sticks.

Mohamed (a pseudonym), 24, from Afghanistan, said:

They had a stick that all the police have with them.... The stick was made of plastic, but it was very heavy. They had black uniforms. I couldn't see all of the uniform – I couldn't see their faces – if I looked up they would beat us. They beat one migrant for five minutes....

There were eight of them – they asked us if we came from Thessaloniki and we said yes and then they started beating us.

All of those interviewed said the Greek security forces stripped them of their clothes, leaving them in either just their underwear or just a basic layer, and took their possessions, including personal identification documents, money, telephones, and bags before pushing them back to Turkey.

In a report published in March, Human Rights Watch [documented](#) that Greek security forces and unidentified armed men at the Greece-Turkey land border detained, assaulted, sexually assaulted, robbed, and stripped asylum seekers and migrants, then forced them back to Turkey. At the end of June, Greece's Supreme Court Prosecutor [opened a criminal investigation](#) initiated by the Greek Helsinki Monitor, a nongovernmental group, into the pushbacks and violence documented by Human Rights Watch and others, as well as into the shooting and deaths of two people in Evros in March.

Human Rights Watch documented similar situations in [2008](#) and [2018](#). In March 2019, the Public Prosecutor of Orestiada in Evros, [initiated an investigation](#) regarding the repeated allegations of systematic violence against migrants and asylum seekers at the Evros river, based on the Human Rights Watch 2018 report, and a report by three nongovernmental groups, including the Greek Council for Refugees.

Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN), a nongovernmental group, has built an extensive [database of testimony](#) of people being pushed back from Greece to Turkey over the Evros river. Between March 31 and April 28, BVMN has reported at least 7 incidents involving more than 306 people. Among these [cases](#), at least six people had legal documents regularizing their stay in Greece when they were summarily expelled.

Annex VII
Executive Summary of April 3, 2020, Amnesty International Report
The full report is attached at the end of the Annex

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR0120772020ENGLISH.PDF>

CAUGHT IN A POLITICAL GAME
ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND MIGRANTS ON THE GREECE/TURKEY BORDER PAY THE PRICE FOR
EUROPE'S FAILURES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 27 February 2020, following statements from the Turkish authorities that the country's borders with the European Union (EU) would be opened, families and individuals from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and from many other countries made a rushed journey to the border region with Greece. Pursued by Turkish and international media, thousands seeking safety approached the border in scenes reminiscent of the 2015 mass irregular migration of asylum-seekers through Turkey's western borders and onwards through the EU.

On 18 March 2016 EU countries and Turkey had agreed the 'EU-Turkey deal',¹ aimed at returning all those arriving irregularly on the Greek islands – including asylum-seekers – back to Turkey. Turkey committed to 'prevent new sea or land routes for illegal migration'. In exchange, EU member states among other things agreed: to take one Syrian refugee from Turkey for every Syrian returned back to the country from the Greek islands; adopt visa liberalization measures for Turkish citizens; and mobilize significant financial support for reception and other projects benefitting refugees in Turkey. The arrival of people at the land border in 2020 came nearly four years after the deal was signed, amid accusations by the Turkish authorities that the EU had not honored its agreement to provide a €6 billion contribution to hosting up to 3.6 million Syrian refugees. These latter make up most of Turkey's refugee and asylum-seeker population of four million people.

The Turkish government's announcement on 27 February that it was opening the border with the EU was made concurrent with its "Spring Shield" military operation in Syria's Idlib province, launched after at least 34 Turkish soldiers were killed in a single attack in that province. The Syrian military (supported by Russia) had at that point advanced into the last stronghold controlled by Turkey-supported opposition armed groups. Turkey requested NATO assistance with the "Spring Shield" operation.

The movement of people seeking safety via Turkey's western borders was starkly different from 2015 movements – merely tolerated by Turkish authorities. In 2020, according to reports and in what appears a calculated political gesture, Turkish border guards and security forces actively prevented access to the Bulgarian border. At the same time, they encouraged and facilitated movement to the Greek border. Whether to pressure the EU for support to Turkey in Syria, increase funding for hosting refugees or for reasons of domestic politics, the move was reckless and destined to lead to harm for those who attempted the journey. Amnesty International spoke to asylum-seekers and migrants, some of whom had arrived on free buses, who stated they had understood from those operating the buses that the borders had been completely opened and they would be able to walk through unrestricted. It was not clear who had paid for these buses, and some people

we interviewed explained they had given up their accommodation and spent all their money to transport their families to the border.

The response from the Greek authorities was categorical. On 28 February Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the Greek Prime Minister, tweeted “Significant numbers of migrants and refugees have gathered in large groups at the Greek-Turkish land border and have attempted to enter the country illegally. I want to be clear: no illegal entries into Greece will be tolerated.” Greece bolstered its ground border forces, sending in troops that used tear gas, water cannons, plastic bullets against people attempting to cross the land border, and sent 52 ships to prevent arrivals to the islands.

Greece passed an emergency legislative Act on 2 March suspending new asylum applications for a month. In consequence, at sea most new arrivals were held arbitrarily in port facilities and other areas, unable to claim asylum and at risk of return to Turkey or to countries of ‘origin or transit’. Later on, Greece announced that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, asylum services stopped receiving claims. In the weeks following Turkey’s announcement to open its borders with the EU, hostility, threats and attacks soared against refugees, NGOs and journalists throughout the Greek islands. Greek authorities now face exceptional challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but all measures need to be taken to provide adequate medical care to those in need.

Greece’s actions were initially supported by the EU, which, in the words of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, thanked the country for being “Europe’s shield.” The Greek authorities had in brazen violation of EU and international law temporarily suspended the right to seek asylum. In addition, evidence of grave abuses by Greek border troops had mounted, including excessive use of force, beatings, use of live ammunition and systematic pushbacks into Turkey.

