



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**

**ILLEGAL
PUSH-BACKS AND
BORDER VIOLENCE
REPORTS**



**NOVEMBER 2021
BALKAN REGION**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November, the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) shared 34 testimonies of pushbacks impacting 1,289 people-on-the-move across the Balkans. This report brings together first-hand testimony from a range of countries in the region to look at the way European Union states and other actors are affecting systemic violence towards people crossing borders.

Trends identified this month in pushback testimonies collected include the utilization of the geography of border regions, and particularly rivers, as a method of deterrence in pushbacks along the Croatian-Bosnian border. Drawing on testimonies from last month, as well as earlier reports going back to April of last year, this section analyzes the use of the 'three-river spot', an area along the border where the Korana River is particularly difficult to cross and many pushbacks have been reported. An additional section covers the mistreatment of people-on-the-move in police vehicles during pushbacks from Croatia to Bosnia.

The report continues from there to analyze developments throughout the region. It covers recent police raids in informal settlements as well as official accommodation centers in 8 different Serbian municipalities, where the authorities claimed to be searching for "irregular migrants and members of organized criminal groups involved in their smuggling".

In Bosnia and Herzegovina this month, the new reception center for people on the move "Lipa" was (re)opened and officials were trained in a new programme aimed at bolstering capacity to independently carry out deportations of people on the move to their countries of origin.

On 18th November, the European Court of Human Rights issued a verdict on the case of little Madina Hussiny, and in doing so confirmed that Croatia pushes back people-on-the-move.

This report covers several key updates from Greece, including increasing restrictions to accessing asylum and other support services through the termination of the Skype pre-registration system, restrictions on mobility in the new camp on Samos, and ongoing issues with the cash assistance program. Further sections analyze instances of violence against people on the move in the port of Patras, and the growing repression of journalists writing about migration and police brutality.

A final section covers updates from Italy, including protests over a new collaboration between the Politecnico di Torino, Srl Ithaca association, and Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) and a decrease in arrivals in Trieste.

In sum, the border violence which has for so long been a mainstay of internal and external EU policy continues, while states along the Balkan route have intensified restrictions on mobility and access to services for people-on-the-move. Cases such as the one of Madina Hussiny are crucial victories in terms of public awareness and justice for survivors of pushbacks, however there is still much work that will need to be done in confronting border violence and systemic pushbacks in European border regions.

**BVMN is a network of watchdog organisations active in Greece and the Western Balkans including No Name Kitchen, Rigardu, AreYouSyrious, MobileInfoTeam, Disinfo Collective, Josoor, InfoKolpa, Centre for Peace Studies, Mare Liberum, Collective Aid, and Fresh Response.*



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**

**NOVEMBER
REPORT**

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GENERAL

REPORTING NETWORK

BVMN 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 members have a common website database, used as a platform to collate testimonies of illegal pushbacks which are gathered through interviews.

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. Push-back 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. Push-backs have become an important, if unofficial, part of the migration regime of EU countries and elsewhere.

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 be as large as 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.

ABBREVIATIONS

BiH - BosniaandHerzegovina
HR - Croatia
SRB - Serbia
SLO - Slovenia
ROM - Romania
HUN - Hungary
ALB - Albania
BGR - Bulgaria
MNK - NorthMacedonia
GRK - Greece
TUR - Turkey
EU - European Union

TRENDS IN BORDER VIOLENCE

PUSHBACKS ACROSS THE KORANA RIVER

This month, BVMN's partner organisation No Name Kitchen (NNK) collected two testimonies from the end of October in which Croatian authorities appear to be using again what in three testimonies collected from April to August of this year, has been named the 'three-river spot'. This pushback location along the Croatian-Bosnian border has been described in the testimonies as a location where people are forced to cross the Korana River three times in order to reach the other side.

