

MONTHLY REPORT | DECEMBER 2025

ILLEGAL PUSHBACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS

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, InfoPark, Legal Centre Lesvos, We Are Monitoring and Human Rights Observers.



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ILLEGAL PUSHBACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS



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Border Violence
Monitoring Network



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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

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Executive summary

This report gathers updates from the month of December 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 borderline-europe.

This month, we look at the latest steps of EU border externalisation into Bosnia-Herzegovina, a dynamic well known in the Western Balkans, benefitting from many of these countries' accession goals. In the context of further EU funding destined to "strengthen the response to irregular migration", we have witnessed the deployment of the first Frontex officers in the country, which has been one of the very last ones in the region to allow the presence of the Agency. Their arrival marks another move of the relentless push for further securitisation and militarisation of the European borders, all whilst the documented human rights violations by state authorities continue, as do the deaths and disappearances of people seeking safety. This month, we report on the deaths of at least three people - after their boat capsized in the Sava river - and the disappearances of two more people in the Drina river. The numbers of these preventable deaths are, however, probably higher, as documentation is often difficult and state bodies and authorities non-transparent.

Furthermore, another person died while in the supposed care of the state in the Lipa Temporary Reception Centre (TRC), Mukter Hossain, after days of denial of medical care following a pushback by Croatian authorities, illustrating how violence upon violence is regularly perpetrated against people on the move with absolute impunity. The extreme negligence and inadequacy of the medical care in the TRC was also shown in the case of several residents suffering from serious frostbite, and receiving no appropriate treatment.

The compounded issues of exposure to winter conditions and lack of dignified basic services - especially, medical care - are recurrent in this report, as authorities consistently fail to maintain and adapt the facilities to the weather. In Serbia, people in informal settlements, as well as in the state-run Preševo Reception Centre, are facing extreme cold and multiple health issues, related to the prolonged wetness, insufficient blankets, and nutritional gaps, making life increasingly difficult. In Greece, many people have also reported the harsh conditions in multiple state-funded accommodation centres, as well as in several Pre-Removal Detention Centres. Dilapidated facilities - with missing windows, doors and heating equipment - add to the extremely insufficient distribution of essential items, such as shoes, clothing or blankets, with some people reporting going without shoes or new clothes for over 20 days after their arrival. The government's failure to provide the legally-mandated



Executive summary

cash assistance to asylum-seekers since April 2024 also makes the self-provision of these and other basic necessities impossible for most people.

Again this month, the list of preventable deaths resulting from the institutionalised violence inherent to the European migration regime grew in the Aegean, where at least 20 people lost their lives and more went missing after six documented shipwrecks. One of these shipwrecks, occurring on December 6th, near Crete, became one of the deadliest maritime tragedies of the year in Greece, with at least 17 people reported dead, and 15 others reported missing. Only two people survived. In this context, pushbacks and pullbacks continue to be systematically perpetrated by authorities, further endangering people and violating their right to seek asylum. This month, at least 1,300 people – the actual number is likely to be much higher – were impacted by these illegal actions in the Aegean.

Similarly, pushbacks and pullbacks remained a regular tactic in the Central Mediterranean, where at least 2,489 people were forcibly and illegally returned in December, mostly to Libya and Tunisia. This is despite the documented human rights violations perpetrated by the authorities of those countries against people on the move. The institutional neglect and violence, and the criminalisation of civil search and rescue organisations has also led to the death of 144 people and the disappearance of 161 more, this month. 116 of these people died in a shipwreck on December 19th, after which the authorities failed to respond and initiate prompt search and rescue operations. In this context, the government continues to target the civil society organisations that step up to fulfill the work they fail to do. This month, another search and rescue vessel has been detained for at least 20 days after they refused to communicate with the so-called Libyan coastguard during a rescue operation, as it could pose a threat for the crew and the survivors.

In Northern France, the authorities conducted an eviction of one of the largest informal living sites in Calais – estimated to host around 1,000 people –, without following the appropriate legal provisions and failing to provide adequate alternative housing to all residents despite the freezing night temperatures. Moreover, in December, solidarity organisations carried out continuous observation at the Calais train station. They collected ample data on the constant police presence and systematic racial profiling aimed at hindering the ability of people on the move to access essential services, such as transportation to get to the closest facility that allows for the filing of an asylum claim, in Lille. While the government continues to spend public resources in institutionalised harassment of people on the move, UK fascist groups increase their reach and violent visits to French shores, without any significant response from French or British authorities.

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



Arrivals and departures from Temporary Reception Centres (TRCs)

In November 2025, IOM reported an increase in arrivals across the three Temporary Reception Centres (TRCs) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with an average of approximately 980 arrivals per week and a total TRC population of around 1,458 people at the end of the month. Departures fluctuated throughout November but followed an overall increasing trend, reflecting sustained onward movement. In December 2025, population movements continued changing, with marked weekly fluctuations. Overall, December was characterized by high turnover, confirming the role of TRCs as short-term transit facilities.

