

MAY 2023
BALKAN REGION

**ILLEGAL PUSHBACKS AND
BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS**



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



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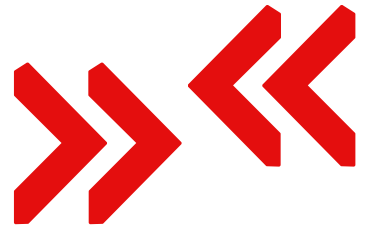




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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

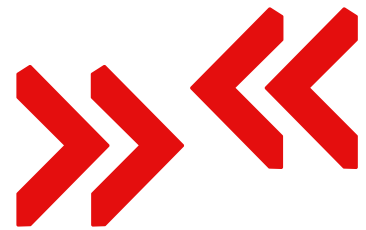


In May, the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) shared 17 testimonies of pushbacks impacting 439 people on the move (POM) across the Balkans and Greece. This report brings together first-hand testimonies from a range of countries in the region to look at the way European Union states and other 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.

This month the New York Times released a report including video footage of an entire pushback of 12 people from Greece to Turkey. Though this type of video evidence is rare in its length, it is also just the latest in an ever-growing body of evidence on human rights violations perpetrated by the Greek authorities which many grassroots groups, activists and organisations have been reporting on for years. In the meantime, the Greek government has increased the number of police units deployed in certain regions of the country, at a time when the number of citizens' complaints against the police is growing. Testimonies taken by BVMN partner organisations also show a systematic increase in random apprehensions, arrests and other abuses against people on the move. Further updates from Greece, this time from Samos, include the full letter shared by the asylum seekers in the Closed Controlled Access Centre outlining their dissatisfactions and the violations experienced in the facility, and announcing a peaceful protest to the Camp Management. Most of the points raised in this letter focus on the lack of freedom of movement, as well as on the delays and discrimination of the asylum procedure.

Moreover, this monthly report includes testimonies describing pushbacks from Germany to Austria, a practice that has been recently denounced by organisations working in the region. Though this type of evidence is new, in 2022, refugee councils in the Eastern part of Germany already denounced pushbacks at the German border with Poland, thus pointing at the systematic use of this practice by German authorities. The last piece of updates comes from Turkey, where the elections have been marked by a stark increase in the nationalist reactionary voices both from the government and the opposition sides, and a focus on the deportation of migrants from the country. These deportations have already amounted to 41,337 people - according to official statistics - in the past six months. The second round of the elections ended with a new victory for Erdoğan's alliance, who managed to gather support from regions grappling with drastic economic difficulties and the ongoing impact of the recent earthquakes.

Lastly, we elaborate on the Feedback on the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive submitted by BVMN partners to the EU Commission, with a focus on the need to take into account the specific vulnerability of people on the move to being trafficked or re-trafficked, including the way pushbacks and detention practices limit the access to rights of trafficking survivors and potential survivors. We end with an analysis on the expanding body of evidence on Frontex violations in its different areas of operations, including breaches of laws and conventions regarding transparency of the Agency, covert interrogations and identification of officers, as well as their widely reported role of witnesses in multiple cases of human rights violations against people on the move by the authorities of different countries.



▶ 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

Northern Greece

----- Greece pushback case brought to the European Court of Human Rights

A pushback case concerning a French citizen and her partner who were pushed back from Greece to Turkey in 2021 has been brought to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on the grounds that Greece violated Article 2, 3, 5(\$1, \$2 ,\$4) and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The case, filed by Front-Lex, involves a French citizen who was studying in Turkey when she and her partner were sentenced to six years and three months in prison by the Turkish Supreme Court in June 2021 for their reported involvement with the Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETO). On October 19th 2021, the woman and her partner crossed into Greece at the Evros land border where they were apprehended by Greek forces. Despite presenting her French passport to the Greek officers and informing them of their reasons for fleeing Turkey, the couple were pushed back to Turkish territory that same day. During their apprehension and pushback, the couple were reportedly treated in a degrading manner by Greek officers and were exposed to dangerous conditions including being forced onto an inflatable boat without life vests. This constitutes a violation of the woman's rights both as a person fleeing persecution and as a European citizen. Once back in Turkey, the French citizen and her partner were arrested. They are currently serving their sentence.

