



Border Violence
Monitoring Network

ILLEGAL PUSHBACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS 2026

MONTHLY
REPORT
MAY

Protest by people on the move and solidarity organizations against the repeated evictions of an informal living site in Calais.
Source: Photo by Mustafa/Lakta Média.



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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 May 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 and borderline-europe.

The lack of safe passage engineered by the deadly European border regime continues to push people seeking safety into increasingly dangerous journeys across the continent and beyond. This month, a fatal shooting in Obrenovac, Serbia, and the deaths of 11 people at Croatia's borders – most from suffocation in a truck and drowning in the Kupa and Mrežnica rivers – force us to look at the most extreme, though painfully frequent, consequences of the current migration policies in the region. Far from prompting a public outcry or institutional reaction, violent deterrence practices and policies continue unquestioned. Conversations with survivors of pushbacks by Croatian authorities keep highlighting endless abuse at the hands of the state, including theft of personal belongings, burning of clothes and destruction of phones. Hungary's announcement of the future deployment of officers to Serbia and Bulgaria promises to further securitisation and violence over protection and safety, now through increased bilateral state cooperation. Furthermore, a new report by Collective Aid on the conditions in Bosnia's Immigration Detention Centre, Lukavica, sheds light on the violations of rights constantly faced by people deprived

of freedom in that facility, including the detention of children or lack of adequate medical care.

Similarly, in Greece, at least two more people have died in the Aegean. Building on reports from the survivors, Aegean Boat Report published a description of a "fatal pushback" by the Greek Coastguard, reportedly leading to one of these deaths. This description echoes the Serious Incident Report published this month by the Fundamental Rights Commissioner at Frontex, on an incident from April 2025, describing the "dangerous maneuvers performed by the Hellenic Coast Guard" that "likely" led to a collision with a boat, resulting in the deaths of seven people. These practices continue unabated despite the mounting evidence on their illegality and fatal consequences, as do the interceptions by the Turkish Coast Guard on the other side of the Aegean. The celebration by authorities of the decrease in arrivals to some islands hides the fact that the increase in surveillance and control only leads to the creation of new – often, more dangerous – routes, never a stop in people's need, right and will to migrate. The authorities then respond with growing securitisation elsewhere, as is the case in Crete, where an expansion of resources for the Hellenic Coast Guard has already been announced.

Meanwhile, the upcoming full implementation of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, on June 12th, celebrated as a milestone in EU legislation, promises to be a fatal embedding of violence at the borders into the regional legal framework. Despite widespread criticism of most elements of



Executive summary

the pact, including the “fiction of non-entry”, the expanded use of so-called “safe-third countries” or the accelerated border asylum procedures, civil society has been largely sidelined from the legislative process. The systematic rights violations taking place at the Greek CCACs should act as an extremely concerning sign, as they have long been considered a blueprint for the roll-out of the new legislation across Europe.

Unofficially the last piece of the New Pact, the new European “Deportation Law” (otherwise known as the “Return Regulation”), was also adopted by the European Parliament on March 26th. Aiming at facilitating deportation procedures from the European Union, this piece of legislation is meant to turn deportation and mass detention into a standard practice across the region. A new UK-France agreement has been recently signed in this spirit, providing for the creation of an administrative detention and deportation center in Dunkirk. In the meantime, we have witnessed intensified police crackdowns in the largest informal living site in Calais during the month of May, which has been subjected to evictions several days in a row for the first time. In the face of this relentless harassment, residents of the living site and solidarity organizations came together to express their anger and exhaustion, organising sit-ins with the aim of blocking – or at least slowing down – potential police operations. Such acts of resistance expose the absurdity of the outsourcing policy of Britain’s borders: while the French government is charged with preventing people on the move from reaching England, it is also

bent on ensuring that they do not stay on French territory.

In the Central Mediterranean, we report on the deaths of at least 26 more people this month – though the actual number is unfortunately likely to be much higher. The Italian government’s response to this constant loss of life continues to be rather focused on the criminalisation of civil rescue, forcing vessels to travel to far-away ports after multiple rescues, despite the critical condition of people on board. The increased securitisation and violence at this border have resulted in an extremely alarming pattern: whilst the number of actual arrivals in Italy is falling, the number of people dying on the crossing is rising. In this context, the European Union refuses to change course, announcing plans to expand even more its support to Libyan authorities. This is despite the widespread evidence of human rights violations against people on the move in the country, survivors of which have now testified in an international court for the first time, on the trial against El-Hishri, a high-ranking officer in the Rada militia, facing 17 charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes. This continuous policy also ignores the multiple attacks against civil rescue vessels by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, including the firing against the Sea-Watch 5 – with 90 rescued people and 30 crew members on board – this month.

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



The dangerous and deadly impacts of criminalisation

Collective Aid did not observe a significant change in the number of people on the move in Serbia during May – though it was low. Weekly figures provided by Hungary [indicate](#) an increase in border crossings at the Serbia–Hungary border. On the ground, conditions continued to be marked by movement, fatigue, and insecurity. People arriving or staying in the country were often exhausted and focused on immediate needs such as clothing, medicine, and rest before attempting to move again.

In informal living sites around Belgrade, many people had only recently arrived from border areas and were already preparing to continue towards Bosnia or Hungary. Some were visibly unwell and could barely walk, while many required medical attention. One day our team met two very young men, one without shoes and another with dried blood on the side of his head, giving a strong impression of recent violence or injury. These encounters illustrate the cumulative impacts of increasingly dangerous journeys through the region.

Violence was the overriding theme in May, following the [fatal shooting](#) of a person on the move in Obrenovac. The incident received significant local media attention and has led to a temporary pause in our field activities until partner organisations agree it is safe and appropriate to return.

The fatal shooting in Obrenovac represents a moment of rupture that makes visible the structural violence embedded

within current migration policies. While widely reported, the incident is not exceptional. Rather, it reflects a broader pattern in which the restriction of safe and regular pathways produces conditions where violence becomes both more likely and more lethal. As routes become increasingly criminalised, people on the move are pushed into reliance on informal and often exploitative networks, where disputes, coercion, and armed violence are recurring features.

In last month's report, we detailed the intensification of policing and surveillance. In April, the Hungarian government upgraded border security along the Serbia–Hungary frontier through an EU-funded electronic surveillance system – an investment amounting to €19.64 million. This trend continued on 27th May, when Hungary announced the [deployment of police officers to Serbia and Bulgaria](#) as part of joint operations along the Western Balkans route. According to the Hungarian police, officers will focus on preventing irregular border crossings, detecting migration-related offences, and combating smuggling networks, supported by thermal cameras, night-vision equipment, and other surveillance technologies.

The consequences of these policies extend beyond border areas. The temporary suspension of field activities following the shooting illustrates how criminalisation [reinforces insecurity](#), affecting not only people on the move but also the ability of organisations to ensure protection, provide support, and maintain humanitarian presence. Throughout May, we continued



Serbia

to observe shrinking humanitarian space and restricted access to services. What this has demonstrated is that deterrence is not effective in preventing movement but rather works to displace risk, [shifting harm](#) onto people on the move while rendering that harm less visible within formal systems of accountability.



