

MONTHLY REPORT | NOV 2025

ILLEGAL PUSHBACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS

Thematic report: **Criminalisation**



Credit: @truuuuuuuuuuuuuuuc



Border Violence
Monitoring Network

MONTHLY REPORT | NOV 2025

ILLEGAL PUSHBACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS

Thematic report: **Criminalisation**



LEGAL
CENTRE
LESVOS



Border Violence
Monitoring Network



Table of contents

5 Methodology and Terminology

6 Introduction

8 UPDATE ON THE SITUATION

9 Serbia

- Police raids in Obrenovac
- Criminalisation of solidarity in Serbia
- Detention in Serbia
- Pushbacks to North Macedonia

13 Bosnia – Herzegovina

- EU policy as a driver of criminalisation
- Pushbacks from Croatia to Bosnia
- Consequences: violence by non-state actors
- November incidents of criminalisation of movement
- Criminalisation of solidarity

19 Greece

- New migration law and expansion of the criminal framework
 - Lesvos
- Criminalization of Sudanese people on the move and solidarity response
- Free Humanitarians: Trial on December 4th 2025
 - Kos
- Prison-style facilities

23 France

- Public transport as a tool of border enforcement in Calais and Dunkirk
- Arrests at bus and train stations
- Evictions and arrests

27 Italy

- Central Mediterranean: Overview and figures
- Criminalisation of people on the move
- Some recent outcomes in the courtrooms: Solidarity with boat drivers
- Criminalisation and endangerment of search and rescue
- The Justice Fleet and resistance by civilian search and rescue

Thematic report: **Criminalisation**

This is the third report in our thematic series, where we will look into overarching themes affecting people on the move across Europe.

This report looks into the topic of criminalisation, and the ways the law and law enforcement practice is used to hinder movement in formal and informal ways. From France to Greece, from Serbia to Bosnia, this report explores some of the consequences of the narrative and policy takeover of the ideas of security and crime in relation to migration, which has obscured and displaced those based on protection needs and rights.

This month, we also include a piece from ally collectives borderline-europe and ARCI Porco Rosso on the situation in Italy, particularly in Sicily.



Methodology and Terminology

REPORTING NETWORK

BVMN [1] 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, Pushback Alarm Austria, I Have Rights, Center for Legal Aid, Mission Wings, Legal Centre Lesvos, We Are Monitoring, InfoPark, Human Rights Observers and Calais Food Collective



Introduction

Across Europe's external borders and beyond, migration, especially towards the EU, is increasingly framed through narratives of threat, legitimising its growing fusion with criminality within legal frameworks and public discourse.

Criminalisation is a systematic phenomenon that frames mobility as a security issue, disregarding and downgrading human rights and protection concerns. It is embedded in broader political narratives and societal dynamics that stigmatise and dehumanise refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and stateless persons, while simultaneously targeting those who support them. This framework views movement with suspicion and through control, reinforcing exclusionary and punitive responses. So-called 'migration management' is translated into border securitisation and fortification, heightened control and surveillance, and practices of punishment and deterrence, ultimately criminalising the very act of seeking safety. But criminalisation does not merely respond to "illegality". It actively produces it by narrowing access to asylum and other forms of protection, increasing procedural barriers, and normalising enforcement-first approaches that endanger people on the move and push them onto increasingly dangerous routes.

Criminalisation operates through both formal and informal means. Formal criminalisation involves the use of legal instruments such as arbitrary arrests and charges, court proceedings, administrative penalties, and legislative reforms to target people on the move and those who support them. Formal criminalisation deliberately aims to conflate movement with criminality. Informal criminalisation, on the other hand, includes acts of repression outside of official legal frameworks: harassment, surveillance, intimidation, excessive identity checks, defamation, and the disruption or destruction of services. Though outside judicial processes, these tactics are no less damaging.

These dynamics have contributed to the legitimisation of state perpetrated violence that does not end at the borders. Beyond the well documented patterns of systematic pushbacks and border violence, formal criminalisation exposes people on the move to prolonged detention, unfair trials, evictions, constant policing, and deportations. At the same time, those standing in solidarity are subjected to criminal investigations, defamation campaigns, and increasing operational restrictions that hinder their ability to provide support. Even without convictions, these procedures drain organisational capacity, interrupt essential services, deter volunteers, and create a chilling effect that discourages others from acting. These dynamics intersect with broader trends of shrinking civic space, affecting human rights defenders, civil society organisations, lawyers, journalists and activists. Ultimately, they also erode democratic safeguards.



EU Developments

Criminalisation has spread across EU countries, reinforced and legitimised by EU migration policy over the last three decades, shaped by securitisation, externalisation, and the fortification of borders. Framings of invasion, illegality, and migration as a threat to internal security have normalised exceptional governance measures that weaken legal safeguards and compliance with human rights standards. The negotiation and adoption of recent EU frameworks reflect this trajectory. The Pact on Migration and Asylum and the proposed Return Regulation consolidate an approach centred on intensified control through expanded detention and surveillance, accelerated border procedures, and faster returns, while also expanding externalisation and reducing safeguards and access to effective remedies.

Alongside these developments, the proposed EU Facilitation Directive would introduce new offences and harsher penalties, further widening the scope for criminalisation while failing to clearly and consistently protect humanitarian acts from prosecution. Presented as part of the ‘fight against migrant smuggling’, this approach in effect targets migration itself, legitimising restrictive policies and coercive enforcement along with deliberate absence of safe and legal pathways and the growing barriers to meaningful access to protection. Rather than responding to protection needs, it renders movement inherently suspicious and positions people on the move as objects of control rather than rights holders. Against this backdrop, existing practices at external borders are likely to continue and deepen, including the routine use of facilitation and smuggling related charges against people on the move for actions linked to crossing, such as driving a vehicle or piloting a boat, often under coercion, duress, exploitation, or simply as part of their own attempt to reach safety. It also reinforces the legal and political conditions in which human rights defenders and other solidarity actors can be investigated, prosecuted, or publicly attacked for providing assistance or documenting violations, even when no conviction follows.

Criminalisation therefore functions, not only to deter entry onto European territory, but also to suppress resistance, shrink civic space, and obstruct independent monitoring and documentation of rights violations. It is structural, produced by policy choices that close pathways and institutionalise coercion, sustained by narratives that normalise exceptional measures, and implemented through everyday policing and administrative practices that make rights harder to access in practice.

