

Illegal pushbacks and border violence reports

registration sites throughout the country. By the end of September 2024, EUAA's provision of interpretation services was reduced significantly, affecting nearly the camps on the mainland.

Further, the recently launched Hippocrates programme does not allocate funds for interpretation services, creating a significant obstacle to delivering healthcare to asylum seekers living in camps. The lack of interpretation further burdens hospitals and medical facilities, which are already facing shortages, and increases the risk of health deterioration for migrants and asylum seekers who experience delays in accessing essential services.

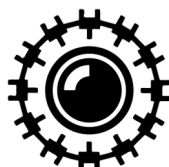
The undersigned organisations have been aware of multiple instances where, as a result of the situation, asylum seekers are unable to progress with their asylum claims or communicate effectively with the authorities, leading to serious consequences on all aspects of their lives:

Restrictions in access to asylum seekers without protection

Without interpreters, applicants are unable to understand the Greek asylum service and are unable to progress with their asylum claims. Few interviews also take place [remotely](#), posing a risk of miscommunication and [other difficulties](#). No interpreter assistance means that all aspects of the asylum procedure are affected, as in many cases, asylum interviews cannot take place, interviews cannot be notified to the applicants, and subsequent appeals and requests cannot be performed.

Despite the severe shortage of interpreters, asylum seekers are not allowed by the authorities to continue with their asylum claims. As a result, their asylum claims are not processed, often at their own expense, to result in a decision. Since the government has not been able to pay for the cost of interpretation, since people seeking international protection are not able to progress their asylum claims or appeals, they are being forced to live in Greece without access to basic rights, such as healthcare, and without the possibility to work or receive [cash assistance payments](#).

Joint letter signed by 36 Greek organisations denouncing lack of interpretation



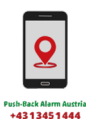
**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**

MONTHLY REPORT | NOVEMBER 2024

Illegal pushbacks and border violence reports



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Executive summary

In November, the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) shared 10 testimonies of pushbacks impacting at least 129 people on the move across the Balkans and Greece. This report gathers updates from the month of November and brings together first-hand testimonies from a range of countries in the Balkans, Turkey, and France to look at the way European Union states and other actors are affecting systemic violence towards people crossing borders. Updates come from the different Member Organisations of BVMN, as well as Human Rights Observers (France) and Glocal Roots (Kos, Greece).

In this report we shed light on some of the effects of the further criminalisation of migration and securitisation of European borders in the Balkans. We discuss the new agreement between Serbia and the UK to crack down on smuggling and how these types of actions have only managed to bring about more violence towards people on the move seeking safety in Europe, as people are forced to hide and travel in even more dangerous conditions. Similarly, in Bulgaria, the increase of criminalisation narratives and policies have been followed by a rise in travel in crowded and unsafe vehicles; while in Bosnia-Herzegovina, more and more people are forced to undertake dangerous river crossings as the situation in Serbia has become harder. As usual, EU funding and support remains a regular character in this story, with Bulgaria's final full admission into Schengen preceded and followed by a fortification of the border with Turkey and EU Pre-Accession funds helping sustain Bosnia's efforts to securitise its borders.

This month we also focus on the extreme violations of the rights of children that are constantly perpetrated in the name of migration policies. Examples from different locations in Europe where BVMN organisations are present paint an appalling picture of the lack of protection faced by minors at borders and beyond. In recently-collected testimonies of pushbacks from Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina, extreme violence and arbitrary detention of minors have been reported on multiple occasions, pointing at a terrible, though unfortunately not new, pattern of impunity and abuses against specially vulnerable groups. In Greece, several organisations have denounced the lack of protection and safe spaces for minors in different CCACs, such as the ones on Lesbos and Samos, where tens and hundreds of children, respectively, have been forced to stay in overcrowded and de facto detention conditions in completely unsuitable areas of the facilities. That being said, no kind of detention facility can ever be suitable for children.



Executive summary

Moreover, following a trend denounced in previous reports, this situation takes place in the context of increasingly degrading conditions in most CCACs, with the Samos CCAC operating at 128% of its official capacity at some point in the month of November, and residents across several facilities reporting a lack of sufficient blankets, hot water and basic hygiene products – particularly concerning in the middle of the winter. The critical lack of adequate medical care, as well as the management’s continuous failure to carry out basic and necessary maintenance work on the facilities remain extremely worrying issues. Furthermore, this month, a joint letter was signed by 36 NGOs to denounce the issue of disruption of interpretation services, also described in previous monthly reports. The lack of interpretation has caused significant delays in many asylum procedures and created more barriers for people to assert their rights.

Meanwhile, in Northern Greece, there has been an intensification of police operations targeting undocumented people on the street, thus increasing the stress and harassment faced by people on the move in public spaces. Similarly, in Turkey, hundreds of people have again been apprehended on the street and processed at the so-called Mobile Migration Points, as part of the Kalkan (Shield) police operations carried out in different cities across the country.

Also in Turkey, we look at reports on several instances of police abuse at different Removal Centers, examples of the systematic violence perpetrated with impunity at these facilities. In one such instance, deportation orders have been issued for one of the residents of the women-only Çatalca Removal Center and her partner following a protest against different abuses within the center. Others, who reported having been drugged through their food have been transferred to other, unknown locations. As quoted by the lawyer of the Syrian couple who have been issued deportation orders, actions like this “send asylum seekers the message to not bother the judicial authorities.”

Lastly, we report on the tragic loss of life of at least 17 people in the Aegean in November, in four different shipwrecks. Three of them occurred off the coast of Samos and resulted in the death of 13 people, including eight children. In the north of France, migration policies have continued to claim lives in the deadliest year on record. 12 bodies have been found in different locations along the coast. Some of these deaths might be related to a shipwreck that took place on October 23rd when three people were found dead after an overloaded boat sank during the night. 48 people were rescued and the search was called off after a few hours, but at least 15 people are believed to have drowned.



General

REPORTING NETWORK

BVMN [1] is a collaborative project between multiple grassroots organisations and NGOs working along the Western Balkan Route and Greece, documenting violations at borders directed towards people on the move. The partners have a common website database, used as a platform to collate testimonies of illegal pushbacks which are gathered through interviews.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological process for these interviews leverages the close social contact that we have as independent volunteers with refugees and migrants to monitor pushbacks at multiple borders. When individuals return with significant injuries or stories of abuse, one of our violence reporting volunteers will sit down with them to collect their testimony. Although the testimony collection itself is typically with a group no larger than five persons, the pushback groups which they represent can exceed 50 persons. We have a standardised framework for our interview structure which blends the collection of hard data (dates, geo-locations, officer descriptions, photos of injuries/medical reports, etc.) with open narratives of the abuse.

TERMINOLOGY

The term pushback is a key component of the situation that unfolded along the EU borders (Hungary and Croatia) with Serbia in 2016, after the closure of the Balkan Route. Pushback describes the informal expulsion (without due process) of an individual or group to another country. This lies in contrast to the term “deportation”, which is conducted in a legal framework. Pushbacks have become an important, if unofficial, part of the migration regime of EU countries and elsewhere.

ABBREVIATIONS

BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina
HRV – Croatia
SRB – Serbia
SLO – Slovenia
ROM – Romania
HUN – Hungary

AUT – Austria
MNK – North Macedonia
GRC – Greece
BGR – Bulgaria
TUR – Turkey
EU – European Union

[1] BVMN is a network of watchdog organisations active in the Balkans, Greece and Turkey including Rigardu, Are You Syrious, Mobile Info Team, PIC, InfoKolpa, Collective Aid, Blindspots, Pushback Alarmphone Austria, I Have Rights, Center for Legal Aid and Mission Wings

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



UK-Serbia agreement: cracking down on cross-border crime

This month, the UK has signed agreements with Serbia, Kosovo, and North Macedonia, pledging to tackle people smuggling and clamp down on 'organised immigration crime' in the Western Balkan region.