Conditions in Lipa TRC

Among those facilities, Lipa continued to function as a key reception site - currently, the only one - in the Una Sana Canton, hosting a stable but fluctuating population, with higher arrivals recorded in early December, followed by increased departures in mid-December. A significant number of people on the move, however, remained outside the centre in informal or private accommodation in the Bihać area. Thus, importantly, and as it is usually the case, official figures did not fully capture the total number of people arriving in and leaving the area.

Meanwhile, healthcare services within the facility continue to be insufficient to meet the needs of residents, a situation that has had fatal consequences this month. The limited number of medical staff and restricted working hours do not allow for adequate coverage. As a result, people on the move are often compelled to rely on external actors for medical assistance. Residents consistently report very limited access to medical professionals, with doctors rarely present in the camp. Official standards for "minimum essential care" are not being met. There is no functional medical referral system, no consistent access to essential medications, no structured management of chronic illnesses, and no psychological support services, despite significant mental health needs among residents.

Two recent and extremely serious examples highlight the inadequacy of healthcare services, as well as discriminatory practices and negligence by camp authorities: the death of a 41-year-old man from Bangladesh, Mukter Hossain, and the presence of two adults from Sudan with severe cold-related injuries inside the facility.

On November 23rd, Mukter Hossain died inside the Lipa TRC after authorities failed to respond to a clear medical emergency. Mukter had returned to Lipa on November



20th, following an illegal pushback from Croatia, during which he reported to have been beaten by the authorities. He arrived at the facility in severe pain and vomiting, but received only minimal treatment and no follow-up care. Over the next few days, his condition rapidly worsened. Despite repeated requests by residents for medical assistance and an ambulance, the TRC staff and the police refused to intervene. On the afternoon of his death, witnesses reported acute respiratory distress and explicitly asked authorities to call emergency services, which was again denied. Mukter died in his bed at approximately 17:15, after several days of repeated requests for medical assistance and a demand for an ambulance during a clear medical emergency. His death was preventable and constitutes a case of deliberate non-assistance and fatal medical neglect, reflecting serious and systemic failures in access to healthcare at Lipa TRC.

The second case relates to the severe medical and psychological condition observed in two other individuals residing in the Lipa TRC. Their situation raises serious concerns regarding a cold-related injury – severe swelling of the feet accompanied by marked discoloration, inability to walk or stand, and progressive loss of sensation in the lower limbs, together with psychological distress – and inadequate medical follow-up in the camp setting. As reported by an anonymous source, these two people were previously admitted to hospital care for several days but were subsequently returned to the camp without documented follow-up or continued medical monitoring. Following their return, no regular clinical assessments were reportedly conducted. Despite being accommodated in the TRC's designated medical area, the patients' condition has progressively worsened. The clinical presentation is highly suggestive of frostbite and cold-related injury. In the absence of urgent specialist assessment and treatment, there is a significant risk of irreversible tissue damage, including potential limb loss.

These cases illustrate the urgent need for systematic medical evaluation, continuous monitoring, and appropriate referral pathways for individuals in the Lipa TRC. They highlight a systemic failure in healthcare provision and reflect broader patterns of discrimination, negligence and institutional violence experienced by people on the move within state-run facilities.

Moreover, the living conditions in these facilities, though harsh all year long, tend to deteriorate significantly during periods of low temperatures and snowfall. Containers are warmed up only by small heaters, and icy pathways within the camp have caused several residents to slip and sustain injuries. Given the insufficient healthcare services available, even minor injuries pose serious risks to residents' health and safety.

Other important service gaps also persist following the closure of the Borići TRC, with child and family-focused spaces underfunded and understaffed. Unaccompanied



minors continue to have limited access to dedicated services and children's zones remain poorly separated from families and single men, thus compromising safeguarding. Other vulnerable groups, including survivors of border violence and other types of violence, are also forced to rely on the insufficient services provided at the remote Lipa TRC, facing increased exposure to risks and inappropriate support. In this context, individuals with pre-existing psychological needs remain in acute distress, without access to meaningful assistance – even following illegal pushbacks. While referral mechanisms exist, they are very limited, and constantly leave many at continued risk. Overall, the situation hasn't improved since October, despite the concerns raised by numerous actors.

Border violence, deaths and disappearances

With the onset of winter, Collective Aid's team in Sarajevo have seen an increase in deaths and disappearances of people on the move across Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. Testimonies of pushbacks also remain consistent. As temperatures drop and rivers freeze, the combination of dangerous crossings, inadequate rescue capacities, and systematic border violence continues to cause preventable loss of life.