The patterns of rights violations reported in this case reflect the many BVMN pushback testimonies collected that detail similar illegal practices at the Evros land border, including reported incidents of people on the move being forced to board inflatable boats without life jackets, physical violence, verbal abuse and failure to provide access to the asylum procedure.

----- Entire pushback from Greece to Turkey captured on video

This month, footage evidencing 12 people, including men, women and children, being pushed back from the Greek island of Lesbos by the Hellenic Coast Guard was released in a New York Times report. The authenticity of the video was thoroughly verified by the New York Times before its publication. On April 11th, the group that had arrived from Turkey were apprehended, driven in an unmarked white van to a dinghy which they were reportedly forced to board by men in balaclavas before being transferred to a Hellenic Coast Guard vessel that subsequently abandoned them in the middle of the Aegean sea on an inflatable life raft. The group was then picked up by the Turkish Coast Guard.



Image sourced from footage released by the New York Times.

Among the survivors was 27-year-old Somali mother, Naima Hassan Aden, who recounted the harrowing experience, stating that they did not believe they would survive that day. Other survivors included Suleka Abdullahi, a 40-year-old woman, and her six children, as well as two young adults named Mahdi and Miliyen, who had been captured by Greek authorities in the Lesbos forests.

The pattern and details captured in this footage are corroborated by over 200 testimonies collected by BVMN partner organisations documenting pushbacks from Greece to Turkey. BVMN members have collected extensive evidence that reports masked individuals in unmarked vehicles forcefully and violently expelling people from Greek territory, both on land and at sea.

As addressed in the BVMN February monthly report, Greece continues to deny any involvement in illegal pushbacks and maintains that it is acting in accordance with international and EU laws. This is despite extensive and ever-growing testimony evidence to the contrary, including a recent statement from the Frontex Fundamental Rights Officer recommending the agency cease all operations in Greece due to frequent human rights violations and the documented use of pushbacks. In May alone, the Turkish government reported 68 pushback cases in the Aegean, affecting a total of 1,785 people, which again shows the continuing systemic practice within Greece's border regime.



The New York Times evidence is rare in that it provides chronological visual footage of an entire pushback from a Greek island, yet this is just the latest in an ever-growing body of evidence which many grassroots groups, activists and organisations have been reporting on for years.



Stills from the NY Times report of May 19th showing the pushback survivors at various stages between Lesbos and their return to Turkish territory.

----- Increase in police presence across Greece

In mid-May, the Greek Minister of Civil Protection, Takis Theodorikakos, announced the deployment of an additional 600 guards across police stations in the Attica region, to “put an end to lawlessness and delinquency”. This comes at a time when the Greek police are being heavily criticised for reported corruption, violent conduct and intimidating behaviour. The Greek Ombudsperson reported that there was a 50 percent increase in citizens’ complaints submitted to the office in 2022 compared with 2019, as well as a 14 percent rise in racially motivated police actions during the same period.

Reports collected by BVMN members since the beginning of 2023 demonstrate how people on the move apprehended by officers identified as the Greek police in the Attica and other regions across Greece are routinely subjected to numerous rights violations - including arbitrary detention, physical and psychological violence, denial of the right to seek asylum and, in some cases, pushbacks to Turkey. Rates of random apprehensions and arrests of third country nationals have also consistently increased in the city of Thessaloniki since February 2023, according to press releases published on the website of the Police Directorate.



Image of a group of people in Acharnon, Athens, on their way to work before being apprehended by men in civil clothing driving a blue bus with “police” reportedly written on it. Image provided by a respondent whose testimony was taken by a member of BVMN.



Letter from the asylum seekers of the CCAC

In May, protests continued to take place in the Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC), where the level of frustration reached a new apex. On May 2nd, a peaceful protest in the camp gathered people from many communities, as well as women and children. The overarching theme of the protest was “enough is enough”, as people were protesting mainly about the inedible food, the lack of cash assistance and the dehumanising prison-like living conditions.

On May 4th, asylum seekers shared a letter, describing their dissatisfaction with the situation in the structure, and underlining the human rights violations they experience, read below:

“AGENDA OF THE PROTEST

Greetings from the Concern Asylum Seekers of the Samos Camp. For quite too long, we have been going through a lot of Victimisation in Samos Camp, which is eating the hearts of many Asylum Seekers in Samos Camp.

We have seen to it that silence cannot be the solution to the crisis of this dangerous virus. We have therefore decided to display this dissatisfaction through a peaceful protest by displaying placards with a written description of our dissatisfaction on them.

