

2025

Annual Report

Arranged In collaboration with Rigardu e.V.
Produced by Emilija Krivosic
Design by Marlene Janke

Wurzner Str. 34
04315 Leipzig, Germany
mail@borderviolence.eu



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	4
	● About Us	
	● Our Mission	
2	Members & Partners	5
3	Geographical Scope	6
4	Trends	7
5	Updates from the Border	8
6	Updates from inside Borders	9
7	Our Response	10
8	Our Work	13
	● Monthly Reports	
	● Against Criminalisation	
	● Trial Monitoring	
	● Joint Research	

Table of Contents

- UN Advocacy
- Third-Party Interventions
- Advocacy within EU Institutions
- Launch of Detention Landscape Database

9	Financial Statement	23
10	Acknowledgements	24

Introduction

1

About Us

The Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) is a horizontal self-organized network of NGOs and groups spread across the Balkans, Greece, France and Poland. Our Network was founded in 2017 to promote safe and legal migratory passage, end violent practices occurring on the Balkan Route, and advocate for the implementation of policies of solidarity and justice. ●

Our Mission

4

As a collective of NGOs, we aim to shed light on the violence at and within Europe's borders, and the severity and extent of illegal, systematic border management practices perpetrated against people on the move (POM). To do so, we rely on the support of BVMN members and partners – 20 grassroots organisations spread across Europe that each contribute to our advocacy efforts whilst also providing their own services to target communities throughout the region. Some of our members provide direct aid to POM and other communities while others offer legal support and advocacy channels for those who have experienced all-too-common injustices during their journeys.

Some of BVMN's member and partner organisations are shown below. It must be noted that two member and three partner organisations choose to keep their relationship with BVMN confidential, and are therefore not listed below. ●

Members & Partners

2

Members



5



Partners



One member and four partner organisations choose to remain anonymous and are thus not listed above.

BVMN
Annual Report 2025

Geographical Scope

3



2025 saw the further degradation of rights for people on the move in Europe. Through the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, policies that were once widely condemned became progressively normalised and legalised, including the detention of minors and deportations to so-called 'safe countries'. Framed as measures to improve efficiency and security, these policies have further entrenched a system that prioritises deterrence over the rights and dignity of people on the move.

7 Alongside this political shift, technosolutionism has become a defining feature of European border governance. Across the region, governments and EU institutions have promoted surveillance technologies, biometric databases, drones, AI systems and predictive technology as neutral and innovative solutions to migration. From Greece's Evros region, to the forests at the Poland-Belarus border, people on the move continue to face violent deterrence measures enabled and reinforced by these technologies.

The growing use of surveillance infrastructure must also be understood in relation to broader externalisation strategies and EU funding priorities. EU candidate countries increasingly adopted advanced border technologies and restrictive migration policies in line with EU expectations for accession.

Over the past year, BVMN has continued to document these developments through fieldwork, in-depth research, Freedom of Information requests, and investigative methods aimed at uncovering evolving border enforcement practices and policies across the region. ●

Updates from the Border

5

In 2025, Europe's borders continued to be shaped by systemic violence and deterrence, while the rapid expansion of border technologies became a defining feature of the region's enforcement landscape.

Across the Balkan Route and beyond, BVMN documented the growing use of drones, biometric databases, thermal cameras, AI-assisted monitoring systems, and digital surveillance tools aimed specifically at preventing people on the move. Reports from Serbia highlighted the use of surveillance technologies targeting both activists and people on the move, while investigations in Greece examined the expanding role of AI and biometric systems in migration governance and policing practices in urban areas such as Thessaloniki. At the same time, Frontex operations and EU-funded border infrastructure continued to expand across neighbouring and candidate countries, reinforcing the EU's externalisation agenda and embedding border enforcement far beyond the EU's territorial frontiers.

