

## On the Move – Latest migration news

# MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN GREECE

### 10/05/2022-24/05/2022

- Migrants detained in the new camp on the island of Samos have been living **without running water**. The new camp, which was built as a closed facility like the ones on other Aegean islands, was presented as a new positive model for migrants' detention. However, residents have only access to running water two hours per day.
- On 15 May 2022, Alarm Phone reported about a **pushback** in the Aegean where 9 people, close to the island of Rhodes, were attacked by Greek authorities and pushed back to Turkish waters.
- On 14 May 2022, Alarm Phone reported about **18 people** in distress in the Maltese SAR zone who had departed from Tobruk, Libya. Despite alerts, Maltese authorities did not intervene while the boat was getting closer to the Greek SAR zone. After one day at sea, Greek authorities confirmed that they rescued the 18 people and disembarked them in Kalamata, Greece.
- On 13 May 2022, Greek soldiers pushed back **15 Turkish citizens** including 5 children who were crossing the Evros river by boat. The soldiers held the kids at gunpoint and threw them in the water to force the parents to go back to Turkey. Historically, Greece has welcomed Turkish opposition leaders and people facing persecution in Turkey for being accused of supporting the 2016 coup attempt, but this **has changed** in recent months. Among the 15 people, some were **accused** by the Turkish government of being part of the 2016-coup attempt and being part of terrorist organizations. Eight of them are now in jail.
- On 13 May 2022, Greek authorities **pushed back** 13 out of 15 people who reached the island of Samos. Only 2 managed to reach the camp.

### 5/04/2022-10/05/2022

- The Greek Council for Refugees **has assisted** 5 groups of Syrian asylum-seekers, including 44 children, by filing 5 applications for interim measures "requesting for the Syrian refugees to be granted humanitarian assistance and access to the asylum procedure". The first two groups were collected by Greek authorities, two other groups were pushed back to Turkey, and the last group was stranded on an island in the Evros river. The European Court for Human Rights granted the interim measures for this last group

and ordered the Greek government not to remove the people from Greece and provide them assistance.

- [3 survivors](#) of a shipwreck that took place on 21 December 2021 are now facing 18 life sentences for steering the boat.
- On 2 May 2022, a taxi driver in Athens [shot](#) a Pakistani migrant in the head. Luckily, the man was immediately taken to the hospital and is still alive.
- On 26 April 2022, Alarm Phone reported of a shipwreck that took place near the island of Kythira, with [73 people](#) in distress. The Greek coast Guard intervened and rescued them saying no one went missing.
- On 22 April 2022, Alarm Phone reported about [86 people](#) in distress in Greek waters. Greek authorities were informed but did not intervene. Finally, the people reached Italy, luckily no casualty was registered.
- On 21 April 2022, [35 people](#) were in distress near Samos, Greece. They were assisted by the Turkish Coast Guard. On the same day, another group of [25 people](#) was also pushed back by Turkish authorities while they were in distress close to Samos.
- Approximately [40 people](#) were marooned on a small island in the Evros river between Greece and Turkey. Authorities were informed but there is no information on what the fate of these people was, possibly they were pushed back.
- On 16 April 2022, an African woman was found [dead by gunfire](#) while trying to cross into Greece with 11 other people by boat. Greek authorities said blamed the Turkish authorities for firing the gunshot, but this claim is not certain as the bullet seems to have been shot from very close distance (Turkish authorities were not so close to the boat).
- On 21 April 2022, the Greek police rescue [64 Syrians](#) who were left on a small island in the Evros river by smugglers. Among them were 10 children.
- The UN Committee of Enforced Disappearances [published](#) its findings on Greece, highlighting its worries about pushbacks and lack of transparency on operations at sea as well as expressing grave concerns “about the criminalisation of search and rescue activities at sea under national legislation and about the prosecution and threats against human rights defenders involved in rescuing victims of enforced disappearance and pushbacks”.
- While the Greek government has praised itself over the past couple of years for its tough migration policies, it is now providing a **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** for Ukrainian asylum-seekers, with easier access to shelter, schools and even employment. In the word of the UNHCR office in Greece, “the solidarity shown by the EU to Ukrainian refugees should serve as an

example for all refugee crises and show that the EU can have an organised approach to asylum”.