In November and December 2025, multiple fatal incidents occurred along border rivers. On November 17th, one person drowned in the Kolpa River separating Croatia and Slovenia. Ten days later, two individuals disappeared in the Drina River between Bosnia and Serbia. On December 11th, a boat carrying thirteen persons capsized on the Sava River near Slavonski Brod, resulting in three deaths and ten hospitalizations for hypothermia. Authorities reported that most were nationals of China and Turkey, with one person still missing.

Local solidarity actors also reported numerous unconfirmed cases of drowning and disappearance. Bodies recovered from the Drina River in recent months often remain unidentified, reflecting long-standing deficiencies in transnational coordination and forensic capacity. According to Serbian organisation Klikaktiv, at least forty-four people died attempting to cross the Drina between 2020 and early 2025. Families face major barriers in tracing missing relatives, while identification efforts depend largely on volunteer initiatives such as the 4D's online database.

Beyond river crossings, the death of Mukter Hossain, described above, as a result of medical neglect and after a violent pushback at the hands of Croatian authorities is also a direct consequence of the violent border regime. Importantly, no investigation has been opened into his case. Similar findings from Bulgaria, where three Egyptian



minors froze to death at the end of 2024 after being ignored by border police, point to systemic and region-wide failures of protection. These deaths are not isolated incidents but consequences of policies that prioritize deterrence and containment over protection and accountability.

Winter conditions have also led to a rise in frostbite-related amputations among people on the move in Bosnia. At the end of November, three Sudanese men were rescued with severe injuries in the mountain area of Bihać. They were transported to Tuzla, where they all underwent the amputation of their legs, due to frostbite; and two of them also had their hands amputated. Their current situation and future placement remain unclear. The association Djeluj.ba assisting the three men has reported receiving unofficial information that they may be transferred to Sarajevo, but no details regarding the destination, responsible institution, or type of care have been officially confirmed.

Transition from IOM management

IOM is nearing the end of its mandate managing the migration response in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with responsibility shifting to State authorities. This transition must be understood in the context of the EU 2025 Enlargement Report for the country. The EU allocated €13.5 million to “strengthen the response to irregular migration and organized crime”, a framework that, far from strengthening protection systems, promises to entrench the securitisation and militarisation of borders in the region, with the sponsorship of EU taxpayers’ money. The handover from IOM to State authorities is a critical moment within the broader pattern of European externalization of border management. Without transparent management and respect for human rights, people on the move risk further marginalization, unsafe conditions, and preventable deaths in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the wider Western Balkans.

Frontex deployment

The EU’s influence over the country’s response to illegalised migration has also been paved by the October 2025 Status Agreement enabling Frontex operations in Bosnia. The deal represents a key step, marking the start of a European Border and Coast Guard presence in the country, with 100 officers deployed under host-state command to support “border management activities” along all borders, including those with non-EU neighbours such as Serbia. In November, Frontex teams were observed conducting patrols along the Bosnia-Serbia border as part of their operational mandate. The Frontex deployment in the country, one of the last ones to sign an agreement of this kind, constitutes a new step of the ongoing externalization of EU border control to the Western Balkans, likely leading to expanded operational activity and further militarization of migration management.



Winter conditions in informal living sites and in Preševo Camp

Throughout December 2025, Collective Aid's teams in Serbia conducted distributions and assessments across informal living sites and the Preševo Reception Centre, in the south of the country, documenting severely deteriorated conditions amid harsh winter weather. Many people on the move remained dispersed in makeshift settlements, abandoned buildings, overcrowded tents (often 5–6 people per unit) clustered around open fires, and exposed areas, where waterlogged, muddy ground made rest nearly impossible. Persistent rain, thick fog, and sub-zero temperatures left clothing and blankets perpetually damp, with individuals reporting days without dry attire. Many wore torn jackets, broken shoes, and inadequate winter gear, with limited replacements available.

Access to basic services was critically deficient. Clean water, electricity, and phone charging were scarce, leading to dead batteries. Food distribution was irregular and inadequate; multiple accounts described multi-day fasts interspersed with single days of meager meals. One man explained, *"Eating is no longer my priority, all my energy goes to staying warm, walking, and surviving the cold."* Despite this, resilience shone through small acts of solidarity: groups gathered around fires to cook together, dry clothes held near flames, play music from portable speakers, or share arriving visitors' food.

Hygiene conditions fueled health crises, particularly scabies outbreaks from infested bedding and overcrowding. In the surroundings of Preševo Reception Centre, meals were provided three times a day, but deemed barely edible due to poor quality and taste. Medical care drew sharp criticism, doctors were described as inattentive, with one person noting a consultation offering no meaningful support.

Health among people on the move was broadly compromised, tied directly to environmental exposure. Common issues included back pain, foot injuries from relentless walking, infected scratches, and skin conditions exacerbated by damp, crowded sleeping spaces. Prolonged wetness, cold nights, insufficient blankets, and nutritional gaps caused visible exhaustion, weakness, and early frostbite signs. Limited medical access compounded physical decline with emotional strain from isolation and uncertainty.