8

Testimonies collected by BVMN throughout the year reveal how these technologies continue to operate alongside longstanding patterns of violence and abuse at Europe's borders. Pushbacks remained systematic across the region, including violent expulsions from Croatia to Bosnia and from Hungary to Serbia, often involving beatings, detention, theft, and the destruction of phones and personal belongings. Reports from Poland documented the suspension of the right to seek asylum at the Belarusian border and the criminalisation of solidarity, while updates from Greece, Turkey, and Northern France highlighted deaths in detention, violent evictions, racial profiling, and increasingly militarised responses at sea and inland borders. ●

Updates from within Borders

6

In 2025, practices and technologies historically limited to Europe's borders increasingly started being deployed within states themselves, revealing how methods developed to control and contain people on the move are also being deployed against broader populations.

The same systems of surveillance, deterrence, and policing used against people on the move at Europe's peripheries are now being used internally to suppress dissent, monitor public space, and consolidate state power. The distinction between the "border" and the "inside" continued to erode as surveillance infrastructures, policing tactics, and exceptional security measures expanded into urban spaces, public demonstrations, and everyday governance.

9

A clear example emerged in Serbia, where reports indicated that a Long-Range Acoustic Device (LRAD), commonly referred to as a "sound cannon," was used against hundreds of thousands of anti-government protesters during a mass demonstration in Belgrade on 15 March 2025. According to BVMN, similar sonic devices had previously been deployed during the Serbian government's "Special Military Operation" targeting people on the move in northern Serbia between 2023 and 2024, where they were reportedly used to intimidate and forcibly displace individuals living in informal settlements.

These developments reflect a broader shift in Europe's political landscape, where border enforcement increasingly permeates domestic governance. ●

Our Response

7

The Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) continues its core mission of documenting systemic border violence, amplifying the voices of people on the move, and holding state and non-state actors accountable for human rights violations.

As violence, surveillance, detention, and externalisation policies intensified across the region, BVMN worked with member organisations and grassroots partners to monitor developments along the Balkan Route and beyond, producing evidence through fieldwork, testimony collection, investigations, legal analysis, and advocacy. This work continued to inform reporting, media outreach, and submissions to regional and international bodies.

10

In response to the rapid expansion of border technologies, BVMN further developed the Invisible Borders project to investigate the growing use of surveillance systems, biometric infrastructure, AI-assisted technologies, and other digital tools used to restrict freedom of movement.

Alongside this, BVMN strengthened its focus on internal forms of border violence through the Detention Landscapes project, which documents detention facilities and the expansion of migration control within states.

Together, these projects reflect BVMN's broader analysis that border violence extends far beyond territorial frontiers, increasingly shaping detention systems, urban spaces, and domestic policing practices across Europe. ●



Top: The İzmir Harmandalı Removal Centre in Turkey.
Bottom: Italy's so-called return hub in Gjadër, Albania.





Top: Police evicts people on the move in Calais, northern France.

