



Border Violence
Monitoring Network

ILLEGAL PUSHBACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE 2026 REPORTS

MONTHLY
REPORT
JULY

Samos CCAC
Source: Anonymous.



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Other contributors:

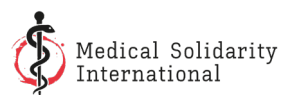


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REPORTING NETWORK

BVMN¹ 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, Turkey, Poland and France, including Rigardu, Mobile Info Team, Collective Aid, Blindspots, I Have Rights, Center for Legal Aid, Mission Wings, Legal Centre Lesbos, We Are Monitoring, InfoPark, Human Rights Observers and Calais Food Collective.



Executive summary

This report gathers updates from the month of July and brings together first-hand testimonies and observations from a range of countries in Europe to look at the way states and other actors are affecting systemic violence towards people crossing borders. Updates come from the different Member Organisations of BVMN, as well as other partners like Glocal Roots, borderline-europe and Medical Solidarity International.

As long as the almost absolute impunity surrounding human rights violations against people on the move continues to be standard practice across Europe, people crossing borders will keep on reporting on the acts of cruelty systematically committed by state authorities. Hence, this month we hear, once again, from people who have experienced extremely violent pushbacks at the hands of Croatian police, describing practices continuously reported over the past decade, including beatings, thefts of belongings and forced undressing. Solidarity organisations also report on an increase in the number and severity of injuries from attacks by police dogs, some requiring urgent medical care, as well as several cases where authorities stole essential medication and medical equipment. The risks to the health and life of people on the move posed by these illegal and violent practices are compounded by the extreme weather conditions of this summer. Heat and sun exposure – including in the poorly adapted state-run Temporary Reception Centres (TRCs) – increase the dangers of the journey, often leading to dehydration, headaches, low blood pressure, heat exhaustion and heat

strokes, as well as gastrointestinal issues from drinking from contaminated sources.

The lack of adequate reception conditions worsens this situation, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and beyond, as people on the move don't have access to dignified living spaces where protection and care are actually provided by those legally obliged to do so. People have reported on the unbearably hot conditions experienced inside the living containers at the Blažuj TRC. Similarly, in the Lesvos CCAC, in Greece, many residents continue to live in plastic containers originally designed for short-term emergency accommodation, now in use for over six years, without air conditioning and with poor insulation. These situations don't go unchallenged, though. This month, we report on an example of community resistance, as a group of Senegalese and Gambian nationals residing in the Lesvos CCAC issued an open letter and planned a peaceful march calling on authorities to improve living conditions in the facility, as well as protesting prolonged confinement. However, as it is usually the case, the initiative was met with intimidation by the authorities, including warnings of potential arrest and imprisonment. Meanwhile, in Kos, the summer has once again exacerbated the homelessness crisis, as the soaring rental prices on the touristic island leave many without access to housing as soon as they receive their refugee status and are kicked out of the CCAC. Thus, without the proper support, the granting of refugee status does not represent the end of displacement for many, but the beginning of a new period of insecurity. This month,



Executive summary

we also report on two shipwrecks off the coast of Samos, resulting in the death of at least one person and the disappearance of three to six people. These recent and avoidable tragedies underscore how the absence of safe and legal routes, combined with dangerous and illegal interception practices by the Hellenic and Turkish coast guards, continue to put people's lives at risk. In the Central Mediterranean, 8 people died in July and at least 50 remain missing, after another month of deadly cooperation between European and Libyan authorities.

In France, a parliamentary inquiry report has been published on the consequences of the externalisation of the Franco-British border following the Le Touquet Agreements, signed in 2004. After months of work, the parliamentary commission tasked with the investigation has found that the policies systematically result in the violation of fundamental rights of people on the move. In the report, they also emphasized the opacity of the funding agreements for both the French and British public. While the publication is a welcomed addition to the extensive body of evidence on the violence perpetrated against people on the move in the region, its limitations in bringing about change in the current political environment have already been made apparent. This month, a hearing took place at the civil court, initiated by several organisations to challenge an order authorising the clearance of the largest settlement in Calais. Despite the evidence presented by the lawyer – including the parliamentary report – to prove the precarious living conditions endured

by residents and the extremely negative effects of evictions, the judge decided to dismiss the rights of those living at the settlement. Meanwhile, at the border between France and Italy, the French police continue to provide people detained at the border with a record of their detention period including false information, before pushing them back.

Lastly, while the number of shipwrecks continues to rise, authorities keep pouring resources into the constant administration of detentions and convictions against NGO ships in the Central Mediterranean. Hence, we look at the new wave of criminalisation of civil rescue by the Italian government, which ordered the detention of two more ships in July; one of them, operated by Compass Collective, accused of not having communicated with the Libyan authorities about the rescue operation, was released after an urgent appeal in court. In this context, a new bill drafted in April could further the criminalisation against civil rescue organisations, as warned by several UN experts this month, including extending the detention of vessels to up to six months. Furthermore, this month, the third anniversary of the Memorandum of Understanding with Tunisia acts as a stark reminder of the impunity surrounding European countries' "cooperation agreements" with third-countries on migration, which continue unchallenged despite widespread evidence of human rights violations, including massive violence, rape, mass deportations or the abandonment of people seeking protection in the desert.