### **22/03/2022-05/04/2022**

- On 31 March 2022, following a [request](#) for Interim Measures from Alarm Phone and Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN), the ECtHR demanded that Greece gives shelter & food to 34 people stranded on an Evros islet.
- On 29 March 2022, according to a statement by the [Greek National Transparency Authority](#), which was tasked with investigating whether the Greek government carries out push backs, the authority found no evidence of pushbacks but the findings have not yet been released.

### **08/03/2022 – 22/03/2022**

- On 11 March 2022, for the first time the European Court of Human Rights [issued](#) a decision ordering that a pushback from the Greek islands should not take place, following a request by Aegean Boat Report to intervene with an urgent measure under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court.
- Since 12 March 2022, 30 Syrians asylum seekers have been [stranded](#) on the small island on the Evros river for six days without water nor food. Following a request for interim measures filed to the European Court of Human Rights, Greece eventually [transferred](#) the asylum seekers to Greek territory.
- The Syrian Alaa Hamoudi, represented by the Front-Lex legal association, who was illegally pushed back into Turkey by Greek authorities [is suing](#) the European Union border agency Frontex for alleged complicity.
- On 13 March 2022, the Greek coastguards [rescued](#) about 100 migrants, most of them Afghans fleeing the Taliban, after their boat got into difficulties off the island of Paros.
- On 8 March 2022, 27 civil society organisations addressed a [joint letter](#) to the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, regarding the “systematic non-compliance by Greece with the Asylum Procedures Directive as regards the safe third country concept”.

### **22/02/2022-08/03/2022**

- [Seven bodies](#) washed ashore on Lesbos, probably after an unreported shipwreck.
- Filippo Grandi, the UN Commissioner for refugees, [stated](#) that UNHCR has collected evidence of 540 incidents of “informal returns” carried by Greek authorities since the beginning of 2020.

- A 32-year-old woman with French and Turkish citizenship [accused](#) Greek authorities of having pushed her and her husband back to Turkey. She claims they were escaping a politically motivated prison sentence in Turkey. She is now detained in a prison in Turkey and is filing a lawsuit to the European Court of Human Rights. This would be the first case where Greek authorities pushed back a European citizen.
- On 13 February 2022, Aegean Boat Report [asked](#) the European Court of Human Rights to intervene under Rule 39 to prevent the pushback of four individuals who were hiding on Greek territory, on the Aegean Islands. The Court issued a provisional decision and demanded clarifications to the Greek government about these allegations of pushbacks and also demanded the government to provide assistance to the asylum-seekers. However, in the time it took the Court to issue a decision, three of the four individuals were pushed back. Importantly, as stressed by Aegean Boat Report “Rule39 of the Rules of Court are the only way for asylum-seekers and migrants to benefit from an effective protection of their rights against pushbacks perpetrated by Greek authorities”.

#### 08/02/2022 – 22/02/2022

- An [investigation](#) by Lighthouse Report, The Guardian, Der Spiegel and Mediapart showed how the **Greek Coast Guards**, during some pushbacks, are throwing people in the water without lifejackets and force them to swim to **Turkey**. According to the reconstruction, two people – Sidy Keita from Ivory Coast and Didier Martial Kouamou Nana from Cameroon – died this way and their bodies were found on Turkish coasts. In September 2021, they crossed the Aegean sea and landed on the Greek island of **Samos**. They were found by Greek authorities, who forced them to board a speedboat, beat them and threw them overboard without a lifejacket when they were close to Turkey. Another person, Ibrahim, was on board with them and is the only survivor and witness who can testify what happened. Two Greek officials that were interviewed under anonymity confirmed that this practice has been used on other asylum-seekers. According to Lighthouse Report, there is evidence of at least 29 other cases since May 2021 where people were thrown overboard during pushbacks.
- The UNHCR [called](#) for an investigation on the case of the 19 migrants who froze to death on the Greek-Turkish land border, after they were forced to undress and were allegedly pushed back by Greek authorities. Greece and Turkey [have been accusing](#) each other for these deaths, without providing any evidence on what actually happened.
- The **LIBE Committee** [demanded](#) the EU Commission to allow Syrian asylum-seekers, whose claim for asylum was rejected based on the designation of Turkey as a safe-third-country, the possibility to apply again.