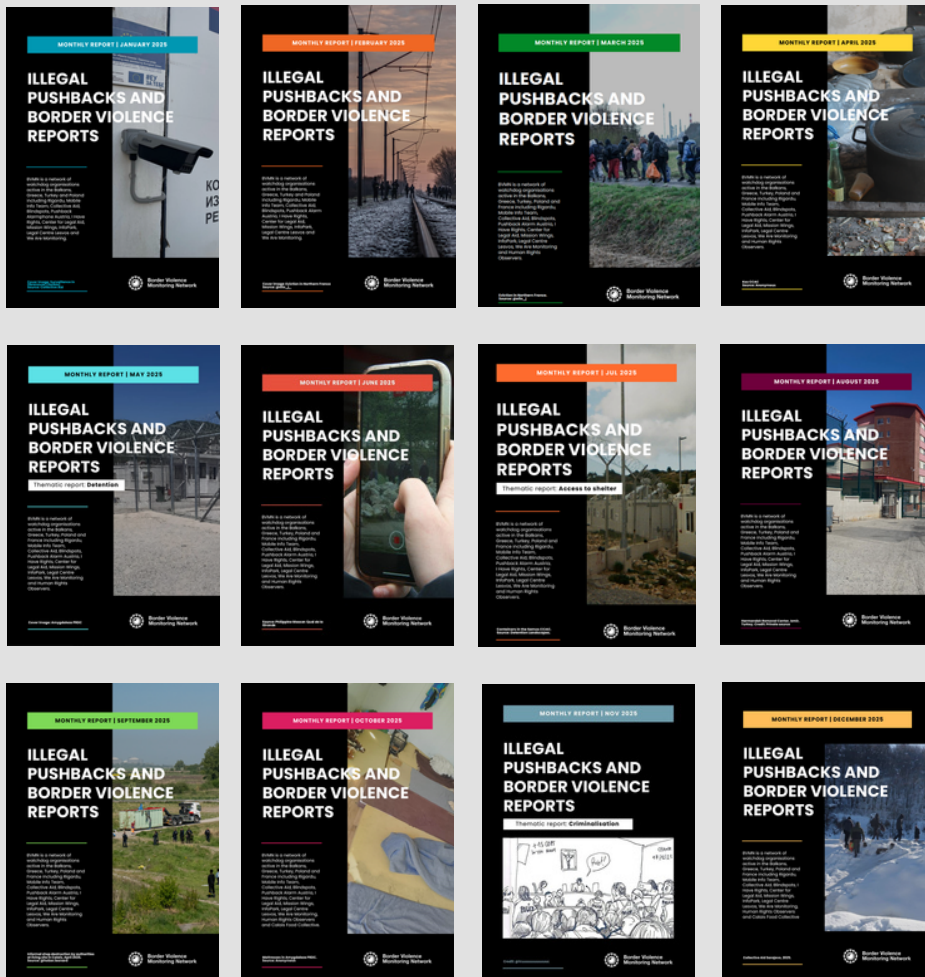
Bottom: Anjila Areezo, from BVMN's Global Strategic Advisory Board on Gender and Migration, at the UN Session on eradicating xenophobia towards migrants in December 2025



Monthly Reports

Throughout 2025, we worked with our member and partner organisations to continue reporting on the situation at Europe's borders, including from Greece, Bulgaria, Bosnia, Serbia, Turkey, Poland, France and Italy. Three thematic reports were also prepared on the topics of detention, access to shelter and criminalisation in an effort to draw a bigger picture of trends and practices across the continent. ●

