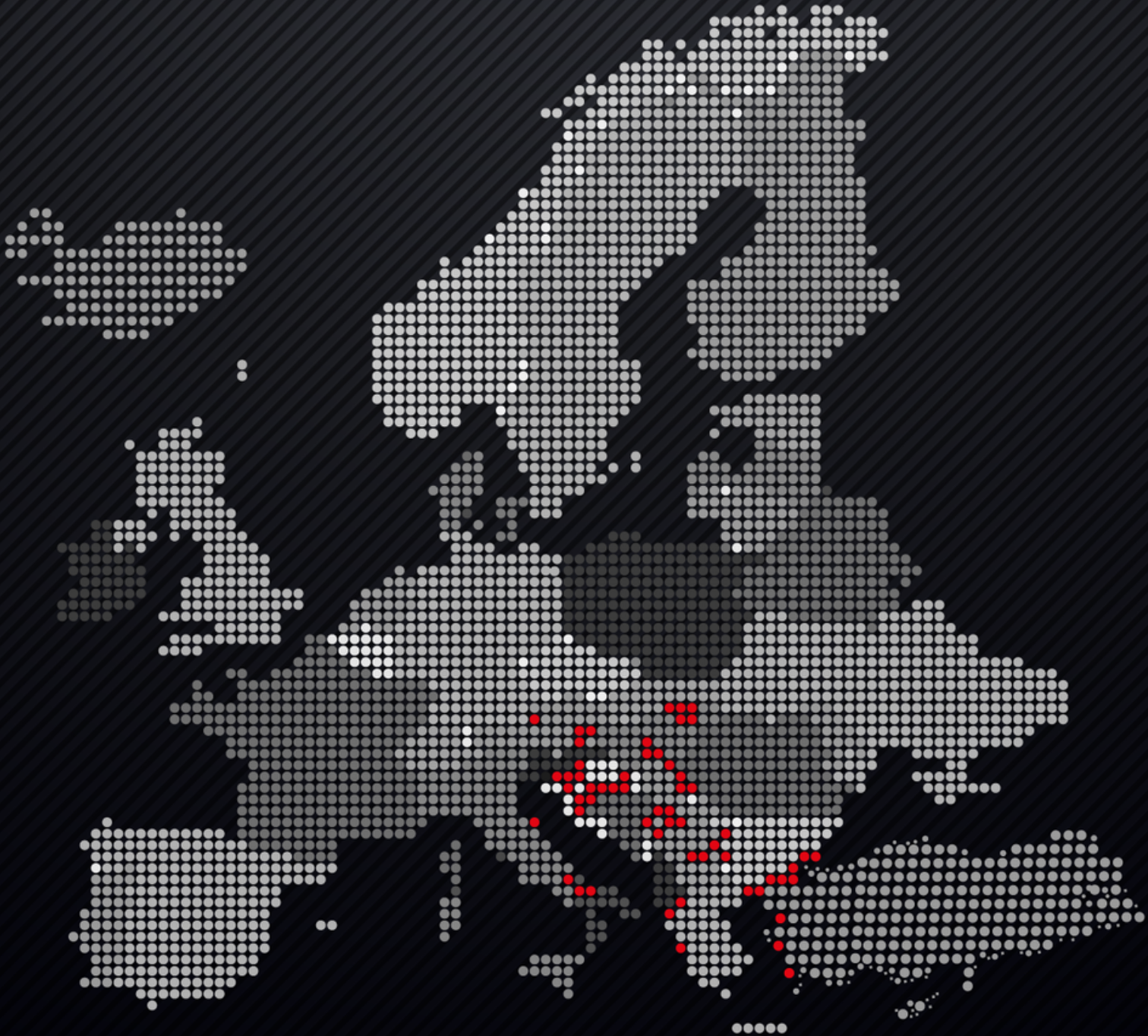


ILLEGAL PUSHBACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS

APRIL 2023
BALKAN REGION



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



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Monitoring Network

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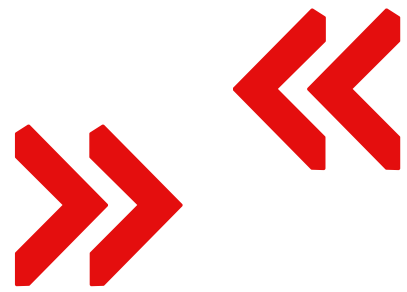
BALKAN REGION
APRIL 2023