- The Greek police [arrested](#) five people on the island of **Lesbos** after a protest emerged against the construction of a new closed camp on the island.

### **25/01/2022 – 08/02/2022**

- [16 people](#) were found dead on the mountains between Greece and Turkey. According to the Turkish authorities, who found the bodies, the people died after being pushed back by Greek authorities in freezing temperatures and without clothes.
- On 30 January 2022, a group of [21 asylum-seekers](#) arrived in the Greek island of Chios. 12 of them were intercepted by the Hellenic Coast Guard, who pushed them back at sea until they were rescued by Turkish authorities. 3 of them were thrown at sea without boat nor life raft. Two of them made back to shore, one of them is missing, presumably drowned. There is no information about the remaining group of people, whether they are still hiding or were intercepted by the police.
- On 24 January 2022 a group of approximately [40 people](#), including 15 children, disembarked in the Greek island of Aspalathrokampos. Hours later, the people were taken by the Hellenic Coast Guard and pushed back at sea, and they were found by Turkish authorities who rescued them. Unfortunately, this practice – which is clearly against international law – is being used more and more by the Greek authorities, who push people back at sea even if they are already on Greek soil.
- Greek authorities trapped [29 asylum-seekers](#), including children, on an island in the Evros river for five days until they were intercepted by Turkish authorities. According to the reconstruction of the events by Efsyn, after five days, Turkish authorities convinced the people they would bring them to Greece, but they brought them back to Turkey and beat them violently when they realised some members of the group were Turks. One of them, a Syrian man with health issues, died.
- Refugees were hit particularly hard by the recent [snowstorms](#) in Greece, and many had to sleep on the streets or in tents in freezing temperatures, due to the decision of the Greek government to [suspend](#) asylum applications on the mainland since November 2021.
- Greece is planning to deploy new [biometrics policing programme](#) *“to gather biometric information from people on a vast scale and cross check it against police, immigration, and private sector databases primarily for immigration purposes”*. Human Rights Watch denounces the fact this programme may expose asylum-seekers to racial profiling and may be against international privacy laws.

- Amnesty International presented a [submission](#) to the UN Committee Against Torture regarding *“ill-treatment and torture of asylum-seekers and migrants in the context of violent push-backs; immigration detention and conditions of detention; the asylum-system; human rights violations in the context of the policing of demonstrations including on-going reports of unnecessary and excessive use of force and failures of the Greek authorities to adhere to international human rights standards related to the protection of the rights of detainees and core safeguards against torture; excessive use of force in migration control; criminalisation of human rights defenders working with migrants and asylum-seekers; and attacks against refugees, journalists and NGOs working with refugees and migrants; and gender-based violence”*
- Aid groups in Greece accuse the government of deliberately depriving more than 6,000 refugees of food and causing a severe [hunger crisis](#). Indeed, the government decided to stop providing food to those no longer in the asylum procedure, leaving 40% of the refugee in the camps without food.
- Alarm Phone kept contact with some of the survivors from the December shipwrecks in the Aegean, who are mainly in detention in Athens. [28 bodies](#) were recovered so far, possibly from those shipwrecks, but relatives of the missing are receiving no support from Greek authorities.