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



Police raids in Obrenovac

Police raids and operations targeting people on the move have been frequent in Serbia this year, particularly in the area around Obrenovac, near Belgrade, where one of the few remaining open Asylum Centres stands. On August 25th, for example, the police arrived in Obrenovac with ten vehicles at around 5pm, arresting several people and transferring eight of them to the Preševo Reception Centre, in the south of the country, by the border with North Macedonia. Around the same day, two additional police operations were documented. A video published on Instagram by an informal news account showed a group of four to five people being apprehended by police while travelling towards Obrenovac on August 25th. Another video, published by Serbian news agency 192, showed police stopping a vehicle carrying people on the move on the Belgrade-Niš highway and violently kicking the driver, following a car chase on August 24th.

In November and December, the presence of Serbian police in the Obrenovac area increased significantly and police operations further intensified, thus fueling feelings of insecurity for people on the move. On November 19th, a police operation took place in Obrenovac, described by several national newspapers as an action aimed at *“breaking up an organized criminal group, composed of migrants involved in a series of criminal acts”*. Following this raid, six people were transferred to the camp in Preševo and two were sent to jail. Media reports failed to specify the nature of the alleged criminal acts, instead merely referencing the presence of weapons to underline the supposed “seriousness” of the group. This type of rhetoric, which conflates migration and criminality, disregards the broader context in which people on the move live in Obrenovac, and in Serbia more generally, where they are frequently denied access to reception centres and forced to reside in unofficial settlements under precarious living conditions. Furthermore, these narratives actively fuel the criminalisation of people on the move by portraying them as an inherent threat to public security. It’s important to emphasize that these institutional discourses do not remain confined to the political or media sphere, but translate into everyday interactions and reinforce racialised stereotypes.

For instance, a 16-year-old boy from Afghanistan recounted to Collective Aid’s team in Belgrade that he was subjected to racial discrimination when, after telling a taxi driver that he was from Afghanistan, the driver immediately replied, *“oh, so you’re a terrorist!”*. This incident illustrates how state-backed criminalising discourses contribute to the normalisation of racial profiling and hostility against people on the move.



Criminalisation of solidarity in Serbia

In September, Collective Aid's team in Belgrade experienced two interruptions of its NFIs (non-food items) distributions in Obrenovac, both carried out by Serbian police. During the first incident, on September 18th, police officers approached members of the team while they were conducting a distribution. The officers demanded to see their passports and questioned their presence in the area. Despite being shown their NGO registration documents and legal authorisations, the officers dismissed the information, photographed the team's documentation folder and ordered them to leave immediately under police escort. They threatened to take the team members to the police station if they did not comply. The second interaction lasted approximately two hours, before the team was instructed to leave the area. During this intervention, police officers forced two people on the move to the ground, with hands behind their backs. No interpreter was present, and a member of the Collective Aid team was required to translate police questions into Dari. This episode further highlights power imbalances and the unequal treatment applied by law enforcement agents. While members of the Collective Aid team, holding strong passports, were able to demand basic procedural guarantees, the two Afghan nationals were subjected to physical force and mistreatment, based solely on the racist presumption that they had committed criminal acts.

Detention in Serbia

Three official detention centres currently operate in Serbia under the Department for Detention and Accommodation of Foreigners within the Ministry of Interior. These facilities function with very limited transparency, as there is no independent supervisory authority with a permanent mandate to oversee detention conditions. Publicly available information on daily practices, treatment of detainees, and safeguards remains scarce. The only institution carrying out regular monitoring visits is the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture, operating within the Ombudsman's Office. Persistent concerns raised over recent years include inadequate access to healthcare, as none of the detention centres employ permanent medical staff. Consequently, detainees must be escorted by police officers to local hospitals in order to receive medical care, creating delays and additional barriers to adequate treatment. Alongside official detention centres, Collective Aid and partner organizations continue to document an increasing number of cases involving the confinement of people on the move in unofficial detention facilities.

A minor from Syria recounted to Collective Aid's team in Sarajevo his experience of detention in an unofficial place in Serbia. After several attempts to cross into Hungary,



he and 27 other Syrians were apprehended by Serbian border police. Each person had a small amount of money with them, which the police confiscated. The group was taken to the reception facility in Preševo, on the opposite side of the country, where their fingerprints were collected. When they attempted to cross again as part of the same group, they were arrested once more and transferred to a warehouse in Belgrade, which the minor described as an “unofficial prison”. He reported that he experienced the worst treatment there: he was held for two days without food or water, beaten if he tried to speak with others and systematically deprived of sleep, as guards constantly entered the room to prevent them from resting. The group was interrogated about how they had reached the border and forced to sign documents written only in Serbian, which he did not understand. Other testimonies regarding unofficial detention in Serbia reveal a similar pattern of human rights violations, including serious concerns related to the treatment of minors.

Another man described being detained in an unofficial facility together with other people, including two six-year-old girls who were held in the same room. They were confined for two days without food or water; only the two children were occasionally given food from cans. These accounts also demonstrate how Serbian authorities systematically disregard the principle of the best interests of the child, treating minors – and adults alike – as criminals rather than as rights-holders.

Pushbacks to North Macedonia

In recent years, a significant trend served in Serbia is that migration has increasingly “moved off the radar”. While official statistics indicate a decline in the number of people entering the country, this decrease also reflects reduced access to reception centers and a growing reluctance among people on the move to engage with formal registration procedures. In fact, access to reception centres in Serbia is only possible following registration at police stations. However, registration exposes people on the move to heightened risks, as their personal data and fingerprints can be shared with European border control agencies, including Frontex. This data-sharing facilitates readmission practices, meaning that individuals who are apprehended in neighbouring countries may be returned to Serbia. As a result, registration not only increases the likelihood of pushbacks by Serbian authorities, as it brings people on the move into contact with the police, but can also trap them in a cycle of forced returns, surveillance, and exclusion from asylum procedures. The brutality regularly exercised by Serbian police against people on the move works as a deterrence mechanism aimed at forcing them out of the country and preventing the continuation of their journey towards Europe. Stories of pushbacks carried out by Serbian authorities are



frequently reported to Collective Aid teams. For example, a minor from Syria recounted that Serbian police apprehended his group at the border, beat them with sticks, confiscated their phones, and forced them to cross into North Macedonia. The officers threatened them with further violence if they attempted to return and subjected them to verbal abuse.

Another testimony was collected from a man from Egypt, who described being pushed back while travelling from North Macedonia to Serbia. He was part of a group of 16 people, four of whom were minors. After crossing into Serbia, the group was chased by police dogs, apprehended, and beaten with sticks before being forcibly returned to North Macedonia. These accounts illustrate the systematic and normalized use of violence by Serbian police. A man from Morocco similarly recounted being beaten alongside a group of 17 people. The police forced them to kneel, ordered them to extend their hands, and beat their hands with sticks.