From satellite imagery of the green border between the two major Bosnian cities in the Una-Sana-Canton: Bihać and Velika Kladuša, it is most likely that the testimonies refer to an area (45.023368, 15.764446) around 6km southwest of the Bosnian town of Sturlić. Here, the river forks into smaller streams, before coming back together after a few kilometers. The two other areas in the region where this geographic phenomena occurs are visible from the border town of Tržac or a rest area in Tržačka Raštela, and so unlikely locations for pushback.

From the description and coordinates, the site also matches the three previous testimonies from this year. In [a testimony collected in May](#), the respondent mentions that "the place of the pushback was a place with three parallel rivers. One of the rivers has been formed in a way to create a sort of "pool" where the water reaches a depth of approximately 1.8 meters."



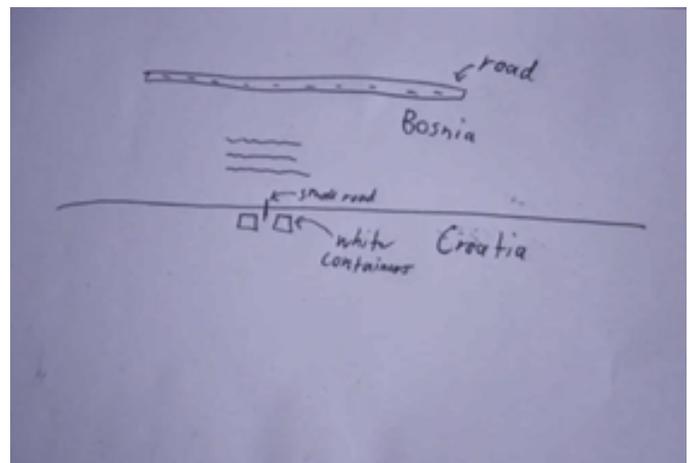
A satellite picture of the area (45.023368, 15.764446), the location being around 6km southwest of the Bosnian town of Sturlić. On the right is visible the Bosnian R403b road, which most groups also mentioned they reached shortly after (Taken from Google Maps).

Using the physical landscape itself as a method of deterrence, or "weaponization of geography" during pushbacks has been documented throughout the region, and was covered in the [October Monthly Report](#) in the context of the Greek/Turkish border. While the Korana River is much smaller than the Evros, the terrain can still create significant risks for people-on-the-move. Even though the Korana River can for the most part be crossed on foot, people-on-the-move have lost their lives in this river. With temperatures in the Balkans dropping below freezing, walking for kilometers in wet clothes significantly increases the risk of hypothermia and death.

In both of the testimonies recorded, the respondents had to walk back to their make-shift camps in Bihać in drenching wet clothing, which took all of them more than four hours on foot, if not longer. During the pushbacks, the officers beat the respondents on several parts of their back, one time with batons, one time with thick sticks of wood.

"One man of the transit group then tried to take off his shoes before crossing the water, presumably fearing having to walk back for hours on the Bosnian side again with wet shoes. The officers noticing this started to beat the man with the wooden stick, forcing him to quickly cross the water, with the shoes on."(7.2)

As the winter sets in, the situation is likely to only become more difficult for people-on-the-move attempting to cross in these areas, and the dangers of pushbacks all the more serious.



Drawing made together with the respondent of the layout of the border around the three streams of water before he reached the R403b road. Also mentioned here are two white containers nearby the border site, in which officers were apparently taking turns of duty and resting. (Source: NNK)

ABUSE IN CROATIAN POLICE VEHICLES

During pushbacks from Croatia, in the vast majority of cases, the transit groups are driven back to the green border from wherever they were first apprehended in police vehicles. Depending on the distance, these journeys can last several hours. Additionally, the transportation often involves long waiting periods, during which people are not allowed to leave the car, while the cars are parked for hours in front of police stations. The conditions and treatment in the police vehicles constitute yet another element in the Croatian police's toolbox of brutality.