Bosnia – Herzegovina

Overview and recent trends

The month of May has seen continued systemic violence at the Bosnia and Herzegovina's and Croatia's border. From the destruction of mobile phones to the burning of clothing, people on the move remain in highly precarious situations.

Beyond the violence occurring at the border itself, an [investigation](#) released on the 12th of May by Collective Aid highlighted human rights violations taking place inside Bosnia's immigration detention center, commonly known as Lukavica. In terms of policy, the final legislation relating to the EU Migration Pact is currently being discussed before its legal implementation date on the 12th of June. The pact represents a further fortification at Europe's borders, with [grave concerns](#) that it will normalise the arbitrary use of immigration detention, use "crisis" procedures to enable pushbacks, and return individuals to "safe third countries" where they are at risk of violence, torture and arbitrary imprisonment.

Arrivals

The month of May has seen the arrival of significantly less people on the move compared to the month of April. The [IOM](#) reported there to be approximately 1,613 entering BiH in April, compared to 398 in May. The largest nationality within the Temporary Reception Centers in Una-Sana Canton and Sarajevo Canton were mostly from Sudan, Afghanistan and Egypt.

Unaccompanied minors continue to represent a significant share of the popu-

lation in the Temporary Reception Centres, accounting for approximately 13 percent of residents according to IOM data.

In TRC Lipa, children and adolescents move freely throughout the camp and remain exposed to potential protection risks due to their close interaction with the adult population. Moreover, the Family Zone accommodates comparatively fewer residents, around 25 people, several families and women have experienced prolonged stays, often linked to repeated pushbacks or difficulties in attempting onward movement towards the EU border. As a result, a small but stable population remains present in the camp.

Violence at the BiH – Croatia border

In May, people on the move repeatedly described the Bosnian and Croatian border as a site of violence. In conversation with Collective Aid a man from Sudan recalled the abuse that he encountered at the hands of border police officers, most likely Croatian border police. While attempting to cross by foot, he described how when they apprehended him, they broke his phone, took his money and set his clothes on fire. This violent practice has been long established, and we have extensively showcased it in our [pushback database](#) and other reporting. The Sudanese man shared his wish to continue his journey, despite the repeated violence he's experienced. On the other hand, a man from Lebanon reported to Collective Aid that he did not want to risk crossing the border again, after having spent around a month in a prison in Croatia.



Bosnia – Herzegovina

Another member organisation reported that one Pakistani resident of Lipa TRC, who had previously faced the Balkan Route in 2019, stated that returning to Lipa felt like going back to hell, although he acknowledged improvements in camp conditions. After spending several years working in the European Union, overcoming significant administrative hurdles to obtain temporary legal documentation, he decided to retrace the Balkan Route in an effort to reunite with his wife. Their experience illustrates the compounded vulnerabilities faced by people on the move, who may find themselves repeatedly exposed to border violence and pushbacks while simultaneously risking the loss of existing legal opportunities, due often to the administrative and procedural barriers.

Conditions in Blažuj TRC

On May 6th, Selvid Hurtić – Bosnian Minister of Human Rights and Refugees – visited Blažuj reception center on the outskirts of Sarajevo. He expressed satisfaction with conditions of accommodation, food and hygiene and was most worried with smuggling and organised crimes located at the camp. He publicly recognised the ongoing problem with bedbugs but did not offer any solution. He explained, *‘there are some minor problems, but I think that they will be resolved in due course. The buildings are old, the roofs are bad, and there are bedbugs that get into the mattresses where people sleep (translated from Bosnian)’* said Hurtić.

Outside Blažuj Camp, Collective Aid has spoken to many people on the move

concerning bedbugs. Multiple men showed bites from bedbugs covered over their arms and necks, which had been badly scratched and inflamed. They confirmed that the bedbugs were widespread among the camp residents. Furthermore, in terms of food, a camp resident reported on the poor conditions of the food within the camp, he explained to Collective Aid that it is always bad and the same. The residents are mostly served rice.

Additionally, last year Ilidža County and residents of Blažuj presented an initiative to close down Blažuj TRC, and this initiative was approved. Yet there continues to be no condition for its implementation. After Selvid Hurtić’s visit to Blažuj, he expressed worry about the proposal alluding to potential problems if people do not have access to food and shelter in the camp ([paraphrased from Bosnian](#)).

Violations in Lukavica Immigration Detention Center

On the 21st of May, members of the [Investigation and Protection Agency \(Sipa\)](#) arrested eight people on the suspicion of being involved in organized smuggling. Three arrests were of people on the move with this suspicion and were handed over to the Service of Foreigners Affairs and sent to the Immigration Center in East Sarajevo. Their transfer draws attention to the role of immigration detention in BiH and in particular, to the country’s only immigration detention facility.



Bosnia – Herzegovina

This month, Collective Aid published [an investigation](#) into that facility, known as Lukavica Detention Center, operated under the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA). Official narratives report a well regulated facility with clear legal safeguards, adequate health care and legal aid. However, this sugarcoating is far from the reality. Accounts from 2 detainees, human rights monitors and lawyers point to violations of rights including arbitrary detention, degrading conditions, serious barriers to legal remedies and a near total absence of independent monitoring.

Here are some of the violations that Collective Aid found:

- Children in Detention: Between 2018 and 2024, 115 children were detained at Lukavica without additional legal protections, despite international criticism, breaching safeguards against arbitrary deprivation of liberty for minors.
- Hygiene: Informal conversations with Collective Aid, point to poor hygiene conditions with walls covered in black mold, poor ventilation and a minimum amount of lighting.
- Access to food and water: Detainees and lawyers from Vaša Prava also reported to Collective Aid nutritionally poor food served. One detainee claimed the food was so bad that dogs would not be given this. Further claims towards a lack of access to water were also reported, with detainees only receiving one or two cups a day, with an occasional bottle of hot water which was not sufficient.
- Outdoor access: While institutional reports note that Lukavica is required to give at least two hours a day of outdoor time, Collective Aid found that in some cases people did not go outside for months, which is a clear breach of domestic regulations and international standards.
- Legal rights: Upon arriving detainees are supposed to receive written decisions explaining the grounds of their expulsion and placement under suspicion, in a language they understand. Prior to this, they should be informed of their right to appeal to the Ministry of Security and the Court of BiH within three days following the issuance of the decision. However, lawyers from Vaša Prava told Collective Aid that detainees never receive decisions, are not interviewed in a language they understand and are not informed of their right to appeal. Not being informed of one's rights, detainees often miss the appeal window. This lack of transparency is just one of the many examples in which detainees' rights are not upheld in this site of detention.
- Medical care: While the SFA indicates that there is a permanent nurse at Lukavica and regular doctor visits, mental health available through a psychiatrist at a contracted health center, testimonies point otherwise. One of the people interviewed described:



Bosnia – Herzegovina

“lying in bed for long, without staff or police ever asking if he was okay or needed a doctor, even though cameras were present and could have shown if he was unwell”.