#### **11/01/2022 – 25/01/2022**

- The European Commission [stated](#) that for the cases of Syrian refugees whose asylum application has been considered inadmissible in Greece, as they could allegedly be sent back to Turkey, they should be allowed to apply for asylum again.
- Alarm Phone reports on a boat being [pushed back](#) in the night of 15 January 2022 near Rhodes. Greece is increasingly coming under scrutiny over the pushback practices of its Coast Guards, as [25,000](#) people have reportedly disappeared after being rescued by Greek authorities, but never landed on any of the Greek islands.
- On 10 January 2022, a [body](#) washed ashore on the island of Sifnos. It is likely to be from one of the shipwrecks that took place in December 2021.
- On 9 January 2022, a boat carrying [25 migrants](#) – including 17 children – arrived on Lesbos. The group was trying to hide from the police and was in contact with the organisation Aegean Boat Report. For the whole night, the people managed to hide but eventually, the following morning, the police found them. The policemen were part of the Hellenic Coast Guard and transported the group of people for over 200 km before putting them on a life-raft at sea and pushing them back to Turkey. The Greek Coast Guard used violence against the people: they broke the foot of a little girl, while



other kids report physical marks and bruises inflicted to them by the officers.

- **30 Cuban** asylum-seekers were forcibly expelled from Greece to Turkey in the end of 2021 and are now accusing Greek authorities of abuse. The group accuses Greek authorities of using violence against them, stripping them of their clothes, taking their personal belonging, and forcing them to walk to the Turkish border by gun-carrying officers wearing balaclavas.
- A group of migrants fleeing Lebanon **accused** the Greek Coast Guard of abuse. They left Lebanon on 26 October 2021, and after having been at sea for three days, they docked on the Greek island of Kastellorizo due to a storm. Despite having received the Coast Guard's permission to dock, the Coast Guard later approached the boat and hooked the migrants' boat to theirs. Migrants were forced on board of the Coast Guard vessel, some of them were beaten up, and the Coast Guard even fired shots in the air for intimidation. After spending one night on the Coast Guard's vessel, the migrants were divided in four smaller life rafts and told to go to Italy (but were actually directed towards Turkey). Finally, the migrants were intercepted by Turkish authorities, placed in removal centers and repatriated with a flight at the end of November 2021.
- The *Mobille Info Team* published the report 'Live on hold: Access to Asylum on Mainland Greece, Crete and Rhodes'. The report is available [here](#).

#### **14/12/2021-11/01/2022**

- On 6 January 2022, Chios residents **gathered** at the port to prevent the unloading of the machinery that will be used in the construction of a new closed centre.
- According to the Greek Minister of Civil Protection, between April and November 2021 there has been **45% increase** in preventing refugees and migrants from entering Greece via the Evros river, with **143,472 people** being stopped before crossing to Greece. This casts strong shadows on the violations of fundamental rights at this land border. The Minister also announced the deployment of 550 more border guards, and the launch of an automated surveillance system.
- On his New Year's Eve speech, Greek Minister of Immigration and Asylum Notis Mitarakis confirmed that about **25,000 asylum-seekers** disappeared in 2021 after being rescued by Greek authorities. Indeed, 8,616 asylum-seekers arrived in Greece last year, and more than 4,000 of those disembarked on Greek islands. However, the Greek Coast Guard reported to have rescued about 29,000 people in the whole of 2021, casting doubts on the fate of those 25,000 who never reached the Greek islands.