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
General	5
Reporting network	6
Methodology	6
Terminology	6
Abbreviations	6
Updates on the situation:	7
Serbia	7
Evictions and Frontex presence	7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8
Borders kill and hurt in many ways	8
Northern Greece	9
Samos	12
Turkey	13
Upcoming elections	13
Pushbacks	14
Deportations	14
Advocacy	15
Bulgaria: Committee on the Rights of the Child	15
BVMN Submission to the Global Digital Compact	16

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In April, the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) shared 15 testimonies of pushbacks impacting 398 people on the move (POM) across the Balkans and Greece. This report brings together first-hand testimonies from a range of countries in the region to look at the way European Union states and other actors are affecting systemic violence towards people crossing borders. It also includes general updates and insights from advocacy actions taken by members of the network.

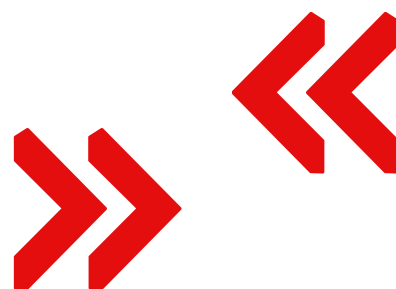
In the past weeks and months, we have witnessed an increase in the frequency and violence of evictions of POM from informal living sites in Northern Serbia. These evictions are now carried out several times a week and often involve physical violence and destruction of property and personal belongings. Moreover, multiple reports have recently pointed at the involvement of foreign officers working under Frontex operations in the actions. The increased presence of individuals from the European Agency has been observed by teams working in the region since the end of last year, and though the scope and details of their mission remain unclear, testimonies describing their cooperation and involvement in the violence perpetrated against POM in the area are growing.

The trend of externalisation of border controls through the increased Frontex presence in non-EU member states is also evident in North Macedonia, where 100 agents were deployed last month the day after Fatmata, a 23-years-old woman, was shot and killed by North Macedonian officers after the car she was travelling in was stopped by the police.

Moreover, in April, the new Migration Code was voted on and passed in the Greek Parliament, which is likely to have dangerous consequences for POM in the country who might be forced to remain undocumented for even longer periods of time. This report also looks at the regular use of detention of people on the move at police stations in Greece. It presents findings from testimonies taken by members of BVMN which describe inhumane conditions of different places of detention, many of which are deemed suitable only for accommodating people during short periods of time but are regularly used to hold people for weeks and even months. Further updates from Greece, on Samos, include the first ever ruling from the European Court of Human Rights that condemns the living conditions faced by an asylum seeker in Samos as inhumane and degrading treatment, in the case of a young mother who successfully sued the Greek Government for the treatment she suffered as a pregnant woman in the Samos camp.

In Turkey, with elections coming up in May, we look at the lack of political options that take into account the rights of POM in the country, where both Erdoğan's government and the main opposition made promises of deportation of Syrian people one of the tenets of their campaigns. Official statistics of pushbacks from Greece and deportations from Turkey shared by the Turkish authorities are also briefly analysed.

Finally, the last sections of this report elaborate on two Advocacy actions at the UN level in which members of the BVMN have been involved this April. The first one was a briefing organised by the UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to discuss violations occurring at Bulgaria's borders. In this briefing, evidence of the systematic violations against children on the move in Bulgaria was provided, largely based on the 89 testimonies of pushbacks from Bulgaria collected by BVMN partner organisations since 2020 - almost half of which relate to minors. Additionally, in a recent field assessment, we witnessed the lack of asylum and reception facilities that include adequate safeguards for the protection of children and unaccompanied minors. The second and final part provides an overview of BVMN's Submission to the Global Digital Compact regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI) regulation, which calls for adherence to the principles of transparency, accountability, access to rights and redress, inclusion, and the prohibition of the use of AI in situations when there is a high risk of harm.



