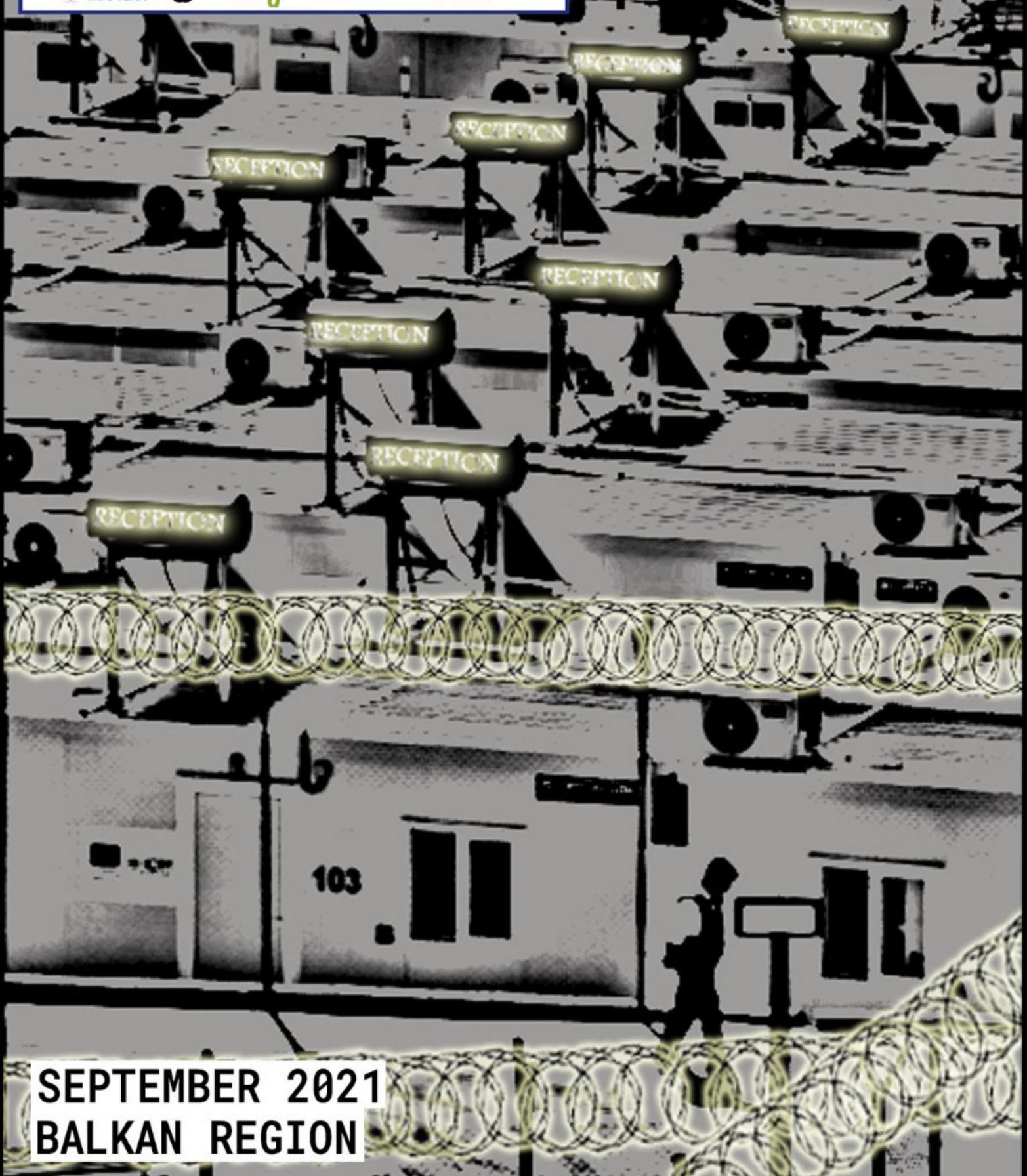




Border Violence Monitoring Network



ILLEGAL PUSH-BACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS



SEPTEMBER 2021
BALKAN REGION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) published 35 testimonies of pushbacks in September, sharing the experience of 815 people-on-the-move at borders across the Balkans. This report looks at a number of trends in these violent expulsions, such as beatings, sexual violence, outsourcing of pushbacks and maritime violations.

Scrutiny of Croatia's patent involvement in violent pushbacks was again a focus of September, with reports detailing a range of severe abuses during pushbacks to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. In particular, the report analyses the spate of sexual assaults and gropings carried out by police during searches of transit groups. The report considers these cruel and torturous procedures in line with continued evidence of Slovenian facilitation, looking at the process of systematised chain-pushbacks through its southern border to Croatia.