- Between 22 and 24 December 2021, **three boats** capsized in the Aegean causing the deaths of dozens of people. On 22 December 2021, a boat capsized with about 50 people on board near the island of Folegandros: 3 bodies were found, 13 people were rescued and at least 17 are missing. On 23 December 2021, a boat capsized near the island of Antikythera: 11 people died and 90 were rescued. On 24 December 2021, a boat capsized causing the death of 12 people, while 62 were rescued and at least 28 are missing. The shipwrecks occurred as smugglers are increasingly using a new dangerous route from Turkey to Italy, to avoid the heavily controlled Greek waters. On 6 January 2022, 3 bodies **were found** near to island of Naxos, who are believed to be part of the Folegandros shipwreck.
- The Administrative Court of Syros **ruled** unlawful the measure to prohibit the exit of an Afghan asylum-seeker from the new closed centre in Samos. The Afghans asylum-seeker was represented by the Greek Refugee Council which argued that the deprivation of the applicant's liberty is against Greek and EU law.
- On 20 December 2021, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) **communicated** that it will examine two cases filed against Greece concerning illegal collective expulsions. The evidence provided by Legal Centre Lesbos shows "that the Applicants were attacked, arbitrarily detained, psychologically and physically abused, and ultimately expelled from Greek territory, without having their asylum claims individually examined". The ECtHR is expected to come with a decision on the cases in summer 2022.
- Following an **alarm** raised by 27 Greek NGOs on the severe conditions refugees and asylum-seekers face in the country after the government stopped cash and food assistance, EU Commissioner Ylva Johansson issued a **response** criticising the Greek government's decision and demanding the provision of food, shelter and hygienic products to all vulnerable individuals. In the meanwhile, many refugees and asylum-seekers are facing serious lack of **food** and access to basic needs.
- The Deputy **Ombudsman** addressed the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum on the case of the NGO Refugee Support Aegean, whose application to the NGO registry was rejected.

### **30/11/2021 – 14/12/2021**

- On the 27 November 2021, **two new centers** were opened on the Greek islands of Leros and Kos. Similar to the one opened in Samos in September, these new camps are closed structures built with EU funds. The camps are controlled by barbed wire fences, high-tech x-ray surveillance systems, ID, fingerprint scanning systems and military personnel. Two additional



centers, based on the same model, will be opened next year in Lesbos and Chios.

- According to Amnesty International, about 100 asylum-seekers **detained** in the new centers are restricted from leaving the camp at any time of the day. They do not have a valid government-issued identity card either because their application has been rejected or because they are newcomers. Without the card they are never allowed to leave the centers, in violation of their right to liberty.
- 27 Greek NGOs are raising the **alarm** as asylum-seekers and refugees in the mainland stopped receiving food support and cash assistance. For about two months, refugees who already had their asylum application accepted stopped receiving food support because of the implementation of a law passed by the Greek government last year. At the same time, about 34,000 asylum seekers have not been receiving cash assistance after the program shifted administration from the UNHCR to the Greek government about two months ago.
- 19 organisations active on refugee issues in Greece **published** a joint statement denouncing the denial by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum to register the non-profit civil society organisation “Refugee Support Aegean” (RSA) on its NGO Registry.

#### **16/11/2021 – 29/11/2021**

- Greece increasingly **persecutes** people helping migrants:
  - Activists working for the Greek NGO Emergency Response Centre International face 25 years in jail. In particular, the two activists Seán Binder and Sarah Mardini have been **accused** of human trafficking, money laundering, fraud and espionage due to their alleged interception of radio frequencies. Police also accuses them of being members of a criminal organisation that presents itself as an NGO but seeks to profit from smuggling people to Greece. The trial against them and 22 other volunteers, was supposed to be held on Lesbos on the 18th of November but was **postponed**.
  - **Three young men** from Afghanistan and Somalia are facing extremely long sentences in the Greek island of Chios for steering inflatable dinghies with migrants after smugglers abandoned them in the Aegean Sea. They are charged as smugglers and condemned to 50 years in prison for two of them and 142 years for the third.
- On 28th of November 2021, Greece **opened** two new migrant camps on the islands of Kos and Leros. These are isolated, closed and highly militarised facilities, on which several NGOs have repeatedly raised serious concerns.