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



Bosnia – Herzegovina

Violence at the Croatian border

This month, member organisations of BVMN have encountered many people returning to the Temporary Reception Centres (TRCs) after being pushed back from the Croatian border. Multiple people on the move have consistently reported forced undressing, beatings and theft and destruction of personal belongings – including phones, cash, medical documentation, equipment and medication –, perpetrated by state authorities during pushbacks. In one recent incident, someone with a chronic health condition shared with us his experience during a pushback in which the Croatian police stole and destroyed his back brace, leaving him without the back support required for his condition.

The accounts of physical violence have also not decreased, with health sessions organised by Medical Solidarity International (MSI) including at least a few cases of injuries related to pushbacks during every outreach. These injuries are often due to beatings by the Croatian police using blunt objects, including batons, as well as bites from police dogs, of which MSI has observed an increase over the summer period. The severity of the dog bites changes depending on the attack. However, while few people have scrapes requiring regular first-aid, the majority of people we see have deep punctures in their skin from these bites. On occasion, the bites can be so deep that there is significant tissue loss requiring hospital intervention and are a massive infection risk. While it has been reported by people who have been attacked by these police dogs that antibiotics

are provided in the Reception Centre in Lipa, tetanus vaccines after contact with soil, and rabies vaccines when necessary are near impossible to access.

Several people have also described seeing drones prior to their apprehension by Croatian officers, an experience [shared](#) by many over the past few years – at [this](#) and [other](#) borders – that highlights the increasing use of technology to aid human rights violations.

This month, a Sudanese man also shared part of his migration story with members of Collective Aid, clearly describing Croatia's patterns of violence. He told Collective Aid that if he gets caught by the police in Croatia, they'll steal his phone, beat him up, and then send him back to Bosnia, a practice described again and again by thousands before him. He believed the hardest part was still ahead of him, crossing Croatia and making it to Slovenia. He ended the conversation with Collective Aid explaining how difficult the journey is, emphasizing they have to try and "get through to Europe", "as there is no other way".

The Blažuj TRC in the media

During the month of July, multiple news reports ([Vijesti.ba](#), [N24 news](#)) were released that focused on the insecurities that local residents felt towards the Blažuj TRC. An article published on July 7th described the "security situation" as a consequence of the slowness and lack of coordination between institutions. The article includes nine pictures of residents of the Blažuj TRC, several of them clearly showing the faces



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of people on the move, some just walking, one stripped of his clothes in a public space, and another one unconscious on the floor. Apart from the highly problematic use of these pictures, both these reports miss the bigger question of the reasons why people end up in this situation, and fail to include information on the lack of safe and dignified alternatives, and the likely relation between this and the use of drugs. Calls to move the Blažuj TRC do not aim to solve any of these issues or improve the quality of life for those arriving in the country; they aim to move the perceived “security problem” elsewhere.

Heat-related health issues

Over the month of July in Bihać, there continues to be an increase in the number of people staying at Lipa TRC only for a relatively short period of time before moving on. In return, the number of medical requests has increased related to heat-related concerns, long journeys and violent pushbacks.

While the warmer weather makes journeys relatively safer than they were in the snow-heavy winter and early spring seasons, the persistent heat with no break for breeze or rain carries its own health-related risks. Continuous heat and sun exposure with no UV protection, shade or access to sufficient safe drinking water can lead to dehydration, headaches, low blood pressure, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Additionally, these weather conditions increase instances of dermatological issues like sunburn, blistering and fungal infections. The journey through the forest

also risks bug and tick bites, which MSI team members on the ground have seen turn into infected, pus-filled wounds. A lack of drinking water has also forced people to drink from contaminated puddles or river water, leading to gastrointestinal issues like diarrhea or vomiting, which then results in further dehydration. People have also reported being denied sufficient access to drinking water while in police detention.

In addition, the rural location of the Lipa TRC, and the reported lack of air ventilation, can make it difficult to stay cool and protected from the environment. In order to access services like pharmacies or supermarkets, many walk multiple hours in the heat, thus increasing health risks caused by sun and heat exposure. Similarly, at the Blažuj TRC, in Sarajevo, people continue to be faced with harsh living conditions. This month, residents kept describing the difficulties of staying in the containers in the facility, as the summer heat makes living there particularly unbearable. Bedbugs too remain a problem, with many people reporting not being able to sleep as a result. Two people described choosing to sleep outside in order to avoid getting bitten.