In some cases, the violence inflicted by Serbian police is so severe that it leaves permanent physical injuries. This is the case of a man from Afghanistan, who shared his story with the Collective Aid's team in Sarajevo. His case highlights how people on the move experience extreme insecurity even in places that are meant to provide safety. He was apprehended directly in front of the Bujanovac reception centre after being told that the camp was only for families. Together with five others, he was stopped by Serbian police, some wearing blue uniforms marked with "Policija" in Cyrillic and others in plain clothes. Under the pretext of being transferred to a camp for single men, they were placed in a police van and driven instead to the Lojane–Miratovac border crossing. There, additional officers were present. The police beat the group one by one and deliberately smashed their phones. When it was his turn, the respondent was beaten while another officer stood guard to prevent him from escaping. After being told to leave, he was struck again when he returned to retrieve his phone, receiving simultaneous blows to both eyes and losing sight in his left eye. The group was forced to cross into North Macedonia, where he collapsed in Lojane and was taken by ambulance to a hospital in Skopje. There, he underwent eye surgery. Fearing retaliation after filing a complaint against the Serbian police through United Nations lawyers, he subsequently crossed into Kosovo instead of returning to Serbia. These testimonies show that pushbacks from Serbia to North Macedonia and Bulgaria are not isolated incidents, but part of a broader system of migration control grounded in violence and criminalisation.

Through physical abuse, threats, collective expulsions, and cooperation mechanisms between countries prioritising border enforcement over protection, people on the move are consistently treated as criminals rather than as individuals seeking safety and dignity.

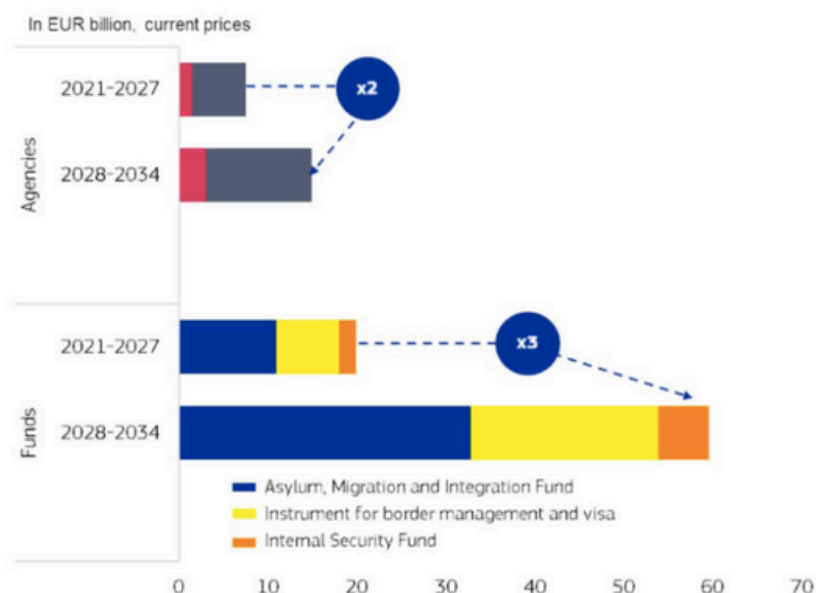


EU policy as a driver of criminalisation

The EU's push for further securitisation of its borders through the relentless influence over its Balkan neighbour's policies continues, and, in the past months, Bosnia-Herzegovina has been no exception to this trend. The country has become a pivotal state in the EU's goal of border externalisation, especially vulnerable to pressures from the Union due to its candidacy status.

The "border management assessment" is a fundamental prerequisite for membership to the EU and, recently, Bosnia-Herzegovina has been pushing to align with the European *acquis*. As shared in the latest [Communication from the European Commission](#) on the country's process of alignment to EU's *acquis*, in January 2025 Bosnia adopted a Law on Border Control to strengthen its "capacity to address security challenges and threats at its border, including cross-border crime and irregular migration". The document further underlines the need to "eliminate illegal border crossings, particularly on the border with Montenegro". Moreover, in June 2025, the government of the country signed the [Frontex status agreement](#) with the EU (on the the last in the region to do so), by which the European Agency can deploy teams with executive powers. In July 2025, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia-Herzegovina also adopted a new action plan for the years 2025-2029 for integrated border management.

Financing for migration and border management in the 2028-2034 budget



Prospective financing for migration and border management in the 2028-2034 EU budget. Source: [EUR-Lex](#)

As the securitisation and externalisation of borders remain a key pillar of European migration policies, the financial significance of these goals in the budgets continue to increase. Thus, according to an official [Communication of the European Commission regarding the "Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034"](#), dated July 2025, the funds allocated for migration and border management should triple.



Lastly, the recently approved (and soon to be implemented) European Pact on Migration and Asylum represents the latest step toward the institutionalisation of the criminalisation of movement through instruments such as the prolonged detention of people on the move. On this matter, in mid November 2025, a workshop on the impacts of the new Pact on Bosnia-Herzegovina was organised by IOM together Italian authorities, and attended by the Director Mirko Kuprešaković and Assistant Director Veljko Lazić on behalf of the Border Police of the Western Balkan country. The official communication states: “The Border Police of BiH will continue to contribute actively to all processes that lead to the strengthening of institutional cooperation, more efficient management of migration and the protection of the border of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the highest European standards”.

Pushbacks from Croatia to Bosnia

While publicly pushing for alignment on Human Rights standards on candidate countries, the EU continues to blatantly ignore the systematic violations carried out by authorities of member states against people on the move. Despite the EU's increasingly fragile narrative of defense of international law and rights protection, countries like Croatia -among many others- have made pushbacks a regular *modus operandi* at the borders. Thus, every month, Collective Aid teams hear multiple reports from people on the move of pushbacks from Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

One of these, shared in November, involved a man who reported crossing the border to Croatia with two others. After walking several kilometers into the country, they encountered a local resident who told them they were not welcome “because they were Muslim”. The police were then called by the locals, and the group described being arrested, driven back to Bosnia, beaten, and forced into a river. According to the respondent, one of the men perpetrating the violence wore a black mask, which he believed was intended to prevent identification. He expressed deep exhaustion resulting from the repeated incidents of violence, pushbacks, and the long, dangerous mountain routes that people must take to avoid police patrols and criminalization simply for trying to seek safety. He explained that each pushback forces them to attempt increasingly remote and risky crossings. This pattern reflects a broader dynamic: the more border crossings are criminalized, the more dangerous they become. As formal routes are blocked and people are pushed into isolated terrain, they often feel compelled to depend on facilitators to attempt a crossing.



Throughout the month of November, many individuals also described being detained in Croatia before being pushed back, another example of how movement is increasingly treated as crime when certain people attempt it. In Bosnia, people on the move are also often held in detention centres, such as the Lukavica Detention Center in Sarajevo, based on alleged security grounds or criminal charges. As shown in a study conducted by [Human Rights Watch in May 2025](#), detainees often lack access to legal protection or knowledge about their rights, and are subjected to prolonged periods of detention.