▶ 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 No Name Kitchen, Rigardu, Are You Syrious, Mobile Info Team, PIC, InfoKolpa, Collective Aid, Blindspots, Pushback Alarmphone Austria and I Have Rights

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION

Serbia

Evictions and Frontex presence

In Northern Serbia, there has been an increase in the frequency of evictions of people on the move. In recent weeks, evictions of informal living sites across various points along the Serbian-Hungarian border have been carried out at least twice a week by the authorities, often with multiple evictions of different living sites occurring simultaneously. These evictions usually take place early in the morning, often when people are still sleeping. However, at the moment, field teams in the region have observed that living sites are being evicted more than once a day, and the authorities return later in the day to apprehend those who avoided being apprehended in the morning. Moreover, evictions are frequently violent, and multiple testimonies have been collected of people on the move sustaining injuries during these operations as a result of police brutality. Furthermore, there has been evidence that living sites and personal belongings were damaged by police officers during the process of evictions. After an eviction, people on the move are taken by bus to state-run camps, most frequently to Preševo, a camp in the south of Serbia, at the border with North Macedonia, over 500 km away from most evicted living sites.

In addition to the evictions of informal living sites, people staying in official Transit Camps are also often forcefully evicted and relocated. In the early hours of April 24th, there was a violent eviction that took place at Sombor Transit Camp. [Video footage](#) shows a Serbian police officer unlawfully beating a person, allegedly a minor, attempting to run away from the police. Circulation of the video has led to the Citizens' Protector initiating an investigation into the actions of the Serbian police as evidenced in the video.

Besides Serbian police, Frontex officers have reportedly been present during evictions of living sites in Northern Serbia. Furthermore, there have been reports of international police officers, working under Frontex operations, [participating in the violence](#) against people on the move during evictions. Since the end of last year, there have been sightings of foreign police officers at the Serbian-Hungarian border, as observed by NGOs working in the area. On March 16th 2023, the presence of Frontex in Northern Serbia was officially confirmed through a tweet posted during a visit of the EU Commissioner, Ylva Johansson, to the region. NGOs working on the ground regularly see German and Italian vehicles in the region, as well as Polish Frontex cars. Presence of Austrian, Lithuanian, Czech, Slovakian, and Swedish officers operating in Northern Serbia under Frontex has also been reported. There have been [testimonies](#) from people on the move taken from January and March 2023 whereby officers wearing shoulder patches with the Frontex logo would have been involved in pushbacks from Hungary to Serbia. This clearly represents a move towards the further externalisation and militarization of EU borders contributing to the violent conditions experienced by people on the move attempting to reach Europe. However, despite the public announcement of Frontex's presence in Northern Serbia, the scope and details of its mission remain unclear, which makes it difficult to seek accountability for the actions of international police officers operating under Frontex in the region.



BOSNIA & HERZOGOVINA

Borders kill and hurt in many ways

In early April, a person on the move who had been stuck on the Bosnian-Croatian border for several months died of a medication overdose in an abandoned house. The friends of this person, who had called for help, reported that they were taken to the police station, beaten up, and then transported to the Lipa camp, where they were subjected to physical violence again. The body of the deceased was taken away by the police.

For people on the move, self-medication is often the only available option for health treatment for years. The effects of traumatic experiences caused by massive border police violence and the lack of medical care often force people on the move to self-medicate. Medication can be used in the context of trauma-related stress, for example, to help sleep better, reduce nightmares and anxiety, or forget what you have experienced. The addictive ingredients of the drugs are often not clear to people. This puts them at high risk of developing medication dependency, severe withdrawal symptoms, or overdoses, leaving many people in increasingly dire conditions at the EU's external borders.