CAT obligations. Read Collective Aid’s [full report](#) to understand this in more detail.

Another testimony with Vaša Prava reported:

“a man who was suffering from toothache was not treated. Upon a visit, he reported taking out all his teeth by himself as he could not bear the pain anymore”.

Opening in 2009, Lukavica Immigration Detention Center was originally constructed with significant EU funding through the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization Programme. However, over the years the center has slowly been expanding. In 2022, a new IOM tender occurred out of nowhere asking contractors for the expansion and construction work at Lukavica, reinforcing what people reported to Collective Aid as a second floor being built. A few years later, tenders surfaced in 2025 for kitchen installation, pump and sanitary systems, furniture, security and surveillance.

Collective Aid states: *‘this is an alignment with the EU’s focus on growing detention and deportation policies, not only supporting it in BiH, but also outsourcing it with its [new deportation law](#) currently in legislative trilogues’*. This report not only reflects the severe lack of transparency surrounding what is going on inside Lukavica, but also the lack of accountability despite ECtHR rulings, Ombudsman denials, and UN critiques, clashing with BiH’s ICCPR, ECHR, and



Deaths at the Croatian borders

May was marked by deaths at the Croatian borders, as reported by various local [media sources](#). The media usually presents these deaths as a consequence of inhumane human traffickers and smugglers, while the state presents them as tragic incidents – we are more than aware that the deaths at the border are an essential part of the border regime offering no safe passage.

Since 2015, there have been at least 147 deaths in Croatia alone, and May has been one of the deadliest months at Croatian borders – at least 11 people died, according to the [4-D database](#)¹.

Firstly, on the [1st of May](#) there was a body found in the river Mrežnica, followed by the suffocation of four individuals described below.

[On the 4th of May](#), Croatian authorities reported the recovery of four deceased migrants near Karlovac, alongside 15 other individuals that survived. Two of the survivors were reportedly in poor health and required hospitalisation, while the remaining 13 were transferred to a nearby Migrant Reception and Processing Center Krnjak, near Dugi Dol. The group was located following information about a larger number of migrants in the area, received the previous day. [Reportedly](#), four deceased people suffocated due to inhumane conditions in the cargo space of the truck,

while one of the hospitalized individuals was found dehydrated and malnourished and the other had multiple contusions throughout their body and a head injury.

Moreover, [on the 10th of May](#), four bodies were recovered in Karlovac County, Croatia, in different locations along the Kupa and Mrežnica rivers, according to local police. The first body was discovered in the Kupa River near Sračak (Ribnik municipality) following a report from a local resident and was retrieved by Croatian rescue services. Later the same day, two additional bodies were recovered from the Kupa River in the area of Gornje Prilišće (Netretić municipality), following information shared by Slovenian authorities. A further body was found in the Mrežnica River near Gornji Zvečaj (Generalski Stol municipality) after a separate citizen report.

Although investigations and autopsies have been initiated to establish the identities of the deceased people and the causes of death, no further information has been released at this stage. This ongoing pattern underscores the persistent lethality of border regimes, within which people on the move continue to die, frequently remaining unidentified.

¹ 4D is a migrant justice database focused on documenting human losses that occur on the so-called Balkan Route.



Systematic and deadly pushbacks continue

In May, a wealth of new evidence emerged regarding the systematic and illegal practice of pushbacks in Greece, which has been [extensively documented](#) by a variety of actors for many years. On May 7th, Turkish coastguards [reported](#) that one person had [died](#) and 43 others had been rescued, in a place around 30 kilometres away from the Greek island of Lesbos. Aegean Boat Report [published](#) a description of what they referred to as a “fatal pushback”, based on reports they received from survivors. The description mentioned that the Greek coastguard damaged the rubber boat and destroyed its engine, leaving them adrift at sea in a boat that was taking on water. This state-made tragedy occurred just three days after the Fundamental Rights Commissioner at Frontex [published a Serious Incident Report](#) on a collision involving a Greek coastguard patrol boat and a boat carrying 31 people on the move. Seven people, including a child, died in the collision. The report said: “*The dangerous maneuvers performed by the Hellenic Coast Guard likely violated the migrants’ rights to life, by putting their lives in danger.*” Moreover, another person was [found dead during an operation off the coast of Bodrum](#) on May 15th. These deaths are the result of violent migration policies, as the Project Coordinator for I Have Rights explains in a recent article co-written with activist scholar Gemma Bird: [Systemic violence in Greek waters: No border security without deaths](#).

BVMN has regularly reported on pushbacks by Greek authorities for years, including in the Monthly Report from [October](#) 2025. While these illegal and deadly practices have remained a constant in the Greek state migration playbook, they have taken different shapes over time. Over the past few months, reports have come out of people on the move being forcibly recruited by the Greek border authorities to push back other people. A joint [investigation](#) led by the Greek research organisation Forensic Architecture Initiative Athens (FAIA) revealed testimonies of two persons with such experience, who described being forced into carrying out pushbacks over the Evros in exchange for their own “free passage”. The two men reportedly spent 100 days in locked cells during their forced recruitment at the [Tycherio Border Guard Station in Evros](#).

Both of them reported witnessing violence and human rights abuses, such as physical violence, robbery, and sexual abuse. This investigation came out after a BBC [report](#) revealed similar practices in April. The latter investigation reports that everyone serving in Evros, including soldiers, police officers and Frontex officers, are aware of those practices.

This vast body of evidence, including testimonies of survivors, investigations, findings of court [cases](#) and reports by EU agencies, provides ample documentation on how these pushbacks and interceptions not only obstruct individuals’ access to their asylum rights, but also result in serious [violations of several other rights under international and EU law](#), including



the principle of non-refoulement, right to life, and prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.

Rise in forced interceptions from Turkey and changing routes

On the other side of the Aegean, the Turkish Coast Guard also continues to intercept boats trying to make the crossing to Greece. Data about apprehensions and rescues in the Aegean collected by Collective Aid shows an increase in apprehended people at sea. According to this data, in May, the Turkish Coast Guard apprehended 767 people. Importantly, a [meeting between the Greek and Turkish Coast Guard in mid-May](#) points at increased cooperation between the two countries.

Increased interception along certain routes always leads to the [development of new ones](#), accompanied with growing control and surveillance. Thus, [reports of sinking arrival numbers](#) disregard the fact that people change courses, being forced to take more dangerous journeys, resulting in a [rise of arrivals](#) elsewhere. Meanwhile, conditions on the islands remain characterized by exclusion, a [rise in rejections](#), especially for Afghan and Somali nationals, the [separation of families and the disregard of vulnerabilities](#). A rise of arrivals on Crete is now met with a planned [expansion of resources for the Hellenic Coast Guard](#), including the procurement of boats and offshore vessels, surveillance drones and the staffing of 500 new officers. Instead of recognizing the need for safe passage, the Greek government, backed by the EU, continues to further its fatal deterrence strategy.