According to a press release put out by the British government, the Balkans are 'a key route used by those who end up in the EU or UK illegally', therefore, these agreements are intended to increase intelligence sharing, expertise, and international co-operation between Western Balkan countries and the UK. The press releases stated that they would build upon existing agreements between the UK and Albania, which include 'joint operational activity targeting the illicit finance flows that underpin the operations of the criminal gangs who seek to compromise Britain's borders'.

The focus on tackling cross-border crimes and smuggling gangs should be critiqued for failing to deal with any of the core issues at hand. As long as people are forced to leave their homes, many will continue to head towards Europe to seek refuge. But whilst there are no options to travel under safe and legal routes, most people are, and will continue to be, forced to rely on smuggling networks. Crackdowns will not stop this from happening.

Attempts to crack down on these networks in the past, such as during the 2023 and 2024 special police operations in Serbia, have failed to end smuggling operations in and around the country. Instead, they have served only to push them underground, which in turn forces vulnerable people to take longer and riskier routes to pass through Europe undetected. This year, BVMN reporters have spoken to countless people who have taken such risks in order to evade police detection, such as clinging to the underside of lorries for hours, or sleeping outside, without tents, in dangerous weather conditions to avoid being spotted by drones. New agreements such as these are only likely to worsen these conditions.

The British Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, said 'there is a criminal empire operating on our continent, exacting a horrendous human toll and undermining our national security'. It must be remembered that this truly horrendous human toll will not be dealt with until there are legal routes that allow people to travel safely and quickly to a place of safety.



Moreover, the violent treatment from Serbian police towards regular displaced people during these crackdowns must be at the forefront of our minds; it is likely that vulnerable people on the move will face the most harm, the most dehumanisation, and the most undue criminalisation going forward – just as we have seen before.

Pushbacks from Hungary

Exemplifying this harm, the Collective Aid team gathered a testimony regarding a violent pushback from Hungary to Serbia in early November. Violence was once again reported, as is typical in testimonies of pushbacks around Serbia.

The group of 20, which included men, women, children, and elderly people, were apprehended at around 6 AM near the border with Hungary by a group of approximately 15 people. The respondent, who identified the group as police by the Hungarian police badges on their chests, described them as being angry, aggressive, and violent. They used batons to beat the group, and shouted at them not to speak. The respondent was struck by the officers, and he estimated that 5-6 men from his group were also hit in the arms, legs, and feet. The group was held in a Hungarian police station overnight, where they were prohibited from using the toilet, and were not given any water or food. The police took a photo of the entire group. The next day, they were driven down to Preševo Reception Transit Centre (RTC) in the south of Serbia by the police.

The violence described matches a pattern documented for years by members of BVMN and other organisations. In October, one man who had also been met with violence by police when he was pushed back from Serbia to North Macedonia told us in an emotional testimony that he didn't understand why he was facing so much hostility. He stated, "We are also humans [...]. People shouldn't behave like this with us. Treat us like humans".

Drones and technological surveillance

This month, BVMN and Collective Aid published a new report, titled 'Surveillance Technologies at European Borders: Serbia'. In this report, we extensively detailed a long list of intrusive surveillance technologies currently being used by Serbian authorities to detect people on the move, including thermal cameras, radars, sensors, lasers, x-ray vehicle scanners and acoustic devices, among others.



In November, drones were spotted by the Collective Aid team in Serbia, along the northern border with Hungary. The team also heard new reports from people on the move who said they had witnessed them, too. As mentioned in previous [Monthly Reports](#), the use of these technologies forces people to hide further, resulting in riskier journeys in attempts to pass through the country invisibly. Many feel that this is their only way to stay safe in a state that is so visibly hostile towards them.

The respondent to the aforementioned testimony, which discussed the group of 20 people who were pushed back to Preševo RTC, also stated that the group was forced to provide their fingerprints when they arrived at the camp. Their fingerprints were taken by force, and without explanation.

Invasive biometrics are a particular and problematic type of surveillance, which leaves many people on the move with a lot of anxiety about their future, especially regarding their asylum claims. Hundreds of testimonies gathered show that people are typically not told why they must provide their fingerprints, how their data will be processed and stored, and they are not given a choice as to whether or not they want to do so. Thus, they add a new layer of uncertainty to their already unstable and uncertain journeys.



Testimonies of pushbacks from Croatia: minors exposed to violence and detention

This November, we continued to receive testimonies of violent pushbacks into Bosnia perpetrated by Croatian border authorities against people on the move. In several testimonies collected in Sarajevo for BVMN, the needless exposure of minors to violence and degradation underscores the systematic dehumanization of people on the move in Croatia – a dehumanisation that targets innocent individuals ubiquitously, with complete disregard for the principles of necessity and proportionality, and for the psychological and physical vulnerability of minors.

In one recent testimony, the respondent, an Afghan man in his 20s, reported that he was part of a transit group that included 2-3 minors between the ages of 16 and 17. The transit group was apprehended by 4 Croatian border officers near Gradište. They threatened the group with guns and tasers, before forcing everyone to the ground. 'Before even searching or interrogating us, the officers threw us all onto the ground and began kicking us', the respondent explained; everyone was subjected to this brutality, 'including the boys', he added. The respondent recalled that the transit group was then ordered to form a line. One officer proceeded down the line, punching and frisking each person, whilst demanding essential items, such as money and phones. 'They even took the food that we had kept in our bags, and they did not allow us to eat. They threw it all away', the respondent added. After this, all 18 individuals, including the minors, were thrown into the back of a white police van with 'no windows and no ventilation' and driven for approximately 2 hours to a detention center in an unknown location, where they were held for 2 nights, 'without water, without bread'. In detention, 'they gave us nothing', the respondent reported: 'they did not let us eat'. After 2 nights in detention, the transit group was driven for approximately 8 hours to the Bosnian border. There, they were released from the van by 10 Croatian officers: one-by-one, each person was surrounded by all 10 officers and beaten with batons, until they fled across the border into Bosnia.

This testimony sheds light on a plethora of inhumane police practices perpetrated by Croatian authorities with impunity, and that severely violate international and EU law on human rights, the rights of refugees, and the rights of the child. Arbitrary detention, especially without access to appropriate material conditions like food and water, is absolutely prohibited under Article 9(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 5(1) of the European Convention on Human Rights.



Moreover, as detailed by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the detention of minors for reasons related to their or their parent's migration status should always be forbidden: detention has been repeatedly proven to pose a serious threat to the long-term psychological and physical well-being of children, exposing children to abuse, PTSD, and other negative mental health consequences. In addition to this, the targeted and deliberate exposure of a group of people to egregious physical abuse because of their migration status shows a clear disregard for the basic human rights of those deemed by Croatian authorities as 'non-European', and is symptomatic of the degrading treatment that exposes people on the move to serious harm in Europe.