Wall in one of the informal settlements in Northern Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Source: Blindspots

» Northern Greece

Shooting of a 23-year-old woman at the North Macedonia border



Banner hung by the collective, Room 39, in Thessaloniki, Greece.

On April 19th, the day before Frontex deployed 100 border guards to southern North Macedonia as part of a joint operation with the country, a 23-year-old woman named Fatmata was shot and killed by police along the North Macedonia-Greece border after the vehicle she was a passenger in was stopped by the police. The incident happened outside the town of Gevgelija, a location where numerous BVMN pushback testimonies are reported and often describe intense levels of verbal and physical violence inflicted by border guards against people on the move, including theft, beatings, and threats.

The North Macedonian authorities reportedly stopped the car on the grounds of suspicions that the driver was a smuggler. Following the shooting, the driver of the car, who was reportedly the victim's partner, was arrested and detained for hours without being given any information on the condition of his partner. In recent years, the criminalisation of people on the move has become increasingly central to European migration policy and discourse; in April alone, BVMN collected two testimonies in Greece from respondents who reported being arrested on charges of smuggling immediately after entering Greek territory.

Closely following the death of the woman at the border and the deployment of Frontex officers in North Macedonia, the country's Interior Minister, Oliver Spasovski, announced plans to further increase Frontex's presence, specifically along the borders with Albania and Serbia in the coming months. Part of the agency's mandate will be to train North Macedonian border guards and support with document checks and monitoring.

Moreover, less than two weeks after the shooting, Corinna Ullrich, a European Commission official from the internal affairs division, criticised the conditions for which Frontex must suspend operations in a country where rights violations are occurring, stating that it [Article 46 of Frontex's mandate] is "not fit for purpose". Although Frontex has only ever triggered the article once in Hungary in 2021, there have been allegations of misconduct made against Frontex and its operations in multiple border areas and calls for the termination of operations in areas where human rights violations against people on the move have been widely documented despite the agency's presence (the BVMN February 2023 monthly report covers the Frontex Fundamental Rights Officer's recommendation to cease operations in Greece).

New Greek Migration Code will narrow legal paths to residency and leave people further vulnerable

At the end of March, the new Migration Code was voted on and passed in the Greek parliament. The Code will come into force in early 2024 and concerns all issues relating to third country nationals residing in Greece except for the asylum procedure. While it is currently possible to obtain residency if someone can prove they have been residing in Greece for at least 7 years, the new Code stipulates that it will not be possible to include the time someone spent in asylum procedures in Greece in this timeframe. This is likely to mean that someone will have to prove that they have resided undocumented in Greece for 7 years to qualify for a residence permit on these grounds. While obtaining the required documentation to prove continuous residency will present a huge challenge in itself, the new law will also force people to remain undocumented for longer periods of time, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, homelessness, police harassment and pushbacks.

People on the move routinely detained for months in police stations

Recent testimonies taken from people on the move detained on the Greek mainland demonstrate how Greece continues to violate national and international legal standards in its detention practices, including in relation to detaining people for prolonged periods of time within police stations. Testimonies documented by BVMN field-based partners in February-April 2023 show that undocumented people on the move are frequently detained for arbitrary lengths of time in police stations across mainland Greece, in some cases for as long as three months, and often prior to being transferred to a Pre-Removal Detention Centre for a further period of detention. The police stations named in testimonies were Marousi police station, Kaminia police station, Katerini police station, and an unnamed police station outside Thessaloniki. The average total detention length in both police stations and Pre-Removal Detention Centres was 7.5 months, while one individual was detained for a total of 24 months.