Survivors of pushbacks have repeatedly reported being crammed into vans that were far too small, so that most of them had to crouch on the floor. The air conditioner in the back of the car is regularly set either far too hot or far too cold, so that people either shiver or swelter and grow very thirsty. In addition, the driving style of the Croatian police is regularly described as reckless. Jerky turns, abrupt braking and curvy meandering on the road are intended to induce sickness of the passengers. Lastly, people describe feeling the air getting thinner and thinner during rides, so that in the end they panic about not being able to breathe anymore.

“I got into the first van, but while I was already inside I heard two other vans coming. You couldn't breathe. The police pushed us all inside. We were shouting that there was no more room but they were beating us with batons and kept shouting – inside, inside! Go inside! Thirty people in a van that would carry six to eight. [...] It was terrible, there was no window, everything was dark, we had no light, no lighter, it was impossible to breathe. They were driving very fast and jerky. They were doing it on purpose.”
(see testimony [here](#))

Violent and inhumane conditions in police vehicles during pushbacks constitute a form of torture. The [BVMN Torture Report from 2020](#) found that in that year “up to 41% of all pushback testimonies from Croatia indicated inhuman treatment inside a police vehicle.” The report highlights that the “use of reckless driving also undeniably increases the risk of a deadly collision.”

Normally, it is difficult to document these abuses, as the police are careful to confiscate people's phones and anything else they can use to document their pushbacks. Even the pictures we receive are mostly limited to outdoor scenes. This month, however, an Afghan father was able to keep his phone and used it to record a short clip from inside the police car on their way to the green border where they got pushed back ([7.6](#)). While the images are shaky, one can clearly make out very young children, women, including a heavily pregnant woman, all seated together in a very confined area in the police van. A total of 17 people were stuffed into one car. In addition, NNK has published a [longer video](#) in which the affected person reflects on the pushback experience.



Photo taken by respondent of people crammed inside the back of a Croatian police vehicle (source: NNK).

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION

SERBIA

"HOTSPOT" EVICTION OPERATION

On November 10th, at 6 AM, a large-scale police operation, named somewhat ironically "Hotspot" was triggered. Police forces in 8 different municipalities, including Subotica, Sombor, and Kikinda in Northern Serbia, raided informal settlements as well as official accommodation centers, searching for "irregular migrants and members of organized criminal groups involved in their smuggling", says Serbian newspaper Telegraf.

This operation follows a series of evictions that occurred in the North in the past month. As a result, our teams on the field witnessed a dramatic drop in numbers in the area around Sombor One Stop Centre (see October Monthly Report).

Historically, such actions very rarely lead to smugglers being convicted. Minor "fixer type" figures, such as taxi drivers, are sometimes brought to court, but people at the top of the smuggling pyramid are very rarely affected by those operations. In evictions and the narrative of the endless battle against smuggling networks, the victims are always to be found among people-on-the-move. Members of transit groups forcibly brought to the Macedonian or Croatian border suffer long-term negative psychological effects from those forced evictions, and they experience an even more precarious environment and dire financial situation caused by the cost and logistics involved in journeying back to the Northern region.

The images below will give the reader a glimpse into the disproportionate use of force involved in setting up the eviction in all Subotica squats.



CROATIA

ECHR RULING ON THE CASE OF MADINA HUSSINY

On 18th November, the European Court of Human Rights confirmed that Croatia pushes back people-on-the-move. The Court ruled on the case of little Madina Hussiny - a six-year-old Afghan girl who was killed during a pushback from Croatia to Serbia. She was hit by a train after Croatian police officers ordered her and her family to return to Serbian territory by walking along train tracks on 21st November 2017.