Below are the dissatisfactions:

1. We have been experiencing a delayed decision process which has always been negative. This time we need a speedy decision for Asylum Seekers and must be positive ones. We recommend that you give decision after one month of interview.
2. Secondly, it has come to our notice that positive decisions are only given to some of our white friends, thereby neglecting the West African Countries like Sierra Leoneans, Ghanaians, Guinea, Nigerians, Cameroon, Congo, Uganda but a few. This time we want the positive decision to cut across all colors and continents.
3. We have been deprived of good and sufficient food in the camp. The food that is supply to Asylum seekers in the camp is not something to write home about, so poor and not enough to sustain us for the day, sometimes we have to go extra to make sure we kept alive and us we all know that a hungry man is an angry man.
4. It has also come to our notice that we are like in the prison. In other camps, the longest duration of stay of the people to get their card is twenty-five (25) days which helps for the freedom of movement.

5. This we are seeing that you are breaking the policy of the UNHCR and human rights which allows freedom of movement. In Samos Camp, it is only when you have health problem that you will be granted open cards. We want to bring to your notice that we have not been convicted of any criminal offence and that we are just here for protection and so we need our cards open and transfers can be optional to ensure freedom of movement.

RULES GOVERNING THE PROTEST

We hereby assured you that it is going to be a peaceful one, and the following rules would be strongly observe.

- 1.No fighting during the protest,
- 2.No throwing of stones or any objects,
- 3.No use of Abusive Languages,
- 4.No attack on personalities,
- 5.No destroying of any camp properties.

Thanks for your understanding and your cooperation is highly solicited.

Faithfully yours,

Samos Asylum Seekers

To: the Camp Management

cc: UNHCR, Police Security Commander of the Camp, MSF, I have right Lawyers, International Journalist, International Body, Human Right”





Germany

Pushbacks to Austria

On May 30th, BVMN partner organisation Push-Back Alarm Austria, together with Bayerischer Flüchtlingsrat (Bavarian Refugee Council), published evidence of pushbacks at the German-Austrian Border. In the end of 2022, Push-Back Alarm Austria, met several Syrian nationals in first-reception camps in Austria who said they had been directly returned to Austria even though they wanted to ask for asylum in Germany.

Six detailed accounts documented by Push-Back Alarm Austria show people were not only denied access to asylum procedure but also denied their right to contact relatives to assist with communication and were strip searched by people in uniforms resembling police. These were not isolated cases but part of systematic rights violations at the German borders. In 2022, refugee councils in the Eastern part of Germany already denounced pushbacks at the German border with Poland.

Police statistics, requested from the German government by the parliamentary group of the left party (Die Linke) document a striking discrepancy between the number of registered unauthorised entries and the number of asylum applications being recorded. Discrepancies were particularly striking in November and December 2022, where only 0.6% of those who had entered via the German-Austrian Border filed an asylum application. In numbers: 20 asylum applications in November 2022 and 12 asylum applications in December 2022 with 3,077 and 2,107 people apprehended respectively. 68% of those rejected following unauthorised border crossing in 2022 were from the 15 main countries of origin of asylum seekers. In light of the testimonies collected by BVMN partner organisations, it seems highly improbable that thousands of people supposedly did not want to apply for asylum once they had entered Germany.



Turkey

Election Results

On May 14th, 2023, Turkey held both parliamentary and presidential elections. As previously discussed in our two last [monthly reports](#), migration and refugees were a constant topic and target throughout the election period, with both Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's ruling alliance and the opposition alliance led by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu centering their discourse expressing their positions on the deportation of refugees.

The elections produced a stronger reactionary, nationalist discourse across the board, with a sharp increase in far-right nationalist parties' representation in the parliament; on the side of the ruling alliance, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP); on the opposition side, the İYİ Party, a breakaway of the MHP. The MHP was founded in the late 1960s alongside its paramilitary organisation the Gray Wolves, whose members are known for their ultra-nationalist politics and use of violence against leftists and minorities (not only in Turkey, but also in [Germany](#) and the [Netherlands](#)). Another severely regressive step came through the gaining of four seats by Huda Par, the Kurdish Islamist party whose roots are as in the Kurdish Hizbullah, a reactionary counter to the Kurdish freedom movement and organisations like the PKK and the HDP.