Rhetoric surrounding pushbacks in Greece and beyond

Pushbacks are a violent and illegal practice employed by states in order to prevent people on the move from entering territories where they may apply for asylum. Due to their illegality under international law, states tend to carry them out systemically in a discreet manner, swept under the rug and likely remaining below the radar were it not for monitoring by human rights organisations. In December, all circumspect was thrown to the wind by Greek Health Minister Adonis Georgiadis, as he explicitly called for the legalisation of pushbacks and perpetuated derogatory language towards people on the move, referring to them as “downtrodden people from Africa”. The fact that such rhetoric could be so casually expressed into public statements shows how emboldened politicians feel in their bid to water down human rights protections. The violence contained in language cannot be taken lightly, it holds real consequences, eventually translating into official policies, influencing society, and appeasing fascist groups. Anti-refugee sentiment is moving beyond dogwhistles to the mainstream, and for a member of the Greek Government to show such a clear contempt for and disregard of both the law and institutions which hold him to account, signals an alarming change in strategy. Georgiadis represents Greece joining the ranks of the UK, Denmark and many other European countries, as they lobby to weaken and restrict the European Convention on Human Rights in its decisions concerning people on the move.

Chronic lack of winter support on the mainland

The lack of winterisation has been a recurring issue raised by BVMN and other civil society actors over the years in Greece, largely to no avail. The current winter months are proving particularly harsh for third country nationals either accommodated in state-funded facilities or detained in Pre-Removal Detention Centres (PRDCs). Mobile Info Team has been receiving reports from asylum seekers living in various camps, including Katsikas, Koutsochero, Diavata, Drama and Malakasa, requesting support for finding clothes, shoes and blankets. While some are lucky enough to live in a camp located close to a community centre organising non-food item distributions, others have no other choice but to face the cold with what they have, at best sharing clothes and blankets with other camp residents. Reports from Malakasa reveal that the clothes distribution in the facility is woefully inadequate, with some people arriving and remaining without shoes for the duration of the 25 day de facto detention period. Once people are able to leave the facility, the majority cannot afford transportation to the nearest town to access basic services, considering the remote location of most camps on the mainland. This is also partly due to the consistent failure from the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum to abide by its obligations and provide asylum seekers with regular cash assistance payments since April 2024.



In addition, solidarity actors operating next to these facilities report that camp residents are living in dilapidated accommodations, making protection from the cold impossible. They mention the lack of windows, doors and heating systems in the containers, compounded by the general lack of provision of basic necessities, including hygiene items.

In detention centres, where exiting the facilities to access basic services is not possible, the inability to protect oneself from the cold adds to the uncertainty and anxiety of confinement. In particular, people detained in Sintiki and Amygdaleza have been reporting highly concerning conditions, including a complete lack of warm water and some people explaining that they were still wearing the same clothes as they did upon arrival four months earlier. Added to undignified living conditions inside facilities and rights violations, including the impossibility for detainees to access basic information on their situation, legal support and appropriate medical care, people in contact with BVMN member organisations and partners display clear signs of psychological distress.

Shipwrecks in the Aegean

Since 2015, shipwrecks in Greek waters have become a terribly frequent consequence of the border regime faced by people on the move. In December 2025 there were six shipwrecks and a total of 20 people lost their lives, with more missing. One of these shipwrecks, occurring on December 6th, approximately 26 nautical miles southwest of Crete, is cemented as one of the deadliest maritime tragedies of this year, with at least 17 people reported dead, and 15 others reported missing. Only two people survived. We stand in solidarity and mourning with the survivors and families left behind, but there is an aching silence regarding accountability from the Greek state. It is because the Greek authorities fail to provide safe passages and refuge, that people on

December 6th. Crete

There was a shipwreck near Crete where 17 people lost their lives, 15 were reported missing and two people survived.

December 7th. Samos

Amidst a panic onboard a boat arriving at Svala Beach in the Vourliotes area, while the vessel was being pursued by the Hellenic Coast Guard, a 9 year old child fell into the sea and was fatally struck by the boat's propeller.



the move are forced to risk their lives by crossing this lethal passage through the Mediterranean, dubbed the deadliest border in the world by the International Organisation on Migration. Any references to these incidents hide behind the Aegean Sea as if this was an actor to blame. In 2025, these preventable deaths are still occurring monthly at a heartbreakingly high rate. Time and time again, they are exacerbated and often engineered by state authorities. Below is a description of the six known shipwrecks this month:

Crete

Increase in arrivals in Crete and Gavdos

Despite the extreme danger of the route from Libya to Crete, Crete and Gavdos saw a large increase in arrivals before the end of the year. According to the coast guards on site, 3,000 people reached their shores in December alone. As a result, the facilities used to detain newly arrived people in Crete once again reached their maximum capacity. In addition, transfers to the mainland have been delayed due to a lack of space on ferries during the end-of-year holidays. This led to the detention of around 500 people in the Former Agia Exhibition Centre in Chania for at least 10 days in unsanitary conditions.