Another man shared that, during a violent pushback, he attempted to ask Croatian officers about seeking asylum. He reported being told that “the only real war is in Ukraine” and that everyone else could simply return home, a cruel answer that dismisses the dangerous and complex situations many people face in their countries of origin, while negating a fundamental right. Numerous respondents reported repeated cycles of beatings, theft, and forced returns at this border. Some said they feel entirely stuck: unable to cross safely, unable to remain in Bosnia, and unable to return to their home countries.

Across conversations, fear of police was a consistent theme. Because many have experienced severe violence during apprehensions, they do not view law enforcement as a source of protection. People often share that they feel unable to report abuse or seek help, as they fear detention, deportation, or being forced to give fingerprints due to their irregular status. These accounts illustrate how criminalization and border violence do not prevent movement, they only force people into more dangerous terrain, erode trust in institutions, and compound the risks they face at every stage of their journey.

Violence by non-state actors

The progressive criminalization of movement, stemming from the absence of legal and safe access routes, forces people on the move into dependence on smuggling structures. Violence at borders, both by state and non-state actors, thus emerges as a continuous and normalized feature of migration governance.

In the past year, several people have reported that, when forced into the remote northern areas of Bosnia, in an attempt to avoid violent pushbacks by the police, they sometimes end up in places where violent gangs are known to operate. There has been some speculation that the police may not always be fully aware of the presence of these gangs, with occasional suggestions pointing at the existence of limited cooperation between them.



In the last few months, there has been an increasing number of cases of kidnapping by these gangs in the Bosnian-Croatian border, a reality also reported in the Serbian-Bosnian and Serbian-Hungarian borders. The pattern is similar: after the abduction, the kidnappers ask for money from the individual's families, promising their release. In Bosnia, an armed gang called BWK is now one of the main protagonists of violence and abuse at the border, together with the Croatian Border Police.

One man shared his extremely violent experience with these gangs recently. He spent six days in the region of the north of Bosnia, where they are operating. All of his belongings were stolen and he was beaten, tortured, and burned. He and his group were not given food, nor any water beyond half a mug of river water each day. He also described witnessing a thirteen year old boy and a woman being sexually assaulted by members of the gang, in front of everyone. The respondent seemed extremely scared at the thought of needing to cross the border again; he would like to get to the EU, but the memory of this incident left him unable to sleep at night without the help of medication. He stated, 'I never thought I would be in such a situation. No one should have to see this or go through this'. These accounts show how the lack of safe pathways often traps people between the violence of state and non-state actors.

November incidents of criminalisation of movement

The past couple of months saw several law-enforcement operations across Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia that illustrate how mobility is increasingly managed and framed through criminalization, and how restrictive policies contribute to further risk and exploitation for people on the move.

On November 9th, a 30-year-old man from Kosovo was arrested in Croatia for transporting foreign nationals. He was placed in detention, while the other individuals involved were processed under the Law on International and Temporary Protection. It's important to note that processing in accordance with the law does not always ensure effective protection, as people on the move frequently report harm or neglect during or after official procedures.

On November 12th, a police operation in Bosnia led to the arrest of three individuals allegedly linked to an international human-trafficking network operating in Sarajevo and Zavidovići. The accused were reported to have recruited and exploited foreign nationals, including minors, between May and September 2024. People had been promised legal employment, salaries, and accommodation, but were instead subjected to forced labour on construction projects, including highways and



apartment complexes, with their passports confiscated to maintain control. This case underscores how very limited legal and support options for people on the move increase vulnerability to exploitation. When safe employment and migration channels are unavailable, people on the move are more exposed to these risks. Meanwhile, the lack of trust in the authorities, resulting from the systematic violence perpetrated by state actors, often precludes people from reporting the abuses.

Moreover, on November 18th and 19th, authorities arrested 13 individuals in the areas around Zvornik and Sarajevo. They were reported to have facilitated the crossing of around 500 people from Serbia into Bosnia over a three-month period. Among those arrested were ten Bosnian citizens and three foreign nationals of “Afro-Asian origin.” Official reports from the authorities describe that “smuggling activities were carried out under the guise of a taxi business.” While these arrests are framed as enforcement against smuggling, they also demonstrate the consequences of restricted legal routes and the criminalization of migration. People on the move, faced with no safe and legal options, rely on informal networks for transport and support. Those who assist, whether out of coercion, financial need, or solidarity, are often treated as criminals, further entrenching vulnerability without providing safer alternatives.

Taken together, these November cases reflect a pattern in which restrictive migration policies and criminalization increase risks for people on the move, exacerbate exploitation, and target those providing assistance, rather than creating meaningful avenues for protection and safe mobility.

Criminalization of solidarity

Bosnia-Herzegovina stands out as a place where solidarity actors in the migration field generally describe an environment of low(er) hostility from the authorities, in contrast with most neighbouring countries. Locals and international activists suggest one reason may be that many Bosnians themselves were on the move just thirty years ago, fostering a greater understanding of and sympathy for those fleeing unsafe conditions. Many people on the move also tend to describe Bosnian authorities as “less violent” and Bosnian communities as “more welcoming” compared to experiences in nearby countries.

In November, a respondent shared an experience that highlights this local solidarity. After a pushback from Croatia, during which Croatian police reportedly confiscated all his valuables, he and a friend walked for 18 hours to reach the nearest village. Hungry



and exhausted, they asked a local man for help. The man took them to a restaurant, provided food and drinks, offered them shelter in his home, and gave them 100 Bosnian marks. The respondent expressed gratitude for this act of solidarity.

While these experiences paint a picture of a place where expressions of solidarity toward people on the move are generally accepted, it is also true that, in the Western Balkans in general, and particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the criminalization of solidarity is often difficult to identify due to the absence of repression or direct violence against civil society organizations. Though not manifesting through explicit legal persecution or physical attacks, this process increasingly operates through indirect, structural, and administrative mechanisms. These mechanisms contribute to the gradual restriction of civic space and to the marginalization of actors engaged in migration-related assistance. While solidarity is not explicitly criminalized, it is increasingly constrained through policies that limit its operational space and political legitimacy.

This development must be understood within a broader global and state-level context characterized by a progressive reduction of political attention and material resources allocated to civil society organizations working in the field of migration. A relevant example is the reduction of international funding streams, such as the one initiated during the Trump administration, which resulted in the downsizing or termination of numerous humanitarian projects.