Criminalisation of movement in BiH and Serbia

The so-called Western Balkan countries have been a target of the EU’s externalization practices for years. The EU has provided hundreds of millions of euros specifically earmarked for border management, security, and migration control. This has meant more tech and biometric controls, more border and police officers, more border



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crossing infrastructure, all to pursue the EU's goal to fortify and secure its borders without providing any safe and legal passage. The EU's securitisation logic has resulted in people on the move going into hiding, disappearing from public spaces, experiencing higher levels of police violence, and having very little access to services. People are going increasingly unregistered as they want to avoid authorities and biometric surveillance, as well as horrible living conditions in the state-led transit or asylum centers. IOM [estimated](#) that in 2025, more than 35,000 people on the move passed through the Western Balkans, compared to 192,000 in 2022. Moreover, Frontex [reports](#) a 26% decrease in irregular arrivals in the first seven months of 2026, compared to the same period of last year.

While some of the gaps in state services have partially been filled by solidarity and civil society presence over the years, this has now started to shift as well. We are witnessing an intense shrinking of civil society space in both Bosnia and Serbia. BVMN member organisations have been reporting a lack of funding, organisations closing their operations, and bigger international NGOs leaving the Western Balkans and subsequently taking their resources with them. In Serbia specifically, the number of active civil society organisations working on migration has gone from 20 to around 7 in the past few years. Not only access to services, but independent monitoring has also been greatly obstructed as a result.

With the border architecture becoming increasingly violent and surveilled, fewer people passing through the Western

Balkans, the Western Balkan states' general neglect, and the nearly complete lack of independent monitoring, smuggling groups have almost completely taken over. People on the move are now largely dependent on these groups to facilitate their movement towards the EU. These factors have greatly contributed to the increase in violence towards people on the move, as has been reported by BVMN member organisations in Bosnia and Serbia over the last couple of years.

One common practice is kidnapping and extortion. This month, the Collective Aid team was in conversation with a man who described being kidnapped south of Sarajevo, near the border with Serbia. The group, which he was unable to identify, captured him after crossing from Serbia, and threatened to cut off one of his toes if he didn't give them money. They reportedly showed him pictures of people that they had already done this to. Kidnappings have been reported by people on the move in the country for a while, including in this investigative piece by the [Balkan Insight](#). This conversation highlights the fact that they are still occurring.

Another development we have been witnessing is the crackdown on smugglers all across the Western Balkans. In BiH, several arrests have been made in relation to border crossing attempts. During [one of these incidents](#), on July 16th, the Border Police of BiH arrested four foreign citizens on suspicion of smuggling people on the move in two separate operations in the Livno and Grude areas. The day before, the Border Police of BiH, together with the



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Croatian police, intercepted the crossing of seven Turkish citizens in the Grude municipality. Two Turkish citizens who reportedly transported people on the move are being linked to this case. Furthermore, at the end of June, the [Service for Foreigners Affairs of BiH](#) conducted two separate operations in the Novo Sarajevo and Ilidža municipalities. In total, 60 people on the move were found in different irregular accommodation facilities and sent to Temporary Reception Centres. Legal measures have been taken against the owners of the facilities, including sanctions and fines.

Similarly, Europol [reports](#) that Serbian, in cooperation with Bulgarian and Europol authorities recently arrested a smuggling group of five people, including two Serbian police officers who were active across the Serbia-Bulgaria border.

Police interventions targeting smuggling networks are failing to address the core issue – lack of safe, legal passages and protection of fundamental rights. As long as state authorities continue to preclude any possibility for safe routes, these police interventions only increase the vulnerability of people on the move, as their dependence on the smuggling networks deepens. The existence and growth of these underground routes is a direct consequence of the lack of legal alternatives, combined with the continuous tightening of surveillance and the systematic border violence. The increased criminalisation of movement and crackdown over these networks will not erase people's wish and need to migrate, nor will it improve their living conditions.



Kos

Homelessness and the never ending cycle of insecurity

Once again, Kos is facing a growing homelessness crisis, echoing the situation documented in [last year's report](#). Despite repeated warnings and reports by civil society organisations, the cycle continues: people who obtain refugee status are required to leave the Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) with little to no support to secure accommodation or rebuild their lives.

"Now I have my papers, but I live on the streets." – A., from Sudan

"I don't know if I should be happy about receiving my ID because I have been kicked out of the camp." – S., from Yemen

The Glocal Roots' team has been receiving these testimonies with increasing frequency at the Hub, the community centre they run on the island. For many people, recognition of their refugee status does not represent the end of displacement but the beginning of a new period of insecurity. Once granted refugee status, people are expected to leave the camp, yet many have no access to affordable housing, employment, or effective integration support. Although recognised refugees are entitled to welfare services in Greece, accessing these rights often proves extremely difficult due to administrative and bureaucratic barriers.

The housing crisis on Kos further exacerbates the situation. As a popular tourist

destination, the island continues to experience soaring rental prices and a severe shortage of available accommodation. Even individuals with some financial resources often struggle to secure housing, as rents are prohibitively high and landlords frequently impose requirements that beneficiaries of international protection cannot meet.

As a result, many newly recognised refugees are left with an impossible choice: remain homeless on the island or attempt to travel to mainland Greece without the financial means or support necessary to establish themselves elsewhere.

