

Up to 600 people drown off Pylos, Greece - only days after EU leaders agreed to further erode the right to asylum

Open letter by over 180 human rights organizations and initiatives together with Tima Kurdi, aunt of Alan Kurdi.

Today on World Refugee Day, we jointly demand full and independent investigations into the events, clear consequences for those responsible, an end to the systematic pushback practices at the European borders, and justice for the victims.

10 years after the two shipwrecks off Lampedusa, Italy, killing around 600 people and causing an immense public outcry, up to 600 people drowned off Pylos, Greece, in the Mediterranean Sea. On June 14, 2023, once again, the European border regime killed people exercising their right to seek protection. We are shaken! And we stand in solidarity with all survivors and with the families and friends of the deceased. We express our deep condolences and grief.

So far, uncountable questions remain unanswered. According to testimonies of the survivors, the Hellenic coast guard towed the boat causing it to capsize. Why was this incredibly dangerous manoeuvre attempted at all? Did the Hellenic coast guard tow the boat toward Italy to push people forward into Italian or Maltese responsibility? Why did neither the Hellenic coast guard nor the Italian or Maltese authorities intervene earlier even though they were alerted at least 12 hours before? What role did the European border and coast guard agency Frontex play?

In all this uncertainty, one thing is unmistakable: this shipwreck - as well as countless others before - is the direct consequence of political decisions taken to prevent people from arriving in Europe. This shipwreck results from the impunity of illegal activities exercised by states at borders and the legalization of practices that aim to normalize the deprivation of rights of people on the move. Activists and organizations have denounced systematic push- and pullbacks, delays and omission of rescues, criminalization of civil search and rescue operations, and cooperation with unsafe countries to externalize European borders and to carry out refoulements. European migration and externalization policies cause physical and psychological violence, imprisonment, and death. Stop diverting your responsibility - Stop killing people on the move!

So far, the European Union and its member states have shown no intention to learn from the past years and end the deaths in the Mediterranean. Instead, they tighten their deadly policies of isolation. Only last week, on June 8, the Council of the European Union agreed on a reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) leading to a massive deprivation of fundamental rights, such as the right to asylum or the right to move freely.

It was only a matter of time until the next shipwreck happened, and it will happen again while conditions in countries of origin, transit, and departure worsen and border practices force people on the move to take more dangerous routes. **Since Lampedusa in 2013, we have seen at least 27,047 deaths in the Mediterranean Sea. One of them was Alan Kurdi. His aunt, Tima Kurdi, speaks out loudly about the deadly shipwreck:**

This shipwreck brings back my pain, our pain. I am heartbroken. I am heartbroken for all the innocent souls lost that are not just numbers in this world. "Never again" we heard in 2015, I heard it countless times. And what changed? How many innocent souls have been lost at sea since then? I want to take you back to September 2, 2015,

when all of you saw the image of my nephew, the 2-year-old baby lying on the Turkish beach. What did you feel when you saw his image? What did you say, what did you do? Me, when I heard about my nephew drowning, I fell to the floor crying and screaming as loud as I could because I wanted the world to hear me! Why them? Why now? And who's next? Since then, I decided to raise my voice and speak up for everyone who is not heard. And most importantly for my nephew, the boy on the beach, Alan Kurdi, whose voice will never be heard again. Please do not be silent and add your voice to mine. We cannot close our eyes and turn our backs to people seeking protection. Open your heart and welcome people fleeing to your doorstep.

The European migration policy needs to change now. It needed to change a long time ago already. It needs to provide safe ways to flee. Building a wall is no solution. Detaining rescue ships for saving lives is no solution. Blaming people as smugglers is no solution. People are suffering, and they will always find a way to flee. You have the power to decide if they have to take dangerous routes because there is no other way to go. Act on it!"