These developments contradict the Minister of Migration and Asylum's proud claims that the new, drastic - and unlawful - measures implemented in 2025 have been effective at deterring people on the move

December 16th. Samos

There was a shipwreck near the Petalides area of Samos, reporting three people missing at sea after falling off the boat.

December 25th. Farmakonisi.

Authorities located 13 people on the uninhabited island of Farmakonisi, reporting one minor missing.

December 29th. Samos

There was a shipwreck near the Petalides area of Samos, where four members of the group were reported missing at sea and the body of one of the missing was found during search operations.

December 30th. Samos

Authorities launched a search and rescue mission for an inflatable boat in distress off the coast of Kouroudere, Samos, and during the operation the body of one woman was recovered.



from crossing borders to reach the Greek territory. As highlighted by the Deputy Mayor for Social Policy in the Municipality of Chania, Eleni Zervoudaki, arrivals in Crete "only stop on days of extremely bad weather and strong winds". This suggests, once again that, however strict they may be, the Minister's measures will not be able to stop people from taking to the sea in search of safety in Greece and Europe, rather, they will be responsible for more violations and suffering.

Samos

Pushbacks, pullbacks and criminalisation

As described in the section above, December was also a deadly month by the shores of Samos, with at least 2 people losing their lives and several more going missing. Pushbacks and pullbacks continued on a large scale across the Aegean. According to available data from both the Turkish Coast Guard and the Aegean Boat Report, 50% of boats crossing the Aegean were "apprehended" or rescued in December, with 25% recorded as having been pushed back by the Hellenic Coast Guard. These illegal pushbacks and pullbacks impacted over 1300 people, and continue to systematically violate fundamental rights across the Aegean. It is critical to note that independent reporting on illegal pushbacks and pullbacks is difficult and they are therefore extremely underreported - partly due to the criminalisation of independent monitoring organisations. The criminalisation of NGOs and solidarity organisations escalated in December with the new draft law put forward by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, described in our last monthly report.

Procedural delays and irregularities

In December, numerous clients of BVMN member organisation I Have Rights reported persistent delays with their asylum interviews, as well as significant delays in receiving decisions on their asylum applications. Three people reported delays in the decision of over six months or even a year. At the same time, five clients described multiple postponements to their interview dates and delays often communicated at a very short notice. One client reported their interview had been delayed on five separate occasions over a four month period. In a separate issue, a client informed I Have Rights that he had not been identified as vulnerable due to a chronic health condition. As a consequence, they were not provided with health care, medication or a health card despite having Hepatitis B.

Updates from the CCAC

At the start of December there were 1596 people held in the Samos Closed Control Access Centre (CCAC), amounting to a 78% occupancy rate, based on the actual



Samos CCAC capacity of 2042 people. This number differs from the official, and arbitrarily adjusted, capacity of the CCAC (3664). Over the course of December the number of people held in the Samos CCAC increased to 1701 people - 83% of the actual capacity of the Samos CCAC. Over 600 people arrived in Samos throughout the month.

The undignified living and sanitary conditions in the Samos CCAC continued to be a source of concern. I Have Rights clients reported on multiple issues related to food over the month of December: three clients described that food was provided only twice a day at 8am and noon, and that the lack of cooking or heating facilities made it impossible to heat up their meals. Furthermore, several large storms hit Samos this month, and clients reported that food was only delivered once a day during those times, and that both electricity and hot water were not functioning in their containers. One of these clients described that it took six days for the hot water to be fixed in their container. Another three people informed I Have Rights of issues with the showers in the camp, ranging from the cleaning standards to the lack of hot water. Limited progress seems to be made to improve these matters by the camp authorities. As one client puts it: *"Even when you complain nothing changes, I thought about complaining about the complaints"*.

The accommodation standards raised additional concerns given the zero degrees night temperatures this month. Two people contacted I Have Rights to report having to sleep in a large open kitchen area, while one other person described sleeping on the floor on a sheet. Reports of mice and cockroaches persisted in December, with several people stating their presence in their containers. These issues have been shared by the clients of I Have Rights throughout 2025. However, even though under the EU Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU and the recast directive, member states are obliged to provide applicants with access to both dignified accommodation and food, the conditions reported in the Samos CCAC continue to fall well below these standards.

The situation is exacerbated by the endemic long-term issue of cash assistance payments, mentioned above, which have not been paid by the Greek Ministry of Migration since April 2024. Despite cash assistance being a fundamental right in EU and Greek law, many people in Greece have been denied this right for over 21 months. Without consistent cash assistance, people are denied the ability to access food and health care in a dignified way and are severely hampered in their access to essential services and NGOs that provide both psycho social and legal support. For people in the Samos CCAC, the trip from the camp to Vathy, the closest town, is a 14km round trip by foot.