In response, the Glocal Roots' team has been regularly distributing blankets and sleeping bags to people sleeping outdoors. While these emergency interventions provide immediate relief, they cannot replace the urgent need for institutional solutions that prevent recognised refugees from becoming homeless immediately after receiving protection.

Samos

Two shipwrecks and an increase in forced interceptions

In July, there was a rise in arrivals of people on the move to Samos, with 473 newly arrived people compared to 148 in June. This was accompanied by a rise in forced interceptions at sea. Sadly, there were also two shipwrecks off the coast of Samos this month, [claiming the life of at least one young Sudanese man](#), while [three to six people remain missing](#). This



is consistent with the seasonal increase of crossings during summer and underscores how the absence of safe and legal routes, combined with dangerous and illegal interception practices by the Hellenic and Turkish coast guards, continues to put people's lives at risk.

Dire camp conditions continue

Living conditions remain dire in the Samos CCAC, with limited access to healthcare and lengthy registration procedures, leaving people in situations amounting to arbitrary and unlawful detention. In July, BVMN member organisation I Have Rights reported more than 30 cases of people being detained inside the CCAC for over 25 days, all involving individuals with medical conditions who were unable to access the care they needed. We will focus more on this in the next publication, as this appears to be linked with the messy implementation of the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, the topic of next month's report.

European Ombudswoman's recommendations to the EUAA

In early July, the European Ombudswoman published [its recommendations](#) to the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) regarding a joint complaint filed by I Have Rights and Avocats Sans Frontières France in January 2024. European Ombudswoman Teresa Anjinho found several instances of maladministration in how the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA) supports Greek authorities in processing asylum applications. In particular, she found that EUAA caseworkers were not properly trained to identify

vulnerable asylum seekers, that flagging vulnerabilities is not enough to ensure that survivors of human trafficking get effective support, and that there is currently no accessible way for applicants to report interview mistakes.

Lesvos

Heat, housing, and health in the Lesvos CACC

Similarly to other parts of Europe, July brought a severe heatwave to Greece, with temperatures exceeding 40°C. Extreme heat affects everyone, but its consequences are not experienced equally. For people on the move residing in the Lesvos CCAC, where [infrastructure and living conditions are extremely poor](#), the heat poses a serious danger. Many residents continue to live in plastic containers originally designed for short-term emergency accommodation, now in use for over six years, without air conditioning and with poor insulation. Reports from partner organisations indicate that while some units remain empty, others hold up to eight people.

Medical care also remains highly insufficient. The Boat Refugee Foundation (BRF) runs a nighttime clinic inside the camp when the EU-funded primary healthcare programme is off duty, seeing between 20 and 25 people per night. BRF Area Manager Christos Nikolaides told [The New Humanitarian](#): "We get a lot of suicidal ideation, a lot of stressors, a lot of things that come to the clinic." MSF's country coordinator for Greece, Sophie Baylac, was more direct: "It's not that it would be difficult to provide



people with better services. It's as if the system is designed to cause more harm to the people." Compounding this, Greece has [not provided regular cash assistance](#) to asylum seekers since April 2024 – despite receiving EU funding to do so – leaving many unable to afford even public transport to Mytilini, a four-kilometre journey from the camp.

Community resistance and the right to live

On July 27th, a group of Senegalese and Gambian nationals residing in the Lesvos CCAC issued an open letter calling on authorities to improve living conditions in the facility. They described prolonged confinement, with some people having been forced to remain in the camp for over 11 months, as limiting their ability to leave. As [Community Peacemaker Teams](#) noted, these conditions are not unique but are shared by all asylum applicants in the CCAC. However, people from Senegal and Gambia, whose countries of origin are designated as "safe third countries," face longer stays as a result of accelerated procedures, exposing them disproportionately to the degrading conditions inside.

In the lead-up to a planned peaceful march, community members visited relevant authorities to communicate their intentions. They were met with intimidation, including warnings of potential arrest and imprisonment. This response is consistent with the broader pattern on Lesvos, where peaceful efforts by residents to raise concerns and advocate for their rights are being curbed, reinforcing isolation and

limiting recourse. These circumstances are not without consequences for mental health. One resident of the CCAC attempted suicide during this period, an act prevented only by the prompt intervention of neighbours in the camp.



Evictions in Calais and Dunkirk

Evictions in the Calais and Dunkirk areas continued in July, despite the record of the hottest month ever in France. At least 430 people were affected by 12 evictions in Grande-Synthe. In Calais, Human Rights Observers (HRO) counted at least eight eviction operations, affecting 2,961 people¹, and during which 240m³ of belongings were seized. We noted a significant number of families with young children, who are sometimes forced to wait and move around in the heat. Some other times, they have to cross dangerous roads to leave their living areas.

Meanwhile, in Calais's largest living site, residents and activists built a space for young people. The aim of this project was to create a place to socialise, where people in the living site could meet. As soon as the first signs of construction of this permanent shelter appeared, intense police surveillance was observed. The shelter was later dismantled. This operation and the other evictions of this large living site led to an escalation of violence and the arrest of several people.