The European Court of Human Rights, in two separate cases in [2018](#) and [2019](#), ruled that prolonged detention in police stations constitutes a breach of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, noting that 'police stations per se ... are places designed to accommodate people for a short time only'. A [2021 report by Oxfam](#) found that detention in police stations in Greece or other places where people on the move are detained under the responsibility of the police (border police stations, the Police Directorate building, and the police station at Athens airport) are among the harshed forms of detention, with people deprived of their liberty for prolonged periods in overcrowded cells, within facilities which are not suitable for detention exceeding 24 hours.

Testimonies documented by BVMN's field partners demonstrate that people on the move are being subjected to prolonged deprivation of liberty in facilities which are utterly unfit for long periods of detention. People reported being detained in overcrowded, cramped and unhygienic conditions, with one respondent reporting that he was detained along with 11 others in a dark basement where they had to share a single toilet. Another respondent reported sleeping in a cell with 20 other detainees, with no heating and blankets that were too thin to keep them warm at night. In several testimonies respondents reported that they were pressured into signing documents in a language they did not understand, without the assistance of a translator, and that they did not have access to a lawyer to help them with the asylum process or challenge their prolonged detention.

One testimony reported the prolonged detention of a 17 year-old minor in a police station. The detention of minors is only allowed as a measure of last resort and for short periods of time [according to Greek law](#).

In April, there were no arrivals recorded to the Samos Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC). As Samos has the second highest rate of pushbacks in the Aegean, the zero recorded arrival rate is unlikely to mean that nobody attempted to claim asylum on Samos, but rather that no one was able to.

Moreover, April saw the continuation of the lack of interpreters in the CCAC. The Greek newspaper ESFYN reported on this, calling CCAC interpreters an “endangered species”. In the meantime, police and private security remain present in the facility 24h a day, indicating the state’s prioritisation of security over support. Protests continued to take place in the prison-like structure, as people’s frustration over the lack of interpreters and medical support, the quality and quantity of food provided, and their general treatment in the structure, increases

Reception conditions as inhumane and degrading treatment

In the landmark ruling of A.D. v. Greece, a young mother successfully sued the Greek Government for the treatment she suffered as a pregnant woman while she was accommodated in the old Samos camp. For the first time, in April 2023, the European Court of Human Rights condemned the living conditions faced by an asylum seeker in Samos as inhumane and degrading treatment, unanimously finding a violation of the prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment (Article 3 of the Convention) and awarded the applicant €5,000 in damages. The case of A.D. was supported by I Have Rights, the Refugee Law Clinic Berlin and PRO ASYL.

A.D. arrived from Ghana to Samos in August 2019. Despite being heavily pregnant and having a history of miscarriage, A.D was forced to live in a small tent in the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions of the old Samos camp. It was not until she gave birth and the European Court of Human Rights ordered Interim Measures, that she was finally provided with adequate accommodation.

This decision is one example of the violation of the basic human rights of people on the move in Greece. It is also the first judgement in a series of cases currently pending at the Court that denounce the treatment of asylum seekers in Greek hotspot islands. It is important to highlight that the support of the European Union is key to this system. Thus, instead of abandoning the hotspot approach and moving away from the use of inhumane facilities, the EU spent €276 million to build Closed Controlled Access Centres (CCAC) on the Greek hot-spot islands. While different from the old camp of Samos, the Samos CCACs is a site of unlawful detention where instances of inhuman and degrading treatment are still constantly reported.



Turkey

Upcoming elections

The upcoming election of May 14th in Turkey has been covered extensively in our previous [March Monthly Report](#). There, many core concerns were laid out regarding people on the move in relation to Turkey, its neighbouring countries and the EU. We refer people to those previous reports for a fuller picture of the issues that have saturated the election discourse; migration, Turkey's immigration and international protection policies, and the legacy of the 2016 EU-Turkey Deal. Neither the current regime nor the main opposition propose any improvement on the position of people on the move - however, there are distinctions in the programs they propose that will have severe impact on people's lives if they are put into practice. Over 3.7 million Syrian people live in Turkey. In May last year, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed to oversee the return of 1 million Syrian nationals to northwest Syria, which is currently mainly controlled by the Turkish military in tandem with a number of local Jihaadist groups. His main opponent, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu - portrayed as the defender of the secular, republican, democratic and traditional values, and against the governing AKP's 20-plus years of neo-Ottomanist rule - has promised voters that he will deport all Syrian people within two years.