State-sponsored shelters due to severe cold weather

Due to severe cold in the last weeks of December, the “Plan grand froid” (PGF) (Plan for Severe Cold, in English) was activated by the French state for the Department Nord and the Department Pas-de-Calais. Emergency shelters were thus provided for people on the move in state-owned facilities, such as a gymnasium in the Dunkirk area.

The shelter in Dunkirk is located about a two-hour walking distance from the living sites. A shuttle was arranged to bring people there, but transport back had to be managed by the people on the move themselves. Several people reported a police presence at the closest bus stop. Here, the officers conducted identity checks, intimidated people on the move, and even used tear gas. It was described that one person was injured by a police officer, while another man was reportedly taken to a police station, where he received a note forcing him to leave France.

Several people stated that they were too afraid to return to the shelter, due to the constant police presence. Considering that temperatures remain close to zero, Human Rights Observers (HRO) considers the police presence near the shelter to be completely unacceptable. Some people also reported that certain personal belongings, such as tents, were not allowed inside. It's clear that the shelters did not meet the needs of people on the move, which led many to reject the offer and remain outside in temperatures dropping below 0°C.

Legal appeal against the state in Dunkirk

On November 28th, six solidarity organizations operating in the area of Dunkirk filed a legal appeal against the local government, municipalities, and health infrastructures, demanding improved living conditions for people on the move.

The Administrative Court of Lille published its decision on December 4th. The ruling includes the installation of closed toilets in proximity to the living sites, the provision of showers, and containers to transport water. While this can be considered a minor success, the decision still fails to address the gross human rights violations occurring during evictions. Close to the newly installed toilets, the construction of a massive concrete wall is ongoing. This wall has been erected to hinder access and restrict movement for people on the move and reflects the state's prioritization of security infrastructure over the dignity and basic needs of people.

Many demands of the legal appeal were rejected, perpetuating undignified living conditions under an oppressive border regime. These included demands for food and



clothing distribution, medical care, human and/or material support for individual needs (e.g. accompaniment to appointments), charging stations for phones, provision of nearby shelter, interpretation services at hospitals, and easier access to an asylum processing centre.

“Operation Overload” and British fascists in France

Since the end of November, British fascists and activists associated with the so-called “Operation Overload” have travelled to the shores of Dunkirk and Calais to harass people on the move. They have reportedly destroyed boats, stolen life vests, taken illegal drone footage, graffitied swastikas near living sites, and surveilled and harassed NGO distributions. Many of these disturbing actions are livestreamed on social media and receive significant attention from their followers.

As of the end of December, no response from either the British or French governments has been observed, demonstrating that the measures implemented at the border do not serve “public safety” but instead reflect racist and xenophobic objectives.

In the summer of 2025, riots linked to the “Raise the Colours” campaign occurred in the United Kingdom (see our [September report](#)). The campaign ostensibly aims to promote patriotism and “unite the country” by encouraging the display of English and UK flags, while espousing a far-right ideology, anti-migration stance, and xenophobic rhetoric targeting the arrival of small boats on the southern shores of the UK.

A group of men initially operating under the “Raise the Colours” campaign has since created a separate movement called “Operation Overload.” This movement goes beyond the group’s original aims and actively calls for the interception of small boats on the French coast. Their livestreams show them stabbing and destroying boats on shore, as well as harassing NGO workers and people on the move.

Actively recruiting “men of England,” they organize themselves to “fight for their country.”, legitimising xenophobic hatred and racist beliefs with rhetoric of patriotism and internal security. In December, they made a public call for donations to purchase equipment for their activities, including night-vision goggles, stab-proof vests, and thermal imaging technology. Their livestreams on social media reach up to 100,000 followers, further building and spreading networks of violent and fascist ideology.



Train station observation in Calais

During the first two weeks of December, HRO conducted continuous observations at Calais' main train station. This was carried out in cooperation with Secours Catholique, Caritas France, La Cimade, and La Plateforme des Soutiens aux Migrant·e·s. With the support of additional local volunteers, teams of two observers were present at the station from Monday to Friday, from 5:15 am until 6:50 pm.

The aim of the mission was to document obstacles imposed by police to prevent access to trains or to restrict movement upon arrival in Calais. The train is not only one of the primary ways to reach Calais, but also the main means of transport to access the nearest asylum processing centre in Lille.

While data analysis is still ongoing, it is already evident that racial profiling is systematically practiced during identity and ticket checks at Calais Ville station. On December 4th, for example, four national police officers conducted such checks. While white passengers were allowed to present photos of their ID cards and continue their journeys, several Somali passengers were searched, patted down, and taken into custody.