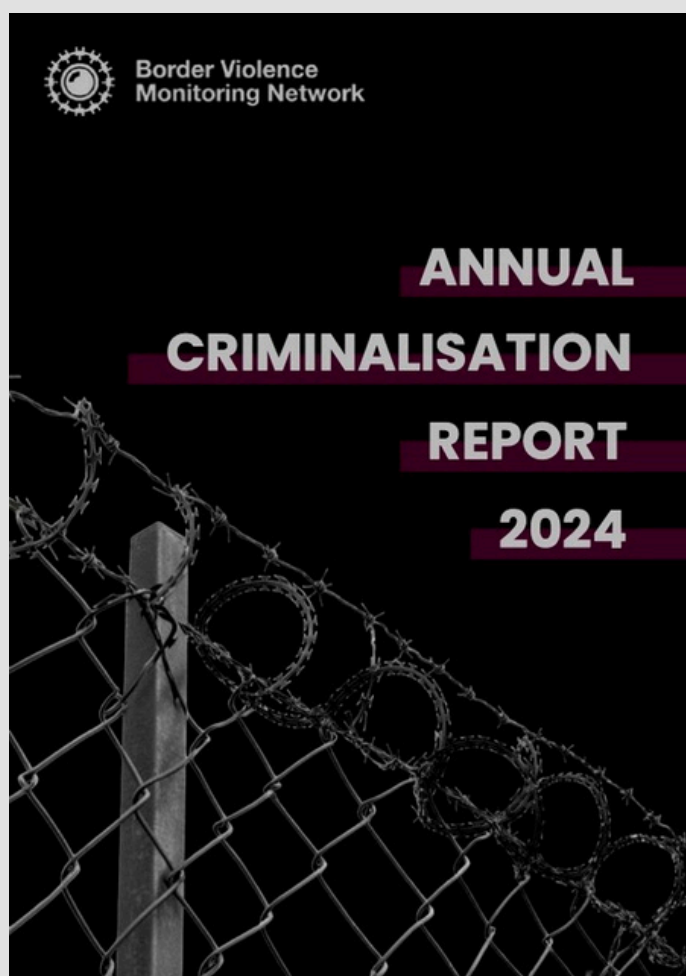
13



Against Criminalisation

In April 2025, the Criminalisation team released its second Criminalisation report, documenting instances of criminalisation targeting people on the move and solidarity actors in 2024, focusing specifically on Poland, France, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. ●

14



Trial Monitoring

In the face of the growing wave of criminalisation of freedom of movement sweeping through Europe, BVMN engaged in a project documenting the fair trial practices in cases of individuals accused of so-called smuggling in Greece.

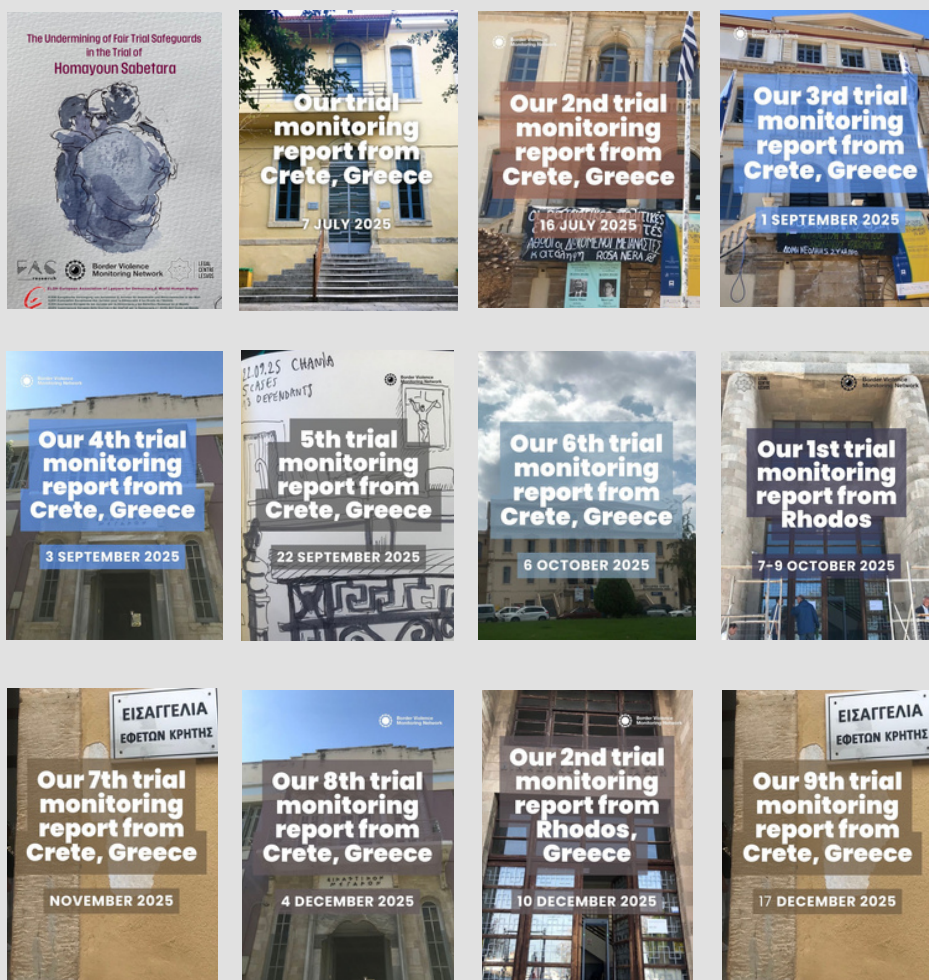
The goal of the project was to reveal the failure of judicial procedures in Greece to uphold the right to a fair trial, as well as empower NGOs and grassroots organisations in the country to conduct such monitoring work themselves.