By targeting already-vulnerable minors with physical abuse and the threat of imminent harm and death, Croatian authorities may very well be utilizing torture (as defined by the Convention against Torture) to coerce and punish children who are seeking security and safety within the EU. Even in cases where more vulnerable individuals are not targeted with direct physical violence, the very fact that they are made to witness in such events can cause profound psychological harm, instilling fear, trauma, and a sense of helplessness that can last long after the incident itself. This is without even taking into account the hazardous crossing conditions that transit groups are forced to navigate during pushbacks. In another testimony collected this November by the team in Sarajevo, 5 Syrian minors (ranging from a breastfeeding infant to 12 years old), along with 2 women (one of whom was a nursing mother) were screamed at by 6 officers in the Croatian forest, whilst the rest of the transit group was subjected to kickings and beatings with batons. The respondent reported that the 'police told us to sit down. They took our backpacks and checked our pockets. They took everything – food and backpacks – and broke all the phones'. Once this was over, the respondent reported that the police forced the group to walk across a small river into Bosnia, placing children at risk of drowning and hypothermia.

The absolute disregard shown for the lives of Syrian and Afghan children in the above testimonies, which are only a mere fraction of the barrage of abuses heaped upon children at the EU borders, highlights the dire consequences of European policies imbued with neo-colonial structures that prioritize security and segregation over the fundamental human rights of children from outside of the EU.



Winter conditions and pushback violence: Theft of clothes and other essentials

November brought the first snowfall of the season in some places in the Balkans, painfully adding to the hostile conditions people on the move are forced to face in the absence of safe passages to asylum and migration. As temperatures drop to as low as -7°C , the dangers posed by these weather conditions are exacerbated by cruel police practices that see people systematically stripped of their clothing and personal possessions during pushbacks at the Croatian border. 'Sometimes the Croatian police kick or hit us with their sticks and batons, and they take everything: our phones, food, clothes,' one man reported. On the ground, we routinely see people exposed to the frost and snow without proper shoes or jackets. The theft and destruction of clothing and other essential supplies by Croatians border authorities underscores the absolute cruelty of this doctrine of intimidation and degradation that exposes people on the move to sustained and aggravated violence, especially in the face of Bosnia's already harsh topographical, geographical and meteorological landscape.



The lack of proper winter shoes and coats endangers the health and safety of people on the move in Bosnia-Herzegovina
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Increasingly dangerous river crossings and EU funds

The heightened securitisation of borders along the Balkan route, and of Serbia's borders with Hungary particularly since the beginning of its Special Military Operations at the end of 2023, has resulted in many people being rerouted towards Bosnia and its various river borders – the Drina river straddling Bosnia and Serbia to the east, and the Una and Sava at the country's northern and northwestern borders with Croatia. This has resulted in an increased risk of death by drowning at such borders, highlighted by the tragedy on the Drina in August that saw the deaths of at least 11 people, including a 9-month old baby, and various reports of drowning since. An additional risk, which may not be as widely recognized, but has been repeatedly reported by people on the move in Sarajevo this month, is falling off bridges.

We have received numerous reports and spoken to individuals who suffered serious injuries after falling or throwing themselves from bridges along the Bosnian-Croatian border, when fleeing from Croatian officers and facing the imminent threat of apprehension, violence and pushback. Some of these people have required intensive surgery and been unable to walk for extended periods of time.

The securitization and militarization of borders places people at serious risk of injury and harm. Despite this, the EU continues to condition Bosnia's accession to the EU and its access to pre-accession funding on the country's implementation of tighter border security operations, including cooperation with Frontex. This November, the EU donated 230,484 BAM worth of IT equipment to the Border Police of BiH, as well as 354,000 BAM worth of tactical uniforms to the country's Service for Foreigners' Affairs through the project, 'Individual Measure to Strengthen Capacity for Border Management in Bosnia and Herzegovina'. To date, the EU has provided more than 8 million BAM (over 4 million €) worth of specialized equipment, vehicles, training, and funding to Bosnia's borders through the 'Individual Measure'. This program is part of the 'Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance', the means by which the European Commission funds Balkan alignment with EU standards, policies and practices, as a condition for economic development and EU membership at some point in the future.



Austrian veto lifted: Schengen Accession

This month Bulgaria has come closer to full Schengen accession to include land borders, following their partial accession from March this year with air and maritime borders. After a meeting in Budapest at the end of the month, the interior ministers of Bulgaria, Romania, Austria, and Hungary agreed to the full Schengen inclusion of both Romania and Bulgaria as of January 1st 2025. The final decision was taken at a meeting of EU interior ministers on December 12th.

Alongside the full accession, an additional hundred border police officers from Romania, Hungary, and Austria have been pledged to be deployed on the Bulgarian border with Turkey. This stretch of the EU's external border has already seen considerable militarisation in line with Bulgaria's gradual introduction to Schengen. Since March of this year an additional 500-600 Frontex personnel were deployed and 85 million € spent on enhancing capabilities at the EU's external borders. A recent BVMN report also highlighted the significant surveillance capabilities of various technologies used at the border between Bulgaria and Turkey.

Testimonies of violent pushbacks have been regularly collected by BVMN members since steps were taken by the EU to further securitise this border. People on the move have been constantly subjected to beatings, forced undressings, threats of gun and dog violence, theft of personal belongings, as well as being forced into overcrowded vehicles - all perpetrated by Bulgarian officers, who, on some occasions, have been masked. Investigations have also shown that Frontex officers have been purposefully kept away from 'hot spot' areas for pushbacks on this border as well as intimidated into silence on the human rights violations they had witnessed. Both EU and Bulgarian authorities have engaged in further neglect of their human rights commitments in order to push through the agenda of full Bulgaria's Schengen accession.

Moreover, in line with the policies required by full Schengen accession, Bulgarian authorities announced that they had recruited 1,200 extra border guards to be deployed at the border with Turkey.

Increase in transit in vehicles in dangerous conditions

In November, Bulgarian police authorities announced they had discovered 26 people on the move traveling in the cargo compartment of a truck near the town of Varshets between Sofia and the borders with Serbia and Romania.



Also this month, Bulgarian police engaged in a car chase with a vehicle on the outskirts of Sofia containing 8 people on the move from Syria. Officers shot at the vehicle causing the driver to need medical treatment.

The continued policing of people on the move in public spaces across Bulgaria – often based on racial profiling – has forced people to use increasingly hidden means of transit through the country, as well as raised peoples reliance on smuggling groups to organise their travel. As a result, more and more people end up traveling in cramped conditions, which turn increasingly dangerous and potentially deadly in the midst of police car chases.

Bulgaria political update

At the end of October, Bulgarians voted in their 7th snap election over the span of three years. The vote saw another low turnout of 38.9% of the population due to voter fatigue and general distrust in electoral integrity. The centre-right GERB party yet again came out on top, without winning a majority. And with majority coalitions refused by all possible parties – based on anti-corruption stance –, the GERB party will either continue with a minority government, unlikely to pass any substantial policy, or an 8th snap election is probable.

Bulgaria's political landscape largely exercises anti-migrant rhetoric across the board. However, the opposition to GERB are generally more staunch in their stance. For instance MECh party leader Radostin Vassilev proposed a unification of all political parties in an anti-corruption majority against GERB, and called for the suspension of the admission of migrants to the territory of Bulgaria.

Moreover, opposition parties often use their anti-migrant rhetoric alongside the spread of misinformation to fear monger the Bulgarian public in order to gain a political advantage. These political tactics have real consequences on the lives of people on the move in Bulgaria. For instance, during the run-up to the election the pro-Russian Revival party claimed that two small shelters that were planned to be built for unaccompanied minors (UAM) in Sofia were instead large refugee centres that would house hundreds of people. As a result, a protest in the Vitosha district resulted in the UAM shelters plan to be scrapped. This is not the first time opposition parties have used the spread of misinformation about migration to stir the Bulgarian public and benefit their political agenda.