The Court found in particular that the investigation into the death had been ineffective, that the applicant children's detention had amounted to ill-treatment, and that the decisions around the applicants' detention had not been dealt with diligently. It also held that some of the applicants had suffered a collective expulsion from Croatia, and that the State had hindered the effective exercise of the applicants' right of individual application by restricting access to their lawyer among other things

Two organisations, Center for Peace and Studies and Are You Syrious, which are part of the BVMN and which took part in the case, stated "the European Court of Human Rights is the last resort when it comes to the protection of human rights. The Hussiny family sought justice in Croatia, but did not receive it from Croatian institutions. The criminal complaint was rejected because the Attorney's Office gave full reliance to the conclusions of the Ministry of Interior instead of examining the evidence and respecting the testimonies of the victims and witnesses. At the same time, the recordings of the thermal cameras, as key evidence available to the police, have mysteriously disappeared".

"This verdict must not be limited to the Republic of Croatia paying 40,000 euros in non-pecuniary damage to Madina's family from the state budget. For all the victims in our borders, for the people who died there, as well as for all the activists who have been intimidated to keep quiet about it, it is time to bring to justice those who enable and cover up this violence, and that responsibility must be sought at the top of the Ministry of the Interior."
(Tajana Tadić, AYS).



Representatives of CPT and AYS at a press conference following the verdict (Source: CPT)

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

(RE)OPENING OF LIPA CAMP

On November 19th, the new reception center for people-on-the-move "Lipa" was (re)opened in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It can now accommodate up to 1,500 people and includes a section for unaccompanied minors and families. The newly-organised Lipa camp in the northwestern Krajina region in Una-Sana Canton replaces a camp that was destroyed in a fire last December, leaving hundreds of people-on-the-move in the freezing cold for days, without any facilities, food, and heating.

But even now, the camp only consists of container-like facilities and is located in a very remote area. The new reception center now provides shelter, food, water, sanitation, and medical care that is finally "expected to meet international standards." The project was funded by the EU with help from individual European governments. Bosnia and Herzegovina was internationally praised for the reopening of the camp. Johann Sattler, the EU representative to Bosnia, said at the opening ceremony:

"Exactly eleven months ago, we were standing here, in the same place but in completely different circumstances, in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. Today we are here in this new multipurpose reception center."

The camp itself is now run by the Bosnian Agency for Foreigners' Affairs with the help of the International Organization for Migration, U.N. agencies and smaller nongovernmental organizations.

It is clear, however, that the (re)opening of Lipa Camp does little to address the broader systemic issues and forms of violence experienced by people-on-the-move in Una-Sana Canton. Simultaneously to the opening of the camp, there have been reports of more evictions, where people-on-the-move were violently removed from their unofficial housing and transported to the new camp.



New Temporary Reception Center Lipa (source: IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina)

NEW “PLATFORM AGAINST ILLEGAL MIGRATION”

In November, officials from Bosnia and Herzegovina received additional training as part of the new 'Platform against Illegal Migration'. As part of this training, two experts from BiH participated as observers on a Frontex-organized charter flight that returned migrants to Nigeria. The main objective of this programme is to train the Bosnian authorities to independently carry out the repatriation of people-on-the-move from the Western Balkans to their countries of origin.

One of the European countries at the forefront of supporting this project is Austria, which is financing the initiative with 300,000 Euros. In a meeting between the former Minister of Interior, now Chancellor, Karl Nehammer and EU Commissioner Oliver Varhelye, the Commission confirmed that it would provide funding for charter flights to repatriate people to Pakistan.

These events, understood within the broader landscape of EU border externalization, exemplify how states in the Western Balkans are put in charge not only to restrict movement but also to actively repatriate people on the move. The involvement of Frontex in this case is particularly indicative of this trend, and concerning given reports of Frontex's involvement in pushbacks, as well as its growing presence in parts of north and western Africa.

GREECE

ACCESS TO ASYLUM RESTRICTED

In November, Greece announced that the Skype pre-registration system for applicants applying for asylum in Greece would be discontinued, and that all of those seeking to apply for asylum would have to register in state-run reception centers. For the last seven years, people seeking asylum on the Greek mainland, Rhodes, and Crete had to register through an online Skype system with immense delays of up to 14 months as evidenced in BVMN member project Mobile Info Team (MIT) [Lives on Hold report](#). Corinne Linnecar, Advocacy Officer for MIT and BVMN focal point, stated on the matter: “the Skype procedure as it stood was inhumane, forcing people to remain undocumented and destitute for many months and often years.” Further, delays in registering for asylum were not due to people trying to evade the system, but rather “a consequence of an inefficient system,” she says. However, she pointed out that “this policy change will only see more delays.”