In November 2025, the working group organised a two-day conference in Athens, Greece, on the topic of criminalisation of people on the move under so-called smuggling laws. The conference was an opportunity to exchange views between activists and lawyers and develop strategies when supporting individuals criminalised for their freedom of movement.

Participants from all over Europe, including Germany, Spain, Italy, France, Ireland, Belgium, Bulgaria, and Poland provided additional input on how authorities in those countries are targeting people on the move through criminal procedures.

15

The trial monitoring team also prepared regular updates from the court cases it attended. In total, BVMN was involved in the monitoring of a total of 123 cases involving 190 individuals in 2025 alone. ●



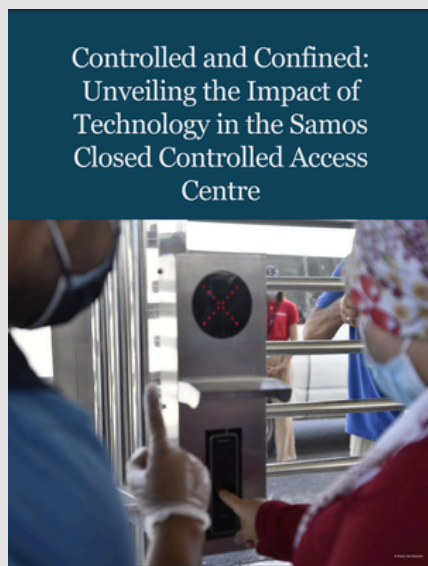
Joint Research

In 2025, BVMN collaborated with member organisations on multiple research projects to shed light on conditions of detention of people on the move.

With I Have Rights, we looked at the experience of refugees and asylum seekers inside the Closed Controlled-Access Centre, on the island of Samos. Based on testimonies obtained from individuals detained there, we showed the widespread range of surveillance they are subjected to through invasive technology.

With Thessaloniki-based Mobile Info Team and the University of Oxford's Border Criminologies, we looked at the unlawful practice of using police stations to detain people on the move in Greece, based on 31 interviews conducted with detainees between 2020 and 2025.

17



This research was featured extensively in the international media such as Balkan Insight and Computer Weekly, as well as in the local Greek press, including EfSYN and TO VIMA.

Most notably, the research into the Samos CCAC was featured in a documentary by news channel Al-Jazeera.●

18



Ella Dodd, former advocacy coordinator at I Have Rights, speaking about the surveillance technology inside the Samos CCAC to al-Jazeera.

Third-Party Interventions

In 2025, BVMN continued to engage with different intergovernmental bodies through Third-Party Interventions. This included submissions in three cases at the European Court of Human Rights.

In the first case, *A.A.N. and others v. Greece*, BVMN presented substantial evidence and testimonies documenting pushback operations conducted by Greek authorities and the involvement of Greek officials in actions that constitute violations under Article 2 and Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In the second case, *Ahmed v. Bulgaria*, BVMN offered impartial and contextualised insight regarding the treatment of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants in Bulgaria.

19

The third submission, done in collaboration with member organisation *I Have Rights* for the case *W.B and others against Greece*, provided insights into the conditions and practices in the Samos Closed Controlled-Access Centre, particularly with regard to potential violations of Articles 3, 5 and 8 of the Convention. ●



UN Advocacy

In 2025, the UN Advocacy group continued to participate in formal and informal negotiations at multiple United Nations forums.

In March and June, for example, the group took part in multi-day informal negotiations on two separate Human Rights Council resolutions, one on Human Rights Defenders and Technology, and the other on internally displaced persons.