Parliamentary investigation report

In France, parliamentary committees of inquiry can be set up by members of the parliament to investigate the management of public services, social issues or public policies. Opposition groups are represented in order to ensure greater objectivity

and a diversity of viewpoints. However, this type of inquiry does not, under any circumstances, allow for the state to be held legally accountable: their main purpose is to bring about policy change, often over the long term.

The committee of inquiry on the consequences of the Le Touquet agreements on public policy and respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of people on the move was established by the National Assembly on January 13th 2026 and concluded its work on July 1st 2026. The aim of this commission was to assess the financial, human and material consequences of the externalisation of the Franco-British border following the Le Touquet Agreements, signed in 2004, and the Sandhurst Treaty, signed in 2018. The commission's organisers therefore paid particular attention to discriminatory practices, the security budget allocated to implementing the "Zero Fixation Point" policy, measures for the protection of children, and shortcomings in the care provided to victims of shipwrecks.

The resulting [report](#) concludes that there is a major systemic crisis and asserts that current policies undermine the fundamental rights and freedoms of people on the move. It highlights the vast amounts of financial and human resources deployed to prevent crossings of the English Channel and stop people from settling on the coast, and the number of crossings, which is, nevertheless, constantly rising. Further-

¹ This number represents the number of individual people that HRO saw being evicted, each day. So one person could have been registered several times, during the different evictions.



more, it states that no safe and sustainable framework has been put in place to address the needs of people on the move on the coast and ensure that their fundamental rights are respected.

“The contrast is striking: the resources allocated to controlling are considerable, whilst those dedicated to reception, information, accommodation and protection remain insufficient.” — Claire Hédon, Human Rights Defender (p. 77)

One figure is particularly striking: of the 761 million euros that the United Kingdom has transferred to France since 2018, 70% goes towards funding the police and the gendarmerie – in other words, towards repression and prevention of crossings. It must also be emphasized that the details of this funding are largely unknown to the French Parliament, as well as to French and British citizens.

This report is valuable because it provides further evidence that policies at the Franco-British border systematically violate human rights. It highlights opaque funding arrangements, which may even be illegal: in theory, the United Kingdom cannot fund police weapons, but what is the reality?

Furthermore, the report acknowledges the extreme precariousness and appalling conditions in which people stranded on the northern coast of France are forced to live. The commission of inquiry also highlighted the shortcomings of the state and local authorities in terms of humanitarian support, and the role left to organisations to fill the gaps left by the government.

This report will certainly not bring back to life those who died at sea or in the camps, killed by violent and deadly policies. But we hope that it will serve as a wake-up call both for public authorities, at local and national levels, as well as for civil society.

Failure of a legal action to defend the largest living site in Calais

On July 17th, a hearing took place at the civil court, initiated by several organisations to challenge an order authorising the clearance of the largest settlement in Calais. This order allowed for clearances to take place several times a week, without prior notice and without the settlement’s residents being able to receive information or to object.

In theory, a judicial officer must visit the site, identify the residents, and give them the opportunity to appear before a judge in order to assert their rights. But how can non-French-speaking residents – the majority of whom are undocumented – speak to a judicial officer, when the officer is accompanied by the police rather than interpreters? With this order, the justice system is trapping people on the move in a legal vacuum.

HRO and other organisations have taken legal action to ensure that the residents of this area can assert their rights. This involves statements from residents of the area confirming that they live there and that they wish to be kept informed of any forthcoming legal proceedings. These statements enable the right to a fair hearing to be upheld: this means that a



third party (some inhabitants of the living sites) is opposing the Grand Calais Urban Community in order to assert its own rights and interests. Thanks to these declarations, as well as the report by the parliamentary committee of inquiry, the judge recognised the interests to act of the organisations and the residents of the settlements, which has not always been the case. The lawyer representing the residents of the housing community also drew on the report's findings to demonstrate that people's living conditions are extremely precarious, and that evictions do nothing to improve this situation. Despite all this, the judge gave priority to the town's property rights over the rights and needs of people on the move. On the northern coast, the authorities routinely exploit every legal loophole to enable the implementation of the "Zero Fixation Point" policy.

Here, we see the limits of a parliamentary report. The grim toll of these policies is well known, but it does not prevent local authorities and the justice system from continuing to violate the rights of people on the move and to prioritise certain interests: those of the government and property owners.

Detention and pushbacks at the French-Italian border

This month, the French border police working at the border with Italy, in the area between Menton (FR) and Ventimiglia (IT), continued to give out the so-called *procès verbal* to the people detained at the border, that is: a formal record of statements and events happening during the detention period. In this post, people are often detai-

ned in metal containers, which have been heating up to extremely dangerous temperatures during the summer, and subsequently pushed back to Italy, on a steep mountain road 9km away from the city. These official reports or *procès verbal* are meant to be an individualised documentation of the detention procedure. Instead, they are one and the same for every detainee (excluding their personal data) and frequently contain false information. The documents state the availability of translators for the detainees, and their ability to make phone calls to inform someone of their detention, two conditions observed to be absent on multiple occasions. The behaviour of French border police officers is still frequently described as "racist" and/or "aggressive" towards detainees. Violations of the rights of particularly vulnerable people, including people with disabilities or minors, continue regularly.