The new system, effective immediately, will force all people who enter Greece via the land border to go to two undisclosed, but already existing facilities, one in Northern Greece and one in Southern Greece, to register their asylum claim whilst being detained. The only Reception and Identification Centre currently active in mainland Greece is a closed site in the Evros region with a mandatory 25-day detention period. The centre has capacity for just 282 people, yet this year alone UNHCR has recorded 4,311 people entering via this border. The expansion of this facility has also raised grievances with local residents. This practice constitutes de-facto detention and mass incarceration of people seeking asylum. Vasilis Papastergiou of the Greek Council for Refugees [describes](#) as “just another tool to stop people from seeking safety in Europe”. He points out that: “Europe’s hands are also not clean as the EU funds the new ‘closed and controlled’ quasi-detention centres, places where migrants are left to be forgotten”. Until these new reception centres are operational, refugees who had been unable to reach asylum officials through Skype will have no way to apply for asylum.

ONGOING VIOLENCE IN THE PORT OF PATRAS

In addition to being the location for many maritime pushbacks between Italy and Greece, Patras has been a site for acute state and police violence against people-on-the-move in the last year. This is particularly present in the port, in which many people-in-transit squat empty factory buildings in the hopes of being able to hide in cargo ships leaving for Italy. In November, No Name Kitchen reported on four episodes of internal violence in Patras. In all cases, the victims were Afghan men under the age of 30, and the perpetrators were either security officers of the New Port of Patras or the Greek national police.

Three of the cases happened inside the port, while the respondents were trying to sneak into the trucks, attempting the so-called “game” to cross the border. The fourth case was an arbitrary arrest in front of the occupied factory where these groups live. The concerned person was taken to a police station, where he was assaulted by the officers.

Three out of the four cases involved the exercise of physical violence by the authorities. In a particularly severe case, the police tore the victim’s ear by beating him with handcuffs. The ear later had to be stitched up. In a case where there was no physical violence, the police stole 100 euros from the victim after holding him at the police station for a full day, claiming that this was the price of the stay.

What all these cases have in common is the destruction or theft of the mobile phones of the people-on-the-move. It is essential to highlight the symbolism and importance of this element, as it is the fundamental tool of people trying to cross the border to reach Italy by ferry. Often, people-in-transit will travel only with a bottle of water and their phones when they go on ‘game’. Once they reach the mainland in Italy, it serves them to communicate with their relatives, move around using GPS and use translation apps to be able to understand the locals.



Wound suffered by a respondent in an instance of police violence (source: NNK)

SAMOS: NEW RESTRICTIONS ON MOBILITY IN MPRIC

On 16th November, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum ordered the camp management on Samos to restrict people who have received a negative decision regarding their asylum claim and those who newly arrived on the island waiting to be issued their official asylum applicant card from leaving the Closed Controlled Access Centre. As a reaction to these newly imposed restrictions on movement, there was a peaceful protest within the camp to voice out opposition in the light of these new measures. On the same day, the Movement for Human Rights on Samos called for an immediate removal of the decision by the ministry to “ensure the freedom and the dignity of all the residents of KED Samos”.

After two weeks of detention, 12 organizations and civil society groups in Samos sent a letter to Greek and European authorities calling for clarity regarding the decision on the new restrictions. Asking for an immediate lift of the aforementioned restrictions and a public announcement by the Ministry “giving legally grounding evidence to their recent decision to detain people”, these organizations made it clear that “there is a collective understanding that people have and are continuing to be detained for no legitimate nor legally standing reason.”