The failure of another election and a GERB minority government means a nearly complete lack of opportunity to pass any legislation that would improve the lives of people on the move in Bulgaria, including the betterment of conditions of the reception centers, which have been well-documented in their inadequacy. It also means that misinformation and the scapegoating of migrants is likely to increase.



Ovcha Kupel camp in Sofia © Collective Aid

Despite this political instability, money is continually pledged – both internally and with EU assistance – to further support ‘border management’ and the securitisation of Bulgaria’s border with Turkey, with general consensus among Bulgarian political parties. This month, the caretaker government of Bulgaria has approved an additional allocation of 20 million lev (around 10 million €) to the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense to support the two bodies amid ‘increased migration pressure’.

Additionally, this month during a visit from the Austrian ambassador to Bulgaria’s border with Turkey, border police chief Anton Zlatanov stated that a contractor had been selected to complete video surveillance over a 100 kilometre section of the border. This border already holds significant high tech surveillance methods – as outlined in the recently published BVMN surveillance technology report focusing on Bulgaria. The funds for the video surveillance were reportedly approved by the European Commission in September.



Continuous lack of interpretation services across Greece

A [joint letter](#) was signed by 36 NGOs in November to denounce the issue of disruption of interpretation services, described in previous monthly reports. The lack of interpretation services in many government facilities severely impacted people's ability to communicate with authorities and navigate the asylum procedure. In some of the centres, such as the Samos CCAC, this disruption, ongoing since May 2024 after METAdrasi suspended operations due to delayed payments, has not been addressed by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. Without functional interpretation services, asylum-seekers face significant barriers in accessing their rights and essential services.

On Lesbos, for example, a new trend has also been observed with people arriving from other islands lacking adequate infrastructure, such as Rhodes, or even from the mainland. Faced with long delays in accessing reception services –due to gaps in interpretation or an overburdened system– some travel independently to Lesbos in search of quicker reception. Upon arrival in Lesbos in the past weeks, they have been detained by the authorities. While some undergo asylum interviews and are subsequently released, others are sent back to the mainland, with no consistent approach being followed. This phenomenon highlights the significant gaps in reception and asylum processes across Greece, exposing systemic shortcomings that leave individuals in a state of limbo.

Pushbacks continue at Evros with impunity

A [report](#) published by the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) in November provides detailed descriptions of 12 pushback operations carried out against people on the move at the Greece-Turkey land border during 2023, adding to extensive [documentation of pushbacks](#) in the [Evros region](#) in recent years. While attention from monitoring groups and media has been decreasing, the report demonstrates that these operations are not occurring sporadically but rather form a broader, state-sanctioned approach to migration control. As the report puts it, pushbacks continue to be “a comprehensive, systematic, and meticulously planned migration and border policy of the Greek state”. The report highlights the absence of accountability, with no pushback cases brought before a Greek court to date, creating a climate of impunity. The modus operandi of the pushback operations documented by GCR correspond with a [detailed pushback testimony](#) documented by BVMN in November, concerning a group of 11 people on the move pushed back in May 2023. Specific details reported in both include the deployment of officers wearing civilian clothing and military uniforms in pushback operations, and the reported use of police auxiliaries to carry out



pushbacks across the Evros river and inflict beatings on transit groups (these individuals were described by the BVMN respondent as “mourtaazaka” in Arabic, ‘mercenaries’). The use of police auxiliaries to carry out violent pushbacks at Evros was reported more than two years ago by Human Rights Watch and in 2023 by GCR. In testimonies collected by GCR and BVMN, auxiliaries are reported to wear balaclavas, speak various languages typically spoken by people on the move, and use knives and guns to threaten and intimidate those being pushed back.

Recent accounts of surveillance and pushbacks in Northern Greece

The evidence and trends exposed in the GCR report are regularly corroborated by formal and informal accounts shared by people on the move with BVMN organisations. This month, an anonymous BVMN partner organisation collected the accounts of two Algerian nationals who reported to have encountered border surveillance technology in the Evros region, specifically mentioning the use of thermal cameras. This type of equipment was highlighted in a recent BVMN report on border surveillance technology at Evros, which documents various technologies used by authorities that contribute to potential human rights violations in the area. These men were apprehended separately in Polykastro, close to the North Macedonian border, and subsequently transported and detained in Idomeni police station. Also detained were two men from Sierra Leone and Syria respectively.

One of the Algerian men explained that he was taken to Polykastro police station to have his biometrics recorded before being transferred back to Idomeni police station. He was detained for 12 days while the other Algerian man was held for four days. He further stated that, initially, a man from Iraq translated for the authorities via phone for four days, but then came to the station to translate in person. Both men were released with a police note, officially ordering them to leave Greece within 25 days.

The two men also shared that two of their friends had been apprehended at the main bus station in Thessaloniki. However, unlike them, their friends were not detained or issued police notes but instead they were pushed back to Turkey.

Moreover, other accounts also point at the continuation of regular pushback practices at the border between North Macedonia and Greece. One of them was from an Algerian national who recounted being apprehended in Gevgelija, North Macedonia, before being pushed back to Greece. Though no formal testimony of a pushback from North Macedonia to Greece has been recorded recently, the respondent asserted that pushbacks at this border region continue to happen regularly.



Intensification of police operations in Thessaloniki targeting undocumented people

Noticeable trends in policing activity in Thessaloniki emerged over the course of October and November 2024, raising concerns over increasingly intrusive and sweeping policing tactics. These include checks and controls which deliberately target third country nationals, operations that focus on areas of the city in which marginalised populations live, crackdowns on illegal street trading and a significant rise in ‘stop and search’ actions, defined by the police as “Operations to suppress crime and increase citizens’ sense of security”. In addition, there has been a sharp rise in the number of actions carried out by the ‘Sub-directorate of Minors’ to “Address Juvenile Delinquency” which seem to consist of random checks and searches on young people.

Many of the operations, which were not specified as focusing on third country nationals, nonetheless involved officers from the ‘Directorate of Foreigners’. This suggests a racially motivated element in operations that assumes that third country nationals are involved in the specific crimes being targeted.

The apparent increase in ‘stop and search’ actions, the sudden and intense focus on juvenile delinquency, and the rise in operations targeting third country nationals and ‘illegal stay’ may be linked to the broader issue of rampant police violence and intimidation in Greece: on the streets, at protests, and in police stations, alongside state-inflicted violence in detention facilities and prisons. Thus, in November, the UN’s Human Rights Committee criticised the Greek police’s failure to adhere to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the UN Subcommittee for the Prevention of Torture visited Athens to discuss the issue of police violence in October.

Numbers and data on pushbacks in November 2024

According to data published by the Turkish government, this month, 2200 people were rescued by the Turkish Coast Guard. When pushbacks weren’t reported, the reason for rescue was nearly always listed as “engine failure”. On 6 occasions people had called for help. Among those rescued, 1246 people had been pushed back, in 38 different cases. Moreover, 4315 people were apprehended by the Turkish Coast Guard before leaving the country and 6396 people in total arrived to the Aegean islands.

These numbers are very similar to those from the previous month, when 2201 people were rescued, among whom 1715 had been pushed back in 60 different cases. 4197



people were apprehended, while 6521 people were registered. Compared to the same time last year, the number of people pushed back is lower, for 2065 people (out of 2533 rescued) had been pushed back in November 2023, in 70 different cases. The higher number of recorded pushbacks then might have also been connected to the lower number of people registered in the Aegean islands: 4033.

In terms of the means of crossing, in November 2024, 32 fibre boats were used, a similar amount to those used in October 2024 (34) and many more than in November 2023, when only 14 were reported.