Further analysis is provided about the outsourcing of boat transportation used to complete pushbacks across the Evros/Meriç River. The publication considers further testimonies of third country nationals allegedly employed in some capacity by Greek authorities to carry out the transfer of pushback groups with dinghies. Meanwhile September saw further pushbacks via boat, this time by Italian authorities using commercial ferries returning to the Port of Patras.

In Greece, the opening of the closed 'hotspot' on Samos drew the most attention, advancing an already markedly carceral shift in the treatment of arrivals to the country. In line with this, the Centaur surveillance system, monitoring sites across the islands and mainland, is also analysed as a system of control impacting people-on-the-move. The report also looks at Migration Minister Mitarakis's claimed 'success' on the Greek government's response to the fire in Moria in September 2020, particularly in light of a recent fire that occurred in Vathy camp. The showcasing of remodelled camps is also discussed in light of the preparations of the new sections of Lipa in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which again raises questions of forced containment over adequate accommodation.

In Serbia, September brought on a number of concerning trends, including a further death in the border area close to Šid and harassment by a local fascist group. The report also looks at the deployment of Hungarian officers inside Serbian territory and quarantine conditions for arrivals to the Italian city of Trieste. A full glossary of pushbacks testimonies is provided alongside the analysis, as well as various field updates from members of the network. In sum, the month of September saw concentrated levels of violence at borders across the Balkans and further repression of conditions in camps, closed centres, squats and quarantine facilities.

**BVMN is a network of watchdog organisations active in the Balkans, Greece and Turkey including No Name Kitchen, Rigardu, Are You Syrious, Mobile Info Team, Disinfo Collective, Josoor, [re:]ports Sarajevo, InfoKolpa, Centre for Peace Studies, Mare Liberum, Collective Aid and Fresh Response.*



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REPORTING NETWORK

BVMN 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 members have a common website [database](#), used as a platform to collate testimonies of illegal pushbacks which are gathered through interviews.

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. Push-back 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. Push-backs have become an important, if unofficial, part of the migration regime of EU countries and elsewhere.

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 be as large as 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.

ABBREVIATIONS

BiH	-	Bosnia and Herzegovina
HR	-	Croatia
SRB	-	Serbia
SLO	-	Slovenia
ROM	-	Romania
HUN	-	Hungary
AUT	-	Austria
MNK	-	North Macedonia
GRK	-	Greece
BGR	-	Bulgaria
TUR	-	Turkey
EU	-	European Union

TRENDS IN BORDER VIOLENCE

FORCED UNDRESSING, SEARCHES AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

In September, testimonies exposed a deeply concerning pattern of invasive searching and sexual violence during pushbacks to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. Alongside the consistent trend of forced undressing (see [5.8](#)), three recorded cases also included the violent stripping and groping of people's genitals by Croatian police. Meanwhile, two other respondents relayed how Croatian officers searched their mouths during pushback operations.

As highlighted in the [August report](#), transit groups are regularly forced to remove their clothes (often down to underwear) when apprehended by Croatian officers. This abusive practice is used as a way of stealing phones and other valuables, but also a form of torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. In 2020, up to [45% of cases recorded by BVMN from Croatia included forced undressing](#), often followed by the burning of clothing or pushing the semi-naked groups into rivers.

Alongside material damage and risks of drowning/hypothermia, forced undressings also act as forms of sexual violence. In three cases recorded in September, respondents describe how their genitals and underwear were violently groped or struck by Croatian officers. During a pushback to Serbia (see [3.2](#)), officers beat one group with batons before groping their bodies and genitals demanding: "Give me money!". Meanwhile, in another case where a respondent was pushed back to BiH, he described how Croatian police removed their jackets and burnt them on the border, before touching their genitals to check for any concealed valuables (see [5.10](#)). Both incidents show a combination of violent theft and intimate, sexualised infringements

on people's bodies. A further case from September reinforces the extreme nature of these attacks, detailing how an officer whipped the respondent with a belt across the genitals as they pushed him back close to the Bosnian town of Velika Kladuša (see [4.2](#)).