Whatever happens in the wake of the elections, solidarity with migrants and refugees in Turkey and the international solidarity movement against the exploitative border regime will remain prerequisites for any meaningful change to the current systematic violence to which they are subjected. This struggle cannot take place without both a deeper challenge to the ethno-nationalist and monocultural ideology, system and culture that has underpinned the Turkish Republic since its formation. Today's most exploited and disposable, and/or most reviled, are those of Afghan and Syrian origin who work for cheap pay, have few rights, and can be swiftly picked up and deported without any due process. Modern Turkey has always had its scapegoats or supposed internal enemies - mainly other minority groups such as Armenians, Rums, Kurds or Alevis. The legacy of violence against these and other groups is very much a living factor in Turkish society and Turkey's geopolitical dynamics today. In the case of the various migrant communities that have arrived in Turkey over the past decade, they lack any kind of solid footing in the society and do not have any recognised institutional or collective voice. They have assumed the position of being the ultimate enemy in Turkish society, in a process that has only consolidated the kind of majoritarian rule that others in the country also struggle against. As with anywhere, tackling today's forms of state and social violence will also require addressing the historical process that brought things to this point. These struggles ultimately cannot be waged or even considered within one country; this too would be deferring to the national borders that already do so much harm. Thus it is vital to keep building towards transnational solidarity movements in these times, irrespective of who is in government in Turkey or elsewhere.

Pushbacks

With the ongoing tensions between the Greek and Turkish government, the Turkish authorities continue to publish data on what they claim to be pushbacks in the Aegean Sea. Between April 1st and April 25th, the official statistics of the Turkish Coast Guard documented 23 pushback cases, impacting 1,273 people.

One particular pushback case from last year surfaced again in the news this past month. In 2022, Barış Büyüksu was released on probation after being imprisoned in Turkey since 2011. In October 2022, he tried to cross to Greece via the Aegean but was violently pushed back to Turkey and died as a consequence. In April 2023, Turkey's Council of Forensic Medicine (ATK) reported that Büyüksu was found unconscious in a boat that had washed up on the coast of Muğla, and subsequently died in hospital. The report stated that Barış died because of multiple rib fractures as well as widespread soft tissue haemorrhage. The ATK report stated that there is a "causal link" between the physical trauma Büyüksu suffered and his death, and that there was no other contributing factor to the cause of death. Büyüksu had numerous bruises, deep scratches, and wounds, as well as internal and external bleeding.

Deportations

According to the data provided by Turkey's Immigration Department, 33,741 people were deported from Turkey in the first four months of this year. Out of this, 10,986 were Afghan citizens, 1,719 were from Pakistan, and 21,036 were from various other countries.

Deportation orders, detention, and deportations in Turkey can be extremely arbitrary. This became once again evident with the case of the 18-year-old Iranian rapper, Shaho, nicknamed Ohash. The son of musician Ador Hooyar - who defected to Turkey 18 years ago because of a death sentence against him in Iran - Ohash came from Iran to take refuge with his family in Turkey seven years ago. He grew up in Ankara, has been very involved in the rap music scene there, and is a legal refugee in Turkey under international protection. Nonetheless, in late March, he came under investigation for his social media activities which resulted in a deportation order against him. Ohash was invited to meet with his father by the Ankara Immigration Administration on April 26th. After the meeting, Ador Hooyar was allowed to go, while Ohash was detained and a deportation order was issued for "threatening public order". After the decision, the young artist was brought to Akyurt Removal Center.