Five of the reported pushback incidents occurred near Lesbos, involving a total of 130 people being forced back to Turkey by the Hellenic Coast Guard around this island, including 49 children. Photos and videos published by the Turkish Coast Guard show that in four of these incidents, people were found in boats without engines, five of which were life rafts and one an inflatable boat. This practice used by the Greek Coast Guard, involving engine-less boats left adrift in the Aegean Sea, poses severe safety risks and violates international law.

Due to this kind of practices and the lack of safe pathways, at least 17 people lost their lives in the Aegean this month. An account of these tragedies can be found in the last section of this report.

Arrivals, population and conditions in the Lesbos CCAC

November saw a sharp increase in arrivals to Lesbos, with 2,216 people reaching the island by sea during this month. This marks a significant increase compared to October, reflecting a sustained upward trend.

Tragically, among these arrivals, a man was found dead in the southern part of the island following the landing of a boat carrying 26 people. The death is believed to have resulted from an underlying health condition or natural causes.

As of November 31st, the population at the Lesbos Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) stood at 3,318, nearing its official maximum capacity. However, it's important to note that the camp's effective capacity is actually reduced, as many housing units remain non-operational due to damages, making the situation even more urgent.



The demographic composition of the camp continues to shift. Afghan nationals now represent the largest group, comprising 51% of the population, while the proportion of Syrians, previously the second-largest group, continues to decline. Notably, the majority of residents are now asylum seekers, signaling a significant change in the camp's demographic profile.

Challenges for residents, many of them outlined in [previous monthly reports](#), continue within the CCAC. Persistent damages to WASH facilities, such as broken doors and locks, have gone unaddressed for months, raising privacy and safety concerns, particularly for vulnerable populations. Additionally, the lack of hot water and blankets has further worsened living conditions as temperatures drop and rainfall increases. These difficulties are compounded by the camp's exposed location near the sea, where weather conditions are harsher and more severe. Although locally operating NGOs have made efforts to address these gaps in the state's absence, the challenges persist, especially as the number of arrivals continues to rise.

At the same time, safe houses for unaccompanied minors, the CCAC designated safe area and guardianship services on the island, have reached full capacity, leaving over 40 unaccompanied and separated minors confined to the first reception area of the CCAC over the month of November. These children have no access to essential services and face a situation of de facto detention, as they are unable to leave. The duration of their stay in these conditions has ranged from a few weeks to over two months, raising serious concerns about their well-being and safety. A [joint press release](#) by 12 organisations highlighted similar issues across Greece and called for immediate action to improve asylum processing, expand accommodation, and activate the EU Relocation mechanism to transfer children to safer environments.

New EU-funded High-Security CCAC in Lesbos

The new EU-funded Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) in Lesbos is being constructed in the middle of the island's pine forest, a zone classified as 'high risk' by the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS). This location raises serious fire safety concerns, while its remoteness imposes extreme isolation from essential services such as legal aid, healthcare, education and access to local communities. Evidence from currently operational 'new-type' CCACs, such as the one in Samos, shows that the excessive use of control systems and surveillance technology in these camps creates a prison-like atmosphere. Combined with the restricted movement imposed by their isolated locations, these conditions may effectively amount to de facto detention without legal justification.



Although €155 million has been allocated by the European Commission for the construction of CCACs on the islands of Lesbos and Chios, both located near the border with Turkey, neither facility is currently operational. Legal proceedings for the Lesbos CCAC remain ongoing due to the failure to conduct an environmental study for the access road. The case is scheduled to be heard again at the Council of State in February 2025, with the possibility that construction may be ordered to halt.

This month, the Municipal Council overturned its 2021 decision approving the construction, and reports indicate that the Council may pursue legal action to stop both the construction and operation of the facility. However, despite these developments, local news sources have reported an extension of the construction permit until April 2025.

Last month, 12 organisations sent an [open letter](#) to Greek and EU authorities highlighting the severe risks and human rights violations associated with the camp's construction. In response, the EU Commission acknowledged the concerns raised but refrained from accepting any responsibility, leaving the critical issues unaddressed.

Worsening living conditions in the Samos CCAC

In November 2024, living conditions in the Samos CCAC reached alarming lows, marked by severe overcrowding, degrading conditions, and insufficient access to basic necessities. While the official capacity of the facility is 3,650, according to the [data](#) of the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the CCAC reached 4,678 between the 16th and 18th of November 2024. The facility was thus functioning at 128% of its official capacity, leaving it once again at the point of crisis. Residents were forced to sleep on the floor without bedding or proper clothing in plummeting temperatures. For example, one respondent reported having to sleep on the floor for around 30 days.

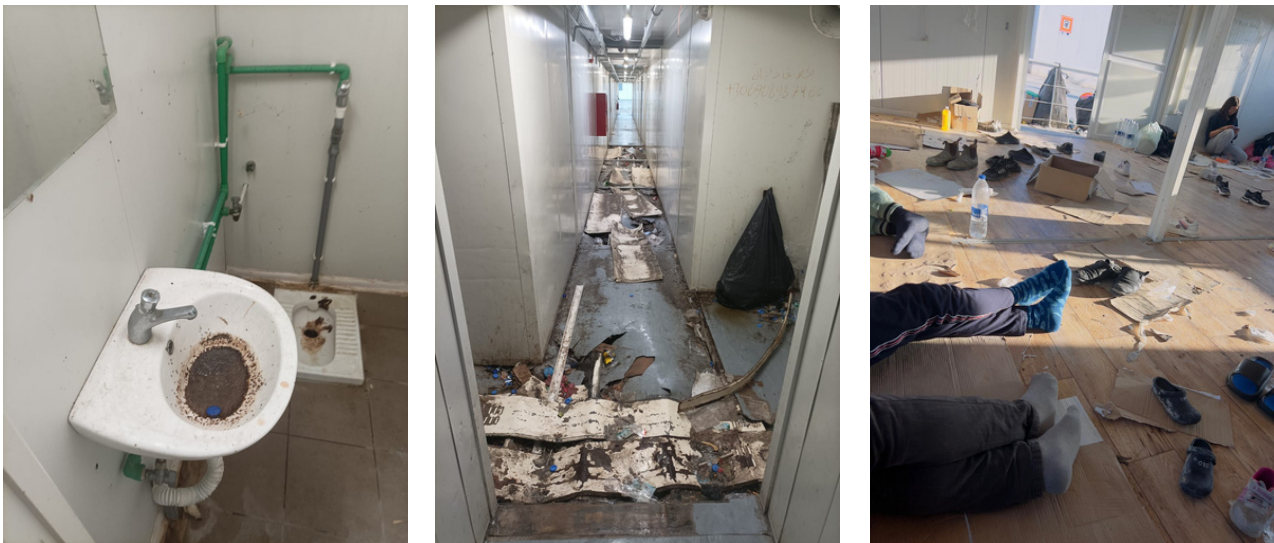
According to the testimonies of 6 people, the conditions in the so-called “quarantine zone” were even more appalling. People were de facto detained in overcrowded, poorly equipped spaces for periods ranging from 4 to 15 days. There was no access to running water, filthy bathrooms, no proper access to showers, and containers were left without adequate lighting. Actors on the island reported that some bathrooms in the so-called “quarantine detention zone” were without doors, leaving detained persons with no privacy. Moreover, food was provided only once a day, often spoiled or frozen. According to a respondent, as many as 30–35 people were crammed into a single container with no clear explanation of the duration or reasons for their detention. Basic items, such as blankets, soap, and sanitary supplies, were not provided. Mobility was



restricted to the isolation area, which was monitored by cameras. In November a heavily pregnant woman reported to I Have Rights that she was forced to sleep on the floor without bedding or blankets. She also described that she did not have access to sufficient clothing. Another respondent reported that their phone was taken for nine days without explanation.