Detention conditions in Corinth Pre-Removal Detention Centre

Over recent months, BVMN received multiple reports, videos and images from individuals who were detained in the [Corinth Pre-Removal Detention Centre](#). Testimonies state the prevalence of poor detention conditions and degrading treatment inside the facility. Similar reports were shared in an [article](#) from Efsyn.

The testimonies received describe an overcrowded facility with an insufficient number of beds, resulting in detainees being forced to sleep on mattresses on the floor. In addition, those mattresses were reportedly dirty and worn-out: *"When I removed my blanket from the bed, the mattress had red spots on it. It also has holes."*

Reports also include alarming unsanitary conditions. Videos shared with BVMN show toilets blocked by garbage bags. Three toilets are reportedly shared between 20 people. Additionally, testimonies describe broken showers, the unavailability of hot water in the facility, as well as an insufficient provision of personal hygiene items. Critically, detainees reported frequent water cuts, leaving them unable to clean but also to drink, sometimes, for up to two days: *"Once we did not have water for a complete two days, even for drinking, cleaning or toilets."* Protests against their inability to fulfill their most basic needs were reportedly repressed with violence: *"After two days, we made a lot of noise, we were talking with lawyers, and were telling the camp that we do not have water. After a couple of minutes, 10 to 12 policemen*



came with [water] bottles. They entered our rooms and they were beating some people. And they were using Greek and English words to them: 'you have to shut up, you have to shut up'. [...] The day after, they fixed the water issue, not the same day, the day after."

Detainees in contact with BVMN also reported being concerningly sleep deprived, both because of a significant infestation of cockroaches, mites and bedbugs, as well as the lights of the facility being kept on all night long: *"You cannot sleep well because you spend your time scratching [...] Because of bedbugs, we did not have a good night of sleep, not even one. [...] Around 8 pm every night they turn on the light. But unfortunately we are not able to close the light. And this is another problem why we do not have a good sleep. Because even if you close your eyes, you just see the light."*

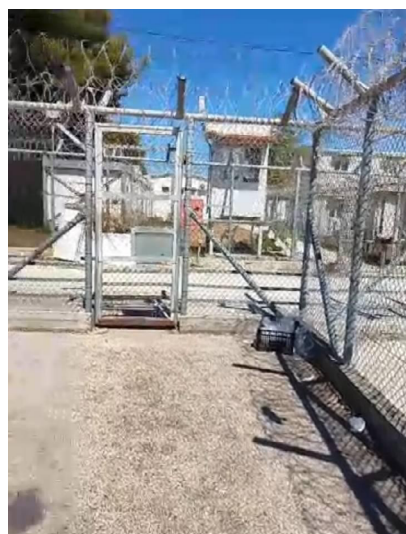
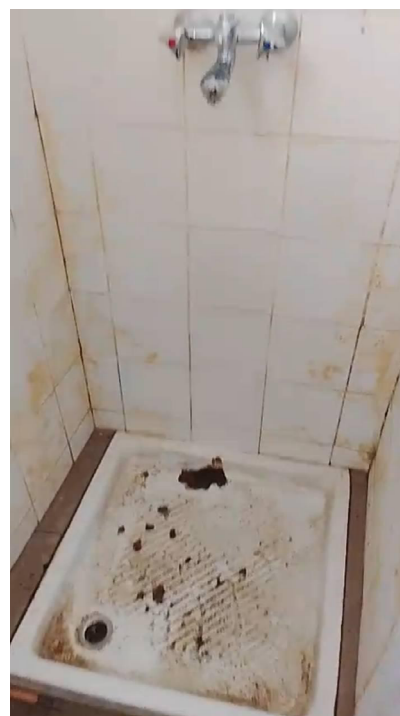
In addition, access to healthcare was reported as either restricted, ignored or delayed by the camp authorities. When eventually granted access, detainees reported not receiving adequate treatment: *"But that person is not examining us. I am not seeing any medical stuff in his room. Each time we are sick we go there to take painkillers. But they are not checking us to know our problem. All the time [he is] just giving us painkillers."* Because of

the lack of interpretation services within the facility, respondents reported having to rely on one of their fellow detainees to translate their health issues with the medical staff, raising serious concerns around confidentiality.

In detention centres such as the Corinth facility, or as [reported last month](#), the Special Detention Facility of Serres in Sintiki, where access to basic services and living conditions that uphold human dignity are not ensured, BVMN continues to receive reports from detainees who perceive the conditions of their detention as being deliberately used by authorities to indirectly pressure them into consenting to deportation. One respondent in Corinth stated: *"I am feeling that the Greek government, they put this situation on us to push us to sign the deportation paper and go back to our countries and not stay in this bad situation in the camp."*



As reports and testimonies continue to emerge documenting persistent and systemic human rights violations in Greek detention facilities, serious questions remain around Greece's regard for the repeated [recommendations](#) from monitoring bodies and [civil society organisations](#). This suggests severe shortcomings in accountability, oversight, and implementation that have yet to be addressed.



Images from videos shared with BVMN by people detained at the Corinth PRDC. Source: Anonymous

EU Pact implementation

The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum is set to come into effect on June 12th, after two years of preparation by EU Member States, since the adoption of the framework

in 2024. The EU has been working on this new system for over ten years, purporting to enhance “effective border management”, and set up efficient, standardized asylum procedures across member states. What is being celebrated as a milestone



in EU legislation is a fatal embedding of violence at the borders into the regional legal framework.

Despite widespread criticism, civil society has been largely sidelined from the legislative process. The Greek draft law on the implementation of the Pact opened for [public e-consultation](#) on May 11th, and the Greek Ministry of Migration gave civil society organisations only two weeks, until May 25th, to participate. The law was [passed](#) shortly thereafter, on June 9th, having taken almost none of civil society's concerns on board. Comments submitted by I Have Rights and other actors regarding the worrying content of the draft law, which notably expands grounds for detention, weakens vulnerability assessments, and restricts access for lawyers and NGOs, can be found [here](#).

As required by the Pact, the law includes a mandatory screening procedure at the external borders, [accelerated border asylum procedures](#), and faster return procedures. These will hasten consideration of claims, risking the quality of determination procedures and outcomes. Using legal constructs such as "restriction of liberty" and "[fiction of non-entry](#)", the law will result in the detention of asylum seekers for longer periods in inappropriate (semi-)closed and isolated facilities, and subject to limited safeguards. According to the law, the detention of more vulnerable individuals, such as unaccompanied minors or pregnant women "by exception", could also be permitted. The framework for medical and vulnerability checks is under-specified, thus leaving vulnerable

groups at risk of being unidentified and subjected to inappropriate procedures. Supplementally to the extended inadmissibility grounds, subsequent application fees and the envisaged use of AI tools for interpretation and transcription without robust human oversight, access to facilities for lawyers and legal counselling organisations is restricted. The provision of free legal aid, interpretation services, independent monitoring and effective remedies are also inadequate.

