

Border Violence Monitoring Network represented by Alexandra Bogos
Transcript of video statement

This statement is delivered on behalf of the Border Violence Monitoring Network, a coalition of organisations documenting pushbacks and state violence in the Western Balkans, Greece and Turkey, since the formal closure of the migration route 5 years ago.

In 2016, during the last Universal periodic review, 35 countries made recommendations to Greece regarding the protection of migrants and asylum seekers.

Despite this, we assert that the Greek government has failed its obligations under international law and has systematically rolled back protection granted to migrants and refugees.

We have witnessed how within Greece the use of pushbacks has both increased and intensified, and now constitutes an unofficial pillar of the country's migration policy.

Let us be clear, pushbacks substantially violate the principle of non-refoulement, the prohibition of torture and pose a significant threat to the right to life.

Pushbacks occur at Greek land borders, deep from within Greek territory and at sea, where victims are left abandoned in motorless rafts.

The Border Violence Monitoring Network has documented that 98% of pushbacks testimonies from Greece contained torture or ill-treatment. Pushbacks are perpetrated with excessive violence, including forced undressing and theft of personal belongings, as well as sexual assault. In 68% of pushbacks, children have either been subjected to or witnessed this disturbing abuse.

Despite the increase in violence and numbers of pushbacks, the Greek state has refused to investigate, has not held perpetrators to account, and has systematically targeted and defamed human rights organisations speaking out against these practices.

We make the following recommendations

1. Greece must immediately halt pushbacks and collective expulsions of refugees and migrants.
2. It must reinforce its commitments to international human rights by providing remedies to pushback victims and public recognition of their entitlement to international protection.
3. Greece must strengthen the role of the Ombudsman as the National Mechanism for the Investigation of Arbitrary Incidents by ensuring its ability to investigate allegations of law-enforcement officials perpetrating pushbacks
4. Greece must establish an independent border monitoring mechanism involving civil society

5. The Greek state should limit the use of detention of migrants and asylum seekers. Greece must investigate all cases of violence and torture by police and detention centre staff and provide effective remedies to victims

6. The first steps Greece could take is by making a declaration to the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to consider individual communications as regulated in Article 31 and by signing ratifying Protocol 4 to the European Convention on Human Rights prohibiting collective expulsions