Moreover, in recent years, official narratives have emphasized a decrease in the number of people on the move transiting through the Balkan route. This perceived decline has been mobilized to justify the closure of reception and transit facilities. For example, in August Borici camp in Bihać, used primarily to accommodate families and unaccompanied minors, was closed. This closure produced significant consequences: individuals previously housed in the Borici camp were relocated to the Lipa Temporary Reception Centre, a geographically isolated facility situated far from urban centers and essential services. The relocation occurred without the implementation of adequate measures to ensure improved living conditions, safety, or protection standards within the camp. On the contrary, the absence of substantial infrastructural or procedural improvements exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, particularly for families and minors, and increased their exposure to insecurity and social isolation. These kinds of actions, sometimes masked as purely administrative decisions, contribute to the containment and invisibilization of migration and solidarity practices.



New migration law and expansion of the criminal framework

The new migration legislation enacted in September in Greece strongly increases penalties for people who stay in the country after their asylum application has been rejected, normalising the treatment as criminals of many of those who arrived in the country seeking safety. The law introduced the criminalisation for irregular stay and decreased the amount of days people have to voluntarily leave the country after the rejection of their claim – from 25 to 14. Now, those who stay can face up to five years in prison. Furthermore, the provision that allowed undocumented migrants to apply for residence after a seven year stay in Greece was abolished, further removing some of the previously available (though scarce and extremely precarious and harsh) pathways to establishing a new life in the country. This newly implemented law now puts people at a higher risk of deportation, unaffordable fines and incarceration.

New legislation was also proposed with regards to registration rules for civil society organisations, as well as with the expansion of criminal liability for charges of facilitation, explicitly including the work of NGOs. At the moment, all civil society organisations working on the fields of “international protection, migration and social integration” are mandated to register on the state’s NGO Registry – including all individual members and employees – in order to work in Greece and access state or EU funding. Registration requirements have become more strict, for instance, criminal offences barring registration are expanded to cover any prosecution of managers or legal representatives of the NGO for any felony and final conviction for an array of misdemeanours including defamation, theft, forgery or breach of trust. Moreover, the mere membership to an NGO also becomes grounds for increasing the penalties for charges such as facilitation and illegalised transportation. Thus, while facilitation of entry into or exit from the Greek territory of a third-country national is currently considered a felony punishable by at least five years of imprisonment and a fine of at least 20,000€ – regardless of whether the perpetrator sought profit –, commission of the act by a member of an NGO registered on the NGO Registry constitutes an aggravated version of the felony subject to at least ten years imprisonment and a fine of at least 50,000€. As for the charges of facilitation of illegal stay of a third-country national on the territory or hindrance of police investigations aimed at locating them, these are considered a misdemeanour punishable by at least two years imprisonment and a fine of at least 5,000€ – again, regardless of whether the perpetrator sought profit. However, when committed by a member of an NGO registered on the NGO Registry, the offence turns into a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a fine of at least 20,000€. Therefore, these provisions create special-status offences



based solely on an individual's participation in an NGO, particularly those registered in the Ministry's NGO Registry, in an attempt to hinder the work of civil society organisations through intimidation.

Lesvos

Criminalization of Sudanese people on the move and solidarity responses

In the past couple of months, the criminalization of Sudanese people on the move in Greece has become more visible than ever, particularly through the prosecution and imprisonment of young Sudanese men and boys for acts carried out during their own journeys to safety. These developments occurred alongside growing solidarity actions led by Sudanese communities across Greece and Europe, mobilizing against violence in Sudan and systemic injustices faced in Europe.

On November 11th, Sudanese people residing in the Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) on Lesvos organized a protest in Mytilini's Sappho Square in solidarity with Sudan and against the ongoing conflict and genocide. The demonstration included speeches addressing the historical and political roots of the violence in Sudan, moments of commemoration and silence, and efforts to inform Greek residents, international humanitarian workers, and volunteers in attendance. Similar protests were organized by Sudanese communities on other Aegean islands and in major urban centres, including Athens, reflecting a coordinated response by Sudanese people on the move to both events in Sudan and their lived realities in Europe.

These solidarity actions occur against the backdrop of protracted and dangerous journeys endured by many Sudanese individuals. Our teams have increasingly met people from Sudan who report prolonged and violent transit experiences, particularly in Libya. One Sudanese man, whom our team has spoken to in Sarajevo, recounted spending eight months in Libya after leaving Sudan two years ago, describing the journey as slow, dangerous, and dehumanizing, stating that *"there's no humanity there."* Such conversations highlight patterns of arbitrary detention, physical abuse, exploitation, forced labor, and denial of basic necessities, leaving deep physical and psychological scars rarely addressed once individuals reach Europe.

Across Greece, more than 200 Sudanese people – most aged between 15 and 21 – are currently facing criminal charges. Some have been sentenced, while others remain in pre-trial detention, facing decades or even life imprisonment. Their alleged "crime": steering the boat or performing basic tasks during their own journey to safety. These



experiences reveal a continuum of neocolonial violence: barely adults, they fled a brutal war fueled by imperialist and geopolitical interests, survived torture and abuse in Libya's EU-funded detention system, and are then criminalized in Europe.

A particularly alarming case occurred on November 24th in Chania, Crete, where eight Sudanese boys were tried as adults. Several were reportedly forced at gunpoint onto boats and were unaware of their destination. Despite birth certificates proving that some were only 15 or 16 years old, only one boy was acquitted. The remaining seven were sentenced to ten years in prison, with court hearings reportedly lasting an average of ten minutes. Judicial authorities disregarded defence arguments, evidence of coercion, and the broader context of persecution in Sudan and abuse in Libya. Taking into account the recent changes to the rules in age assessment law, these cases are even more alarming and reveal the systematic gaps in accountability.

Free Humanitarians: Trial on December 4th 2025

On December 4th 2025, the felony trial of 24 humanitarian workers began at the Mytilene Court of Appeals on Lesbos, Greece, after more than seven years of investigations and pretrial detention. These individuals, all linked to the Emergency Response Centre International (ERCI), face charges including membership in a "criminal organization," facilitation of illegal entry, and money laundering, offenses that carry sentences of up to 20 years in prison. Even after seven years, the trial was not concluded, but postponed until further hearings take place in January, 2026.

In reality, these people were performing humanitarian aid on the shores of Lesbos, helping people trying to seek safety, when they were criminalized. The hearings on December 4th–5th laid bare the flaws and contradictions in the prosecution's case: key evidence demonstrating ERCI's coordination with the Hellenic Coast Guard, as well as recognition and awards from Frontex, were ignored or dismissed.

This trial is a stark example of criminalization of solidarity, and sends a chilling message that standing in solidarity with those suffering the consequences of Europe's deadly border regime can land you behind bars.

Kos

Prison-style facilities

Kos is located only 4 km away from the Turkish coast, which makes it a common arrival point for people on the move. However, pushbacks are frequent, and as a result, in the



past few months, many people have started arriving on other nearby islands such as Kalymnos, Rhodes, and smaller islands closer to Turkey. The ways in which law and law enforcement are used to hinder movement are multiple and expanding. As it is the case in other Aegean islands, people are often accused of boat-driving and prosecuted upon their arrival in the island.