Additionally, the expanded use of so-called "safe third countries" will facilitate faster deportation to certain countries, possibly without proper consideration of the insufficient means of protection they offer. In border regions, increased cooperation between coastguards is expected, for example between [Greece and Turkey](#), which may also lead to a further increase in the use of illegal practices like pushbacks. Together with other Member States like Germany, Austria and Denmark, Greece is also making plans for [agreements with third countries](#) to return rejected asylum seekers. Those might include Rwanda, Libya, Uzbekistan or Ethiopia, among others, regardless of people returned not having ties to those countries, and disregarding the safety risks posed. In the case of Libya, extensive human rights violations are consistently made public with reports of [violence, extortion and torture](#). Still, the EU continues to train and fund the so-called Libyan coast guard.

Considering the above, it is hard to ignore that the adoption of the Greek law will reorganise the asylum system around



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intensified control, deterrence and detention, potentially widening the gap between people on the move and their rights, leaving them vulnerable to systematic and normalised deprivation of their liberty and fundamental rights. BVMN will continue to monitor and analyse implementation, and share more in future updates.

Lesvos

Signs of the New Pact: Lesvos

As EU Member States prepare for the New Pact coming into effect, examples of the implementation of the new legislation, warning signs of the future, become more visible. On Lesvos, as [camp numbers](#) in the Mavrovouni CCAC drop rapidly without a clear reason, and the expulsion of people with positive decisions from the camp before the mandated 30-day period and the wrongful identification of nationalities – among other violations – become established practice, the construction of the new CCAC in [Vastria](#) continues. So-called “multipurpose centers” that combine screening, processing, detention and deportation facilities serve as a “one-stop centre”, preventing people on the move from accessing the local community, while keeping procedures out of the sight of the public. This means further invisibility, fewer safeguards and a higher level of impunity.

Seeing how the [CCACs on Lesvos, Samos and Leros](#) are characterised by deep deficiencies in almost every area of care, including healthcare provision, food distribution, structural exclusion from food services for people outside of the asylum

process and poor general living conditions, a much more secluded center – like Vastria – is likely to intensify all of the above, especially when accelerated procedures come into the picture. [NGOs on the island are warning](#) about around the clock video surveillance violating privacy rights, as well as the use of private security firms increasing risks regarding the misuse of personal and biometrical data. Treating people as “security risks” and screening them before they can even apply for asylum denies them access to their fundamental right to claim protection and safety. At the current CCAC on Lesvos, residents are locked in overnight and until the asylum procedure officially starts, which is already a heavy restriction of movement, that will only increase. With regards to border police serving as screening staff, instead of trained personnel, the fair application of the procedure is in serious question.

Furthermore, as has been highlighted in several [reports](#) before, the remote location of the Vastria facility in a highly flammable pine forest cuts people off from access to public services and community, impeding access for NGOs and putting residents at risk of being trapped in a forest fire. A contract over 585,680€ for a fire detection system guarantees no safety for camp residents, since the system has a merely reactive role and there are no safe escape routes from the CCAC yet.

BVMN and its members have long warned against the use of the Greek CCAC model as a blueprint for the roll-out of the Pact across the rest of the EU. The New Migration Pact paints a bleak picture of a



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system not designed to offer protection, but to manage, process and dispose of people deemed unwanted. This framework enshrines the different value of humans into international legislation and furthers the abandoning of the protection of human rights and life.

Kos

Transfers from Crete and conditions in the CCAC

In May, a group of 194 people on the move was transferred from Crete to the Kos CCAC. This follows a significant decrease in the population of the camp, which went from 1,100 to 550 people between March and April, and was at 800 people by June 11th. The local press has been particularly critical of these transfers, arguing that the arrivals in Crete should not be handled by Kos and condemning the authorities on the island for not taking a hard enough stance on this issue. The main nationalities of people in the facilities are currently Bengali, Sudanese and Egyptian, with a majority being men between 18 and 30 years old. Apart from this transfer, 2 boats transporting 34 people on the move arrived on the island during the month of May.

Several testimonies described the continuing bad living conditions in the CCAC and reported several human rights violations. Some residents stated that the camp administration was systematically breaking phone cameras in order to prevent people from taking videos or photos of the facility. We were also made aware of the shortage in the provision of essential items,

with people describing only receiving soap and a sleeping bag. When reporting on the detention conditions in Crete, before the transfer to Kos, people also described having access to very few hygiene items, insufficient food and no clothes, despite their sometimes weeks-long stay in the detention facilities.

Lastly, many testimonies described the return of scabies, the prevalence of which had significantly decreased in the Kos CCAC for the past few months. This situation highlights the poor living conditions experienced by people in the facility, who often lack appropriate sanitary infrastructures, and frequently denounce the insalubrious state of most spaces in the camp.

Samos

Ongoing issues in the CCAC despite lower occupancy

In May, the population of the CCAC slowly decreased, from 1,226 residents at the beginning of the month to 1,130 by the end (according to statistics from the Ministry). Despite the relatively low occupancy of the camp, living conditions remained poor and delays in medical assessments continued.

These delays have consequences beyond the well-being of asylum seekers. Without a health assessment, they cannot obtain the health card required for their asylum interview, hence directly delaying interviews. This month, at least nine clients of I Have Rights had their interviews postponed, three of them twice.



This reflects a broader failure to provide adequate care upon arrival. Two of our clients, both pregnant women and survivors of sexual and physical violence were placed directly in quarantine without being seen by a doctor. One of them, a survivor of human trafficking, described the conditions she faced:

"We slept directly on the floor. We had no mattresses, only one blanket. So you either slept on it or under if you were cold."

Despite being visibly pregnant, she only saw a doctor five days after her arrival, following an episode of bleeding. In another case, a young man, survivor of physical and domestic violence, reported that, after repeated postponements, his health assessment was eventually conducted by a psychologist rather than a doctor and was not thorough.

The situation is particularly difficult for the most vulnerable. A single Palestinian mother of three children, two of whom have disabilities, described how inaccessible the camp is for her daughter who has to use a wheelchair and needs medical treatments that are not available on the island. After surviving multiple pushbacks, the family was not seen by a doctor for two weeks after their arrival, and had been waiting for a decision on their status and a medical transfer for several months before being transferred to Athens recently. As a single parent, she also could not leave the camp without her children, adding to the isolation and mental load of an already extremely difficult situation.

Furthermore, authorities continue to evict residents 30 days after their asylum decision, or earlier in certain circumstances, forcing many people into homelessness. Until recently, some had found shelter in containers near the camp, living under inhumane circumstances, but in May, authorities removed most of them, worsening conditions of destitution. One client, a single father of two minors, had his fingerprinting appointment delayed and him and his family were asked to leave the CCAC before it took place, forcing them to stay in these containers before they were removed.

Long waiting times for asylum decisions remain a serious concern, regardless of camp occupancy. One Afghan family told our team that they have been waiting over ten months in the CCAC. This prolonged uncertainty takes a heavy toll on people's mental health and wellbeing, forcing people to live in isolation with no clarity about their future and a continued fear of rejection and deportation.