Annex VIII

July 13, 2020 Press Release for Report by Legal Centre Lesvos

The Full Report is Attached at the End of the Document

<https://legalcentresvos.org/2020/07/13/press-release-new-legal-centre-lesvos-report-details-collective-expulsions-in-the-aegean-sea/>

Press Release: New Legal Centre Lesvos report details collective expulsions in the Aegean Sea
July 13, 2020

Greek authorities are unlawfully expelling migrants who have arrived in Greece, and abandoning them at sea on motorless, inflatable vessels. In a report released today by Legal Centre Lesvos, testimonies from 30 survivors detail the systematic, unlawful and inherently violent nature of these collective expulsions.

Since the Greek authorities' one month suspension of the right to seek asylum on 1 March 2020, the Greek government has adopted various unlawful practices that are openly geared towards the deterrence and violent disruption of migrant crossings, with little regard for its obligations deriving from international law and specifically from the non refoulement principle – and even less for the lives of those seeking sanctuary.

While collective expulsions from Greece to Turkey are not new, in recent months Greek authorities have been using rescue equipment – namely inflatable, motorless life rafts – in a new type of dystopic expulsion. Migrants are violently transferred from Greek islands, or from the dinghy upon which they are travelling, to such rafts, which are then left adrift in open water.

In addition to the well-documented practice of non-assistance to migrant dinghies, the Greek authorities have damaged the motor or gasoline tank of migrant dinghies before returning the vessel – and the people on board – to open waters, where they are subsequently abandoned.

These collective expulsions, happening in the Aegean region, are not isolated events. Direct testimonies from survivors, collected by the Legal Centre Lesvos, demonstrate that they are part of a widespread and systematic practice, with a clear *modus operandi* implemented across various locations in the Aegean Sea and on the Eastern Aegean islands.

The information shared with the Legal Centre Lesvos is from 30 survivors, and testimonies from 7 individuals who were in direct contact with survivors, or were witness to, a collective expulsion. These testimonies, related to eight separate collective expulsions, were collected between March and June 2020, directly by the Legal Centre Lesvos.

Collective expulsions are putting peoples' lives at risk, are contrary to Greece' international legal obligations and violate survivors' fundamental and human rights, including their right to life and the *jus cogens* prohibitions on torture and refoulement. When carried out as part of a widespread and systematic practice, as documented in our report, these amount to a crime against humanity.

Collective expulsions should undoubtedly be condemned, in the strongest possible terms; however, this is not sufficient: it is only through the immediate cessation of such illegal practices that the

protection of human rights and access to asylum will be restored at the European Union's external borders.

Lorraine Leete, attorney and one of the Legal Centre Lesvos' coordinators, said that:

“The Greek authorities are abandoning people in open water, on inflatable and motorless life rafts – that are designed for rescue – with no regard for their basic safety, let alone their right to apply for asylum. Such audacious acts show the violence at the core of the European border regime, and the disregard that it has for human life.

Greek authorities have denied reports of collective expulsions as “fake news”, despite a plethora of undeniable evidence, from survivors and various media outlets. This is untenable: evidence shared with the Legal Centre has shown that collective expulsions are happening in the Aegean sea, with a systematic and widespread modus operandi that amounts to crimes against humanity. They are being carried out in the open, in plain view – if not with the participation – of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex. European Authorities are complicit in these crimes as they have thus far failed to act to prevent further pushbacks, or hold Greek authorities accountable.”

Annex IX

September 1, 2020 press release for Border Violence Monitoring Network's Submission to the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearance

The full report is attached at the end of the Annex

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/15638-2/>

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES REPORT TO UN COMMITTEE ON ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

September 1, 2020

For the [International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances](#), the Border Violence Monitoring Network releases its seminal report to the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearance regarding the use of illegal pushbacks by the Greek government.

BVMN has consistently documented the disappearance of refugees and migrants from Greek territory, including the illegal pushbacks of 1196 persons. BVMN is increasingly concerned of the disappearance and pushbacks of refugees and migrants from humanitarian distribution sites, refugee camps and pre-removal centers in Greece. The illegal pushback and disappearance of refugees and migrants is systematically followed by the statewide dismissal of credible evidence and the perpetual refusal to open a free and fair investigation into the whereabouts of the missing.

The Border Violence Monitoring Network joins numerous other organizations including; The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, Human Rights Watch and the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in calling for a complete stop to all practices of pushbacks and disappearance from Greek territory. Further to this, today we are calling on the United Nations to formally request that Greece explains the persistent policy of illegally pushing back and disappearing refugees and migrants from its territory who are seeking safety and international protection.

The report to the United Nations asserts that:

- Despite the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances (ICPPED) and its subsequent integration into Greek domestic law, the Greek government has failed to meet its obligations under the ICPPED
- The continuous use of illegal pushbacks and disappearance of refugees and migrants from Greek territory as documented by the Border Violence Monitoring Network and partner organization Mobile Info Team is unlawful and in contradiction to the obligations set out under the Convention.
- The use of pushbacks and collective expulsion, specifically to Turkey, is a further breach of the ICPPED due to the substantial risk of human rights abuses and enforced disappearances that victims of illegal pushbacks and disappearance by Greek authorities to Turkey face.

Annex X

March 19, 2020 Executive Summary of Report by Mobile Info Team

The Full Report is Attached at the End of the Annex

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/597473fe9de4bb2cc35c376a/t/5e747d5185894d689a084750/1584692583068/Report-on-Greece_March-2020.pdf

Violations at Greek borders

Sea and Land report February/March 2020

March 19, 2020

Introduction

The deteriorating situation at the Greek land and sea borders represents an affront to the basic rights of people-on-the-move - not only since Turkish President Erdogan's decision to "open the gates" for refugees. This joint report summarizes the most recent findings of multiple organizations who are documenting violations at Greek borders, including firsthand testimonies from people suffering at the hands of EU border externalization policies. Of deep concern are the commonalities in fundamental rights violations across the Greek islands and the mainland, and the fact that recent events show intentional and deliberate human rights violations against vulnerable transit groups, instead of an emergency reaction as presented by government and media within the European Union.