General hygiene conditions in the CCAC were also deplorable in November; people lacked cleaning supplies, laundry services, and functional waste disposal, creating a breeding ground for disease. Medical care was critically insufficient, with no state-appointed doctors present. Safety was another concern, as women, children, and other vulnerable residents were forced to live in unsafe, mixed-gender spaces without adequate protection and support.

In response, NGOs on the island published an [open letter](#) to denounce the inhuman conditions in the Samos CCAC.



WASH and common areas at the Samos CCAC © I Have Rights

Close to 500 UAMs in the so-called “safe zone” of the Samos CCAC

Similarly to the conditions on Lesbos, this month, the situation for unaccompanied minors (UAMs) in the Samos CCAC reached a breaking point. According to the Greek newspaper [efsyn](#), over 480 children were crammed into the so-called “safe zone” intended for just 200. Around 280 children slept on the ground without mattresses or bedding. Basic needs such as bedding, hygiene supplies, and clothing were unmet,



while access to medical care and psychosocial support was severely limited due to understaffing and the lack of interpreters. According to NGOs on the island, some UAMs were without shoes.

Degrading conditions at the Kos CCAC

Numbers of new arrivals in the Dodecanese islands remain high, and Kos continues to be an important point of entry, in addition to receiving asylum seekers transferred from neighbouring islands with no CCACs.

Many individuals have been transferred to other camps in the mainland, particularly families. One of the consequences of this has been that many of the children who had finally gotten access to local schools -50 out of the 400 children living in the CCAC-, have found themselves transferred to the mainland sometimes just a few weeks after enrolling.

Additionally, living conditions within the facility remain extremely alarming, especially as temperatures decrease during the winter. Camp residents report a big shortage of blankets and warm clothes, and sometimes even mattresses. Another concerning issue is flooding in residential areas of the CCAC, which leaves many residents in unlivable conditions.



Government apprehension statistics

According to [statistics](#) published by the Presidency of Migration Management, 19,270 “irregular migrants” were apprehended in November 2024, making a total of 209,715 apprehensions so far this year, as of December 5th. The groups of nationals most affected by apprehensions have been Afghans, Syrians, Turkmens, Uzbeks and Palestinians (see Table 1 below for more information). Furthermore, authorities apprehended 11,971 so-called “organizers”, the term used by the government to describe those accused of facilitating irregular transit.

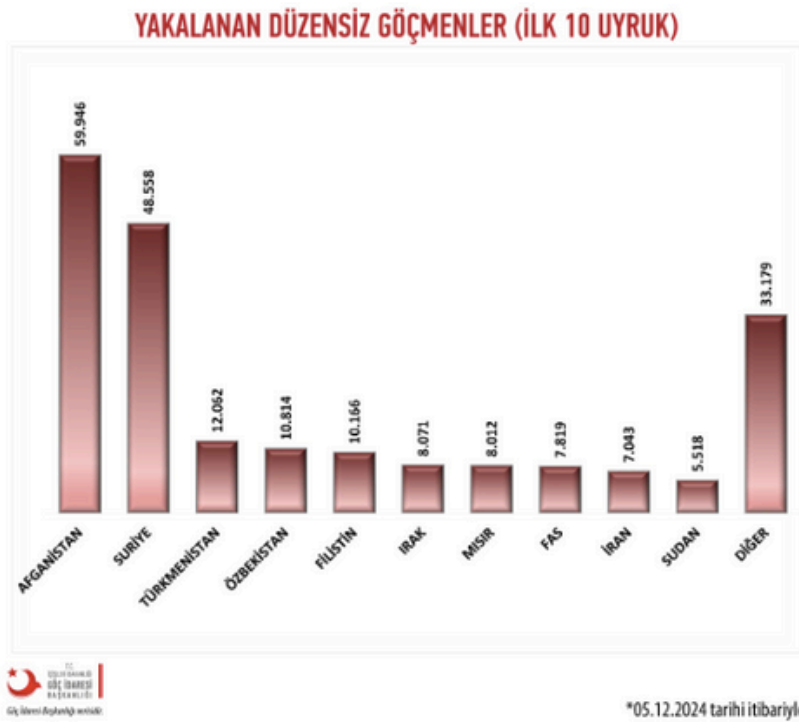


Table 1: Statistics from the Directorate of Migration Management show the number of “irregular migrants” detained in November 2024 according to nationality/country: Afghanistan, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, Iran, Sudan, and ‘other’.

Source: [Directorate of Migration Management](#).

The authorities also continued with their Kalkan, or “shield”, operations, targeting “irregular migration and organizers” in different cities. In early November, they carried out [Kalkan-29](#) in Esenyurt, an Istanbul neighbourhood that is home to a large number of Syrian nationals, resulting in the apprehension of 242 people. A total of 4,568 individuals and 149 organizers were detained in the [Kalkan-30](#), [Kalkan-31](#), and [Kalkan-32](#) operations carried out across Turkey. According to a statement by Interior Minister



Ali Yerlikaya, more than 65,000 locations, including abandoned buildings, terminals, and public spaces, were inspected during the operations, while hundreds of thousands of people were processed through mobile migration points.

Yerlikaya stated that Turkey offers an “exemplary” model of migration management, based on the law and with respect for human rights, adding that operations will continue uninterrupted. Speaking at the recent 7th Ministerial Conference of the Budapest Process in Hungary, Yerlikaya claimed Turkey’s success is based on its “five-legged irregular migration strategy, which starts [...] and ends in the source country,” emphasising the need to address the root causes of migration.

Number of Syrians with temporary protection in Turkey falls below three million for the first time since 2017

On November 20th, a report from the Migration Administration found the number of Syrian nationals under temporary protection in Turkey had decreased to 2,935,742. This marks the first time in nearly seven years that fewer than three million Syrians have been residing in Turkey with temporary protection.

The number of Syrians in Turkey increased steadily from 2011 and peaked at 3,737,369 in 2021. However, the number has continuously declined in recent years, a trend BBC News linked to voluntary and forced returns, as well as crossings into the European Union.

Government figures stated that 729,761 Syrians returned to their country of origin between 2016 and 2024, with 114,083 returning so far this year. Turkey describes these departures as “voluntary returns,” though extensive evidence suggests many are coerced into it, and that the authorities are also aided by EU funding. The second biggest factor for this decrease in the number of Syrians with temporary protection status has been crossings from Turkey into the EU, though it is hard to estimate how many people belong in this category. Recently, the government determined through an address verification process that a total of 150,327 Syrians who did not update their addresses should be deleted from the system in Turkey. However, further verification for the linking of non-updated addresses to the crossings to EU countries was not offered.

Attorney attests to abuses at Çatalca Removal Center

In early November, Mehmet Behzat Yılıcak, the attorney for married Syrian couple Ş.N. and M.N., spoke to Mesopotamia News Agency about their detention. He reported that



a Turkish court had issued a deportation order for the two after they made a police complaint over a case of verbal harassment at the Removal Center, as BVMN reported last month. Yılıcak also discussed the abuses he reportedly witnessed at a women's repatriation center.

According to the attorney, Ş.N. was given a deportation order despite having temporary protected status in Turkey, which "sends asylum seekers the message to not bother the judicial authorities." When he attempted to visit Ş.N. at Çatalca Removal Center on October 31st, he was denied access, but witnessed detainees protesting against their conditions, including lack of beds and food:

The women inside were banging on the windows and shouting, 'We are not murderers. Help us. No to violence against women.' The riot police in front of the [removal center] immediately went inside [...] We recorded this situation with our colleagues. I reported what happened to the Istanbul Bar Association and other associations.