The documented pushback cases and other forms of violence towards people on the move - and their acceptability - indicate the outright hostility directed towards them. Cases such as those of Barış Büyüksu or the Gabonese student, Dina, whom we reported on last month and whose death is still under investigation, are only some of the few more widely publicised examples of the often anonymously concluded effects of racism and xenophobia. The huge number of deportations and forced 'voluntary returns' from Turkey and the legally ambiguous, erratic way in which these are carried out, illustrates the current outright antagonism towards those seeking an ordinary and safe life. Overall, these incidents demonstrate a concerning disregard from both Turkey and Greece for the safety and well-being of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and everyone that is on the move.



ADVOCACY

Bulgaria: Committee on the Rights of the Child

In April, members of the BVMN attended a briefing organised by the UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to discuss pushbacks and attributed rights violations occurring at Bulgaria's borders. Since 2020 BVMN, through our former member organisation Josoor and other anonymous groups, have collected 89 testimonies of illegal pushbacks to neighbouring Turkey and Greece, impacting approximately 1,680 people. 40 of those testimonies, or 45%, were relating to minors, while 100% of the testimonies referred to the theft of personal belongings, and 99% contained accounts of beating and excessive use of force. These testimonies represent only the tip of the iceberg, with the Bulgarian Tripartite Working Group for border monitoring, composed of UNHCR, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) and the General Directorate of Border Police (GDBP), have registered the pushbacks of 65,801 individuals between 2019 and 2021.

Pushbacks violate the best interest of the child; they are inherently violent and violate international and national law. Furthermore, they often consist of the denial of protection, separation from the family, a lack of due process and inhumane treatment. Our testimonies consistently highlight how children on the move, some as young as two-years-old, have been violently pushed back from Bulgarian territory. In 2020, former BVMN member Josoor documented a testimony of a pushback of 80 people, the youngest being six-years-old, from Bulgaria to Turkey. Describing the indiscriminate use of violence against children amongst the pushback group, the respondent described his shock at seeing the officers beat everyone, including the women and small children. The respondent further explained "there was an eight-year-old boy who got punched in his eyes. A blue circle formed around his eyes. He had broken teeth. We were hit too much with the baton." After the beating, the respondent also described how together with the children, the group was detained at a detention site for three days without food, water, a place to sleep or access to toilets. These, among many other testimonies, show how violence is deployed systematically and indiscriminately at the border to all groups of people on the move and even directly to children.

A recent BVMN field assessment in Bulgaria has brought to light the child protection deficiencies in the asylum procedures and reception conditions provided once individuals manage to gain access to Bulgarian territory and lodge a claim for international protection. Bulgaria has faced a massive increase in the number of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) applying for international protection in the country; whilst only 799 UAM applications were registered in 2020, the number rose to 3,172 in 2021 and 3,348 in 2022. UAMs have significant specialised protection needs but are currently under the responsibility of the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) and IOM who operate two safe zones for UAMs in Sofia, Ovcha Kupel and Voena Rampa. Neither of these bodies have the mandate for child protection and therefore are unable to meet the requirements for accommodating and working with UAMs. Furthermore, for those accommodated in Harmanli camp, there are no safe zones for UAMs meaning they live within the camp population of mixed ages and genders. There have been criticisms about the protection and security of the residents in the camp, as those who are responsible for restricting access are evidently not upholding their obligations to do so, and during the night, anyone has access to the camp including drug dealers, smugglers and traffickers, further placing the children at risk.

In light of all this, BVMN calls on Bulgaria to immediately end the systematised practice of pushbacks and to ensure the individual identification, registration and protection of those seeking asylum. This should additionally include specific screening for UAMs and other children on the move and a full assessment of their vulnerability needs; the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be respected at all stages of the asylum process, from reception conditions through to the end of procedures. BVMN urges the Bulgarian authorities to immediately carry out an independent and thorough investigation into illegal and violent pushbacks, and to apply sanctions to those responsible for the practice.