Amnesty International released a statement on the detention in the new EU-funded camp. The initial fears about the prison-like structure in Zervou seem to have become reality on Samos, or in the words of Adriana Tidona:

This camp more closely resembles a prison than a place to house people seeking safety. This is a gross misuse of EU money, and a gross abuse of the residents’ rights.”



Front gate of new Closed Controlled Access Centre on Samos
(Source: Samos24.gr)

SAMOS: LIBE COMMITTEE VISIT, POTENTIAL PUSHBACK

This month, MEPs from the European Union LIBE Committee visited Samos to speak to the community, NGOs and authorities to get an understanding of the current situation on the island. Alongside, recommending a redirection of EU funds into integration projects and protection pathway mechanisms to report human rights abuses, NGOs urged an establishment of an independent border monitoring mechanism to investigate pushbacks and hold the ones breaching international law accountable for their actions.

While on Samos, MEP Cornelia Ernst witnessed a potential pushback on the evening of the 2nd of November. According to a respondent, the transit group likely included 24 men, women and children. Despite this, according to the Ministry there were only 5 registered arrivals on the 3rd of November, and another 5 on the 4th. There has been no official update about the whereabouts of the 19 missing people.

However, Aegean Boat Report reported that 25 people have been pushed back on the 3rd of November whilst the Turkish coast guard published a large rescue of 29 people on the 4th of November off the coast of Kusadasi. Both reports increase the likelihood that the rest of the arrivals were pushed back to Turkey.

Despite a fellow MEP being publically outspoken about the events witnessed on the 2nd of November, the Chair of the Committee, Lopez Aguilar, insisted in a joint press conference with minister Mitarachis two days after the incident that the LIBE committee hasn't witnessed any illegal pushback while being on Samos.

Once again European officials continue to play down the prevalence of pushbacks at external European borders.

CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN SHAMBLES

After having received the last cash assistance by UNHCR in early September, covering for August and September, asylum seekers now find themselves without financial support for over three months as the Ministry of Migration and Asylum failed to carry out a smooth transition of this vital program. Whilst the Ministry assured that all eligible asylum seekers would receive the first payment after the transition at the end of October, it published on the 1st November an invitation for NGOs for the submission of proposals regarding the "Financial Aid to Applicants for International Protection".

With this open call for proposals for NGOs that are part of the national NGO register, the authorities communicated at the end of the same month that the Catholic Relief Services will be in charge of the cash assistance program, awarding them with 12,000,000 euros for the operation. Even though CRS is a former implementing partner of UNHCR for housing and cash assistance, people are uncertain they will receive financial aid again, and if they are going to be compensated for the missing months.

REPRESSION OF JOURNALISTS FOCUSING ON MIGRATION

The freedom of press—particularly as it relates to migration, and critiques of the police—was threatened again this month, with several highly publicized instances of repression against journalists.

On 9 November 2021 Dutch journalist, Ingeborg Beugel, asked the Greek New Democracy Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, about the occurrence of pushbacks in the Aegean Sea during a press conference. In the ensuing heated exchange, Mitsotakis shouted at Beugel, denying any misconduct on the part of the Greek state, and suggesting that she was disrespecting him through her questions. A video of the press conference went viral, leading to an increase in discussion of pushbacks on the national level. However, Ingeborg Beugel faced serious online threats and physical attacks in Athens in the days following the press conference and eventually had to leave the country.

Only a few days later, it was revealed that Stavros Malichudis, a journalist with Solomon Magazine, was being surveilled by the Greek National Intelligence Service in connection with an article he had written about a 12-year-old refugee living on Kos whose artwork had appeared in the French newspaper Le Monde. Pavol Szalai, who heads the European Union and Balkans desk for Reporters Without Borders, reflects: "Press freedom in Greece has taken a dangerous turn in recent weeks. Especially journalists working on migration, which is an issue of national and European public interest, have been increasingly threatened."