Moreover, Kos is the only island in the region which has a Pre-Departure Detention Center (PDC). This facility has capacity for 600 individuals and holds people on the move whose asylum claims have been rejected. As of December 2025, the PDC holds 42 individuals. Concerns have been raised regarding the state of the PDC, pointing at the highly restrictive and degrading conditions: individuals have limited access to outdoor space, limited access to hygiene or basic necessities, and can be detained without a clear timeline for return to their countries of origin. Even the Closed CCAC on the island, the facility where asylum seekers are residing while their asylum applications are reviewed, can be described as a prison-style type of facility with fences, security controls, and limited open spaces. Individuals are not allowed to bring food items in the camp, and actors who provide legal aid or assistance on the island have limited entry.



Public transport as a tool of border enforcement in Calais and Dunkirk

In recent months, the criminalisation of people on the move in northern France continued unabated, including the ongoing use of public transport spaces as sites of policing, surveillance, and arrest. In Calais and Dunkirk, bus stops, train stations, and surrounding infrastructure function as extensions of the border regime.

Essential modes of transport – ostensibly accessible to all – were weaponised to control and criminalise people on the basis of race, perceived migration status, and intent to move. Rather than confining repression to border crossings or coastal zones, the state embeds border enforcement into everyday civic spaces, rendering routine acts, such as waiting for a bus, entering a station, or seeking shelter, dangerous and punitive for racialised people.

Throughout November, we saw the continuation of high levels of police presence and hostile operations at essential transport hubs. Border Police (PAF), National Police (PN), and other law enforcement units were regularly observed carrying out identity checks, searches, and arrests. These operations were not based on individual suspicion or probable cause, but on racialised profiling and the collective targeting of people perceived as foreign.

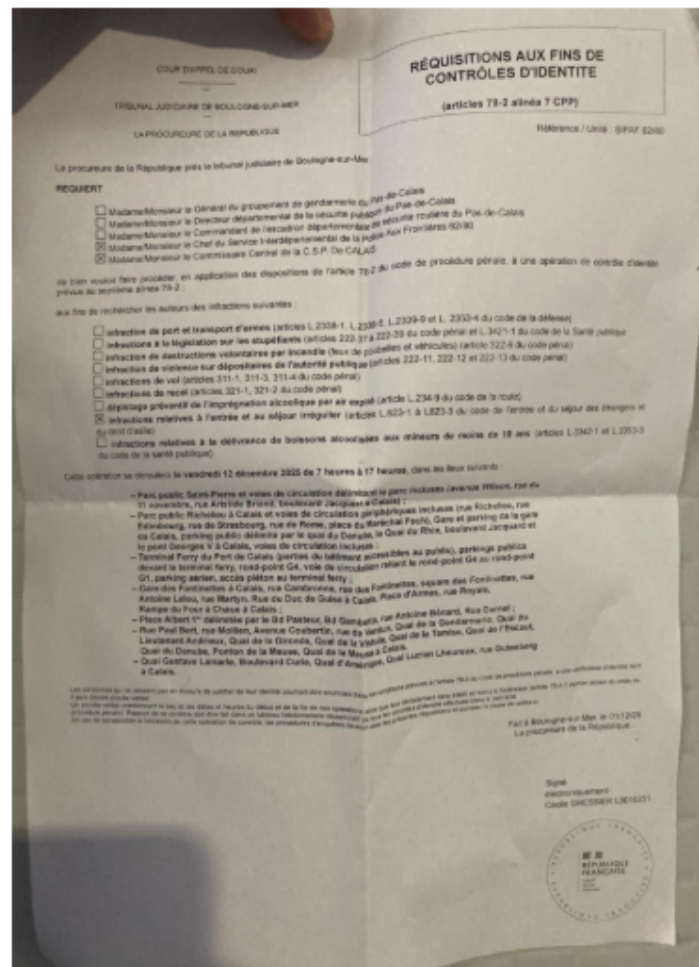
Buses in Calais are free of charge and marketed as a public service for all residents. Yet, in practice, access is heavily restricted, if not outright denied, to people on the move. The essential nature of public transport – necessary for accessing food distributions, medical appointments, asylum and administrative services, or simply moving through the city – is exploited as a means of trapping people for checks and arrests.

The asylum processing centre in Calais has been closed for several years, with the nearest facility located in Lille, approximately 110 km away. Police are aware of this and routinely target trains travelling to and from Lille for systematic searches and hostile operations. Police interventions in train and bus stations overwhelmingly target racialised individuals. White French passengers were not subjected to checks, while people of colour – particularly black and brown men – were repeatedly stopped, searched, and questioned in full view of the public. These checks were conducted without visible justification beyond skin colour, clothing, or possession of everyday items such as backpacks. Such interventions are deliberately humiliating. Being searched or arrested in crowded public spaces exposes individuals to public scrutiny,



shame, and fear, reinforcing a hierarchy of belonging in which racialised people are treated as perpetual suspects. Public transport thus becomes a site where racial boundaries are enforced, and inequality is rendered visible and routine.

Similarly, during periods of favourable weather, buses travelling towards Boulogne-Sur-Mer are heavily policed, as it is during those periods when attempted crossings are expected in this area. In this context, public services cease to function as services at all, becoming instruments of state control where people are harassed and criminalised simply for moving through public space.



A requisition order for the police, during a good weather window, stating their right to control and search people at the train station among other places in Calais. Source: Anonymous.

Arrests at bus and train stations

In 2025, at the central bus and train stations in Calais:

- At least 75 people were arrested by the PAF.
- We observed systematic ticket checks alongside racially discriminatory ID checks.
- We observed an almost constant police presence throughout the day at the train station, with routine patrols and visible shows of force.

The actual numbers are most likely higher, as BVMN member organisation Human Rights Observers (HRO) is not able to maintain a permanent presence at transport hubs. Constant observation was only possible for the first two weeks of December, with the help of volunteers from other organisations. During this time, an observation team was present at the train station every day from 5am to 7pm, documenting police presence and operations both on the trains and throughout the station.



The scenes described were not exceptional. Arrests were frequently carried out, with little to no explanation given to those detained or to their companions. In one instance observed by HRO, a pregnant woman ran after a PAF van in which her husband had been arrested, visibly distressed and unaware of where he was being taken.

Evictions and arrests

The destructive consequences of the so-called “no fixation policy” continue, evictions of informal living sites disrupting and endangering lives. In Calais and Dunkirk, routine evictions involved the systematic seizure of essential belongings. Tents, sleeping bags, blankets, clothing, documentation, and personal items were confiscated despite freezing temperatures and the absence of alternative accommodation.