Resistance movement against the ongoing evictions in Calais

During the month of May, the largest informal living site in Calais was subjected to intensified police crackdowns. Approximately 1,000 people are surviving at this site under deplorable conditions, some waiting to cross the English Channel, others hoping to apply for asylum in France. For the first time since the camp has been the target of evictions, police operations took place for several days in a row. On May 11th, 12th, 13th, 18th, and 19th, dozens of vans from the Republican Security Company and the Border Police, as well as numerous agents from a state-contracted cleaning company, entered the encampment to evict its residents. In addition to this familiar convoy, we observed a helicopter flying over the area on May 12th.

These operations are presented by the local Prefecture – [in their social media posts](#) – as humanitarian efforts aimed at providing shelter for people, removing them from exploitative networks, and clearing the occupied land. However, our observations and the testimonies we gathered from the people on site contradict this misleading narrative. Many of them told us they had not been warned ahead of the eviction, nor did they have the opportunity to speak with translators to understand the situation and receive

information on shelter alternatives. On May 12th, one person also shared with us that their bag had been stolen, containing a substantial amount of money and administrative documents.

These accounts highlight the gap between the authorities' rhetoric and the reality on the ground: an ongoing pattern of harassment against people on the move. Routine evictions create even more precarious living conditions and disrupt access to essential services such as water, sanitation, and medical care. In the face of this disgraceful policy, residents of the living site and solidarity organizations came together to express their anger and exhaustion. Sit-ins have been organized on the road and roundabout leading to the camp every morning since June 1, with the aim of blocking – or at least slowing down – potential police operations. Slogans calling for solidarity and an end to evictions are shouted through megaphones or displa-



Protest by people on the move and solidarity organizations against the repeated evictions of an informal living site in Calais. Source: Photo by Mustafa / Lakta Média.



yed on signs aimed at passing cars and pedestrians. Although these protests have not prevented further evictions from taking place, they notably brought around 200 people together on Tuesday, June 2nd, and received coverage in the local newspaper *La Voix du Nord*. Such acts of resistance expose the absurdity of the outsourcing policy of Britain's borders: while the French government is charged with preventing people on the move from reaching England, it is also bent on ensuring that they do not stay on French territory.

New European 'Return Regulation' : an authoritarian shift

The new European "Deportation Law" (officially, the "Return Regulation"), adopted by the European Parliament on March 26th, marks a further step in the institutionalization of repressive migration policies. While such policies have already been implemented in Calais for decades, this regulation turns deportation into a standard practice across the region. Warrants to search living sites will now be authorized, paving the way for police raids on squats, emergency shelters, and encampments. Mass detention will be systematized, as the new legislation requires the internment of anyone targeted by a return decision in an Administrative Detention Center, where the maximum detention period is extended to 24 months. Cooperation among member states on removal decisions and their enforcement is also planned, meaning that a deportation order issued in one member state will now be valid throughout Europe. This comes with the creation of 'return hubs' established outside the Euro-

pean Union's territory, in third countries to which the affected individuals may have no connection.

These externalised detention measures are part of a broader set of security-focused public policies that have been in place for 30 years along the France-UK border. They have a very tangible impact on the daily lives of people on the move, who are already living in extremely precarious conditions. In particular, [the latest UK-France agreement](#), signed on April 22nd, provides for the creation of an administrative detention and deportation center in Dunkirk. It joins the two existing centers in the region, in Coquelles and Lille, [with the goal of reaching 3,000 detention spots in France by 2027](#). This number-driven policy is necessarily accompanied by a total dehumanization of foreigners: ignored dead and missing persons, racial profiling in transportation, and widespread disregard for the lives of non-European citizens.

Two volunteers acquitted by the court in the name of free speech

On April 7th, 2025, two HRO volunteers were arrested by the police, including the railway police, and taken into custody for standing next to the railways during their expulsion monitoring and documenting work. The two volunteers remained in custody respectively for 16 and 17 hours. Their testimony reveals psychologically challenging detention conditions, marked by prolonged isolation, lack of access to basic healthcare, and a generalized lack of understanding in relation to their role as independent observers. On May 28th, their process took place.



The lawyers reminded the increasingly concealed nature of living-site evictions, which are taking place farther and farther from city centres and behind walls and barbed wire erected by the municipality of Calais. Without the work of HRO and other organizations mobilized at the French-British border, these expulsions would largely go unnoticed. Therefore, the infraction was justified by the need to access the evicted living site. The collected data are then spread with the aim of raising public awareness on exiled people's living conditions and on the systemic violence which they are exposed to. Relying on the case-law of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which ensures freedom of expression, the lawyers demonstrated that HRO's monitoring function justifies protection similar to that afforded to the press regarding the collection, dissemination, and access to information. The article provides "freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers". On this basis, the lawyers requested a complete discharge against the defendants, which was accepted by the judge and the prosecutor.

This decision implies recognizing our advocacy activities towards civil society and authorities, as well as HRO's role in providing information on matters of public interest. This protection against State and police interference applies in this case, but it should also be taken into account during the many unjustified identity and vehicle checks carried out by law enforcement officers against HRO teams in the field. Since the beginning of the year, volunteers

have been subjected to 18 identity checks and 10 vehicle checks. These practices constitute genuine intimidation and reflect a clear intention to discourage HRO from monitoring and documenting living-site evictions and the systemic violence they perpetuate.

This article is excerpted from HRO's monthly report, which can be found [here](#).

Pushbacks and detention conditions at the border police station in Menton

The southern zone of the French-Italian border, especially the territory around the cities of Menton (F) and Ventimiglia (It), continues to be crossed by people on the move in many ways. The amount of people who are then arrested in France, brought to the border post and subsequently made to walk the steep mountain road to Italy (9 kilometers away from the city) is still the highest in this whole border. The daily number of pushbacks at this spot only is about 30, while 20 people are usually detained every night in the containers and cells of the French border police. People traveling from Italy report the exhausting experience of increasing numbers of failed attempts to cross the border.

People on the move who are arrested during controls of trains and buses near the city of Menton are also pushed back to Italy with a standardized procedure, regardless of the length of their stay in France. People who have worked and lived in Europe for many years are increasingly subjected to this same procedure. This month, on May 8th, a family with three small children and a



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pregnant woman were also pushed back to Italy, having recently arrived in Europe, after six hours of detention at the police station.

An increasing number of testimonies from people who have spent time in detention at the French border police station in Menton describe the devastating hygienic conditions in the cells, the extremely cold temperatures and lack of covers and mattresses and the lack of access to food and water when detained overnight. According to several testimonies, detainees receive only a few biscuits in the morning. Furthermore, people report on the lack of medical care, support and assistance to detainees with special needs. That was the case on May 20th, when a visibly wounded person with a documented disability was detained without receiving any support. Despite the growing evidence and the criticism by solidarity organisations, the conditions of detention in the French border police station have not changed.

Most of the time, translators are also not present at the detention site. In May, several testimonies described French border police using the personal phones of the detainees to call their contacts and prompt them to engage in the translation.

Additionally, five of the 16 people arrested in February 2026 in an international police operation have been on trial since the beginning of May in the city of Nice for supporting “illegal” border crossings. They are, among other things, accused of handing out clothes to people on the move or sharing information, and may face prison sentences of one to four years.