- On 21st of November 2021, Alarm Phone [reported](#) 71 people in distress off the island of Crete. Despite authorities being informed, no one intervened. The people were finally rescued by a cargo ship, but one person remain missing.
- [Seven migrants](#) died in a car accident while trying to escape from a police check and eight remained injured. The accident took place on a motorway close to the Greek-Turkish border.
- Four members of the Italian Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration were taken into [custody](#) by a mixed patrol of Greek policemen, border police and Frontex agents during a field visit to the Greek-Macedonian border, in the Greek village of Idomeni. Despite having all the required documents for entering Greek territory, police and Frontex officers took them back to the border and forced them to cross to Macedonia.
- Athens has hosted over [700 Afghan women](#) since the Taliban takeover in the summer, a number higher than in any other country. They arrived via the intervention of international organisations, aid groups and individuals who directly pressured the government. While this is a positive development, Greece's borders remain largely shut to migrants and asylum-seekers, including Afghan citizens, coming via land and sea borders.
- The International Rescue Committee published the [report](#) *A chance for a better future: Supported independent living and the protection of unaccompanied children in Greece*. The report analyses the improved situation of unaccompanied refugee children in Greece and highlights the main challenges and criticalities that still need to be addressed.

#### 25/10/2021 – 15/11/2021

- On the 26th of October [4 people](#) drowned close to the Greek island of Chios; 3 of them were children.
- After departing from **Turkey** on the 27th of October, [382](#) asylum-seekers disembarked on the Greek island of Kos on the 31st of October. They were mainly Pakistanis, Afghans, Bangladeshis, Syrians, Iranians and Lebanese. Due to bad weather conditions, the migrants alerted the authorities and were assisted by the **Hellenic Coast Guard**. However, the latter boarded the cargo ship and started navigating towards Turkey. According to the [Aegean Boat Report](#), [Alarm Phone](#) and to the [video footage](#) shared by the migrants on board, it seems that the Hellenic Coast Guard was attempting a push-back. It would have been the largest single push-back carried out by Greek authorities ever recorded. However, after pressure from civil society, the [UNHCR](#), the [media](#), and after 4 days at sea where migrants were given no food, water, nor medical attention, the Hellenic Coast Guard disembarked the migrants on the island of **Kos**.

- Five MEPs from the **LIBE Committee** travelled to Greece on a migration [fact-finding mission](#). The LIBE chair López Aguilar commented the mission during a press conference. He stated that one of the goals of the mission was to help the EU do better concerning the solidarity mechanisms listed in the EU Migration Pact. He also stressed the need for securitization of the external borders and talked about “huge improvements” in the Greek reception centers. German MEP of The Left, Cornelia Ernst, [documented](#), denounced and prevented the pushback of five asylum seekers in the island of **Samos**.
- The Greek migration minister **Notis Mitarachi** stated that further monitoring of possible rights abuses at Greece’s borders might constitute a [rule-of-law violation](#).
- A young woman from Burundi and a minor from Congo [sued Frontex](#) for the first time since the European Agency was born. Both are accusing Frontex of complicity in a push back operations from Greece to Turkey. The two of them met on the 28th of November 2020 since they were part of a group of 18 asylum-seekers who arrived on the Greek island of **Lesbos**. The group was victim of a pushback orchestrated by the Greek Coast Guard. Besides this episode, they were both victims of other pushbacks incidents in 2020 and therefore decided to file a lawsuit against Frontex.

#### **05/10/2021 – 25/10/2021**

- Despite the highly militarised land border crossing point between Greece and Turkey at the [Evros river](#), migrants try to cross and are continuously pushed back to Turkey. NGOs and locals don’t have access to the border to document and denounce the violations. 38 people died already in the Evros river in 2021.
- On 18 October 2021, 26 NGOs [denounced](#) that 60% of people staying in refugee camps in Greece don’t have access to food.
- An [investigation by Aljazeera](#) revealed how Greece is depriving thousands of refugees of their liberty for long times and in poor conditions. According to the Greek Council for Refugees, in July 2021, of those detained in Kos, more than 90 had been held for longer than a year.
- The NGO Mare Liberum [denounced](#) the numerous attempts by Greek authorities to hamper their work of monitoring human rights violations in the Aegean Sea.
- The NGO Aegean Boat Report [documented](#) a latest pushback on 18 September of a group of people who arrived on Lesbos and were later found adrift on a life raft by Turkish Coast Guards.