Overview of Situation

Tens of thousands of people have attempted perilous land and sea crossings into Greece since the end of February 2020 and were met with a wall of violence. The need for safe passage is evident for the transient migrant and refugee populations stuck in Turkey. But Turkish President Erdogan's decision on 17th February to "open the border" to Greece is also the culmination of a perfect storm that has been a long time coming. Publicly, the Turkish government justifies its decision to open the border to Greece with humanitarian motives due to the further displacement of Syrian civilians from Idlib towards Turkey and with the EU's failure to live up to its responsibility under the EU-Turkey deal, concluded in early 2016.

Turkey certainly has a point: the EU has barely carried out any resettlement of people-on-the-move from Turkey to the EU, which it had promised – although this presents, technically speaking, not a breach of the agreement as resettlements are linked to the number of people sent back from Greece. The six billion Euros Turkey was meant to receive in exchange for closing its borders, were disbursed behind schedule. Finally, the EU has failed to honor its commitment to re-invigorate Turkey's membership process, and, more importantly, to grant visa free entry to Turkish citizens. Turkey's unhappiness with the EU is thus understandable and has been continuously expressed by officials over the years – yet it is not the full explanation for Turkey's decision to open the border.

Domestically, the Turkish government is embattled on three fronts. In 2018, it has faced off an economic crisis in the making by refueling its economy with additional debt. The current growth appears unstable and there is a strong sense that the country could slip back into a recession at any time. Domestic opinion has increasingly turned sour on Erdogan's openness towards refugees. After electoral losses in Istanbul and other major cities, the government may feel that it is time to respond to popular demand and to begin expelling people-on-the-move. Finally, Turkey's intervention in

Northern Syria has led to an increasing number of casualties. Fearing popular backlash, the government temporarily shut down major social media sites in the last week of February. Embedded in this military crisis is the fear that once Idlib falls to Assad, it could cause a mass exodus from the region, destabilizing Turkey's domestic situation further.

With this context in mind, it becomes possible to understand what Erdogan wants out of this crisis. Simply, expelling people-on-the-move is part of the goal as it will satisfy popular anti-refugee sentiment. But more importantly, he wants money – preferably disbursed directly to his government – in order to stabilize the country's economy. Finally, geopolitical support from the EU (and NATO) could increase the legitimacy of Turkey's military action in Northern Syria and possibly tip the scales to affect the outcome of the conflict through sanctions or limited military action.

Driven by a lack of European solidarity, economic woes, popular backlash, and geopolitical interest, Turkey has made people-on-the-move pawns in a bigger power struggle between the EU and Turkey. As the remainder of this report shows, Greek authorities under the conservative Prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis known for his tough stance on migration followed suit and responded with unspeakable violence against those who are most in need of protection - with full support of the EU.

Suspension of Asylum Rights

As people began to muster at the land border and the islands from 27th February onwards, the Greek government dealt a swift and illegal rebuttal. On 1st March 2020, the Greek National Security Council announced the “temporary suspension, for one month [...] of the lodging of asylum claims by all people entering the country illegally” and their “immediate deportation without registration, where possible, to their countries of origin or transit.” Since the announcement, multiple international agencies and NGOs have affirmed that the suspension of asylum rights and the principle of non-refoulement is neither permitted under international law nor European law. The UN Declaration of Human Rights, the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights all protect the right to asylum or non-refoulement. The EU Commission has sent deliberately incoherent messages in response to Greece's infringement of internationally affirmed rights and principles.

The infringement and suspension of fundamental rights by Greek authorities has facilitated and intensified a brutal border regime that has led to people-on-the-move being shot and tear gassed at official border crossing points and pushed back across the Evros river. Whilst, unfortunately, the practice of illegal pushbacks is commonplace across Europe's external borders, the veracity with which Greece has enforced these illegal procedures and the political will from the EU to back such violations are particularly disturbing. Despite the documentation of widespread abuse, violence and a host of human rights violations currently being carried out against people-on-the-move by Greek border officials, multiple EU member states have used the frame of a security threat to justify the deployment of additional police forces to the region. The ongoing support that member states are providing has allowed their Greek counterparts to act with impunity during the current suspension of rights at both the Evros land border and across the islands.

Annex XI
August 14, 2020 Article by the New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/14/world/europe/greece-migrants-abandoning-sea.html?searchResultPosition=1>

Taking Hard Line, Greece Turns Back Migrants by Abandoning Them at Sea

By [Patrick Kingsley](#) and Karam Shoumali

Aug. 14, 2020

Many Greeks have grown frustrated as tens of thousands of asylum seekers languished on Greek islands. Now, evidence shows, a new conservative government has a new method of keeping them out.

RHODES, Greece — The Greek government has secretly expelled more than 1,000 refugees from Europe’s borders in recent months, sailing many of them to the edge of Greek territorial waters and then abandoning them in inflatable and sometimes overburdened life rafts.

Since March, at least 1,072 asylum seekers have been dropped at sea by Greek officials in at least 31 separate expulsions, according to an analysis of evidence by The New York Times from three independent watchdogs, two academic researchers and the Turkish Coast Guard. The Times interviewed survivors from five of those episodes and reviewed photographic or video evidence from all 31.

“It was very inhumane,” said Najma al-Khatib, a 50-year-old Syrian teacher, who says masked Greek officials took her and 22 others, including two babies, under cover of darkness from a detention center on the island of Rhodes on July 26 and abandoned them in a rudderless, motorless life raft before they were rescued by the Turkish Coast Guard.

“I left Syria for fear of bombing — but when this happened, I wished I’d died under a bomb,” she told The Times.

Illegal under international law, the expulsions are the most direct and sustained attempt by a European country to block maritime migration using its own forces since the height of the migration crisis in 2015, when Greece was the main thoroughfare for migrants and refugees seeking to enter Europe.

The Greek government denied any illegality.

“Greek authorities do not engage in clandestine activities,” said a government spokesman, Stelios Petsas. “Greece has a proven track record when it comes to observing international law, conventions and protocols. This includes the treatment of refugees and migrants.”