These heinous crimes at Croatian borders must be seen within a wider pattern of rape and sexual violence that has also been documented by network member [Centre for Peace Studies](#) and the [Danish Refugee Council](#). Additional to the involvement of Croatian police, one testimony from September also showed Slovenian police undertaking similar abusive groping against a group of Afghan and Iranians, including six minors (see [4.5](#)). The respondent recalls how they were led into a room in a police station and searched one-by-one in a row:

"I don't know, they maybe check for money or for drugs. They pull our underwear and touch inside. Maybe [this takes] one person 10-20 minutes. It feels bad to be touched in this way."

The invasive nature of pushback violence was also seen in several searches of transit groups where officers forced their hands into peoples mouths to check for money. One respondent interviewed in September described how, "they even control inside our mouth" (see [5.10](#)). Another example of this practice saw officers physically assault a group member for having money concealed in his mouth by hitting him in the face (see [5.5](#)). This intrusion on the bodies of people-on-the-move shows the way pushback methods combine physical and extractive elements of harm, as well as clear processes of sexual violence.

DINGHY DRIVERS IN EVROS

Testimonies this month from survivors of pushbacks over the Evros/Meriç river from Greece to Turkey again mentioned third country nationals (TCNs) working with Greek authorities in violently expelling people from the country (see [7.1](#) & [7.2](#)). This trend has been observed sporadically in reports since 2020, and it is often mentioned that TCNs who assist in perpetrating pushbacks are promised legal documentation in Greece or other compensation for their actions. A [testimony](#) from September 2020 states that:

“The dinghy was manned by a Pakistani man. Speaking Pashto, the respondent spoke to the driver and found that he had been offered documentation by the Greek authorities in exchange for two months manning the vessels.”

Across different reports it has been asserted

that the people driving the dinghies come from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq or Morocco. It also appears that driving a boat is not the only task that these people are assigned to. Testimonies from September mentioned that people working with the Greek police were asked to take over organisational tasks and responsibilities, such as preparing the dinghies (see [7.2](#)), establishing a queue, searching and removing valuables (see [7.1](#)), and asking transit groups to take off their shoes. The exact nature of this relationship between TCNs and authorities is difficult to assess and there is so far no proof that the promised compensations are duly exchanged. Though, regarding the repeated assertion of this practice, it appears that the Greek authorities are operating some form of exploitation over people-on-the-move which plays on the lack of access to asylum in the country.



Deflated dinghy lying on the river bank (Source:Josoor)

CHAIN PUSHBACKS FROM SLOVENIA

In September, organisations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia collected numerous reports of chain pushbacks from Slovenia. These chain pushbacks have been ongoing for several years and were the focus of a recent webinar [hosted](#) by BVMN partner organization InfoKolpa. Especially in view of the [Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU](#) and [recent court rulings](#) which the Slovenian state is yet to adhere to, it is important to remember that the illegal practice of pushbacks via Croatia to BiH and Serbia continues to occur with a high frequency.

The specificity of these chain-pushbacks is that the affected people are seemingly ‘officially’ handed over to the Croatian authorities by the Slovenian officers at marked border crossings, both road and rail. An incident from last month describes the use of border crossing points (BCPs) to exchange apprehended groups (see [4.8](#)):

“On the morning of the 24th September the group of five, all Afghan males between the age of 18 and 22, were given all of their belongings and driven to a small checkpoint on the Croatian border. The checkpoint was described as a two-sided road with a container on each side. Here they were handed over to two Croatian officers, which the Slovenian officers spoke with.”

These quasi ‘official’ removals differ from pushbacks at other borders, which are instead characterised by their informality and seclusion. Taking the Croatian example, experienced by most groups removed from Slovenia, officers carry out pushbacks with masks at remote stretches of the green border, making no pretense at enacting a formal readmission. Whereas the more open course of removing people via BCPs from Slovenia relies on the trappings of a manipulated readmissions process and implies a paper trail of signed documents to

justify the act. In spite of this, both the Administrative and Supreme Courts of Slovenia have found these practices to breach law on asylum, and expose people to the risk of torture in Croatia.

Differing from pushbacks directly from Croatia to BiH or Serbia, Slovenian chain-pushbacks imply a set of more elaborate steps and can therefore last multiple days. This was illustrated strikingly by a testimony collected in September [see inset maps] where the removal of the transit group took three days and involved 45 hours of detention (see [4.3](#)). Similarly, another group (see [4.2](#)) described being held in detention with only little food and water provided and no possibility to consult a lawyer.

“We stayed 3 days in jail. We didn’t see any lawyer, they didn’t provide us a translator. They just gave us one bottle of water per day and some bread.”