- The Greek National Transparency Authority (EAD) may act as the independent body that will investigate reports of migrant pushbacks, the Greek government [said](#).

### **23/09/2021 – 05/10/2021**

- On 4 October 2021, Alarm Phone [denounced](#) that at least 67 people are in distress in the Aegean Sea and that the Greek Coast Guard is informed.
- Amid growing concerns of [Greek pushbacks](#) at sea and land borders, Greek Migration Minister [rejects](#) a border monitoring mechanism.
- Greece [suspends deportation](#) of a Syrian man with disabilities and chronic health issues following European Court of Human Rights' grant of interim measures.
- INTERSOS Hellas, Greek Forum of Migrants and Greek Forum of Refugees [launched](#) a campaign calling for the access to everyone, including undocumented migrants, to the COVID-19 vaccine.

### **6/09/2021 – 22/09/2021**

- According to Euractiv, "the European Commission has asked Greece to set up an ["independent" mechanism](#) to monitor and avoid pushbacks of migrants at its border as a condition to release an additional €15.83 million in migration funding requested by Athens".
- On 18 September 2021, Greece opened the first official EU-funded closed refugee camp on the island of Samos. This [prison-like camp](#) has "barbed-wire fencing, surveillance cameras, x-ray scanners and magnetic doors". On 19 September 2021, a [major fire](#) broke out at the Vathy migrant camp on the Greek island of Samos.
- An appeal authority [annulled the decision](#) of the regional asylum office that an Afghan family could return to Turkey, as it could not be considered a safe third country for the applicants.
- Greece requested EU funds to deploy patrol units and surveillance systems to [intercept any Afghans crossing into its territory](#). EU officials have so far refused, "insisting any payments must be linked to Greece establishing an independent monitoring authority to ensure no one is illegally turned away".
- Ahead of the one-year anniversary of the fire that destroyed the refugee Moria camp on Lesbos, [forty-five civil society organisations](#) called on the EU and the Greek government to stop the policy of refugee containment and exclusion reinforced with the new reception facilities in Greece. While refugees hosted in the EU-funded camps on the Greek islands "prefer [being returned](#) to Afghanistan and killed by the Taliban".

- The [September Lesvos Bulletin Update](#) on the EU response in Lesvos, by the Greek Council for Refugees & Oxfam, focuses on the Joint Ministerial Decision of the Greek government, published on 7 June 2021 on considering Turkey as a “safe” third country. 63% of current residents in Mavrovouni camp (so-called Moria 2) are Afghan citizens, who are directly affected by the decision.

### 19/08/2021 – 06/09/2021

- On 5 September 2021, Alarm Phone fears another illegal pushback in the Aegean Sea since they lost contact with [85 people](#) adrift near Folegandros island.
- On 27 August 2021, Greek Migration Minister, Notis Mitarakis, presented a legislative proposal in Parliament aiming at [accelerating deportations](#) of migrants. Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, [called on](#) the Greek government to align the deportations and return bill with human rights standards. In particular, Article 40 of the Bill “would seriously hinder the life-saving work carried out at sea by NGOs, and their human rights monitoring capacities in the Aegean”. Greek officials have previously [declared](#) that “Greece will not become a “gateway” to Europe for Afghan asylum seekers”.
- Refugee Support Aegean released a [note](#) on the functioning of the Greek asylum procedure during the first half of 2021.
- Alarm Phone [denounced](#) that 14 people have been stranded for days at the Greek-Turkish border without food and water, and some are severely injured. Authorities have been alerted but are not responding.
- Greek police have been [imposing fines](#) of 5,000 euros to asylum seekers entering the country, by treating them as tourists not having a Covid-19 test upon arrival.
- On 20 August 2021, Greece [announced](#) that it had completed the construction of a 40-km wall on its border with Turkey and put in place a new surveillance system to prevent potential asylum seekers from trying to reach Europe.