Since 2015, European countries like Greece and Italy have mainly relied on proxies, like the Turkish and Libyan governments, to head off maritime migration. What is different now is that the Greek government is increasingly taking matters into its own hands, watchdog groups and researchers say.

For example, migrants have been forced onto sometimes leaky life rafts and left to drift at the border between Turkish and Greek waters, while others have been left to drift in their own boats after Greek officials disabled their engines.

“These pushbacks are totally illegal in all their aspects, in international law and in European law,” said Prof. [François Crépeau](#), an expert on international law and a former United Nations special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants.

“It is a human rights and humanitarian disaster,” Professor [Crépeau](#) added.

Greeks were once far more understanding of the plight of migrants. But many have [grown frustrated and hostile](#) after a half-decade in which other European countries offered Greece only modest assistance as tens of thousands of asylum seekers languished in squalid camps on overburdened Greek islands.

Since the election last year of a new conservative government under [Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis](#), Greece has taken a far harder line against the migrants — often refugees from the war in Syria — who push off Turkish shores for Europe.

The harsher approach comes as [tensions have mounted with Turkey](#), itself burdened with 3.6 million refugees from the Syrian war, far more than any other nation.

Greece believes that Turkey has tried to weaponize the migrants to increase pressure on Europe for aid and assistance in the Syrian War. But it has also added pressure on Greece at a time when the two nations and others spar over contested gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean.

For several days in late February and early March, the Turkish authorities [openly bused thousands of migrants to the Greek land border](#) in a bid to set off a confrontation, leading to the shooting of at least one Syrian refugee and the [immediate extrajudicial expulsions](#) of hundreds of migrants who made it to Greek territory.

For years, Greek officials have been accused of intercepting and expelling migrants, on a sporadic and infrequent basis, usually before the migrants manage to land their boats on Greek soil.

But experts say Greece’s behavior during the pandemic has been far more systematic and coordinated. Hundreds of migrants have been denied the right to seek asylum even after they have landed on Greek soil, and they’ve been forbidden to appeal their expulsion through the legal system. “They’ve seized the moment,” Professor Crépeau said of the Greeks. “The coronavirus has provided a window of opportunity to close national borders to whoever they’ve wanted.”

Emboldened by the lack of sustained criticism from the European Union, where the migration issue has roiled politics, Greece has hardened its approach in the eastern Mediterranean in recent months.

Migrants landing on the Greek islands from Turkey have frequently been forced onto sometimes leaky, inflatable life rafts, dropped at the boundary between Turkish and Greek waters, and left to drift until being spotted and rescued by the Turkish Coast Guard.

“This practice is totally unprecedented in Greece,” said Niamh Keady-Tabbal, a doctoral researcher at the Irish Center for Human Rights, and [one of the first to document the phenomenon](#).

“Greek authorities are now weaponizing rescue equipment to illegally expel asylum seekers in a new, violent and highly visible pattern of pushbacks spanning several Aegean Islands,” Ms. Keady-Tabbal said.

Ms. al-Khatib, who recounted her ordeal for The Times, said she entered Turkey last November with her two sons, 14 and 12, fleeing the advance of the Syrian Army. Her husband, who had entered several weeks earlier, soon died of cancer, Ms. al-Khatib said.

With few prospects in Turkey, the family tried to reach Greece by boat three times this summer, failing once in May because their smuggler did not show up, and a second time in June after being intercepted in Greek waters and towed back to the Turkish sea border, she said.

On their third attempt, on July 23 at around 7 a.m., they landed on the Greek island of Rhodes, Ms. al-Khatib said, an account corroborated by four other passengers interviewed by The Times. They were detained by Greek police officers and taken to a small makeshift detention facility after handing over their identification documents.

Using footage filmed at this site by two passengers, a Times reporter was able to identify the facility’s location [beside the island’s main ferry port](#) and visit the camp.

A Coast Guard officer and an official at the island’s mayoralty both said the site falls under the jurisdiction of the Port Police, an arm of the Hellenic Coast Guard.

A Palestinian refugee, living in a disused slaughterhouse beside the camp, confirmed that Ms. al-Khatib had been there, recounting how he had spoken to her through the camp’s fence and bought her tablets to treat her hypertension, which Greek officials had refused to supply her.

On the evening of July 26, Ms. al-Khatib and the other detainees said that police officers had loaded them onto a bus, telling them they were being taken to a camp on another island, and then to Athens.

Instead, masked Greek officials transferred them to two vessels that ferried them out to sea before dropping them on rafts at the Turkish maritime border, she and other survivors said.

Amid choppy waves, the group, which included two babies, was forced to drain the raft using their hands as water slopped over the side, they said.

The group was rescued at 4:30 a.m. by the Turkish Coast Guard, according to [a report by the Coast Guard that included a photograph of Ms. al-Khatib](#) as she left the life raft.

Ms. al-Khatib tried to reach Greece for a fourth time, on Aug. 6, but said her boat was stopped off the island of Lesbos by Greek officials, who removed its fuel and towed it back to Turkish waters. Some groups of migrants have been transferred to the life rafts even before landing on Greek soil.

On May 13, Amjad Naim, a 24-year-old Palestinian law student, was among a group of 30 migrants intercepted by Greek officials as they approached the shores of Samos, a Greek island close to Turkey.

The migrants were quickly transferred to two small life rafts that began to deflate under the weight of so many people, Mr. Naim said. Transferred to two other rafts, they were then towed back toward Turkey.

Videos captured by Mr. Naim on his phone show the two rafts being tugged across the sea by a large white vessel. [Footage](#) subsequently published by the Turkish Coast Guard shows the same two rafts being rescued by Turkish officials later in the day.

Migrants have also been left to drift in the boats they arrived on, after Greek officials disabled their engines, survivors and researchers say. And on at least two occasions, migrants have been abandoned on Ciplak, an uninhabited island within Turkish waters, instead of being placed on life rafts.

“Eventually the Turkish Coast Guard came to fetch us,” said one Palestinian survivor who was among a group abandoned on Ciplak in early July, and who sent videos of their time on the island. A [report](#) from the Turkish Coast Guard corroborated his account.