Besides poor treatment in detention, several testimonies mention violence and mistreatment happening even inside Slovenian police stations, such as intensive searching of people’s genitalia mentioned in a testimony collected by No Name Kitchen (see [4.5](#)). Although one testimony (see [4.8](#)) mentions that the minors from the group were allowed to stay in Slovenia, the assessment of vulnerable persons appears inconsistent, and gatekeeping of asylum rife. In the same incident the respondent refused to sign documents presented to him in Slovenian, at which point a translator was called and signed the documents on his behalf. Others report being promised access to initiate their asylum claim, only to be violently chain-pushbacked to BiH several days later (see [4.2](#)).

“I asked for asylum many times. Finally, one policeman arrived and made us signing some papers. I really thought it was related to my request for asylum.”





Map of chain-pushback testimony (Source: No Name Kitchen)

FURTHER PUSHBACKS TO PATRAS

In September, BVMN shared three testimonies of maritime pushbacks from Italy to the Greek Port of Patras. The four persons impacted by these removals, all from Afghanistan, were apprehended at various ports along Italy's Adriatic coast and returned by ferry to Greece. Prolonged detention in the hold of the vessels and excessive force were used during these incidents.

One respondent caught in Bari was told by Italian police officers "You can't stay in Italy", before being beaten to the ground and locked in a room for 10 hours during the return trip to Greece (see 6.1). Another case also showed this lengthy period of detention in ferry cabins, with two respondents being

held on an overnight trip from the Port of Venice and denied water in spite of requesting it (see 6.2).

A further case where a minor was apprehended in Ancona led to a violent altercation with four Italian police officers who dragged him from the truck where he was concealed and slapped him in the face (6.3). The respondent was then transferred back via ferry to Patras, taking 23 hours in total. Upon arrival he was subject to further threats by Greek officials in the port who stated:

"If the police catch you again, it will not be good for you. Next time, you will go to jail"

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION

GREECE

NEW 'HOTSPOT' OPENED ON ISLAND OF SAMOS

As announced in late July 2021, the new 'closed and controlled' hotspot of Samos – [entirely funded by the EU](#) – opened its doors in September. Located in a remote, double military fenced and highly surveilled basin at the centre of the island, the inauguration of the camp on 18th September was met with wide range criticism from various parts of the population in Samos.

The weekend of the inauguration saw the protests of local, refugees and international communities, both in Vathy town and [in front of the facility](#). For [two successive nights](#), people gathered in the central square of Vathy. Among them were refugees bound to move into the new camp, internationals and locals expressing solidarity with the displaced community and general refusal of these new developments in EU migration policy.

The festive spirit of the inauguration pushed by the Greek authorities was further overshadowed by the absence of two central local figures: Regional Governor of North Aegean Kostas Moutzouris who stated in his [official refusal to the invitation](#), that nobody *“agreed on structures imposed by Europeans with the capacity of 300 acres like the one in Zervou and for this reason I will not attend the inauguration”*. His statement followed the [declaration](#) of the Mayor of Eastern Samos, Georgios Stantzios, that the opening was not a *“celebration”* and that the members of the municipal council ‘strongly disagree with the size of the structure’. However the mayor's ambiguous attitude over the last years in regards to the building of the camp in Zervou came once more to light as [he visited the premises](#) only 10 days after the ceremony. While both critiqued the sites location and composition, many other observers queried why such a closed centre should be built in the first place, amid rising concerns of arbitrary detention and human rights abuses.

During the inauguration day nonetheless, a large contingent of journalists from all over Europe, invited by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum to witness the improved quality of the facility – now termed ‘Closed and Controlled Access Center’, seemingly replacing the [official nomenclature](#) in the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the European Commission.

Another noticeable absence, that of DG Home Affair Ylva Johansson, was covered by the Deputy Secretary Beate Gminder and leading figure in the project of the five Aegean ‘superstructures’. Together with Mr. Mitarakis, Ms. Gminder was tasked with the raising of [the Greek and EU flags](#) to mark the ‘success’ of this new step in EU securitisation policy.

As planned, the first transfers of people to the new structure out of Vathy town took place at the start of the following week. Despite an outbreak of a [fire](#) on Sunday 19th September in the old camp, the transfer ran ‘smoothly’. After the completion of the movement on Tuesday evening, people were not allowed to leave the camp until Thursday, which fueled tension, uncertainty and fear among the residents of the new prison-like structure.

While the general living conditions inside the new ‘hotspot’ seem to have improved, pre-existing mental health problems will most likely worsen inside the new highly secured structure. As stated by [Médecins Sans Frontières](#):

“As psychologists working with the people who are at the frontline of Europe’s tightening migration policies, we witness on a daily basis the deterioration of these people’s mental and physical well-being. The opening of the new prison camp is changing the collective identity of the refugees, their self-esteem and image: their dignity. Europe is breaking them.”