Arrivals

According to figures from *borderline-europe*, 2,557 people on the move reached Italy by sea in May 2026. This represents a significant increase of 16% compared to April, which may be attributed to the start of summer, the resulting rise in temperatures and calmer seas. In May 2025, 62% more people arrived in Italy compared to May this year.

The majority of people (1,783 individuals, or 71%¹) arrived in Sicily – primarily Lampedusa. This represents a decrease compared to May 2025; however, overall, a wider distribution of arrivals across the country can be observed. Thus, 40 people arrived in Sardinia, 369 in Calabria, 136 in Liguria and 130 people in Emilia-Romagna, in northern Italy.

According to our figures, 1,173 people (47%) were rescued by Italian authorities. A total of 746 people (28%) were rescued by civilian sea rescue services. Frontex was involved in the rescue of 217 people (9%) in May. 143 people (5%) reached Italian territorial waters (12 nautical miles off the coast) independently, without having been intercepted or rescued beforehand. For 278 people (10%), no information was available regarding the manner of arrival or rescue.

According to official figures from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, 2,895 people arrived in Italy in May. We were able to

verify slightly lower arrival figures for this month, but we would like to note that there is no access to the background information or sources of the figures published by the Ministry of the Interior.

Overview of the data collected by <i>borderline europe</i>²	
Arrivals of people on the move in Italy by sea	2557
Arrivals of people on the move in Sicily	1783
Rescues by Italian authorities and Frontex	1390
Rescues by NGOs	746
Independent arrivals of people in the move	143
Arrivals with no information on arrival/rescue	278

The actual numbers are likely to be significantly higher, due to the cases that go unreported.

On May 12th, the Sea-Eye 5 rescued a wooden boat that had set sail from Libya with 72 people on board. According to the NGO, a [Libyan vessel](#) reached the scene

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

² The figures are provided without guarantee, as the number of unreported cases could be significantly higher



during the operation, but the rescue was completed despite initial concerns. Among those rescued were a newborn baby and a woman in the late stages of pregnancy. Immediately after the rescue, the woman was flown by [helicopter to a hospital](#) in Malta.

Routes to Europe

The transit countries of Libya, Tunisia and Algeria serve as the primary points of departure for the crossing to Italy. In May, at least 2,150 (78%) of those arriving in Italy set off from Libya, 112 people (4%) from Tunisia and 49 people (2%) from Algeria. The point of departure is unknown for 437 people (16%).

The human rights situation in the North African transit countries remains dire for people on the move, particularly those from Sub-Saharan Africa. This month, for the first time, the systematic human rights violations faced by people on the move in Libya were [brought before an international court](#). From May 19th to 21st, Khaled Mohamed Ali El Hishri became the first person to stand trial for his role in the structural violence in Libya. El Hishri is a high-ranking officer in the Rada militia and was in charge of the section of Mitiga prison in Tripoli where migrant children and women are detained. He faces 17 charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including murder, rape, sexual violence, arbitrary detention and torture. The International Criminal Court (ICC) will decide [by July](#) 20th whether to confirm the charges and open a trial.

The trial against El-Hishri is of great significance, as it marks the first time that survivors of systematic violence against people on the move have testified in an international court and their accounts of torture and violence have been heard and taken into account. [David Yambio](#), co-founder of Refugees in Libya and himself a survivor of violence in Libya, comments on the trial, saying: "One thing was certain: even if the system is not brought to an end immediately, those who commit crimes must still be held individually accountable for their actions." Nevertheless, accountability must not end with El-Hishri. He is just one of many perpetrators.

On January 18th 2025, the ICC issued an [arrest warrant](#) for Osama Njeem Almasri, the leader of the Rada militia and former head of Mitiga Prison and other detention camps for people on the move, charging him with war crimes and crimes against humanity. Almasri was arrested in Italy the following day. However, instead of extraditing him to the ICC, Italy shirked its responsibility and, a few days later, returned Almasri to Libya on a state aircraft. The ICC subsequently referred Italy to the Assembly of States Parties for [breaching its duty to cooperate](#).

In May, two people on the move who had been detained, tortured and enslaved in a Libyan prison controlled by Almasri lodged [a complaint against Italy](#) with the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). They view Almasri's release as a violation of their rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights: the right to life (Art. 2), the prohibition of torture (Art. 3),



the prohibition of slavery and forced labour (Art. 4) and the right to a fair trial (Art. 6). Italy must respond to the allegations by September 18th. The ECtHR will then rule on the admissibility of the complaint.

As important as it is to hold individual perpetrators to account and prosecute them, this is by no means sufficient. The entire system of violence must be brought to an end, starting with the European unwavering support for it. For more than a decade, the EU has supported the so-called Libyan Coast Guard in western Libya, thereby fundamentally contributing to the maintenance of a system that traps those seeking protection in a vicious circle between pushbacks in the Mediterranean and abuse in detention camps in Libya.

However, instead of taking civil society's demands seriously and ending cooperation with Libya, [it became public in May](#) that the EU plans to extend its support to the Haftar government in eastern Libya as well. A technical agreement leaked to the organisation Statewatch reveals that the EU will in future also train and support "coastal authorities" in north-eastern Libya. In addition, there are plans to build a regional migration coordination centre in Benghazi. Eastern Libya is controlled by General Haftar and, much like the west of the country, is known for systematic violence and human rights abuses against people on the move. Through these plans, the EU is effectively supporting the unlawful interception of people seeking protection at sea and their transfer to detention centres similar to Mitiga prison. Rather than exposing and preventing human rights

violations, the EU is stepping up its support for a system based on the systematic mistreatment, detention and exploitation of people fleeing their homes.

Pushbacks and pullbacks

This month, we recorded 2,088 interceptions in the Central Mediterranean, where boats carrying people on the move were often forcibly taken back to the North African coast. This represents only a slight increase compared to April 2026, when we recorded 2,017 interceptions, but a 154% rise compared to the same month last year (May 2025). All of the intercepted individuals were towed back to Libya. However, it is reasonable to assume that the actual number of cases is significantly higher, as many interceptions are not documented and the fates of those involved remain unknown.

Dead and missing persons

According to data from [borderline-europe](#), 26 people died whilst fleeing across the Central Mediterranean in May. The fate of a further 100 people remains unknown and we assume that the number of unreported cases is much higher.

Between May 11th and 13th, the ship Ocean Viking, operated by the NGO SOS Méditerranée, rescued [a total of 130 people in two consecutive operations](#). Initially, 75 people from a completely overcrowded boat, who had been adrift on the open sea for five days and four nights, were taken aboard the vessel; the following day, another boat carrying 56 people was rescued. Several people were in critical condition and, after



spending days at sea, were suffering from fuel burns, hypothermia, dehydration and severe physical and psychological trauma. On the small fishing boat, the team found one [person unconscious](#). Despite immediate resuscitation efforts, the young man could not be saved and died at the scene. According to statements from the survivors, the deceased had lost consciousness several hours earlier and is believed to have been subjected to severe physical violence in Libya. Shortly afterwards, the ship received another distress call. After hours of searching through the night, the reported boat [with around 100 people on board](#) could [not be found](#). Their fate remains unknown to this day.