In parallel, several rights organizations, [including Human Rights Watch](#), have documented how the Greek authorities have rounded up migrants living legally in Greece and secretly expelled them without legal recourse across the Evros River, which divides mainland Greece from Turkey.

Feras Fattouh, a 30-year-old Syrian X-ray technician, said he was arrested by the Greek police on July 24 in Igoumenitsa, a port in western Greece. Mr. Fattouh had been living legally in Greece since November 2019 with his wife and son, and showed The Times documents to prove it.

But after being detained by the police in Igoumenitsa, Mr. Fattouh said, he was robbed and driven about 400 miles east to the Turkish border, before being secretly put on a dinghy with 18 others and sent across the river to Turkey. His wife and son remain in Greece.

“Syrians are suffering in Turkey,” Mr. Fattouh said. “We’re suffering in Greece. Where are we supposed to go?”

[Ylva Johansson](#), who oversees migration policy at the European Commission, the civil service for the European Union, said she was concerned by the accusations but had no power to investigate them. “We cannot protect our European border by violating European values and by breaching people’s rights,” Ms. Johansson said in an email. “Border control can and must go hand in hand with respect for fundamental rights.”

Patrick Kingsley reported from Rhodes, Greece, and Karam Shoumali from Berlin.

Annex XII
June 16, 2020 Report by Der Spiegel

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/videos-and-eyewitness-accounts-greece-apparently-abandoning-refugees-at-sea-a-84c06c61-7f11-4e83-ae70-3905017b49d5>

Greece Suspected of Abandoning Refugees at Sea

An investigation by DER SPIEGEL and partners has revealed that the Greek Coast Guard intercepts refugee boats, puts the migrants in life rafts, tows them toward Turkey and then abandons them to their fate. What do German troops in the area know about the practice?

By [Giorgos Christides](#) and [Steffen Lüdke](#)

June 16, 2020, 7:19 p.m.

Europe is just a few kilometers away, recalls Amjad Naim, when the men in masks show up. It's the morning of May 13 and the Palestinian is sitting in an inflatable boat, having paid migrant smugglers in Turkey for the trip. Naim can already see the Greek coast, and with every second, he is getting closer and closer.

Naim wasn't alone in the boat. They were a group of at least 26 people, and they had almost reached the island of Samos. Naim remembers hearing a helicopter, and then all hell broke loose. For the next several hours, those on board would be afraid for their lives.

The men in the masks approached in a large vessel, says Naim, adding that he remembers seeing the Greek flag and several dinghies. And then, he says, the masked men went on the attack.

They fired shots into the water, he says, snagged the migrants' inflatable raft with a grappling hook and destroyed the motor, thus stopping the boat. The men then took the migrants on board their vessel, Naim says, adding that he started crying and hid his mobile phone in his underwear.

There are videos that prove that Naim really was on his way to Samos. The images show a young man with closely cropped hair and a smooth-shaven face. The motor of the small inflatable boat hums in the background as Naim smiles into the camera. He is originally from the Gaza Strip in the Palestinian Territories, where he studied law and got married. His wife is waiting for him in the Netherlands. Naim blows a kiss into the camera.

The next images of Naim are shaky -- a 55-second clip made by Naim that clearly documents a crime. The footage shows him and the other refugees on two inflatable life rafts. The Greek Coast Guard had put them off of the ship and onto the rafts. The square-shaped platforms are little more than wobbly rubber rafts.

In the video, a Greek Coast Guard ship, 18 meters (59 feet) long, is dragging the rafts back toward Turkey. An additional ship stands by. Water can be seen pouring into Naim's raft.

Then, as can be seen in the video, the Greek Coast Guard unties the tow rope, leaving the refugees to their fate in the middle of the sea. Sitting in a rubber raft that has no ability to maneuver on its own.

It is possible that Naim's experience could be an isolated incident. It is conceivable that the Greek sailors simply lost their patience or that that particular ship was crewed by an especially nasty group. But that is not the case. Naim is apparently just one victim among many. There is a system behind the tactics he was exposed to. In a joint investigation with Lighthouse Reports and Report Mainz, DER SPIEGEL has forensically analyzed dozens of videos and compared them with geodata in addition to speaking with numerous eyewitnesses.

The material shows beyond doubt: In the eastern Aegean, European values are being sacrificed in the name of protecting its external borders.

Masked men, almost certainly Greek border control officials, regularly attack refugee boats in the area. In one case on June 4, the inflatable boat belonging to the masked men can be clearly identified as a Greek patrol boat. It belongs to Greek Coast Guard ship ΛΣ-080.

After the refugee boats are intercepted, the Greeks, apparently, frequently put the migrants in inflatable life rafts, tow them toward Turkey and then leave them to their fates. In most cases, they are dragged ashore after several hours by the Turkish Coast Guard.

The actions taken by the Greeks are a clear breach. It has long been known that Greek Coast Guard personnel delay rescue attempts and perform aggressive maneuvers. Now, though, they are actively putting the lives of migrants at risk and they are using life-saving equipment to put people in danger.

Images of migrants on orange life rafts have been appearing for weeks on Facebook and Instagram. NGOs like [Aegean Boat Report](#), [Josoor](#) and [Alarm Phone](#) have also spoken with refugees and reported their experiences - and since March 23, activists have documented a number of incidents. The Turkish Coast Guard has also published images of the orange life rafts. But Naim's video is the first to document beyond doubt a Greek Coast Guard vessel towing life rafts toward Turkey and then abandoning the refugees on the open sea.

These so-called pushbacks represent both a violation of international law and of the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights. Asylum seekers have a right to have their cases heard on an individual basis and countries are not permitted to bring them back against their will to a place where their safety is not guaranteed.

Itamar Mann, a lawyer at the University of Haifa and member of the Global Legal Action Network, believes pushbacks could also have criminal consequences. From a legal perspective, such operations, he says, are a kind of torture, with refugees experiencing inhumane treatment and humiliation.