INCREASED AND CENTRALISED SURVEILLANCE OF CAMPS

With the concept of ‘national security’ increasingly playing a key role (at least symbolically or in discourse) in the Greek migration policy, the authorities have started building [concrete walls](#) around Ritsona camp in the outskirts of Athens. While this was one of the first where 10 feet high concrete walls were built, 24 camps on the mainland are planned to follow.

An important piece of this ‘securitisation’ based approach lies in the new CENTAUR surveillance system. Presented as a part of the [“National Migration Strategy 2020–2021, Protecting Aegean Island”](#), it is now first being used in the light of the opening of the new “Closed and Controlled Access Center” on Samos. Described as an “Integrated Digital Electronic and Physical Security management system perimeter and inside the premises, using cameras and motion analysis algorithms (Artificial Intelligence Behavioral Analytics). It seems blatantly obvious that the

aim of this new strategy is to monitor every step of people placed in those new prison-like structures, and it “includes central management from the seat of the Ministry” who preside over the system.

These tight surveillance methods are not only taking place in Samos. The overall aim of CENTAUR is to be able to [connect to every single camera](#) in the structures of the Aegean islands and other camps throughout Greece in the future. As stated by Migration & Technology Monitoring researcher, [Petra Molnar](#):

“It really shows that the priority of this project and perhaps for the Ministry of Migration is to normalize surveillance in these spaces. We're talking about cameras, automated voice broadcasting, drones and also this kind of amorphous algorithmic detection analysis which no one can really know what exactly would entail”.

MITARAKIS CLAIMS ‘SUCCESS’ ON THE GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO 2020 MORIA FIRE

On the first anniversary of the destruction of Moria camp by the large fire in September 2021, Greek Migration Minister Notis Mitarakis stated that the government’s handling of the catastrophe was to be recognised as a ‘success’: *“Moria, like the crisis in Evros, has proven that we can respond even under the most extreme conditions, and thus manage emergencies in a successful way”.*

Meanwhile, and in response to the arguable claims of Mr. Mitarakis, Lesbos-based organisation FenixAid issued a report on the ‘inadequate emergency response to the Mo-

ria fires’, highlighting the systematic neglect in the treatment of asylum seekers in the hours and days immediately after the fire. According to the quantitative survey from 126 asylum seekers undertaken by FenixAid, 65.9% of respondents were left without daily access to food while 34.9% of them had no access to food in the four days following the fire and 52.2% had no water. Moreover, almost all of the respondents (93.7%) did not have access to sanitary facilities and up to 49.2% of them did not receive medical attention in four days.

ENDING OF CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Greek Migration Ministry [decided](#) to end the UNHCR's cash assistance program at the end of September 2021 and will now become responsible for the support of asylum seekers in what many see as a troubling reshuffle. This means that no financial assistance will be given to asylum seekers, who are not accommodated in formal housing structures recognised by Greek authorities. According to [media reports](#), in March 2021 the number of people living outside these structures amounted to 25,000 in Greece, while the total number of people receiving financial assistance was 64,500.

The last payment has been issued in August covering two months, August and September. From October 2021 onwards, the Greek authorities will be responsible for providing assistance to asylum-seekers. The Ministry has [announced](#) that asylum seekers of the "urban population" should submit a housing request in case they lack the

financial resources to cover their basic needs. At the same time, mainland camps and the official state housing program (ESTIA) lack sufficient capacities to accommodate these people and waiting periods for state housing can last months. This leaves many people at risk of becoming [homeless](#), struggling to survive without any support.

As of 1st October, the new system for cash assistance administered by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum was supposed to commence. However, the Ministry released a statement saying that cash assistance would not be available to international protection seekers until the end of the month, and that until then food would be provided within accommodation structures and Reception and Identification Centers (RICs). Residents and workers inside several RICs reported that this new food distribution system has been "chaotic" while failing to adequately meet needs.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

NEW SECTION OF LIPA ANNOUNCED AS READY

As winter approaches, the situation in camps around the Bihać area in Bosnia's Una Sana Canton remains troubled. Sedra camp has been closed since [30th June](#), though the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has continued to list the closure as [pending](#) past this date. In the meantime, families, unaccompanied minors, and women have been moved to Borići camp, a site which has no current planned closure. Throughout the past months construction continued on Lipa camp, and [IOM reported](#) the works would be finished by the last week of August.