With the unforgivable shipwreck off Greece, we see that the Mediterranean Sea is not only a graveyard, it is a crime scene. A scene of crimes against humanity with millions of privileged tourists continuing to cruise on it freely every year. **On this account, we demand an immediate end to (systemic) border violence. We demand that:**

1. **both Greek and European governments and institutions ensure that full, thorough, and independent investigations into these events are conducted.** It's time for complete transparency about what happened and accountability of those responsible. This includes officials who were directly involved in the events through decision-making, as well as those political leaders who have been facilitating and perpetuating the hostile practices at the external borders for years. Access to justice for the victims and their loved ones must be ensured.
2. **the Greek government immediately releases the Pylos shipwreck's survivors** from (semi-)closed facilities and instead provides them with dignified accommodation and any kind of support needed, such as independent legal counselling, psychological support, and the possibility to communicate with families and friends. Furthermore, we petition for the release of the 9 men arrested. We condemn the criminalization of people on the move, blamed for illegalized entries and deaths at sea. These accusations are intended to exonerate responsible state actors.
3. **all European member states at the external borders stop the weaponizing of time by delaying rescue efforts.** Furthermore, we demand independent investigations and conclusive measures by the European Commission against the systematic practice of pushbacks and non-assistance at sea and on land conducted by European member states - as widely demonstrated by organizations and activists in recent years.
4. **the European Union and its member states provide safe and legal routes** to Europe as the only solution to avoid further loss of life at sea. The CEAS reform, further eroding the right to asylum in the European Union, must not become law. Additionally, we demand the creation of a long overdue European state-led rescue program.

Signatories

Tima Kurdi

Abolish Frontex

aditus foundation

AED - European Democratic Lawyers

Afrique-Europe-Interact

AK Arbeitskämpfe, Assoziation für kritische Gesellschaftsforschung (AkG)

Alarme Phone Sahara

All Included Amsterdam

Amal Berlin!

Anarchist Solidarity

antira.org

ASGI - Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration

Asians of Chaos

Association for Justice, Equality and Peace (AJEP)

Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants - ASAM Türkiye

Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants - ASAM Greece

Asylum Links

Baobab Experience

Barnim für Alle

BIPoC Ukraine & friends in Germany

Blue Door Education

Border Forensics

borderline-europe - Human Rights without Borders

Border Violence Monitoring Network

Boza Fii - Alarm Phone Dakar

Bozen Solidale

Bridges over Borders e.V.
Café Zuflucht / Refugio e.V., Aachen
Calais Food Collective
Cambiare l'Ordine delle Cose - Forum Nazionale
Campagna LasciateCIEntrare
Campaign „You can't evict solidarity“
Captain Support Network
Carovane Migranti (Italia-Messico-Tunisia)
Centre for Peace Studies
Channel Info Project
Chkoun Collective
Civil March For Aleppo
Clinica del Diritto dell'Immigrazione e della Cittadinanza Roma
CNCD-11.11.11
KISA - Equality, Support, Antiracism
Collective Aid
Collettivo Rotte Balcaniche Alto Vicentino
CompassCollective
Convenzione dei diritti nel Mediterraneo
CopwatchFFM
CPT - Aegean Migrant Solidarity
Cuistots solidaires asbl
de:|border | migration justice collective
Diotima Centre for Gender Rights & Equality
Droit de rester- Fribourg
Droit de rester- Lausanne
Dutch League for Human Rights
ECHO100PLUS

EMERGENCY

Ens Movem

EqualHealth's Campaign Against Racism

Equal Legal Aid

Ermittlungsausschuss Hamburg

EuroMed Rights

Europe Cares

Feminist Autonomous Centre for Research

Flüchtlingsrat Hamburg e.V.

Flüchtlingsrat Sachsen-Anhalt

Forensic Architecture

Forensis e.V.

Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer

Freie deutsch syrische Gesellschaft e.V.

From the Sea to the City

Greek Council for Refugees (GCR)

Grupa Granica

Gruppo Melitea

Haitian Bridge Alliance

Hub Humanitaire de Bruxelles Médecins du Monde Belgique

Human Rights Association (Turkey)

Human Rights at Sea

HumanRights360

Humans before borders

I Have Rights.