When contacted, the Greek Coast Guard denied the accusations and claimed that its personnel does not wear masks. They also said they obey all applicable laws. Delays in rescuing the refugees, they said, were due to the Turkish Coast Guard because they only accompany refugee boats if they are traveling in the direction of Greece. The Greek officials, they said, only locate the refugee boats and then inform the Turkish Coast Guard as quickly as possible.

They claimed that they cooperated with the Turkish Coast Guard in the May 13 incident. In their statement, the Greek Coast Guard did not specifically address the video showing the pushback.

Caught in the Middle

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has been in office since last July, and since then, he has taken several steps to ensure that fewer refugees arrive in Greece. He had temporarily suspended the right to asylum and shortened the deadline for appeal in asylum cases. Furthermore, during his tenure, border guards on the Maritsa River between Turkey and Greece have apparently used live ammunition against refugees, likely killing at least one. His government has considered blocking refugee boats with barriers at sea.

Annex XIII
May 8, 2020 Report by Der Spiegel

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/greek-turkish-border-the-killing-of-muhammad-gulzar-a-7652ff68-8959-4e0d-9101-a1841a944161>

The Killing of a Migrant at the Greek-Turkish Border

On March 4, Pakistan national Muhammad Gulzar was shot and killed at the Greek-Turkish border. Evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the bullet came from a Greek firearm. An investigation into the tragedy at the edge of Europe.

By [Giorgos Christides](#), [Steffen Lüdke](#) and [Maximilian Popp](#)
May 8, 2020, 5.00 p.m.

The land border between Greece and Turkey is 212 kilometers long, with most of it running along the Maritsa River. There's just one segment in the north where an 11-kilometer stretch of border fence runs between the two countries near Karaağaç.

In early March, just before the coronavirus took over the news cycle, this fence was the focus of headlines around the world.

On that early spring day, thousands of migrants were crowding the Turkish side of the border, while on the Greek side, security forces had taken up their positions. The acrid odor of tear gas filled the air and helicopters circled the area. People were shouting back and forth.

Muhammad Gulzar, 42, hadn't slept well the night before, his wife Saba Khan, 38, would later recall, and he woke up hungry on March 4. Khan would have preferred, that morning, to return to Istanbul, from where the couple had started their journey in the hopes of making it to Europe. But Gulzar had talked his wife into making one final attempt to get across the fence. A short time later, Gulzar was dead, struck by a bullet in the chest.

Muhammad Gulzar and Saba Khan, both from Pakistan, had only recently got married, on Jan. 21. Just a few days after the shooting, Khan was sitting in a restaurant in Istanbul, her face buried in her hands. On her wrist was the watch that her husband had given her. Khan was in a state of deep desperation, wondering if Muhammad might still be alive if she had insisted on turning around and going back.

The deadly incident that unfolded in the first week of March along the border between Turkey and Greece has long since dropped out of the international headlines. Khan, though, can't put it behind her - nor can the other families who lost relatives in those chaotic March days. At least two people died trying to cross the border into Greece, and dozens were injured, some seriously. And to this day, it still isn't entirely clear who bears responsibility.

A propaganda war over the incident has broken out between Turkey and Greece. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan alleges that Greek security forces deliberately fired on the migrants, while the Greek government denies all such claims.

DER SPIEGEL reporters spent weeks reporting on both sides of the border, together with the research teams Forensic Architecture, Lighthouse Reports and Bellingcat. The reporters interviewed two dozen witnesses, including refugees, border guards, politicians and doctors. They also reviewed official documents, including Muhammad Gulzar's autopsy report, and evaluated more than 100 videos and photos taken by migrants at the border.

The findings of the reporting contradict the official versions, especially – on decisive points – the Greek account. Muhammad Gulzar's death may well have been an accident, but it was a predictable accident. A reconstruction of the events surrounding his March 4 death reads as though both sides were eager to escalate the situation.

BLACKMAIL

On Feb. 27, Russian fighter jets are believed to have killed at least 33 Turkish soldiers in an attack on military posts in the Syrian province of Idlib. The Turkish authorities blocked both Facebook and Twitter, but they were unable to suppress news about the deaths for long. In response to the incident, Erdoğan convened a crisis meeting, which ended with a surprising decision: Turkey would be opening its border to Europe.

That border had been closed ever since the EU and Turkey had agreed to a pact years earlier that would sharply reduce the number of refugees making their way north to Europe. And by publicly breaching that deal, Erdoğan was likely seeking to distract from the problems his military was having in Syria, while at the same time blackmailing the Europeans for more money to care for the large numbers of refugees in Turkey. And the gambit seemed to have had the desired effect: Over the course of the next few days, there was little talk about the Turkish losses in Idlib.

At the height of the refugee crisis in 2015, the bus station in Istanbul's Aksaray neighborhood served as a hub for migrants making their way to Europe, and now, refugees were once again boarding buses at the site. The news had spread on Facebook and WhatsApp that the gates to Europe had reopened, and more than 10,000 migrants had decided to see for themselves. In some instances, the Turkish authorities even chartered buses to transport migrants to the border.

Pakistan national Gulzar and his wife were among those who took a bus from Istanbul to the border. It wasn't the first time that Gulzar had traveled to Europe. In 2007, he had made his way to Greece, where he ended up working for years – most of the time with a "tolerated" status from the immigration authorities. He was initially on his own, but was later joined by his oldest son. His wife at the time and four children remained in Pakistan. Gulzar repaired fireplaces in Greek homes, with his last boss, Nikolaos Tzokanis, describing him as honest and hard-working.

Things were going well professionally for Gulzar, but privately, something was amiss. He was married, but his true love, Saba Khan, lived in Pakistan, so he decided to separate from his wife and move back to Pakistan to marry Khan. Tzokanis says he asked Gulzar to wait until Khan received an official entry permit before returning to Greece. But that would have taken months and they didn't want to wait that long. He says Gulzar told him: "I've made it to Europe before. I can do it again."