According to the Italian police, the number of people pushed back from French territory decreased to an average of 15 people per day. This might be due to the fact that Italian police forces began driving some of the detainees directly to detention centres in Italy after their imprisonment at the French border police post. In the Italian media, several reports have come out mentioning the availability of only one equipped police car to remain in the border zone while detainees are being driven to detention centres.

The police task force "[contro l'immigrazione](#)", which started in June and carried out 14 deportations and the incarceration in detention centres of 22 people on the



France

move arrested at the border during that month, continued operating. It is involved in French-Italian border control operations. One of them, on July 29th resulted in three criminal charges and 22 interceptions of people on the move close to the border.

According to official numbers published in July, since the beginning of the year 2026 2,446 people have been arrested for crossing the border and 92 returns to countries outside of Europe have been executed. Meanwhile, in the border city of Ventimiglia, Italian police are carrying out expulsions of informal tent settlements of vulnerable people at least twice a week, while doing identity checks. Those failing to provide documents are detained at the police station in Ventimiglia, which exposes them to possible deportation or transfer to detention centres.

Arrivals in Italy

According to data collected by [borderline-europe](#), 1,479 people on the move reached Italy by sea in July 2026 representing a significant decrease of 47%¹ compared to June's figures. Compared to data from the previous year (6,000 people arrived in July 2025), a sharp decrease in arrivals is also evident, continuing the trend already observed in previous months. The majority of people (986 individuals, or 67%) arrived in Sicily – primarily Lampedusa. The trend of a wider distribution of arrivals across the country, which has been noted over the past few months, is continuing, with rising numbers in Tuscany (96), Lazio (38) and Liguria (170). This can be attributed to the Italian authorities' allocation of safe havens to civilian sea rescue vessels². Sicily nevertheless remains the primary point of disembarkation.

According to our figures, in July, 953 people (65%) were rescued by Italian authorities, while a total of 370 people (25%) were rescued by civilian sea rescue services. Frontex was involved in the rescue of 122 people (8%). 15 people (1%) reached Italian territorial waters (12 nautical miles off the coast) independently, without having been intercepted or rescued beforehand. This month 19 people (1%) were rescued by merchant vessels.

According to official figures from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, 2,179 people arrived in Italy in June. Borderline-europe verified lower arrival figures for this month, but it's important to note that there is no access to the background information or sources underlying the figures published by the Ministry of the Interior. As stated in borderline-europe's [last CMI](#), the general decrease in arrivals over the last few months is not a dynamic unique to the region of Italy but, rather, part of a bigger European trend. In the first half of this year, the number of irregular crossings of the Central Mediterranean route fell by 52% compared with the same period in 2025, when [Frontex had already reported the lowest level since 2021](#). However, this is not due to an improvement in living conditions or the resolution of crises forcing people to leave their homes. Rather, it is due to the worsening conditions faced by people on the move during their journey, deliberately created by the states, e.g. an increase in violent and illegal pushbacks and pullbacks.

Overview of the data collected by *borderline europe*³

Arrivals of people on the move in Italy by sea	1,479
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¹ Unless stated otherwise, all percentages quoted refer to the total number of people who arrived in Italy by sea that month

² Italian authorities are deliberately assigning safe harbors that are far away to maritime rescue NGOs in order to hinder their work

³ The figures are provided without guarantee, as the number of unreported cases could be significantly higher



Arrivals of people on the move in Sicily	986
Rescues by Italian authorities and Frontex	1,075
Rescues by NGOs	370
Independent arrivals of people in the move	15
Rescues by merchant vessels	19

Dead and missing

In July, the number of deaths and missing people in the Central Mediterranean decreased significantly compared to June. According to [borderline-europe's](#) figures 8 people died whilst fleeing across the Central Mediterranean in July and the fate of 50 people remains unknown, with the estimated number of unrecorded cases assumed to be significantly higher. All of these deaths have been documented along the Libyan coast, mostly as a consequence of two incidents that occurred around July 13th.

On July 13th, approximately 50 people set out for Lampedusa on a severely overloaded boat. After a few hours at sea, the [boat sank off the coast of eastern Libya](#), dragging the people on board into the sea. Ten people managed to swim to the Libyan island of Al Bardaa, the remaining 40 are still missing. In the days that followed, three bodies washed ashore on the Libyan coast; it is unclear whether they were victims of

this shipwreck. The 10 survivors were taken back to Libya, the country they had sought to leave and where they face unjustified detention and severe violence. 24 hours earlier, a boat was spotted off the coast of Libya with 28 people on board; after the rescue, four bodies were recovered. The 24 survivors said they [had been adrift for two weeks](#). All were in very critical condition and were immediately taken to hospitals on the Libyan mainland. [The Libyan authorities have not disclosed how many ultimately survived](#). Those who did are now facing criminalisation, detention and violence in the country they were trying to leave behind.