In the presidential race, neither candidate obtained a majority vote, leading to a runoff on May 28th. In the run-up to the second round, the opposition, led by Kılıçdaroğlu, swiftly adopted an even more [xenophobic rhetoric](#) to appeal to far-right voters, claiming Turkey is host to 10 million refugees ([IOM figures](#) for March 2023 place the total number of foreign nationals in Turkey at 5.1 million). Ultimately, despite the amount of criticism he has faced, Erdoğan emerged as the winner of the presidential election, managing to garner support from regions grappling with drastic economic difficulties and the ongoing impact of the recent earthquakes. Days after the election, the Turkish lira reached [new record levels](#) of devaluation. Come the time of the elections, left and progressive groups were in a tight position between seeking Erdoğan's departure and aligning themselves with Kılıçdaroğlu's campaign as the vehicle to do so, with a deference to this nationalist discourse largely winning out. Many rationalised this by arguing that the removal of Erdoğan would open up space for stronger social movements to pressure the state if Kılıçdaroğlu and the opposition gained more power; many for the most part did not engage on the topic. Overall the traditional left parties have failed to strategically adapt and engage on the issue of migration in ways that would undermine the power of nationalism in Turkish politics and social life. Critiques of Kılıçdaroğlu's anti-migrant rhetoric from the broad left were [few and far between](#) - often more vocally coming from other centre-right members of the opposition. Beyond the sphere of party politics, more forthright defence of the abuse of migrants came mainly from small migrant solidarity groups, and feminist and LGBTQ+ groups. A [statement](#) against the anti-migrant and racist discourse posted by the We Want to Live Together initiative and shared by Women's Solidarity received huge circulation and backlash from both ruling and opposition sides. Some hopeful gestures have been seen since the elections via [images and statements](#) of solidarity from the Trans Pride committee, subverting the cruder slogans of Kılıçdaroğlu's campaign. These are messages of common struggle that have been largely absent from wider politics, and their coming from the trans community in Turkey is of great value, given the kind of danger they too face in the context of rising heteronormative, patriarchal, racist nationalisms. Equally the Kurdish movement, which stands to face only more obstacles from the emboldened nationalist powers in Turkey, faces an uphill battle. After the election, the HDP's imprisoned leader Selahattin Demirtaş [announced](#) that he had quit active politics and apologised for "not being able to put forth politics that are deserving of our people."



Trans Pride "billboard" image saying "Syrians Will Not Go" (Among Kemal Kılıçdarođlu's main campaign slogans was "Syrians Will Go!")



Trans Pride "billboard" image saying "Refugees Will Not Go!"



Trans Pride “billboard” image saying “Trans [people] Will Not Go!”

Pushbacks and Deportation

In their weekly statistics, the Governorate of Migration stated that over the course of the past 6 months leading up to June 1st 2023, Turkey deported 41, 337 people; 32% to Afghanistan, 4,47% to Pakistan and 60,53% to other unspecified countries.

Furthermore, the Turkish authorities reported that a significant number of people, totaling 96,785 individuals, were prevented from entering Turkish territory. However, the exact meaning and circumstances surrounding these prevention measures remain ambiguous. The majority of such “preventions” are known to occur at the Iranian-Turkish border. In December 2022, the EU allocated funding of €220 million for “to support further border control measures” at Turkey’s eastern border. On June 7th, a Guardian investigation revealed that the UK has provided £3 million to Turkish border forces for the same operations. Freedom of Information (FOI) requests revealed that UK funding to Turkey’s border force operations went from £14,000 in 2019 to £425,000 in 2021-22.

While incidents at the Iranian-Turkish border remain largely under-reported, there is somewhat more exposure of what the situation looks like at the Syrian-Turkish border. One brutal incident from March, (covered in our report of that month) in which a group of eight people were beaten and tortured leading to the death of two, was since then further verified by a recent Human Rights Watch report that called for an end to the impunity of such abuses.

ADVOCACY

Feedback on the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive

The EU Anti-trafficking Directive is being updated, specifically to include the impact of new technologies on trafficking and to criminalise those who avail of services provided by survivors of human trafficking. BVMN submitted feedback to the EU Commission on the proposed amendments, focusing mainly on the need to take into account the specific vulnerability of people on the move and survivors of pushbacks to being trafficked or re-trafficked. The submission demonstrates how pushbacks and detention practices limit the access to rights of trafficking survivors and potential survivors, including the right to identification, information and protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. It also highlights the hindering of entitled support and access to translation, necessary medical treatment (including psychological assistance) and legal remedy. BVMN further observed that the often violent and dangerous nature of pushbacks prevents survivors from reporting their experiences to the relevant authorities. Multiple recommendations were included in the submission, including the improvement of data protection within the scope of the Directive and the prioritisation of ensuring people who were trafficked do not face criminalisation for being survivors of human trafficking.

