



### URGENT UPDATE:

## CONTINUOUS VIOLATIONS OF THE RULE OF LAW IN GREECE AS PEOPLE STILL STRANDED ON ISLETS IN EVROS

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09/08/2022 - On the 27th July 2022, BVMN published a [briefing](#) detailing a case whereby a transit group composed largely of Syrian nationals, including a 70-year-old diabetic woman in need of urgent medical attention, three pregnant women and twelve children were stranded on [an islet](#) since the 14th July in the middle of Evros, close to Didymoteicho and the village of Kissari. Despite CSOs Human Rights 360 and Greek Council for Refugees filing for interim measures at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on the 20th July 2022, and a Rule 39 measure being indicated on the same day mandating the Greek authorities to provide the group with food, water, adequate medical care and to ensure that they are not removed from Greek territory, the transit group reported being violently pushed back to Turkey after 12 days of being left on the islet. The condition of the group deteriorated significantly, particularly considering their exposure to extreme heat and lack of access to food and water.

More than three weeks later, a transit group is stranded on the same [islet](#) including several members from the first group, having been pushed back and forth between Greek and Turkish authorities to different locations on the river. Not only can this be considered a breach of the principle of *non-refoulement* and violation of European and international human rights law, but the group further [reported being heavily beaten](#) by Greek authorities - violating Article 3 of the ECHR - before being held by Turkish authorities in military barracks and returned to the Evros border. Importantly, the original Rule 39 measure indicated by the ECtHR on the 20th July 2022 remains valid for the members of the group who were stranded on the islet from the 14th July. This is a legally binding and urgent measure, further placing Greece in direct contravention of ECHR.

On the 8th August, a member of the transit group reported that they were transferred to a second island and the 70 people were dispersed into groups. There were reportedly 40 people on this islet, including pregnant women and children and a 70-year-old diabetic woman. A severe toll on both the physical and mental health of the group is evident from reports; particularly for vulnerable members such as the 70-year-old woman who reportedly experienced multiple seizures. Without access to drinking water, the group reported resorting to drinking polluted river water out of sheer desperation. This report was included in an updated application to the ECtHR for interim measures filed today.

In spite of the [evidence](#) to prove that the group is on Greek territory, extensive [public visibility](#) and efforts to relay information to the competent authorities by CSOs and the Court, the Greek authorities refused to respond to phone calls or emails, claiming the group can not be found.



## Border Violence Monitoring Network

In the early hours of the 9th August, a member of the transit group reported that a young [5-year-old girl died overnight](#). A [9-year-old girl](#) is also reported by the transit group to be in critical condition, and in need of urgent medical care.

Greek and Turkish authorities are using people-on-the-move as pieces in a political game. The reported death of a young girl - as a result of denying the transit group their fundamental right of access to Greek territory, asylum procedures and material reception conditions - is a severe violation of human rights - specifically Article 2 of the ECHR - as well as a breach of European Court rulings.

### Recommendations:

It is evident that, despite recent concern expressed by the [UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders](#), and [the LIBE Committee](#) and countless CSOs, Greece has continued down a path of mass proliferation of human rights abuses. The actions of the Greek state continue to lie in direct contradiction to the guarantees of the CEAS, the Charter and other EU treaties.

BVMN join the **Greek Council for Refugees and Human Rights 360** in their [urgent call](#) for the Greek authorities to proceed with the urgent rescue of the transit group. We additionally call on the European Commission to hold the Greek state accountable for these violations.

*To the European Commission:*

- Initiate disbursement of funds to the Greek state until they are in accordance with the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and a truly independent and impartial border monitoring mechanism is in place and compliance with the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- Start infringement proceedings to condemn Greece for any use of violence, to enforce the asylum *acquis*, and take all the necessary measures in order to ensure that the rule of law is being upheld by Greece.