Yılıcak described that, when he was able to visit Ş.N the next day, she reported having been "subjected to insults, psychological violence and degrading attitudes from staff." He also criticized a lack of response from the Istanbul Bar Association and other rights groups.

The protests at Çatalca were followed by other reports of abuse. According to a November 5th report by journalist Sema Kızılarşlan, some detainees at the facility began to suspect they were being drugged. Attorneys for some of the women said their clients claimed the food they were served was laced with sleeping medication, as some detainees felt drowsy after eating. They also said those who would not eat were denied meals. After confronting the staff, the detainees were reportedly told: "You'll eat like dogs! Don't make a fuss about it!"

Kızılarşlan reported that some of the women who protested against the food were transferred to different removal centers. Their contact with families and lawyers has been restricted, and, at the time of the reporting, their new locations were being kept secret, according to Kızılarşlan. The report also cited several buses departing from the



center in the days prior to November 5th, however further reports following up on this were not found. The absence of consistent monitoring of events within and between Turkey's removal centers is a recurrent and concerning issue.

On November 8th, the Turkish Migration Management Directory denied the accusations that detainees had been drugged, adding removal centers have "zero-tolerance for mistreatment".

Suspected assault at Istanbul Tuzla Removal Center

On November 12th, the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey (TİHEK) released a report on the suspected torture and abuse of M.M., a Tunisian national who was detained in Istanbul. In late April, M.M. was transferred from Istanbul Arnavutköy Removal Center to Istanbul Tuzla Removal Center, where he was reportedly subjected to mistreatment and racist behavior. TİHEK concluded that the prohibition of ill-treatment in removal centers had been violated.

According to the report, on the morning of April 28th, M.M missed roll-call while he was in the restroom. Later that day, he was reportedly taken into a room with an "under renovation" sign on the door, which had no security cameras inside. M.M. said he was then beaten by six officers, resulting in a broken finger. He reportedly managed to escape from the room into the corridor but was taken again into the same room. A medical record from Tuzla State Hospital - where he was taken the day after the attack - confirmed he had trauma and broken bones in his hand, requiring a cast. His lawyer stated that he saw M.M. after sustaining multiple injuries, his hand in a cast, and he described that he displayed multiple wounds and marks on his body during their meeting.

TİHEK's investigation found that some of the official records related to the incident were missing, and some dates appeared to have been altered in the documents Tuzla Removal Center submitted to the investigation. In the Directorate's document referring to the incident, authorities state that M.M. had requested to speak with gendarmerie security and thus was taken to the gendarmerie security room. They allege he later requested to be released, but refused to return to his room and encouraged other detainees to rebel. Authorities state that at this point he was brought to another room, with the knowledge of the Gendarmerie Duty Officer. TİHEK reported that there is no video evidence to support this description of events. The Directorate of Migration Management has said the incident is under investigation.



In a thread on the social platform Twitter/X, Istanbul Bar Association member Gülşen Başarır wrote that TİHEK has the authority to file a criminal complaint against relevant officers, but rarely uses it.

Syrian family affected by 2023 earthquake facing deportation

On November 17th, 2024, Syrian nationals Wafa Kurdi and her sons Yemin and Yazen Sabsabi were detained and sent to Şanlıurfa Removal Centre over an “unauthorized” change of address. The family had returned to Ankara in 2023 from Kilis, a city on the border with Syria, after the area was affected by the massive earthquake.

Their attorney Ercan Karan has decried the most recent decision, describing the procedures as unlawful and demanding their reversal. The deportation order is the second Kurdi and her children have faced, after an early attempt to deport them was aborted in 2021.

The Sabsabi family has been in Turkey for more than a decade, and Ankara had been their original place of residence when they arrived from Aleppo, Syria in 2013. The family came under temporary protection status and lived in Ankara until 2021, when security forces detained the family, following attacks against Syrians in Ankara’s Altındağ district. Kurdi’s husband Selam Sabsabi was then sent to Gaziantep Detention Centre, where he reports to have been subjected to torture in a cold room referred to as a ‘refrigerator,’ and forced to sign a “voluntary repatriation” form. He was then sent to the Azaz region of Syria, near Aleppo.

After her husband was deported, Kurdi and her sons were relocated from their residence in Ankara to a temporary center in Kilis, without any legal justification. Although the court ruled there were no grounds for prosecution, the family was still threatened with deportation. They were later released under a monthly signature system.

Migrant activists detained at march to end violence against women

On November 25th, at least three migrants were among the more than 150 demonstrators detained during a march to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, according to the Istanbul Bar Association.



An activist group reported that the detained included two LGBTQ+ feminist activists from Azerbaijan, Ali Malikov and Parvin Alakbarov. Their lawyer stated the two were beaten by the police while in detention, could not access legal counsel for more than a day, and were denied vegetarian meals and access to their medication.

In a November 30th social media post, Malikov confirmed the pair had been deported from a removal center: “Now, we’re writing to you from the plane, if everything goes well in our country, we will share the torture, abuse and harassment we experienced.”

Nina Babazade, a friend of Malikov and Alakbarov, told media law enforcement detained the pair before the march began. “They had to come here,” Babazade said, citing Malikov’s LGBTQ+ activism. “There was a risk of arrest. They are also students here. Parvin applied for a residence permit but it has not been finalized yet.”

These deportations are part of a larger trend of targeting activists, women and the LGBTQ+ community. In 2022, three Iranian refugees faced removal from Turkey after attending a protest against Ankara’s decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe treaty meant to combat domestic and other violence against women. In July, a trans woman was deported to Syria after her HIV status was revealed publicly and she was declared to pose a public health risk. Within days, she was killed in Syria.

This year, more than 400 women were reportedly killed across Turkey. Femicide and violence against women know no borders – they occur in every region of the world. According to a new United Nations report, last year, about 85,000 women and girls were killed globally. The report notes the most dangerous place for women is the home, as around 60% of victims were killed by a partner or close relative.



Update on evictions in Northern France

As a result of the Zero-Fixation-Points policy, living sites in Northern France are evicted by the police at least every 48 hours. These evictions involve the taking of personal belongings, including tents, and often take place in the early hours of the morning, adding a huge amount of stress to the daily lives of people on the move in the region. According to various testimonies, police officers also arrive regularly at the French border to tear down tents with knives, rendering them unusable.

During the month of November, at least 721 people on the move were evicted from their informal living spaces in and around Calais. 63 evictions were carried out by the police forces, on 10 different informal living sites. During these almost-daily police operations, Human Rights Observers was able to document numerous cases of violence inflicted upon people on the move: at least 9 people on the move were arrested, and at least 194 tents and tarps were illegally seized. Several of these arrests were particularly violent. On November 13th, two people on the move were searched and arrested by the Border Police, while the officers restrained them by the back of their neck. On November 27th, a person on the move was tackled to the ground by the Border Police, handcuffed and arrested.

Moreover, this month, two large scale operations took place. On November 4th, at 7:22 a.m., a police convoy arrived at a living site with buses, the state-appointed private cleaning company, and CRS officers (Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité, French riot control unit). The people living there had been unofficially informed that an eviction operation was going to take place. All the people had moved ahead of the eviction. They had not been directly evicted that day, but rather “self-evicted” under the threat of the upcoming operation. On November 22nd, CRS vans and at least three buses were present to evict two informal living sites. A CRS officer said that it was “about the cold operation [...] there is a cold wave coming so the goal is to protect people who are outside”. In reality, it was an operation to move people away from the border. According to different testimonies, people were not even aware of the bus’ destination. In one of the two locations, all the tents were seized, as well as two bags containing identity papers.