Member organisation I Have Rights (IHR) also gave feedback, with focus on the deficiencies observed at every stage of the asylum procedure in the Closed Controlled Access Centre on the island of Samos. Along with a statement on the impact state violence and de facto detention have on survivors of trafficking, IHR included an assessment of deficiencies in: the screening procedure conducted by Frontex; the medical and psychological evaluations; the asylum interview process; and the National Referral Mechanism. It also provided recommendations, with specific consideration given to the definition of human trafficking in the updated Directive, which should include child marriage and illegal adoption.

As a follow-up to these submissions, the feedback, along with the recommendations, was combined into a brief that was then sent to rapporteur B.Malin on May 23rd, ahead of the discussion on the Directive on the 24th in the European Parliament, with members of the EU Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) and the EU Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE).

International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

This month, the German platform for Freedom of Information FragDenStaat published a research piece on the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), together with nearly 500 documents that evidence ICMPD's role in the developments of the so-called "migration management" policies of multiple EU and non-EU states, over the past years.

An international organisation with 20 member states founded by Austria and Switzerland in 1993, the ICMPD was initially focused on the Balkan region. However, its scope of action has vastly broadened in the past years to include support for border controls and migration policies of multiple countries outside of Europe. Recent investigations show how the ICMPD has become a growing player in the increasing externalisation of EU borders. Moreover, as an international organisation, the ICMPD is subject to fewer controls

and transparency obligations than EU bodies, despite currently receiving over 50% of their funding from the European Commission, which brings greater concerns over human rights violations that might be committed in the context of their operations.

Northern African countries have been witnesses to this expansion. The organisation has been commissioned for multiple capacity-building projects with national authorities in the region, including police training and provision of surveillance equipment, despite mounting testimonies and evidence of human rights violations perpetrated against people on the move by coastguards and other authorities. Human rights defenders have raised concerns over surveillance technology provided by the ICMPD - with EU funding - to the state of Morocco, that would allow for the hacking of secured phones and laptops and reportedly been used against critics of the government.

The ICMPD is also increasing its collaboration with Balkan states. The role of the organisation in the construction of the new detention centre in the Lipa camp in Bihac was already mentioned in the BVMN March Monthly report. Apart from this, the ICMPD has facilitated meetings between Bosnian authorities and other countries to discuss migration-related topics, including deportations. According to representatives of the country's Ministry of Security, the budget for these deportations seems to be coming from the EU's "Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance".

Let's speak about Frontex...again!

In light of Frontex's continuous expansion, more recently we report that the European Union has signed an upgraded Memorandum of Understanding with Montenegro on Frontex's operations in the country. In case our readers feel that they missed relevant reports on how Frontex was held accountable for covering fundamental rights violations in multiple of their operational areas and is now allowed to expand, BVMN can safely inform you that no accountability measures have been taken against the infamous EU Agency (for cover-ups see for example the report published by FragDenStaat, Revealed: The OLAF report on Frontex from October 2022 showing that Frontex had been covering up fundamental rights violations in Greece, and more recently, The Crotone Cover Up, an investigation published by Lighthouse Reports indicating that Frontex covered up for the Italian authorities refusal to launch search and rescue operations). On the contrary, the Agency was rewarded with their long withheld budget for 2021 that was finally discharged by the European Parliament on May 10th to every human rights defender's and rule of law aficionado's disappointment and more expansion (one example, keep an eye on the development of the EU Action Plan in the Western Balkans).

In addition, we add some updates from the areas where Collective Aid and Medical Volunteers International are reporting from in Serbia and inform on systematic issues observed that have yet to be addressed. We continue to report on the blatant disregard of Frontex officers in using identifiable insignias or the armbands. Considering that the armband is removable, Frontex officers potentially consider it an inconvenience, even more so when they might be identified in connection with fundamental rights violations. As of November-December 2022, we reported the presence of Frontex officers in Northern Serbia. Reporters stated that they approached and inquired foreign officers on the extent of their mandate and they were informed that they were Frontex officers. Also in Northern Serbia, BVMN has received reports of disturbing incidents involving violent evictions carried out by Serbian authorities and according to individuals in transit, Frontex presence has been noted during some of these eviction operations. Reminder to officers they cannot sit by and witness fundamental rights violations being perpetrated according to the law, and it might even constitute aiding and abetting.