Despite the serious health condition of a large number of those rescued, as well as the fact that there was a deceased person on board the rescue vessel, the [Italian authorities](#) did not refrain from their restrictive and criminalising practices. Instead of providing the people on board with urgently needed protection as quickly as possible, they directed the Ocean Viking to the port of Ravenna in the Emilia-Romagna region, 1,350 km from the rescue site, which meant a further three-day journey.

On May 16th, following a rescue operation by the Italian Guardia di Finanza, [a newborn girl](#) was pronounced [dead](#). The one-month-old baby had set off from Sfax in Tunisia bound for Italy, together with her mother, her older sister and 52 other people. Upon arrival in Lampedusa, she was taken to the local polyclinic [in critical condition](#) with [signs of hypothermia](#), but did not survive the journey there.

These deaths represent a worrying pattern that has persisted throughout the year. In the middle of the month, Frontex published data on arrivals in Italy during the first few months of the year. This showed a [46% decrease in](#) arrivals via the Central Mediterranean route [compared to the same month last year](#). However, these figures cannot be properly understood without context. Whilst the number of actual arrivals in Italy is falling, the number of people dying on the crossing is rising. By May of this year, [borderline-europe](#) had recorded 450 deaths on the crossing to Europe; last year, this figure stood at 259. The IOM has already recorded [825 deaths](#) in the Central Mediterranean for the first quarter of 2026, making 2026 the deadliest start to a year since the IOM began recording data in 2014. Here too, the actual number is likely to be much higher.

Fewer arrivals, therefore, do not mean less danger for people on the move. Two factors could be particularly relevant here. By May, [borderline-europe](#) had recorded around 1,000 more interceptions than in the same period last year, the majority of which were carried out by the so-called Libyan coastguard. These operations expose people on board to considerable risks and violence, both during and after the incident. At the same time, the ongoing criminalisation of civilian sea rescue is further reducing the chances of rescue for people in distress at sea. The crossing is not becoming less frequent, but even more deadly.



Attacks by Libyan militias

Attacks on civilian sea rescue operations are by no means limited to the expansion of restrictive legal and administrative measures. Operations at sea themselves remain dangerous for the crews of rescue vessels. In May, for instance, there were several more attacks by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard.

During the [second rescue operation](#) on May 10th, the Sea-Eye 5 was harassed by armed Libyan militias, which severely hampered the rescue efforts. Despite the panic this caused among the people on the boat, all individuals were eventually brought to safety. Just a few days later, a [violent attack](#) took place on the Sea-Watch 5 in the same operational area. The rescue vessel, which at that time had 90 rescued people and 30 crew members on board, was repeatedly fired upon without warning by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, threatened via radio and pursued whilst carrying out its rescue operation. [According to Sea-Watch](#), the two boats involved in the attack had been handed over by Italy to Libya in 2017 and 2023 and had already attracted attention on several occasions in the [past](#) for acts of extreme violence against rescue organisations.

The responses from Italy, the German government and the European Union fell far short of addressing the gravity of the events. No [assistance](#) whatsoever was provided to the Sea-Watch 5 despite distress calls being made – a fact that weighs particularly heavily in Germany's case. As the flag state, the German gover-

ment is not only fundamentally responsible for the ship's safety, but had also raised the [threat level for Libyan waters](#) just at the beginning of this month due to repeated attacks by Libyan militias. The German government has not made any public statement on the incidents to date.

Whilst Berlin remains silent, a spokesperson for the European Commission stated at a [press conference that](#) they had taken note of the incident, and described it as "regrettable". Against the backdrop of the recent expansion of financial support for Libyan "border management" by a further 30 million euros, however, this reaction appears nothing short of cynical. The Italian authorities, too, continued their [crack-down](#) on civilian sea rescue operations regardless of the incidents. Not only did they direct the Sea-Watch 5 to the port of Brindisi, nearly four days' journey away, but they also launched a criminal investigation against the ship's captain immediately upon its arrival. The charge: "aiding and abetting unauthorised entry". The potential penalty: up to 20 years' imprisonment.

The incidents of the past month once again clearly demonstrate how the criminalisation of sea rescue by Italy and across Europe continues to escalate. The imminent implementation of the CEAS reforms and the unrelenting expansion of European-Libyan cooperation paint a grim picture. Civil resistance therefore remains all the more important. We demand an end to all cooperation with the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, an end to the policy of letting people die, and the creation of safe escape routes.



Turkey

Reported increase in apprehension and deportations of Somali nationals in February

This month we report again on the situation in Turkey. This piece refers to an update from February.

In February 2026, migration lawyers and solidarity activists in Turkey reported a marked increase in apprehension, detention and deportation proceedings against Somali nationals, particularly in the Aegean coastal city of Izmir. According to legal practitioners, the increase affected not only people without papers or valid papers but also those registered. Lawyers also reported that some deportation orders were being carried out before the expiry of the statutory waiting period, while applicants for international protection and individuals subject to alternatives to administrative detention under [Article 57/A of Law No. 6458](#) were also reportedly being summoned by the authorities and forced into deportation procedures.

Article 57/A, [introduced in 2019](#), should be understood in the context of the EU-Turkey Deal of 2016 and of EU externalisation policies more generally. In practice, it has meant that instead of being held in a removal centre, people are required to reside at a specified address, are tied to a

specific province of Turkey, must regularly report to Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) offices (many attached to removal centers), providing a weekly or monthly signature or fingerprint, and can be subject to electronic monitoring, among other measures.

Over this period, the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) has steadily increased identity checks, detention and deportation practices, while expanding the use of Mobile Migration Points across Turkey, with the corresponding spectacle of [highly publicised operations](#).



A Mobile Migration Point vehicle parked outside the Yenikapı metro station in Istanbul.
(Source: Private)

Although the reports of increased targeting of Somali nationals were circulated among community, solidarity and lawyers networks, the actions received little public attention and as far as could be observed, no official policy announcing a specific campaign targeting Somali nationals was issued. One English-language Somali



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website reported on [Turkey's deportation of a group of "irregular" Somali nationals](#) in mid-February, but they were reportedly in detention for the previous four months. The article did not mention the specific increased apprehensions of that same month. Of note also, in the same week, it was reported that Ankara [deployed three warships](#) to Somalia to oversee drilling conducted by the Turkish state-run company there. It is worth noting that in recent years, [Turkey's relationship to Somalia](#) has simultaneously been getting closer politically, financially and militarily, with Ankara approving a [\\$30 million grant](#) to Mogadishu in late April.

Notably, these reports from Turkey emerged amid a more explicitly hostile international environment for migrants of Somali origin. These include an especially sharp rise (95%) in [deportations](#) of Somali nationals from the Schengen area in 2025, the January 2026 US decision to [end temporary protected status](#) for Somali refugees, and most recently the [EU's imposition of visa restrictions](#) on Somali nationals over cooperation on returns.



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**

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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