These seizures are not incidental but part of a deliberate strategy of deterrence through destitution. By depriving people of the means to survive, the state manufactures hardship while framing it as merely “law enforcement”. Such practices violate fundamental rights, including the right to dignity, shelter, and protection from inhuman and degrading treatment. The impact is cumulative. Each eviction compounds physical exhaustion, psychological trauma, and vulnerability, particularly as winter conditions worsen. Furthermore, arrests are also repeatedly carried out during these operations.

While French authorities continuously justify arrests and police operations through a narrative of “combating smugglers and trafficking networks”. Observations on the ground once again demonstrated the falsity of this claim. Arrests witnessed by solidarity organisations and carried out during evictions and in transport hubs overwhelmingly targeted ordinary people on the move – those sleeping in informal sites, travelling short distances, or moving collectively for safety. There was no evidence that those arrested were involved in facilitation or exploitation. Instead, arrests functioned as tools of disruption, intimidation, and forced displacement.

In 2025, arrests during evictions included *at least*:

- 73 people in Grande-Synthe
- 119 people in Calais

Evictions were frequently accompanied by border police checks, identity verification, and the escorting away of individuals without explanation.



Beyond Calais and Dunkirk, arrests linked to attempted Channel crossings further demonstrate the indiscriminate and hostile nature of border enforcement. One individual reported:

"Me and 20 of my friends have been arrested in Le Tréport. Only three of us have been released. I don't know where I will sleep tonight."

Such accounts illustrate how arrests function not as a response to crime, but as a mechanism of dispersal and destabilisation – separating people from support networks, releasing them far from familiar areas, and leaving them without shelter or resources.

These observations confirm a deepening trend: the transformation of public infrastructure into tools of border enforcement. Bus stops, train stations, and roads are no longer neutral spaces of movement, but active sites of exclusion where racialised bodies are criminalised into immobility.

This system relies on routine, visibility, and repetition to function. Discrimination is normalised by being embedded into daily life, making harassment predictable yet unavoidable for people on the move. Accessing a bus or train carries the constant risk of arrest, separation, or violence.

Far from protecting public order, these practices erode the principles public services are meant to uphold. They entrench a racialised hierarchy of mobility, violate fundamental rights, and serve the broader objective of externalising the UK border throughout French territory. As winter deepens, the continued criminalisation of movement, survival, and presence places lives at risk. Accountability, oversight, and a fundamental shift away from punitive border policies are urgently required.



Central Mediterranean: Overview and figures

The Central Mediterranean route remains the deadliest migration route to Europe and continues to constitute a key site of restrictive and punitive migration governance. Italy is the main country of arrival along this route, with the island of Lampedusa in particular having become a symbol of Europe's externalized border regime – at the latest since the image of the dead Syrian boy Alan Kurdi in 2015.

According to the official figures of the Italian Ministry of the Interior, 4,314 people arrived in Italy in November 2025. By contrast, *borderline-europe* recorded a slightly higher number, counting 4,633 arrivals by sea during the same month. The majority of them (4,168) arrived in Sicily, especially in Lampedusa. Overall, *borderline-europe* was able to verify that 1,826 of these arrivals departed from Libya. Italian authorities rescued approximately 1,424 of those who arrived, while 876 people were rescued from distress at sea by NGO vessels. Frontex was involved in the rescue of 229 people. A further 202 people on the move reached Italian territorial waters (12 nautical miles off the coast) autonomously, without having been intercepted or rescued beforehand. The trend of increasing arrivals of unaccompanied minor migrants also continued to be observed in November 2025. Furthermore, the number of deaths and missing persons increased significantly in November 2025, compared to the previous month. According to data from *borderline-europe*, 76 people died, 161 people are reported missing, and the fate of a further 157 individuals remains unknown. As in all such cases, the number of unrecorded incidents is likely to be considerably higher.

Additionally, *borderline-europe* recorded 3,178 interceptions (pullbacks or pushbacks at sea) in the Central Mediterranean, during which boats carrying refugees were forced or towed back to the North African coast. Of these, 2,992 people were returned to Libya and 123 people to Tunisia. In addition, 15 pullbacks to Algeria were recorded. While the total number of interceptions declined slightly compared to October 2025 (3,831), reported cases of interceptions to Tunisia almost doubled, increasing from 65 to 123. Since September 2025, interceptions have been observed at significantly higher levels than in previous months and, on average, markedly higher than in previous years. Whereas the IOM recorded 17,190 people returned from the Mediterranean to Libya in 2023 and 21,764 in 2024, by the end of November 2025 at least 25,334 people had already been intercepted at sea and returned to Libya. It must be emphasised, however, that these counts of pushbacks and pullbacks cannot capture all cases; the number of unreported incidents is far higher.



Criminalisation of people on the move

Beyond functioning as a primary country of arrival, Italy also serves as a testing ground for European securitizing policies aimed at deterring migration and criminalising not only civilian actors supporting people on the move, but also those accused of facilitating crossings, including alleged boat drivers.

Together with Arci Porco Rosso in Palermo, borderline-europe has established a monitoring project on the criminalisation of boat-drivers (who are accused of having facilitated others' entry, so of being so-called "smugglers", in Italian, "scafisti"). The forthcoming yearly report by the From Sea to Prison project details the arrest of 467 people in 2025 with the accusation of "facilitation of irregular immigration". The project supports people on the move who have been systematically criminalized with the accusation of having driven a migrant boat across the Mediterranean sea. At the end of 2024, we counted that, since 2013, about 3,300 people were arrested in Italy at disembarkation with this accusation. The accusation of facilitation is grounded in a set of EU laws known as the Facilitators' Package, and is implemented by all EU states against people crossing borders at land and sea. In Italy, this law is implemented with art. 12 and 12bis of the Italian Immigration Act.

The law punishes "Anyone who promotes, directs, organizes, finances or carries out the transportation of foreigners into the territory of the state, or carries out other actions with the aim to obtain their illegal entry into the territory of the state" (art.12). Art. 12bis, introduced with the 2023 law known as the Cutro decree, massively increases punishment to a minimum of twenty years "if, as a non desired consequence, [the act causes] the death or serious injury of one or more people" (12bis).

This last year, Arci Porco Rosso and borderline-europe monitored a decrease in arrests for sea arrivals (97), and a growth in arrests in land arrivals (78), particularly on the Italian-Slovenian border, as well as other changes in Italy's criminalisation patterns that might signal broader evolving trends.