Since 2020 BVMN has been repeatedly contacted or informed of people on the move being pushed back and abandoned on islets, or stranded on islets in the Evros river in Greece. BVMN promptly alerted the Greek authorities, UNHCR, and Frontex with utmost urgency. However, it is worth noting that Frontex did not take action in response to any of these cases brought to their attention by BVMN. The reasons cited for this lack of intervention were twofold: either the islets in question fell outside Frontex's designated operational area, or the Greek authorities did not request assistance from Frontex to intervene. Recently, two posts published on Twitter by the Hellenic Red Cross depicting two rescue operations on May 3rd and May 10th of people abandoned on islets, clearly show Frontex officers present at the scene. Frontex should be re-informed that the right to life and the freedom from torture enshrined in the EU Charter cannot be respected sparingly.

With regards to operations in the Aegean Sea, serious incident reports from the Agency recently obtained by BVMN partner organisation I Have Rights show that officers assess a boat being seaworthy despite unsafe conditions: no communication with the skipper; not successful assessment of sufficient life jackets on board; the fact that the dinghy/rubber boat carrying 30 people compared to its recommended capacity of reportedly 7-8 metres was over carrying; and that the event took place at night. Sea worthiness is qualified as "*able to manoeuvre and steer*". Article 9 of the Sea Borders Regulation 2014/656 lays down and elaborates on multiple situations that constitute search and rescue situations. However, Frontex's main characteristic is applying the law selectively. For example, not triggering Article 46 (suspend or terminate) in Greece despite 17 years of not preventing violations (first joint operation Poseidon was launched in 2006).

Regarding transparency, the new Executive Director's promises that nothing is kept secret by Frontex (except everything) can already be easily disproved by the level of redaction of released documents. BVMN also has one complaint related to transparency pending at the EU Ombudswoman's office.

Worthy of our attention is the fact that Frontex conducts covert interrogations in Spain, as was revealed by two experts, and there is a great probability that it occurs in all their operational areas (but nothing is secret about Frontex). In layman's terms, your right to remain silent and have a lawyer present is not respected by Frontex officers.

The Border Violence Monitoring Network, its member organisations and partners strive to continue reporting on the matter until Frontex accountability is ensured at all levels.



MAY PUSHBACK TESTIMONIES

Link	Incident	Recorded	Demographic	Group size	Organisation
Hungary to Serbia					
1.1.	25/04/2023	25/04/2023	Syria	25	Collective Aid
Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina					
2.1.	05/04/2023	07/04/2023	Afghanistan, Turkey	5	Collective Aid
Germany to Austria					
3.1.	15/11/2022	09/05/2023	Syria, Somalia	4	Anonymous
3.2.	03/12/2022	09/05/2023	Syria	1	Anonymous
3.3.	04/12/2022	09/05/2023	Syria	8	Anonymous
3.4.	06/12/2022	09/05/2023	Syria	1	Anonymous
3.5.	06/12/2022	02/05/2023	Syria	2	Anonymous
3.6.	08/12/2022	09/05/2023	Syria	1	Anonymous
Bulgaria to Turkey					
4.1.	17/03/2023	22/04/2023	Syria	22	Anonymous
Greece to Turkey					
5.1.	01/06/2022	01/03/2023	Syria, Morocco, Algeria	200	Anonymous
5.2.	18/09/2022	02/03/2023	Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Tunisia	32	Anonymous
5.3.	10/12/2022	20/12/2022	Morocco, Algeria	34	Anonymous
5.4.	01/01/2023	01/03/2023	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria	24	Anonymous
5.5.	15/01/2023	15/02/2023	Syria, Morocco, Algeria	10	Anonymous
5.6.	18 January	10/05/2023	Afghanistan/Syria	37	Anonymous
5.7.	16/02/2023	17/02/2023	Morocco	3	Anonymous
5.8.	06/04/2023	06/04/2023	Iran, Syria, Algeria, Sudan	30	Anonymous



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.

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