Initiativenbündnis Berlinzusammen

Integra Foundation

Inter Alia

Internationaler Fußballclub Rostock

Irida Women's Center

Írídia-Centre for the defense of human rights

iuventa-crew

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Malta

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Greece

Jewish Antifascist Bund Berlin

JG-Stadtmitte Jena

Jugendkulturinitiative Schwäbisch Gmünd

Just Action

JUZ Friedrich Dürr, Mannheim

KISA - Equality, Support, Antiracism

Klimagerechtigkeit für alle

Kopin - Empowering Communities

kritnet - Netzwerk Kritische Migrations- und Grenzregimeforschung

Kuchnia Konflikty Poland

Kulturkollektiv Semtex St. Pauli

#LeaveNoOneBehind

Legal Centre Lesbos

Lesbos Solidarity

Let's Bring Them Here, The Netherlands

Lighthouse Relief

Ligue Tunisienne pour les Droits Humains (LTDH)

Lungo la rotta balcanica

Lützerath Lebt

Maldusa

Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society

Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement

MARDi NGO

Mare Liberum

Mare*Go

Médecins Du Monde Belgique

Médecins du Monde Greece

Medici del Mondo Italia

medico international

MEDITERRANEA Saving Humans

Mediterranean Children's Movement

Mem.Med - Memoria Mediterranea

Migrant Solidarity Network

Migrant Women Association Malta

migration control.info

MiGreat

Migreurop

Mission Lifeline e.V.

Mobile Info Team

movements without borders

MV Louise Michel

No Border Assembly

No Border Medics e.V.

No Border Kitchen Lesbos

No Name Kitchen

No Nation Truck

NoBorders community Athens

Non Una di Meno Venezia

Northern Lights Aid

Novact - International Institute for Nonviolent Action

Open Assembly Against Border Violence Lesvos
Paulo Freire Institute Foundation Malta
Plateforme Citoyenne en Soutien aux Réfugiés - BelRefugees
Pro Bleiberecht in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Project Armonia
Project Play
r42 - SailAndRescue
RAV, Republican Lawyers' Association
Reclaim the sea
Red Antirracista Tarragona
Refugee Legal Support
Refugees in Libya
Refugees in Tunisia
Refugees' Solidarity movement
Republikanischer Anwältinnen - und Anwälteverein e.V. (RAV)
ResQ People Saving People
RESQSHIP e.V.
Right to Resist - linke Ukraine Solidarität Hamburg
Roots, Dunkirk
Safe Passage International
Safe Passage International AMKE
Salvamento Marítimo Humanitario
SARAH gUG
Sea Punks e.V.
Sea-Eye e.V.
Sea-Watch e.V.
Seebrücke
Seebrücke Frankfurt am Main

Seebrücke Jena

Seebrücke Kassel

Seebrücke Mainz

Seebrücke Schweiz

Sienos Grupè

Solidarischer Wohn- und Kulturraum Mannheim

Solidarisches Kollektiv Oberbadgasse e.V.

Solidarité sans frontières

SOS Humanity

Spazio Autogestito 77

St. Pauli Fanclub Dörte Becker

Statewatch

Stella Network North Macedonia

Stop deportation center BER

Sudan Uprising Germany

SUDS - Associació Internacional de Solidaritat i Cooperació

Swiss Democratic Lawyers

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)

Tunisian forum for economic and social rights FTDES

Ultrà Sankt Pauli

United4Rescue - Gemeinsam retten e.V.

Verband deutsch syrischer Hilfsvereine e.V.

VVN-BdA e.V. Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes - Bund der Antifaschistinnen und Antifaschisten

VVN-BdAN e.V. Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes - Bund der Antifaschistinnen und Antifaschisten Landesorganisation Hamburg

Walk Off Shame Europe

Was jetzt e.V.

Watch the Med - Alarm Phone

WISH - Lesvos Women in Solidarity House on Lesvos

WISH-No Borders

Wohn- und Kulturprojekt SWK Mannheim

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Germany

Women's Rights Foundation Malta

Yoga and Sport with Refugees