An official Frontex statement links the decline in arrivals to Italy to “ongoing cooperation with partner countries” and “preventive measures” adopted in the main countries of departure, obscuring the violence involved in this so-called “cooperation” and the fact that deaths have only increased. From early January to the end of June, IOM numbers show that at [least 872 people have died](#) while attempting to cross the Central Mediterranean, representing at least a [57% increase](#) compared to the first half of 2025. Again, the actual number is unfortunately likely to be much higher.

The increase in “cooperation with partner countries” has been built over an architecture of agreements promoting strict deterrent measures, such as the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with Tunisia, which is turning 3 this month. Some of these agreements have had the effect of [drastically reducing departures from certain coast-](#)



[lines](#), including the Tunisian port of Sfax, which were once crowded embarkation points. However, people seeking a way to cross the sea have always adapted, shifting toward less-patrolled areas and new transit routes, with the frequently observed result that these routes are becoming longer, more complex, and deadlier. These deaths are a direct consequence of a violent border regime characterised by interceptions and abandonment, which is actively supported, created and financed by the EU.

Pushbacks and pullbacks

This month, *borderline-europe* recorded 1,230 interceptions⁴ in the Central Mediterranean, during which boats carrying people on the move were pulled back or towed to the North African coast. This month, all of the intercepted individuals documented were towed back to Libya, but it is likely that there were unrecorded cases where people were forcibly returned to other departure countries, like Tunisia. Compared to June 2026, when 1,090 interceptions were recorded, the number of documented pullbacks increased slightly this month. The number of interceptions we documented days before the earlier reported shipwreck was particularly high. From July 10th–13th alone, we counted 14 interceptions, during which a total of at least 491 people were returned to Libya. These developments continue to highlight a systematic practice that constantly

endangers the lives of those aiming to seek safety in Europe.

Routes to Europe: Tunisia

The transit countries of Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria serve as the primary departure points for the crossing to Italy. In July, at least 1,109 of the people who arrived in Italy departed from Libya and 60 from Tunisia⁵. For 310 people the point of departure is unknown.

Just a few days apart, two sad anniversaries fell in Tunisia this July: the [self-coup by President Kais Saied](#) on July 25th 2021, and the signing of the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between Tunisia and the EU on July 16th 2023.

After Saied won the presidential election in 2019, he [suspended parliament in 2021](#) and increasingly concentrated executive power in his own hands. Since then, Tunisia's political order has been shaped by a [series of intensifying crises](#) ranging from the drastic deterioration of socio-economic conditions and inadequately secured basic services to the widespread repression of political opponents and civil society actors. The country's authoritarian development and its multiple crises crystallize in the [weaponization of migration](#) by the political leadership, and in particular by President Saied himself. Following his [racist speech of 2023](#), in which he described the arrival of people from sub-Saharan Africa as an

⁴ Interceptions are violent forced returns at sea to a third country.

⁵ The actual number is expected to be significantly higher, but there has been little information about departures or interceptions from Tunisia lately.



alleged conspiracy to change the country's demographic composition, attempts have since been made to portray people on the move as the cause of the country's domestic socio-economic ills. The Tunisian authorities pursue this narrative with what at times appears to be limitless brutality: massive violence, [rape](#), [mass deportations](#) (under the guise of supposedly "[voluntary return](#)"), [abandoning people seeking protection in the desert](#), [forcible transfers to Libya](#).

On [this year's Republic Day](#) thousands of Tunisians therefore gathered in the country's capital to demonstrate against the political leadership and against the increasingly deteriorating living conditions, which had most recently been further exacerbated by widespread fires and the resulting power and water outages. This [protest was the latest](#) in a series of demonstrations against "[injustice and oppression](#)", the [restrictions on freedom of the press and of expression](#), as well as for [the independence of the judiciary](#).

Against the background of these domestic political developments and the extensively documented serious human rights violations that the Tunisian government deliberately commits against people on the move, as well as against persons of presumed sub-Saharan origin and political opponents, the ongoing cooperation between the EU and its member states with the Tunisian government on "migration deterrence," and the classification of [Tunisia as a "safe country of origin"](#) appears to be more than merely cynical.

To mark the third anniversary of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the EU and Tunisia in 2023, 46 human rights organizations, including [borderline-europe](#), signed a [joint statement](#), in which they called on the Commission and the 27 member states of the European Union to "[immediately suspend support for Tunisia – in particular for its security forces – in the area of border control and the management of migration flows](#)."

Despite the serious human rights violations described above, the EU has, as part of its cooperation to date, already provided [approximately 105 million euros](#) to support border controls in the form of vessels, equipment and training, for the Tunisian coast guard and Tunisian security forces.