These incidents are not isolated but demonstrate how police systematically intimidate and prevent people on the move from freely accessing public transportation, thus often hindering access to other essential services.

Eviction of the largest living site in Calais

One of Calais' biggest informal living sites is currently being evicted on a large scale. The site covers a vast area, with tents grouped in several sections. Altogether, the population is estimated at around 1,000 people. The first section was evicted on November 20th, and a second section was evicted on December 12th. Local authorities claim that these operations follow legal procedures; however, no documentation has been published or made available, and no prior information was provided to the inhabitants.

An eviction of this scale requires specific legal conditions to be met, which were not the case in either operation. Unmet requirements included the presence of a social worker, the creation of an inventory of seized items, and a mechanism that allows people to retrieve their belongings. Additionally, no suitable alternative housing was provided.



The eviction on December 12th began before 6:00 am and lasted until approximately 1:30 pm. The seizure of 129 tents, 39 tarpaulins, 31 blankets, 19 mattresses, and many other items was observed. Personal documents, asylum applications, money, and phones were also confiscated. The actual number of seized items likely exceeds these observations, as police established a wide perimeter that limited documentation. Police also prevented people on the move from retrieving their belongings. During the eviction, various forms of violence were observed, including intimidation, threats, pushing, and the use of tear gas and batons.

Many people were transported by bus to state-provided shelters. These shelters are often located several hours away, cannot be chosen by the individuals themselves, and no transport back to Calais is provided.

Further evictions of this living site (commonly known as "Hospital") are expected in the coming weeks. HRO is therefore conducting early-morning security checks to increase the likelihood of being present from the start of future evictions.



Arrivals

In December 2025, 3,031 people on the move reached Italy by sea, according to figures from [borderline-europe](#). This represents a decrease of 36,4% compared to November and a decrease of 4,4% compared to the same month of the previous year. A steady decline in the number of arrivals during the winter months is common, as weather conditions make the route across the Mediterranean even more unpredictable and dangerous.

The majority of people (2,081 individuals, or 68,8%) arrived in Sicily – primarily on Lampedusa. A further 280 people (9,2%) arrived in Calabria, and 250 people (8,2%) arrived in Sardinia.

Of the arrivals, 1,379 people (45,5%) were rescued by Italian authorities, while 735 (24%) were rescued by civil search and rescue operations. In December, Frontex

was involved in the rescue of 92 people (3%), according to data from [borderline-europe](#). Another 459 people (15%) reached the Italian territorial sea (within 12 nautical miles) autonomously, without being intercepted or rescued. The manner of arrival or rescue was unknown for 366 people (12%).

According to official figures from the Italian Ministry of the Interior, 2,990 people arrived in Italy in December. Our numbers indicate slightly higher arrivals for this month; however, it should be noted that the Ministry's figures are published without access to background information or sources.

The trend of increasing arrivals of [minors](#) – often unaccompanied or very young – continued in December, as observed in previous months.

Overview of the data collected by [borderline-europe](#)

Arrivals of people on the move in Italy by sea	3,031	People rescued by NGOs	735
Arrivals of people on the move in Sicily	2,081	Independent arrivals of people on the move	459
People rescued by authorities	1,379	Arrivals without information on arrival/rescue	366

The data should be interpreted with caution, as the actual figures may be significantly higher due to underreporting. Unless otherwise stated, all percentages refer to the total number of people who arrived in Italy by sea during that month.



Pushbacks and pullbacks

In December, we recorded interceptions (meaning interception and forced return during the migration journey) of 2,489 people in the Central Mediterranean. Boats with people on the move were often violently pushed back toward the North African coast. Of those intercepted, 2,318 people were returned to Libya and 171 people to Tunisia. These figures should be interpreted with caution, as the actual number of cases is likely to be significantly higher due to underreporting. IOM Libya recorded interceptions of only 1,782 people.

Although the number of people intercepted in the Mediterranean decreased slightly compared to the previous month (November 2025: 3,178), it remains very high in relation to the number of departures. In addition, documented interceptions to Tunisia increased once again, as was already the case in November. Since the actions of the Tunisian authorities against people on the move are rarely documented, this increase is particularly noteworthy.

On December 19th and 20th, two groups (a total of 95 people) were intercepted by the Tunisian Coast Guard. Relatives informed Alarm Phone that the men were separated from the groups and abandoned in the desert without any means of subsistence. Their subsequent whereabouts and condition remain unknown. Such treatment of people seeking international protection has long been a known practice of Tunisian, Libyan and Algerian authorities.

On December 26th the offshore supply vessel Maridive 703 rescued 34 people, including three children, from distress at sea in the Maltese-Tunisia search and rescue (SAR) zone. Both Maltese and Italian authorities ignored the ship's calls for several days. On December 30th, the vessel rescued another 74 people. Two deaths and several injuries were reported in connection with this incident. Once again, no rescue operation was initiated by the European authorities. When the Ocean Viking (SOS MEDITERRANEE) reached the vessel on December 31st, the crew was only able to rescue 33 of the 108 people. The remaining 75 individuals had already been taken to Tunisia against their will.