While the site waits to officially open, two tents located inside the provisional area at the Lipa site caught fire, a worrying continuity with events from last December. Of the 400 people staying in this provisional area fortunately nobody was injured, but question marks remain about the structural violence being upheld by this camp which has seen poor sanitation, a lack of adequate food, and even suicides throughout its tenure. Some of these issues were addressed in a recent BVMN submission to the [UN Committee on](#)

[Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on Bosnia-Herzegovina](#). Coupled with the regular forced removals of squat communities to the site by local police and special forces, the camp has become a symbol of the degrading accommodation that can be witnessed across the EU external border.

In September, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs and the Bosnian Ministry of Security announced the completion of the reconstruction work in Lipa, which will replace the provisional tented area set up by the BiH army after the fire on 23rd December 2020. The opening of the new camp was announced for 6th September but has been postponed several times to a date yet to be defined. In an [official video](#), Laura Lungarotti, IOM's head of mission, announced that the camp will have a maximum capacity of 1,500 beds, and will also accommodate unaccompanied minors and families. Lungarotti also stated that the reconstruction of the camp has been financed by the European Union, the Austrian and Swiss governments, and several other EU member states.

SERBIA

ENCOUNTERS WITH FAR-RIGHT GROUPS IN ŠID

On 25th September, three No Name Kitchen (NNK) volunteers in Šid had an encounter with the “Opština Šid Sokolovi” (Municipality of Šid Falcons), a far-right nationalist organisation based in and around the town. The volunteers were sitting, speaking with a group of people-on-the-move in a field near Adaševci refugee camp when they were approached by an unmarked car. The two men who emerged wore equipment belts and military style uniforms, bearing the sign of a falcon on their insignia. One had a tattoo of the Serbian coat of arms paired with a portrait of Dragoljub Mihailović, a historical leader of the Serbian nationalist Chetnik movement and Nazi collaborator.



The uniformed men demanded that the people-on-the-move show them their camp IDs, which had been lost during a recent push-back from Croatia, and warned them that they had five minutes to return to camp. One of the NNK volunteers present asked the men who they were, to which they replied “military”. The men then photographed the IDs of the volunteers, but when they could not produce any of their own, the volunteers left. Later, No Name Kitchen contacted the people-on-the-move to ask them about the altercation. They replied that they were part of a “weird group” that provided security in the area behind the camp. After the volunteers translated the name on their insignia, they realised these men were members of the Sokolovi.

Unfortunately, this was also not the first encounter with the Sokolovi. From January to February 2020, NNK volunteers had repeated violent encounters with them while trying to prevent them from burning down the belongings of People sleeping in an abandoned factory on the outskirts of town. In the [final encounter](#) the Sokolovi, some of whom were wearing Chetnik uniforms, threw petrol at one volunteer and hit another’s phone out of their hand before destroying it with a baton. The volunteers then phoned the police, but in full view of them after their arrival, the Sokolovi proceeded to slap one volunteers and stab the tyres of the NNK van. Finally the town mayor arrived, who previously boasted of his tough approach to controlling the “migrant threat”, and the volunteers were arrested. In the following trial, described by one volunteer as “theatrical”, the Sokolovi

Demonstrators rallying in the town (Source: Omladina Šida/Facebook)

were admonished due to the fact that they had been engaged by the municipality to clear the squats. On the other hand, the accounts of the NNK volunteers were summarily dismissed and they were ordered to leave Serbia and pay a fine.

In addition to these incidents, the Facebook group called “Omladina Šida” (Youth in Šid) posts regular statements and holds street protests campaigning against NNK and the population of people-on-the-move in the town. One such statement warned that “neither migrants nor volunteers should be able to walk the streets”, and that locals should call the police if they see them. Many of their posts, which include pictures of NNK volunteers, have been followed by periods of increased police harassment.

Just recently on 6th October, Omladina Šida called for a street protest against the arrival of eight buses of people to the official camps in Šid following evictions in northern Serbia. The message warned that people would have “nothing better to do than expel migrants from their homes and gardens” and that they could “resist or not exist”. Gangs of young people have also been known to [draw swastikas on the NNK house and vehicles](#), smash windows, and even steal the vehicles license plates. Outside of organised groups, the attitudes of some locals can be just as extreme. The week before this most recent encounter with the Sokolovi, NNK volunteers encountered a customer in a mechanics shop

who stated that they “worked with his enemy” and that if the “Muslim hordes” invading his country did anything to his daughter, he would seek revenge against the organisation. were the first people he would come to for revenge. He also warned that at least 90% of the town agreed with his views.