Gulzar flew from Greece to Pakistan, where he and Khan married on Jan. 21, and a few days later, the newlyweds traveled to Turkey via Iran. They had big plans for their future in Greece: Khan wanted to work as a hairdresser and maybe even open up her own beauty salon. The only thing standing in their way were the Greek border guards.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis had only been prime minister of Greece for nine months, but the refugee crisis was already overshadowing his tenure. Migrants were living in overcrowded camps on the Greek islands and there had been repeated instances of violence against them. Mitsotakis was well aware that the asylum system would collapse for good if the number of refugees was to rise sharply. But that's exactly what was in store now that Erdoğan had reopened the border.

Facing this dilemma, Mitsotakis suspended the right of asylum on March 1 for one month, a move lawyers would later deem illegal. He also dispatched 1,000 soldiers and 1,000 police officers to the north.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Gulzar and Khan believed Erdoğan's claim that the border had been opened. But when they arrived at Pazarkule, it was like a battlefield. Thousands of people were camping outdoors while Greek security forces were firing tear gas and water cannons.

Khan says they never would have boarded the bus had they known what was awaiting them at the border, adding that they would have tried to get to a Greek island by boat instead. But now they were stuck at the border area. To keep pressure on the Europeans, Turkish gendarmes even prevented refugees from returning to Istanbul from Pazarkule.

The migrants grew increasingly desperate as a result, with some throwing rocks at Greek border guards. The BND, Germany's foreign intelligence service, believes that Turkish agents mixed in with the crowds to exacerbate the situation. The Greeks clearly sought to keep the onslaught at bay – and not just with water cannons and tear gas. Several refugees told DER SPIEGEL that they had been shot at by Greek security forces.

One Syrian said his wife has been missing since Greek border guards stopped the family from crossing the Maritsa River. He claims that Greek officers fired at him several times and forcibly separated him from his wife. Another Syrian man, Mohammad al-Arab, died on March 2 along the Maritsa, more than 80 kilometers south of the Pazarkule border post. The research agency Forensic Architecture has determined through video analysis that al-Arab was shot. Two witnesses claim it was Greek soldiers who opened fire on him.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen traveled to the crisis area on March 3. For the first time in four years, the EU could no longer rely on Erdoğan to stop the refugees, and Greece, in the words of von der Leyen had become Europe's "shield." She made no mention of the accusations of violence against Greek security forces.

Elias Tzimitras always gets called in when there's danger. He's part of a Greek armed forces special unit that the military leadership had deployed at the Greek-Turkish border. The Greek security forces were organized in two lines: On the front line were the police officers with shields, batons and pistols, while behind them were soldiers with semi-automatic rifles. Tzimitras and his men.

As an officer, Tzimitras is forbidden from speaking to the media. As such, we have decided to keep secret his real name, rank and the name of his unit. Tzimitras reports that the situation at the border was extremely tense. He and his colleagues feared they might get kidnapped and said that some of the migrants were also armed. Tzimitras and his comrades worked in day shifts and night shifts, and they were constantly subjected to provocations by Turkish soldiers, Tzimitras says.

The government in Athens has denied that Greek security forces used live ammunition. Tzimitras, however, disputes such claims. "We fired both blanks and live ammunition," he says. But he claims they were only warning shots into the air or the ground. Authorization to do so, he says, came from the military leadership.

Videos that have been evaluated by the forensics experts also prove that shots were fired with live ammunition on March 4. One video filmed on the Turkish side of the border and shown by Turkish state broadcaster TRT shows a fire at the border fence. Then shots ring out and a young man collapses.

The man filming the blurred images shouts in English: "Gunfire from the Greece army ... I have seen someone who is shot." Migrants can be seen fleeing from the fence, and a little later, men appear behind the fire at the fence – apparently Greek soldiers.

In a video from the Greek side, the same sequence of shots can be found. Two Greeks can be heard talking to each other off camera. "They aimed", the first person says in it. "They aimed," the second person confirms. "That's the only way ..."

In the video, the characteristic sounds of live ammunition can be heard: first a crack produced by the shock wave of the projectile followed by the sound of the muzzle blast. With blanks, you would only hear the muzzle blast. Steven Beck, an American weapons expert who reviewed the footage, is certain that the shots that can be heard in the video are live ammunition. According to his analysis, the intervals between the shots indicate it was a semi-automatic weapon. He believes the shooter was standing around 40 to 60 meters away from the camera. In all the available videos, it is only on the Greek side that individuals can be seen standing within a radius of 60 meters and carrying such weapons.

THE SHOT

When Gulzar and Khan woke up after a restless night, the first altercations had already broken out at the border post and the air was full of tear gas. Khan could barely breathe.

That day, Gulzar wore a black jacket, a pair of blue jeans with holes and black, ankle-high boots with a zipper. He took his wife's hand and they marched toward the fence together. "Do not attempt to cross the border," Greek border guards warned over a loudspeaker. Khan watched as a man cut a hole in the fence just a few meters away from them. Some of the migrants used bolt cutters, which the Turkish gendarmes likely supplied.

The Greek soldiers stood parallel to the fence, with a few meters between them. They wore face masks and carried semi-automatic rifles. Shots could be heard every few minutes, including from semi-automatic weapons. But the men continue trying to break through the fence. A group of migrants carried the first injured person away, the man holding the left side of his face with his arm. The migrants placed his legs in a blanket to make it easier to carry him. When they reached the road, they put the injured man in a Turkish ambulance.

Gulzar and Khan weren't far from the border fence. Gulzar spoke to the security forces in Greek and had just turned away, Khan says, when the fatal shot was fired. Her husband collapsed with his hand on his chest. "Get up," she screamed at him, "get up!"

"The shot definitely came from the Greek side," Khan says. She says she barely missed getting shot in the foot.

In the video, you can see people rushing to the injured Gulzar. His face is covered, but the zippered boots, the pattern of the torn blue jeans and the black jacket leave no doubt that it is Gulzar who is lying there on the ground.

"They killed him, lift him up!" the migrants shouted in Arabic. They pulled him up by his shirt and jacket, running as they carried Gulzar toward the street to the ambulance.