These incidents come within a broader landscape of increasing abuses of power and attacks against the press by both the state and the police, causing a feeling of 'asphyxiation' in public discourse. Reporters have also been repeatedly attacked by police officers at protests. In the past year, there has been an alarming rise in violent incidents amid reports of unprovoked attacks by police officers against both protesters and bystanders. Internal investigations by the police into such incidents have rarely resulted in punishments for officers, or put an end to such methods. A journalist investigating a case of police corruption was murdered under uncertain circumstances over the summer. According to a report from Reuters Institute at Oxford University, Greece is one of the few European countries where people trust social media (70%) much more than they do traditional media.

Structural changes in the last month also make the future seem bleak. A new law adopted on the 11th of November makes sharing fake news a criminal offense and states that any citizen who shares false information which is "capable of causing concern or fear to the public or undermining public confidence in the national economy, the country's defense capacity or public health," could face fines or a prison sentence of up to three months. In effect, journalists now risk jail for speaking out on important issues of public interest, if the government claims it's false. On the topic, HRW's Greece researcher, Eva Cossé states: "The Greek government accuses its critics of bias, politically motivated criticism, Turkish propaganda, or factual error, but the truth is simpler: the state of the rule of law and human rights in Greece are failing."

COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE "POLITECNICO OF TOURIN" AND FRONTEX

Last July, the Politecnico di Torino, in collaboration with the Srl Ithaca association, won a 4 million euro tender for the production of infographic maps needed to support Frontex's activities. The call for tenders published by Frontex in October 2020 states that the production of cartographic services is necessary in order to systematize the different types of information useful for carrying out the activities of the European Border and Coastguard Agency.

On 16th November, the activists and NGOs took a position by sending a [letter](#) to the Rector, the Vice-Rector and all the members of the Department of the Politecnico di Torino. Frontex has been repeatedly accused by NGOs, activists, and international agencies of being directly involved in the violent pushbacks of people-on-the-move at the European borders.

TRIESTE UPDATES

In the last month, activists working in Trieste's Piazza della Libertà have noticed a decrease in the number of people-on-the-move arriving. This decrease is probably due to the worsening of climatic and environmental conditions, but also to the intensification of police controls in border areas.

In November, 197 arrivals were registered in Piazza della Libertà, of which 28 were minors and 3 families, however, the overall numbers of arrivals in Trieste are potentially much higher. There are many people who do not pass through the square but head directly to other cities, as Trieste is no longer considered a safe place to stay. The increase in controls has also led to a large number of people-on-the-move being caught by the police in the border area and then transferred to quarantine camps in Friuli Venezia Giulia - which are now full. The quarantine camp in Trieste was hosting 220 people just in November. More than a hundred people-on-the-move have been apprehended in the [area of Aquilinia](#) in the last two weeks of November alone.

According to the testimonies collected by the volunteers in Piazza della Libertà, there were no episodes reported of push-backs by the Italian police during the month of November, despite the initial intention declared by the Prefect of Trieste, immediately after taking office, to resume this illegal practice. Following these declarations, on 30th November, MPs Riccardo Magi and Matteo Orfini in the [press conference](#) at the end of the visit to Trieste, announced that "this kind of practice will no longer be applied to asylum seekers", as also underlined by the Italian government in one of its latest statements on the issue.

Although readmissions from Italy are formally blocked, the role and modus operandi of the mixed patrols along the border remains unclear. Eight mixed patrols currently operate per month, six in Slovenia and two in Italy. Further clarification as to the role of these patrols is needed, so that they are not used as a trick to resume the practice of push-backs.

During the last month, two different investigations trying to criminalize solidarity in the North East of Italy were closed with no consequences, with the filing of both cases involving Lorena Fornasir and Gian Andrea Franchi from Linea d'Ombra in Trieste, and Pordenone Solidal Network in the eponymous city. A special rapporteur from the United Nations' Human Rights Defender Office, held by high commissioner Mary Lawlor, was visiting Trieste to get information about the criminalization of solidarity in the region.