### 27/07/2021 – 19/08/2021

- In a new [report](#), *EU funding for the integration of migrants and refugees in Greece: The clock is ticking*, two NGOs, International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Common Ground, claims that EU funds for the integration of refugees in Greece could be invested more efficiently.
- In the first half of 2021, Greece released almost 10 000 detention orders for migrants, including [9,227](#) that were issued in the context of returns or deportations. The Greek NGO, Refugee Support Aegean

(RSA) [denounced](#) this systematic deprivation of liberty and inaccessibility of remedies as well as lack of adequate psychological, medical and legal support in migrant detention centres.

- More than 4,200 migrants are [living](#) in deplorable conditions in the limbo of the Kara Tepe refugee camp, on the Greek island of Lesbo, which was built after the destruction of the Moria camp. 45% of those are minors.
- On 30 July 2021, the Greek Ombudsman [called](#) for the release of 19 people who are unlawfully detained in the Pre-Removal Detention Centre on the Greek island of Kos.

#### **5/07/2021 – 27/07/2021**

- On 22 July 2021, a [shipwreck off the island of Crete](#) caused at least 10 people missing. 37 others, including a woman and a child, mainly from Syria and Iraq, were rescued by the Greek coast guard.
- A [landmark decision](#) of the European Committee on Social Rights – in a complaint filed by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and the Greek Council for Refugees – finds that Greece is violating the right to education of migrant children on the Aegean islands. In 2021, only 7 of 2,090 kids in the island camps were in school.
- Greece has [launched an investigation](#) against four NGOs, including Aegean Boat Report – active in denouncing and documenting pushbacks of migrants and refugees – accusing them of “facilitating illegal entry of foreigners and espionage”. On 26 July 2021, the EUobserver [reports](#) that “Greece has annulled an award for humanitarian aid worker Iasonas Apostolopoulos, known for his work with rescuing migrants and refugees at sea”.

#### **21/06/2021 – 05/07/2021**

- A pushback in the Aegean Sea was [reported](#), involving Greek Coast Guards and **Frontex**.
- A new barricaded refugee camp of around 1 800 places will open soon on the Greek island of **Leros** to isolate refugees from the outside world. The EU [invested](#) EUR 276 million in 2021 to build such camps on the Greek islands.
- On 28 June 2021, Greek Migration Ministry [said](#) that **Turkey** should take back 1,450 migrants whose asylum requests have been rejected, also as a deterrent for future crossings. In its effort to reform the deportation and return procedures, the Immigration and Asylum Ministry [proposed a bill](#) on “Reformation of deportation and return procedures for third-country citizens, issues of residence permits and procedures for granting



international protection and other provisions of competence of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and the Ministry of Civil Protection". As Greece recently declared Turkey as a "safe country" to return migrants and refugees to, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) warns that **80% of children** supported by IRC risks being denied asylum in Europe and being deported.

- A new **Amnesty International** report points at the violence against migrants and the unlawful practices of pushbacks by Greek authorities and calls on Frontex to suspend its operations in Greece.
- The **Dutch journalist**, Ingeborg Beugel, foreign correspondent in Greece, was **arrested** for having hosted an Afghan asylum seeker.
- The Greek Migration Ministry's decision to **cut financial assistance** for all asylum seekers who are not housed in facilities run by the Ministry or its partner organisations, will seriously undermine effective integration efforts, human rights organisations warn.
- On 29 June 2021, the defendants for the fire in **Vial Camp** were all **acquitted** of the felony charge of arson and of the membership in a criminal group. However, rights groups **denounce** Greece's practice of unfairly prosecuting and sentencing migrants.