DER SPIEGEL spoke with two of the migrants who filmed the events that day. Both claim that Gulzar was shot and killed by the Greeks. One of the men, named Sobhi, says that a soldier shot Gulzar with an assault rifle. He can be seen in a video shortly after the incident. He says: "There's a Pakistani who's been shot in the shoulder with live ammunition. At the fence. The ambulance just took him away."

Images from the Greek television station Skai TV show Greek soldiers along the fence near the place where Gulzar was shot and killed. They are carrying FN Minimi, M4 and M16 semi-automatic weapons, which fire 5.56-millimeter caliber bullets. According to the autopsy report of the Istanbul Institute of Forensic Medicine, which DER SPIEGEL has obtained, it is precisely one of these bullets that was found inside Gulzar's body.

The rattle of automatic weapons never seemed to stop on that day. Mobile phone cameras captured the sound, and more migrants started filming. Some fled the fence area in panic. Within four minutes, four injured men were carried away. Fourteen minutes later, a fifth was taken away. Some suffered from gunfire wounds.

One of the injured can be identified beyond any doubt. His name is Mohammad Hantou. Videos show him stumbling across the field, holding his head with one hand. When he falls down, other men help him up and support him.

DER SPIEGEL met with Hantou at the hospital at Edirne one day later. His brother Riad was with him, and Hantou had a bandage on his right ear. Two pieces of shot from a shotgun struck him there, one of them destroying a bone behind his ear, he says. That's what the doctors told him. Hantou is certain that Greek security forces fired on him that day.

The university hospital in Edirne is located only 14 kilometers from the border post. Gulzar arrived at the hospital's emergency room a half hour after he was shot and the doctors tried in vain to resuscitate him. They declared him dead 45 minutes later.

When Saba Khan received the news, she collapsed on the sidewalk next to the hospital, as can be seen in a video shot by a CNN camera team. It shows Khan sobbing, screaming and banging her head against a car repeatedly. She will say later that she believed right to the very end that Gulzar would survive.

When contacted by DER SPIEGEL for a statement, the Greek government rejected all the accusations, dismissing them as "Turkish propaganda." Greece has the "right to protect its borders,"

the government said in a written statement, adding that "Greek police and military forces were charged with using non-lethal measures."

The European Union member states have been tightening their migration policies since 2015 and they have ceased conducting rescue missions in the Mediterranean, but Gulzar's death nonetheless marks a turning point. In his case, border guards not only failed to help – in all likelihood, they themselves were the ones who killed him.

It's quite possible that Gulzar was shot accidentally, that he was hit by a ricochet. But it is also the responsibility of the authorities to determine exactly what happened. By dismissing all reports on the attacks against migrants as fake news, however, the Greek government is making it impossible to uncover all the facts.

Back at the restaurant in Istanbul, Khan swipes through the photos on her mobile phone. She has retained a lawyer to pursue the case – and she's prepared to go all the way up to the European Court of Human rights if she has to. It would then be up to the judges to deliver what politicians have failed to: justice for Muhammad Gulzar.

With reporting by Usman Mahar

Annex XIV
Non-Exhaustive List of Other Reports

List of Reports by the Greek Helsinki Monitor

<https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com/2020/08/27/2-244/>

Pushback Testimonies by Mobile Info Team

<https://www.mobileinfoteam.org/testimony-1>

List of Reports by Aegean Boat Report

<https://aegeanboatreport.com/reports/>

September 27, 2020 Article by The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/sep/27/catastrophe-for-human-rights-as-greece-steps-up-refugee-pushbacks>

September 4, 2020 Press Release by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles

<https://www.ecre.org/greece-10000-people-prevented-access-lockdown-extended-recognition-rate-increases/>

August 21, 2020 Report by Border Violence Monitoring Network:

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/bvmn-investigations-analysis-of-video-footage-showing-involvement-of-hellenic-coast-guard-in-maritime-pushback/>

June 26, 2020 Report by Border Violence Monitoring Network:

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/june-21-2020-2100-ipsala-edirne-turkey/>

June 16, 2020 Report by Border Violence Monitoring Network

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/balkan-region-report-april-may-2020/>

June 3, 2020 Report by Border Violence Monitoring Network:

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/june-3-2020-0200-lesvos-greece/>

May 22 Report by Just Security

<https://www.justsecurity.org/70309/tents-at-sea-how-greek-officials-use-rescue-equipment-for-illegal-deportations/>

May 21 Report by Deutsche Welle

<https://www.dw.com/en/migrants-accuse-greece-of-forced-deportations/a-53520642>

May 20, 2020 Report by Refugee Support Aegean

<https://rsaegean.org/en/alarm-over-increase-of-reported-push-backs-at-sea-and-risks-for-the-lives-of-those-seeking-protection/>

May 14, 2020 Report by Alarm Phone

<https://alarmphone.org/en/2020/05/14/push-backs-the-new-old-routine-in-the-aegean-sea/>

May 12, 2020 Report by Border Violence Monitoring Network

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/special-report-covid-19-and-border-violence-along-the-balkan-route/#more-14584>

April 23, 2020 Report by Border Violence Monitoring Network

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/april-23-2020-0000-near-to-uzunkopru/>

March 19, 2020 Report by Border Violence Monitoring Network

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/new-report-on-violations-at-greek-borders/#more-14389>

March 10, 2020 New York Times Report

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/10/world/europe/greece-migrants-secret-site.html>

November 15, 2019 Report by Mobile Info Team

<https://www.mobileinfoteam.org/pushbacks>

December 18, 2018 Report by Human Rights Watch

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/12/18/greece-violent-pushbacks-turkey-border>

October 22, 2015 Report by Human Rights Watch

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/10/22/greece-attacks-boats-risk-migrant-lives>

November 26, 2008 Report by Human Rights Watch

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/11/26/stuck-revolving-door/iraqis-and-other-asylum-seekers-and-migrants-greece/turkey>

Annex XV

August 3, 2020 PDF Export of Testimonies Database from the Border Violence Monitoring Network

The PDF Export is Attached at the End of this Document