Meanwhile, in the area of Dunkirk, a large-scale eviction took place on November 20th. National police vehicles were present, along with 15 CRS vans, 6 vans from the Border Police and 2 buses from the AFEJI (organization appointed by the State to manage “sheltering”). Due to an abusive so-called “safety” perimeter, HRO’s observers were unable to monitor the course of the eviction and, as a result, could not gather



information on the number of people arrested, the number of people taken onto the buses, whether individuals were forced to board onto the buses, or on the seizures and destruction of property.

Intimidation of solidarity organisations and hindrances to observation work is a common tactic used by the police during the evictions. For example, on November 20th, members of HRO and another association were stopped by the police around Dunkirk and had their identities checked and recorded. Police officers also examined the exterior condition of the HRO car. On November 5th, there was an interaction between an observer and a police officer, who was pointing his flash ball gun toward the observer. She asked him to put it down when they're talking, to which he replied twice "It is down!", without actually doing it.



Eviction monitoring by HRO - seizing of tents and belongings © HRO & @elio_j_



Eviction in Northern France © HRO & @elio_j_



Hostile police behaviour

This month, Collective Aid collected a testimony of a man who described several recent instances of police harassment. In one of them, the respondent and a group of people had gone to a supermarket in the region, when the police stopped them and took a picture of the group after threatening them with arrest if they didn't allow the authorities to take the photo. On another instance this month, he reported that 10 police officers arrived at 6 am at the place under a bridge where he was staying with another 25 people. The authorities told them to go and took their belongings. The respondent described that one of the officers flashed a light directly into his eyes repeatedly, and prevented him from covering them with his arm. After taking his arm down several times, the officer arrested the respondent and one other person and took them to the police station, where he was accused of lying about his age and forced to give his fingerprints.

Interior minister pays tribute to French police

On November 29th, the Minister of the Interior, Bruno Retailleau, came to Calais to honour his gendarmes and border police for their work "in tough conditions and for their commitment to the fight against immigration". He also announced the strengthening of French measures to prevent people from leaving the country. Examples of the use of violence to prevent departures, which contribute to the increase in the loss of lives in the Channel, can be found in the last BVMN report from October.

As local organisation Auberge des Migrants pointed out, not a word was said about the difficult situation of people on the move, or about the people who have lost their lives in the Channel as a result of the Franco-British border policy. In the meantime, Collective Aid reports an increase in the number of requests for tents and blankets as the continuous lack of shelter alternatives and the winter conditions leave many without any protection against wind, rain and cold.



Deaths and Disappearances

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION

17 people lose their life in the Aegean

This month, at least 17 more people have lost their lives in the Aegean as a result of the violent migration policies of European states. On November 6th, 4 people died close to southern Rhodes.

Three more devastating shipwrecks happened off the coast of Samos, claiming the lives of 13 individuals seeking safety on Samos, eight of whom were children. On November 10th, a young boy went missing after falling into the sea near Samos, prompting a large-scale search operation. Two weeks later, on November 25th, a boat sank off the island's northern coast. While 39 survivors were rescued, six children and two women lost their lives, according to the Greek Newspaper Samos Voice. Amongst the victims were babies, the youngest just four months-old. A mother lost three of her children while another man lost both his wife and daughter. Just two days later, on November 27th, another boat struck rocks in the same region, resulting in the deaths of two children and two women. The tragedy echoed Monday's disaster in its heartbreaking loss of life.

These shipwrecks underscore the risks faced by individuals seeking safety and the critical need for safe migration routes to prevent further loss of life.

12 bodies found off the coast of Calais

During the month of November, at least 12 bodies have been found on the UK-French border. On November 2nd, the body of a 30-to-40 year-old man was found at the beach at Sangatte. On November 5th, three bodies were found off the coast of Calais, one of them at the town's beach, and two others by the port. Another body was found in Dover on November 6th. On November 12th one body was found at the beach at Sangatte and another at the beach at Wissant. On November 14th, the dead body of a man was found at the beach in Calais. Another body was found at the beach in Hemmes-de-Marck on November 17th. In Quend in the Somme, one body was found on November 20th.

Some of these deaths may be linked to a shipwreck that took place on October 23rd, when three people were found dead after an overloaded boat sank during the night. 48 people were rescued and the search was called off after a few hours. At least 15 people are believed to have drowned.



Tragic anniversary 24th November 2021 in Northern France

On the night of November 23rd to 24th 2021, a small boat with 33 people on board set out from the Dunkirk coast trying to cross the Channel, in the hope of reaching safety in the UK. However, a few hours later, the boat capsized. The incident killed 27 people, including six women, at least one of whom was pregnant, and three children. Four people remained missing and only two people were rescued.

That night, authorities failed to send rescue vessels to the boat, after ignoring about 15 calls from the passengers. Even though CROSS (Centre Régional Opérationnel de Surveillance et de Sauvetage) told the people on the boat that rescue vessels were on their way, no help arrived that night. This shipwreck was the biggest single loss of life in the Channel since data collection began in 1999.

During this year's tragic anniversary, we denounce that 2024 has been the deadliest on record in this region. We remember all of those who have lost their lives at this border, as a direct result of the states' policies and the lack of safe routes. We stand in solidarity with their families and friends, and all those fighting for justice. We demand safe routes now and an end to the policies and rhetoric that continue to cause this loss of life and everyday suffering.



Testimonies published in October

Link	Incident	Recorded	Demographic	Group size	Organisation
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Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina

<u>1.1.</u>	13/8/2024	15/08/2024	Syria	10	Collective Aid
<u>1.2.</u>	1/9/2024	2024-03-09	Syria	3	IPSIA
<u>1.3.</u>	12/10/2024	2024-10-15	Iran	3	Collective Aid

Bulgaria to Serbia

<u>2.1.</u>	25/09/2024	2024-10-10	Afghanistan	31	Collective Aid
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Serbia to North Macedonia

<u>3.1.</u>	14/10/2024	2024-10-17	Afghanistan	1	Collective Aid
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Bosnia to Serbia

<u>4.1.</u>	29/09/2024	07/10/2024	Afghanistan	29	Collective Aid
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Serbia to Hungary

<u>5.1.</u>	08/08/2024	2024-08-13	Afghanistan, Pakistan	7	Collective Aid
<u>5.2.</u>	12/08/2024	2024-08-13	Afghanistan	7	Collectie Aid

Bulgaria to Turkey

<u>6.1.</u>	31/07/2024	2024-08-26	Afghanistan	27	Collective Aid
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Greece to Turkey

<u>7.1.</u>	21/05/2023	2024-11-19	Iran, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Kurdistan	11	Anonymous
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Border Violence Monitoring Network

Network structure and contact

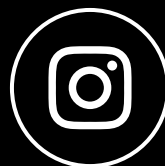
BVMN acts as an alliance of organisations in the Balkans and Greece. BVMN is based on the efforts of partner organizations working in the field of documentation, media, advocacy and litigation.

We finance the work through charitable grants and foundations, and are not in receipt of funds from any political organisation. The expenditures cover transport subsidies, several part-time paid coordination positions and some costs incurred by partner organisations for their contributions to our shared work.

To follow more from the Border Violence Monitoring Network, check out our website for the entire testimony archive, previous monthly reports and regular news pieces. To follow us on social media, find us on Twitter handle @Border_Violence and on Facebook.

For further information regarding this report or more on how to become involved please email us at mail@borderviolence.eu.

For press and media requests please contact:
press@borderviolence.eu



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