The encounters above paint a bleak picture of Šid; one where the government, fascist groups, and locals carry out interlocking harassment of people-on-the-move. However, the daily reality is quite different. No Name Kitchen also shared that they have many friends and supporters in the area, some are vocal, others quieter. Volunteers stated that the general attitudes they encounter around town are friendly, or at least bemusement at their poor grasp of the Serbian language.

DEAD BODY FOUND NEAR THE BORDER

On 16th September 2021, another person died trying to cross a border. The Afghan boy was run over by a train, along the tracks on the line from Šid (Serbia) to Tovarnik (Croatia), just a few feet from where Madina Hussiny, a six-year-old girl, [died in winter 2017](#). Little is known about the boy that was killed last month, though it appears that he was found lying near the train tracks to rest, but when he realised that the train was about to pass it was already too late. Whatever the reason, it remains a death that stems directly from the violent border regime that forces such minors to cross such risky stretches of border in search of safety.

The volunteers present at Šid, alerted to the incident by other people-on-the-move, immediately called an ambulance and went to the scene. The arrival of the ambulance, however, was preceded by the arrival of the police who chased the volunteers away and threatened them with legal consequences. The volunteers also reported that the police violated the dead body, kicking him and saying “this migrant kaput”. As if that weren't enough, police took the occasion to destroy the informal camp located close by, burning and destroying peoples tents, sleeping bags, food and cooking facilities.

This cruel death must be seen

Though this also speaks to an experience of privilege which racialised communities from the camps and squats do not share.

Moreover, pressure from right-wing groups and the police has caused several supporters to distance themselves from NNK. When the police or certain locals enter the same shop as volunteers, staff often begin talking in hushed tones. Certain distribution sites had to be abandoned because the risks to the safety of both people-on-the-move and volunteers were too high. While they are a minority, the presence of these groups, their connection to the local authorities, and the pressure they place on volunteers certainly gives them more power than their numbers might suggest.

within a wider, and intentional, policy at the EU external border which has led to the springing up of marked and unmarked graves. An exhibition held recently in Zagreb with the support of people-on-the-move known as “[The Passage](#)” marked these sad passings, commemorating the lives of people killed at borders across the Balkans. While volunteers in Šid and across the region continue to mourn and support the bereaved, one wonders how many more people will be killed by the migration policy of the EU and its member states.



People-on-the-move buried in Šid (Source: Murray Kemp)

HUNGARIAN POLICE OFFICERS IN SERBIAN TERRITORY

In September, the presence of Hungarian police officers was noted in the border area between Serbia and North Macedonia, in the area of Miratovac, where Serbia began the construction of barbed wire near the southwestern town of Preševo, to prevent the entry of people-on-the-move from North Macedonia. The mayor of Preševo, Shqiprim Arifi, said that the construction of the barbed wire fence was part of an agreement with the European Union and that the fence is a further protection of the borders with non-EU countries from an influx of people-on-the-move. A [recent report](#) from Serbian-based NGO KlikAktiv uncovered notable findings about the policies being implemented at this border.

In 2013, Serbia and Hungary signed the Protocol on Joint Border Patrols with the aim of "strengthening cooperation in border control and migration management in order to prevent illegal migration through the Western Balkans to the European Union". This protocol regulates joint police patrols of the two countries along the common border of Serbia and Hungary in the area of 20km on both

sides of the border line. However, the protocol does not define joint patrols on other Serbian borders and therefore it is not clear under which agreement Hungarian police officers patrol the Serbian–North Macedonian border.

Recently, the ORFK, the headquarters of the Hungarian National Police, confirmed that three separate units of the Hungarian police have been deployed at borders in North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia. Hungary states that their officers will be engaged in preventing illegal migrants from entering Hungary and the EU by sending these divisions south along the route, with the task of monitoring the borders using mobile and portable cameras and SUVs.

As mentioned in previous reports by BVMN about the projection of border controls by Brussels and individual member states, notably the [Czech Republic](#), this latest move marks further bilateral and (semi-)official police cooperation in order to stem movement along the Balkan route.

ITALY

QUARANTINE FOR ARRIVALS IN TRIESTE

In September, a total of 426 people arrived in Piazza Libertà in Trieste, compared with the 700 recorded in August. Yet, this number does not consider those intercepted by the police nor those who continued their journey without receiving support from volunteers/activists present in Trieste. This comes as a slight decrease compared to the previous month, but is still significant.