The last years have seen the development of a growing network of people who organize in solidarity with criminalized people on the move, both transnationally and in Italy. Here, collectives and associations have been forming and campaigning together on the issue of criminalisation, lawyers have been organizing to maximize their defence strategies and artists have been increasingly bringing the topic to the public debate. A couple of examples of the latter's work have been the movie "Io Capitano" by the famous Italian director Garrone, and the book "Perché ero Ragazzo" by Alaa Faraj,



which came out in October 2025 and whose author was sentenced to 30 years of imprisonment with the accusation of art. 12 after surviving a maritime incident known as the Ferragosto massacre. Alaa is currently still in prison, and has been writing from there. Thanks to his tireless work, in December 2025 Mr. Faraj was granted a pardon by the Italian President of the Republic, which reduced his sentence by 11 years.

Some recent outcomes in the courtrooms: Solidarity with boat drivers

The combined solidarity efforts of individuals (especially those directly affected), collectives, and associations all across Italy and transnationally seem to be slowly changing the environment in which court decisions are made. This year, Maysoon Majidi and Marjan Jamali, two Iranian women imprisoned for facilitation in the Calabria region, who had attracted nation-wide attention and campaigning, have been acquitted of all charges. Sadly, their co-defendants who received less mediatic attention were sentenced.

Similarly, four people who were arrested in Naples in July 2024, three of which were from Sudan and one from Chad, were acquitted at the request of the prosecutor himself in December 2025. Their defence team successfully demonstrated the juridical exemption of the state of *necessity* [1]. In December, the prosecutor in another case also requested a defendant's acquittal, in a trial we are monitoring, after a judicial ordeal lasting almost ten years. We are waiting for the appeal court judge's decision in March 2026.

Another positive piece of news is the acquittal, in December 2025, of three co-defendants from Gambia, Sudan, and Nigeria, accused under Article 12bis, and on trial at the Agrigento court. Once again, the defence demonstrated the lack of evidence and the superficial nature of the investigations. Of the three, one had already been released from pre-trial detention in the early stages of the first instance trial, two were released from prison after the acquittal, of which one was transferred directly to the administrative detention centre of Milo, in Trapani, despite his innocence being recognized. We are currently supporting and monitoring their situations.

[1] In Italian criminal law, the state of necessity is a justification provided for under Article 54 of the Criminal Code. This justification applies when a person commits an act that would normally constitute a criminal offense, but does so in order to save themselves or others from an immediate and serious danger, and is therefore not punishable. In the case of boat drivers, acquittals for the state of necessity occur, for example, if the judge recognizes that the accused has taken the helm of the boat because they were forced at departure, or if a situation of extreme danger occurred during the crossing, or in slightly broader interpretations, that this was the only way for the person to escape a situation of immediate danger.



These small but still important moments of success indicate that something might be shifting in Italy's criminalisation patterns. This does not mean, however, that boat drivers are no longer being criminalized, and much less that criminalisation is coming to an end; For example, we should be concerned about the transnational shifts in criminalisation strategies, which include the externalization of detention and criminalisation to third countries. We have seen that economic and political agreements between Italy and the EU and countries like Tunisia and Egypt have been specifically conditioned on "curbing illegal migration" and "cracking down on smuggling networks". We know that this has resulted in strong increases in arrests in these two countries along very similar lines as those we see in the EU under the crime of "facilitation". Furthermore, with the introduction of the new EU Pact on Migration in 2026, third countries will predictably be put in charge more often of the offshore processing and detention of people on the move trying to arrive in Italy.

Criminalisation and endangerment of search and rescue

On the other side of this criminalisation – and as a direct consequence of the criminalisation of movement – lies the targeting of those conducting rescue operations at sea. This month, another civilian rescue vessel was, once again, detained. The rescue ship operated by the NGO Mediterranea Saving Humans, which had been lifted by a court order, allowing the ship to resume operations on October 29th, was stopped again shortly thereafter.

The reason given was the docking at a port that had not been officially assigned on November 4th. Following three separate rescue operations with a total of 92 people on board, the Ministry of the Interior had assigned the distant port of Livorno as the port of disembarkation. Instead, the vessel headed to Porto Empedocle, where all 92 people, including 31 unaccompanied minors, were ultimately able to disembark. According to assessments by various medical professionals, this decision was necessary, as the rescued individuals would not have been physically able to endure an additional three-day sea journey. Some of them were in urgent need of medical care. In addition, two public prosecutors had called for the rescued people to be allowed to disembark in Porto Empedocle. Despite the medically certified vulnerability of those rescued and the assessments of the prosecutors, the ship was once again detained for heading to the nearest port, and subjected to a 60-day administrative detention and a fine of €10,000 under the law known as Piantadosi Decree. The latter is the primary legal instrument used to criminalise civilian search and rescue operations, notably by assigning distant ports of disembarkation, imposing administrative detentions and fines, and thereby systematically obstructing timely and effective rescue at sea.



On the night of November 2nd, the civil search and rescue organisation *Mediterranea* was harassed in international waters by four speedboats belonging to unknown Libyan militias. According to a report by the newspaper *Domani*, whose journalists were on board at the time, the boats approached the ship without navigation lights and with masked men on board. The militias carried out risky manoeuvres in close proximity to the NGO vessel and intimidated the crew through their aggressive behaviour. This incident is part of a series of increasingly frequent and extremely dangerous intimidation attempts against civilian sea rescuers in the central Mediterranean by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. Documented incidents from this and the previous year can be reviewed collectively in the new *Mediterranea Report*.

The Justice Fleet and resistance by civilian search and rescue

Despite these events, the commitment of many organisations to saving lives in the Mediterranean continues. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), for instance, has deployed its new vessel *Oyvon* for renewed rescue missions, after the crew had already carried out two rescues in November. According to MSF, the smaller and faster vessel *Oyvon* represents a targeted response to the restrictive policies of the Italian government. Their previous vessel was frequently forced to transport only a small number of rescued people over long distances to assigned ports, despite being equipped to accommodate large numbers. As a result, MSF had suspended its operations in the Mediterranean for approximately one year.

Just one day after the renewed detention of the *Mediterranea*, thirteen search and rescue organisations announced the formation of the Justice Fleet alliance. Their aim is to strengthen solidarity networks with people detained in Libya and to increase public and political pressure to oppose the criminalisation of search and rescue operations and to end the EU's funding and legitimisation of massive human rights violations in Libya. As an act of civil resistance, all Justice Fleet vessels have ceased any operational communication with the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. They no longer share their position data with Libyan authorities and no longer follow their instructions. Instead, the coalition calls for compliance with international maritime law, which obliges the rescue of people in distress at sea and requires disembarkation at a place of safety. The alliance emphasises that the groups referred to as the Libyan Coast Guard are not a legitimate search and rescue authority but part of a violent regime that is financed by the EU.



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**

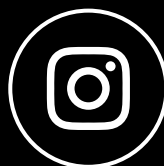
Network structure and contact

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.



@Border_Violence