GLOSSARY OF REPORTS, NOVEMBER 2021

In November, BVMN shared 34 testimonies of pushbacks impacting 1,289 people-on-the-move across the Balkans. Those affected by these incidents included men, women, children with guardians, and unaccompanied children. They also represent a wide demographic, including people from Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Morocco, Iraq, Algeria, Pakistan, and Turkey.

- 6 Pushbacks to Serbia (3 from Romania, 1 from Slovenia, 1 from Hungary, and 1 from Croatia)
- 12 Pushbacks to Bosnia-Herzegovina (1 from Italy, 1 from Slovenia, and 11 from Croatia)
- 14 Pushbacks to Turkey (7 from Greece, 4 from Bulgaria, 3 from Bulgaria to Turkey via Greece)
- 2 Pushbacks to Greece (1 from North Macedonia, 1 from Albania)

LINK	INCIDENT	RECORDED	DEMOGRAPHICS	GROUP
Romania to Serbia				
<u>1.1</u>	21st October	27th October	Syria	9
<u>1.2</u>	24th October	24th October	Syria	15
<u>1.3</u>	29th October	31st October	Syria, Egypt	3
Slovenia to Serbia				
<u>2.1</u>	2nd November	5th November	Afghanistan	2
Croatia to Serbia				
<u>3.1</u>	14th October	18 October	Afghanistan	3
Italy to Bosnia-Herzegovina				
<u>4.1</u>	6th November	8th November	Pakistan	50
Hungary to Serbia				
<u>5.1</u>	22th November	27th November	Syria	12
Slovenia to Bosnia-Herzegovina				
<u>6.1</u>	6th November	16th November	Pakistan, Nepal	15
Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina				
<u>7.1</u>	20th October	3rd November	Afghanistan, Pakistan	20
<u>7.2</u>	28th October	29th October	Afghanistan, Pakistan	20
<u>7.3</u>	28th October	29th October	Afghanistan, Pakistan	6
<u>7.4</u>	2nd November	5th November	Algeria	2
<u>7.5</u>	10th November	13th November	Iraq	6
<u>7.6</u>	10th November	11th November	Afghanistan	17
<u>7.7</u>	16th November	17th November	Afghanistan	3
<u>7.8</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> 24th November	26th November	Afghanistan	6

<u>7.9</u>	2nd November	3rd November	India, Pakistan	32
<u>7.10</u>	4th November	18th November	Pakistan	7
North Macedonia to Greece				
<u>8.1</u>	15 November	29th November	Morocco	1
Greece to Turkey				
<u>9.1</u>	15 November	16 November	Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Nigeria	53
<u>9.2</u>	31 October	10 November	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Cuba, Syria	40
<u>9.3</u>	12 November	17 November	Syria, Iraq, <u>Morocco</u> , Tunisia, Somalia, Turkey	70
<u>9.4</u>	18 November	19 November	Palestine, Morocco, Algeria, Yemen	80
<u>9.5</u>	20 November	21 November	Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, unidentified African country	59
<u>9.6</u>	9 November	19 November	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Congo, India	51
<u>9.7</u>	6 November	7 November	Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, <u>Sudan</u> , Egypt	179
Bulgaria to Turkey				
<u>10.1</u>	6 November	7 November	Algeria	2
<u>10.2</u>	21 November	22 November	Morocco	6
<u>10.3</u>	6 November	7 November	Algeria	6
<u>10.4</u>	4 November	5 November	Morocco	4
Bulgaria to Turkey via Greece				
<u>11.1</u>	18 November	21 November	Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Egypt	200
<u>11.2</u>	25 November	26 November	Afghanistan, Sudan, Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Ivory Coast	120
<u>11.3</u>	21 November	21 November	Afghanistan, Syria, Palestine, Morocco, Algeria	80
Albania to Greece				
<u>12.1</u>	24 November	26th November	Morocco	2