Dead and missing people

While the number of reported missing persons decreased significantly, the number of documented deaths almost doubled compared to November. According to data from borderline-europe, 144 people died in December (November 2025: 76) while crossing



the central Mediterranean. In the same month, 24 people (November 2025: 161) were reported missing. The fate of a further 195 individuals remains unclear. Here too, the actual figures are likely to be substantially higher.

On December 7th, a boat carrying 21 people on the move left Algeria. 19 of them died in a shipwreck. Concerned relatives contacted Alarm Phone on December 10th because they lost contact with the boat, but the boat could not be reached. On December 28th, Alarm Phone found out that a shipwreck had occurred and only two people had survived. These survivors were subsequently abandoned by the Algerian authorities in the Niger desert. The precise moment of the shipwreck remains unknown.

In another deadly shipwreck on December 19th, 116 people died, leaving just one survivor. Alarm Phone received a distress alert on December 19th from a boat that had left Libya the evening before. The responsible coast guards (including Libya, Tunisia, and Italy) and NGOs were alerted. Sea-Watch immediately dispatched its drones to determine the location of the ship, while the coast guards were slow to respond and did not initiate a search and rescue operation. Two days later, the sole survivor was rescued by a fisherman and transferred to a hospital in Tunisia. However, neither Tunisian civil society organisations nor Alarm Phone were able to establish contact with the survivor. This devastating shipwreck and the death of 116 people was not an accident, it is first a consequence of the migration policies that systematically force people to undertake dangerous journeys in the absence of safe passage, as well as the result of the direct inaction and neglect of the authorities at the time of the shipwreck.

After rescuing 33 people from the Maridive 703 (described in the section above) on December 31st, the Ocean Viking set off to respond to another distress alert from approximately 60 people (including a baby). However, due to threats from the so-called Libyan coast guard, the crew was forced to leave the people behind in the middle of the night. The fate of these people is unknown.

Civil resistance

In December, nine vessels from the civil fleet were deployed in the central Mediterranean and rescued a total of 735 people in distress at sea during 16 rescue operations (24% of all arrivals).

Civil search and rescue vessels were involved in three rescue operations, before the individuals were brought ashore by state authorities or Frontex.



The crew of the vessel Life Support (Emergency) carried out a total of two multiple rescue operations in December. The crews of the vessels Louise Michel (Louise Michel) and Sea-Watch 5 (Sea-Watch) also rescued two groups during a single operation.

In December, the Italian government once again prevented civil sea rescue from carrying out their work. On December 9th, Humanity 1 (SOS Humanity) was provisionally detained in Ortona for 20 days. The Italian government justified the measure by stating that the crew had not communicated with the so-called Libyan coast guard during their rescue of 85 people. This marked the first time that action had been taken against a member of the new NGO alliance "Justice Fleet". The 13 sea rescue organisations involved in this alliance had jointly decided to no longer cooperate with the so-called Libyan coast guard. The policy expert at SOS Humanity, Marie Michel, stated that cooperation with the so-called Libyan coast guard would pose a threat to both the vessel's crew and the rescued individuals. SOS Humanity has now taken legal action against the Italian government's decision to detain *Humanity 1*.

At the beginning of the month, an alarming incident occurred in the context of restrictions on civil sea rescue. The crew of the Louise Michel reported that on December 1st, the so-called Libyan coast guard fired shots in the immediate vicinity of the vessel. Shortly after, the NGO found an empty rubber boat, suggesting an interception by the so-called Libyan coast guard. Particularly alarming is the fact that, according to the NGO, the vessel from which the shots were fired had been gifted to Libya. It was reportedly handed over as part of an EU-funded project. According to the NGO, the handover ceremony in 2023 was attended by Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Antonio Tajani, Italian Minister of the Interior, Matteo Piantedosi, and the EU Commissioner, Olivér Várhelyi.

During the aforementioned operation of the Ocean Viking on December 31st, intimidation by the so-called Libyan coast guard also occurred. The Ocean Viking was on their way to rescue approximately 60 people in distress at sea when it was ordered to turn back by the so-called Libyan coast guard. After the Ocean Viking had already been fired upon by the so-called Libyan coast guard in August 2025, the crew decided to comply with the instruction in order to ensure the safety of survivors onboard as well as that of the crew. Following the shooting incident in the summer, the vessel was out of service for three and a half months. The cases of the Louise Michel and the Ocean Viking illustrate how the work of civil sea rescue is being obstructed by the Libyan authorities. However, the fact that the Ocean Viking has been operational again since December 16th, despite the attack, also demonstrates the resilience of civil sea rescue.



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.