BVMN Submission to the Global Digital Compact

At the end of April, members of BVMN's UN Advocacy Working Group submitted input for the UN Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology's Global Digital Compact (GDC). The GDC aims to connect all people, including all schools, to the internet, avoid internet fragmentation, protect data, apply human rights online, introduce accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content, and promote regulation of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The call for submissions sought to open a space for multi-stakeholder input in preparation for a Summit for the Future in September 2024 to agree on a Global Digital Compact, much like the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) or the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) that came before it. We inputted two separate submissions on AI regulation and the protection of data in the context of migration.

In the first submission, on AI Regulation, we have reiterated calls to adhere to the following core principles in the regulation of AI: transparency, accountability, access to rights and redress, inclusion, and the prohibition of AI in situations when there is a high risk of harm. Currently, AI-based technologies are increasingly being deployed in the context of migration without the existence or proper implementation of adequate regulatory mechanisms to assure adherence to the principles listed above. We therefore call for greater transparency obligations for AI systems, especially those used in contexts where there is a high risk of fundamental rights violations, for mechanisms to access rights and redress, and for the inclusion of communities impacted by the uses of AI-powered technologies, as well as civil society groups representing their interests, in the development of standards, regulations and laws on the topic.

On the topic of data protection, the working group's submission called for adherence to eight proposed core principles and commitments. The first was on the topic of greater transparency in data collection, with people on the move having their rights respected in terms of being informed on how and why their data is collected. People on the move often find themselves in inherently coercive situations due to inherent power imbalances when confronted with authorities, and to assume that people on the move can fully consent to their personal data being recorded and stored by often armed border personnel shows nescience. High and strict standards must be set for those engaging in data collection to guarantee the protection of data rights for all subjects. The second principle is around greater and fair access to legal remedies for data protection violations including access to information, finances, translation and adequate/effective instruments to ensure proper accountability. The third is on comprehensive regulations on large-scale databases, especially those containing personnel information and data of people on the move. There should be several layers of restriction of access, GDPR-like regulations, a strict prevention of storing unnecessary information and for sharing information with third countries. Furthermore, BVMN recommends regulations around the interoperability of databases to avoid data being shared and used for purposes unrelated to the stated reasons for

collection. In general, the storage of data must adhere to the principle of proportionality and any usage of data must be transparent, and sufficiently regulated to avoid any misuse. Overall, any data collected from people on the move must be done so in compliance with the relevant privacy laws and regulations of the states in which the collection is happening, and individuals must always be fully informed of their rights in regards to their own data. Failure to do so must result in severe legal consequences so that adherence to core principles is respected and the potential for rights violations is diminished.



APRIL PUSHBACK TESTIMONIES

Link	Incident	Recorded	Demographic	Group size	Organisation
Hungary to Serbia					
1.1.	2nd April	3rd April	Morocco	5	No Name Kitchen
1.2.	7th April	8th April	Syria	15	Anonymous
1.3.	8th April	11th April	Syria	11	Collective Aid
1.4.	13th April	13th April	Syria	40	No Name Kitchen
1.5.	18th April	/	Syria	40	No Name Kitchen
1.6.	14th April	20th April	Syria	30	No Name Kitchen
1.7.	24th April	25th April	Syria	2	Collective Aid
1.8.	11th April	11th April	Syria, Morocco, Afghanistan, Somalia	50	Collective Aid
Croatia to Serbia					
2.1.	28th February	/	Egypt, Syria	4	No Name Kitchen
2.2.	14th April	14th March	Morocco	4	No Name Kitchen
2.3.	27th April	29th April	Afghanistan	3	No Name Kitchen
2.4.	28th April	29th April	Afghanistan	6	No Name Kitchen
Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina					
3.1.	28th March	1st April	Afghanistan, Iran, Morocco, Turkey	180	No Name Kitchen
3.2.	2nd April	/	Morocco, Tunisia	6	No Name Kitchen
3.3.	9th April	12th April	Algeria, Morocco	2	No Name Kitchen



NETWORK STRUCTURE AND CONTACT

BVMN is a volunteer led endeavor, acting as an alliance of organisations in the Western 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.

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