A country that literally engages in [hunting migrants](#), in which there is [no functioning asylum system](#), and which currently faces trial for its serious human rights violations before the [African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights](#) (see also [borderline-europe's latest CMI](#)), can under no circumstances be regarded as a partner of the European Union – let alone as a "safe third country".

Civil resistance

In July, 8 ships of the civilian fleet were operating in the Central Mediterranean and rescued a total of 370 people from distress at sea.

This month, the NGO Sea-Watch carried out a multiplerescue. On its first mission after



being fired upon by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard on May 11th, the *Sea-Watch 5* rescued a total of [52 people in distress at sea](#) in two consecutive operations from July 8th to 9th. Before the crew could begin the rescues, the so-called Libyan Coast Guard made [another attempt at intimidation](#) and demanded that the organization change course. Nevertheless, the ship was able to take on board the 40 people from the first boat, who were in acute distress. Among the people were a heavily pregnant woman and her 17-year-old cousin. Due to the critical condition associated with a pregnancy in its 37th week, both were evacuated from the *Sea-Watch 5* by the Italian Coast Guard and taken to a [clinic on Lampedusa](#). The following day, a second rescue took place, involving a total of 12 people. Rather than being allowed to head to the port of Lampedusa, which was closest to the rescue locations, the organization's operation was once again made more difficult by Italian authorities. The crew, with 50 passengers on board, had to undertake a four-day journey to reach [the assigned port of Carrara](#).

New detention of civilian sea rescue boats

This month saw two detentions of sea rescue boats belonging to the NGOs Compass Collective and Louise Michel, following their operations in the central Mediterranean.

After the *Trotamar III*, operated by Compass Collective, docked at the port of Lampedusa following the rescue of 25 people on June 30th, it was met with a

decision by the Italian authorities ordering a [45-day detention](#); on July 8th, this was followed by a demand for a fine of 10,000 euros. The accusation: failure to communicate with Libyan authorities about the rescue operation, despite [lawful notification to the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre \(MRCC\)](#) immediately after the dinghy was sighted. The organisation maintains that communicating with the Libyan rescue center, which is under the *de facto* control of militias, could have resulted in [the people being returned to Libya](#). On July 30th, they achieved a partial victory in court; following an urgent appeal against the decision of the Italian authorities, the *Trotamar III* was [released after 29 days of detention](#), 16 days before the order was originally set to expire. The court in Agrigento nevertheless upheld the fine, against which Compass Collective is continuing to pursue legal action, and has launched [a donation campaign](#) to cover the legal costs.

On the night of July 23rd, the ship *MV Louise Michel*, operated by the NGO of the same name, managed to rescue six people who were drifting in the water. The rescued persons stated that, shortly before, they had been [forced by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard at gunpoint to jump into the water](#). When the *MV Louise Michel* reached the location, the crew saw only a speedboat [moving away toward the south](#). After transferring the six survivors to a Coast Guard vessel in Pozzallo, the crew was informed that their boat [would be detained under the Piantadosi Decree](#). The stated reason: the crew had disregarded the authorities' order to sail to the port



of Catania, for which they allegedly had enough fuel on board. The NGO had stated a day earlier that [the fuel would fall below the ship's safety reserves](#) if they had to sail all the way to Catania, following which they were assigned the closer port of Pozzallo.

New bill drafted to further criminalisation

The restriction and possible criminalization of civilian sea rescue in Italy could be further intensified by the new draft law. In an [open letter](#) to the Italian government dated July 6th, 2026, six UN experts⁶ raised concerns regarding the [draft bill](#) introduced on April 14th, 2026. Read more about the draft bill in [borderline-europe's Scirocco](#).

The UN experts warn that the planned measures could hinder the work of sea rescue organizations and significantly impede access to international protection. Particular criticism is directed at provisions relating to border controls, the so-called "naval blockade," and the possible detention of rescue vessels for up to 6 months. They also raise concerns regarding the transfer of rescued people to so-called third countries and possible violations of international human rights and refugee law.

Since 2023, NGO sea rescue ships have been [detained in Italy at least 42 times](#). A further expansion of such measures will make civilian sea rescue even more difficult and significantly hamper humanitarian aid in the Mediterranean. Civilian

sea rescue is at a critical juncture. Both official bodies and several media actors are doing everything they can to criminalize NGOs and everyone who wants to support people in distress at sea. This stands in tension with the rising number of shipwrecks and deaths that occur every month in the central Mediterranean. While authorities pour their resources into the constant administration of detentions and convictions against NGO ships, it is the people fleeing who are hit hardest. Deaths in the Mediterranean will continue until there are safe and legal routes for entry. Until then, the work of civilian sea rescue remains indispensable.

⁶ Mandates of several Special Rapporteur, such as on trafficking in persons.



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



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Network structure and contact

BVMN acts as an alliance of organisations in the Balkans and Greece. BVMN is based on the efforts of member organisations 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 member 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, and for press and media requests please email us at mail@borderviolence.eu.



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