Field teams active in the area also reported that even the quarantine facilities remain at capacity. Quarantine for a person who enters "illegally" into Italian territory is 10 days for adults and 14 for minors. After which people are transferred to ordinary asylum seekers centres in Trieste or elsewhere in the region of Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG).

For those in quarantine facilities, some have received COVID-19 vaccinations. There has been a general rise in positive tests from persons intercepted and taken into quarantine, in line with the increase of positive cases in the wider population. Those who are intercepted by police and taken to quarantine camps are forced to apply for asylum in Italy. Until now, their stay in Italy has not been immediately threatened by pushback, as seen systematically across the course of 2020. Such illegal removals have seemingly stopped from FVG, yet statements by regional authorities and police regarding the "necessity" of resuming these operations at the border continue, despite the fact that the practice has been [judged illegal by the Court of Rome](#).

GLOSSARY OF REPORTS, SEPTEMBER 2021

BVMN published 35 pushback cases in September, impacting 815 people-on-the-move. Those affected by these incidents included men, women, children with guardians and unaccompanied children. They also represent a wide demographic, including people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, India, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Libya and Lebanon.

– 7 pushbacks to Serbia (1 chain-pushback from Slovenia, 5 from Croatia, 1 from Romania)
 – 19 pushbacks to Bosnia-Herzegovina (8 chain-pushbacks from Slovenia, 11 from Croatia)
 – 3 pushback from Italy to Greece
 – 6 pushbacks to Turkey (2 from Bulgaria, 4 from Greece)

LINK	INCIDENT	RECORDED	GROUP	DEMOGRAPHIC
SLOVENIA TO SERBIA				
1.1	27 th September	29 th September	1	Afghanistan
ROMANIA TO SERBIA				
2.2	27 th August	3 rd September	7	Afghanistan
CROATIA TO SERBIA				
3.1	5 th September	18 th September	16	Afghanistan, Pakistan
3.2	13 th September	20 th September	4	Afghanistan
3.3	15 th September	18 th September	2	Afghanistan
3.4	16 th September	17 th September	5	Afghanistan
3.5	20 th September	25 th September	23	Afghanistan
SLOVENIA TO BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA				
4.1	5 th September	7 th September	15	Afghanistan
4.2	6 th September	13 th September	4	Afghanistan
4.3	7 th September	11 th September	10	Afghanistan, Pakistan
4.4	10 th September	20 th September	9	Afghanistan, Pakistan
4.5	14 th September	20 th September	46	Afghanistan, Iran
4.6	18 th September	28 th September	27	Pakistan
4.7	19 th September	26 th September	8	Afghanistan, Pakistan
4.8	24 th September	25 th September	11	Afghanistan, Pakistan
CROATIA TO BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA				
5.1	24 th August	28 th August	25	Afghanistan
5.2	25 th August	26 th August	25	Afghanistan, Pakistan
5.3	27 th August	31 st August	11	Afghanistan
5.4	28 th August	3 rd September	25	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Pakistan
5.5	31 st August	5 th September	6	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan
5.6	2 nd September	2 nd September	15	Afghanistan
5.7	4 th September	6 th September	120	Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Sudan
5.8	4 th September	7 th September	80	Afghanistan, Pakistan

LINK	INCIDENT	RECORDED	GROUP	DEMOGRAPHIC
5.9	6 th September	10 th September	4	Afghanistan
5.10	7 th September	8 th September	22	Pakistan
5.11	13 th September	15 th September	60	Pakistan
ITALY TO GREECE				
6.1	1 st September	3 rd September	1	Afghanistan
6.2	11 th September	13 th September	2	Afghanistan
6.3	24 th September	25 th September	1	Afghanistan
GREECE TO TURKEY				
7.1	3 rd September	6 th September	100	Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia
7.2	12 th September	13 th September	100	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Algeria
BULGARIA TO TURKEY				
8.1	11 th September	14 th September	2	Tunisia
8.2	18 th September	18 th September	12	Syria
8.3	19 th September	20 th September	6	Morocco, Libya, Lebanon, Iraq
8.4	20 th September	21 st September	10	Syria
FIND ALL REPORTS ON THE DATABASE HERE				



NETWORK STRUCTURE AND CONTACT

B O R D E R V I O L E N C E M O N I T O R I N G N E T W O R K

BVMN is based on the horizontal participation of member organisations in the field of documentation, advocacy, media and litigation. The Network receives funds through charitable grants and donations from supporters. The funds primarily cover transport subsidies for volunteers in the field and staff costs.

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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