However, the group's biggest achievement has been the outcome of its work advocating for the inclusion of pushbacks as a form of enforced disappearance.

Indeed, the UN Advocacy group submitted evidence to the UN's Committee on Enforced Disappearances against Bulgaria, which became the first successful case of pushbacks reviewed by the Working Group, and the first time a Balkan state has been reviewed under this procedure. ●

20



Former UN Advocacy coordinator Joseph Cripps speaking at a panel on the margins of the United Nations 59th Human Rights Council in June 2025.

Advocacy within EU Institutions

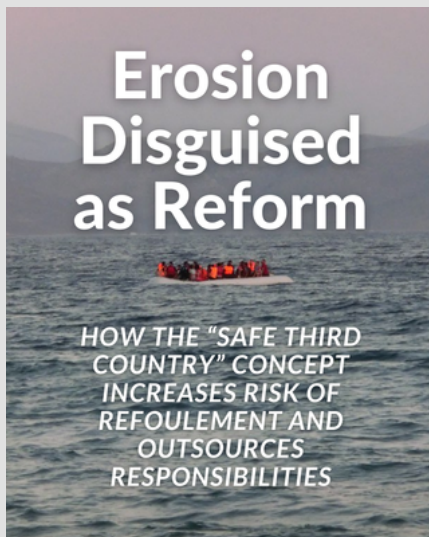
The Border Violence Monitoring Network continued to engage with EU institutions to advocate for EU-wide policies in support of a humane treatment of people on the move.

In 2025, the team drafted policy briefings opposing the so-called Return Regulation, and led the effort of building a coalition to oppose extreme amendments to it.

This work continued right up until the last days of 2025, when rightwing and far-right factions within the European Parliament introduced last-minute amendments to the Return Regulation to remove many of the safeguards that civil society has long advocated for.

21

2026 will see a continuation of this fight, as the Pact on Migration and Asylum is set to be rolled out throughout Europe. ●



The Detention Landscapes Database

In March 2025, the platform 'Detention Landscapes' and the associated project at the University of Oxford was Highly Commended by the University in the 2025 Social Sciences Impact Awards in the Developing Impact category.

The project, launched in April 2024, is a collaboration of BVMN, member organisation Mobile Info Team and the University of Oxford's Border Criminologies project. It is an interactive open-access database that evidences human rights violations in Greek immigration detention facilities using testimonies obtained from detainees.

22

In 2025, the database was used to prepare a report on Greece's unlawful use of police stations for the long-term detention of migrants. The report received extensive coverage in Greek media.●



Dr. Andriani Fili from the University of Oxford and Manon Louis representing BVMN at the Social Sciences Impact Awards ceremony. Credit: John Cairns

Financial Statement

9

January - December 2025

Income	
Donation Income	1,866.70
Restricted Grants	664,777.01
Total for Income	666,643.71
Expenses	
Payroll Expenses	
Payroll Accountant Fees	5,736.01
Payroll Taxes	43,202.99
Wages	141,975.03
Total for Payroll Expenses	190,914.03
Contractors	98,221.37
Employer of Record Services	18,878.95
Total Personnel Expenses	308,014.35
Travel	42,265.14
Server and Webdesign	15,601.89
Training & Stipends	7,537.60
Burnout Prevention	6,965.00
Office Expenses	5,467.51
Insurance - General	4,204.96
Volunteer Reimbursements	3,901.50
Total Expenses	393,957.95
Other Expenses	
Transfers to Partners	171,242.15
Total Other Expenses	171,242.15
Increase in Net Assets	101,443.61

23

Acknowledgements 10

Our work would not be possible without the support of generous, like-minded foundations and organisations that have endowed us with their trust. In particular, we would like to thank our 2025 foundational supporters, including:



SIGRID RAUSING TRUST



24



European Artificial Intelligence & Society Fund

For more information, including reports, our testimony database, and ways to get involved, visit our website.

[borderviolence.eu](https://www.borderviolence.eu)



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**