



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



Press Release

Greek police launched operations targeting people-on-the-move in Thessaloniki

30 April, 2022

Yesterday, April 29, 2022, [the Greek police launched operations targeting people-on-the-move](#) in the city of Thessaloniki. The police are targeting improvised homeless shelters and a food distribution site for vulnerable people with serious protection needs. To our knowledge, between 20:00 and 21.30 EET at least three people that are beneficiaries of Border Violence Monitoring Network member organisations in Thessaloniki were arrested on their way to collect food from a humanitarian distribution site in the city.

We, the Border Violence Monitoring Network, put forward our concerns about the potential repercussions of these operations. We have collated a body of evidence that suggests detention and illegal pushbacks are often a subsequent outcome of police operations, which entail numerous violations of international human rights provisions such as access to asylum, non-refoulement, and the prohibition on collective expulsions.

Similar [operations were carried out](#) in predominantly migrant neighbourhoods in central Athens nearly one month ago (March 2022) leading to the arbitrary arrest and detention of over 600 people-on-the-move, many of whom were previously unable to access the asylum system due to the termination of the online skype pre-registration system in November 2021.

Today, there have been [reports](#) of people-on-the-move being apprehended by police and put into the back of unmarked red vans across Thessaloniki. This is of concern in terms of a lack of transparency and of endemic police brutality in Greece, and pushbacks as a frequent outcome of such operations. Further, the use of similar unmarked red vans was mentioned in three first-hand testimonies of pushbacks in the Evros region in the last month (see below).

We reiterate that Greek authorities are obliged to act in full respect of European Union law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Immigration detention should be used as a means of last resort and should not be applied to vulnerable persons.



We urge that the Greek state should act in full compliance with the principle of non-refoulement, the European Convention of Human Rights, and other relevant human rights instruments to refer people in need of protection and vulnerable persons apprehended to the competent authorities and to ensure their rights to access asylum.

We remind the Greek state to abide by the recommendations of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances that found that people on the move who are pushed back are at risk of being subjected to enforced disappearances.

Details of these cases can be found in the links below:

Raids of humanitarian distribution site resulting in pushbacks:

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/police-raid-humanitarian-distribution-site-and-pushback-people-in-need/>

https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/access-territory-and-push-backs/#_ftn11

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/june-6-2020-0100-meric-river-ipsala/>

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/april-14-2020-1300-evros-meric-river-near-gemici-turkey/>

Raids of Diavata camp:

<https://medium.com/are-you-syrious/ays-daily-digest-28-04-20-police-raid-in-diavata-camp-near-thessaloniki-fear-of-pushbacks-to-9350ab907399>

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/april-16-2020-0000-meric-river-grk-tur/>

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/april-23-2020-2200-evros-border/>

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/april-28-2020-2200-evros-border/>

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/july-5-2020-2200-meric-river-near-meric-ipsala-turkey/>



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Arrests in Thessaloniki resulting in pushbacks:

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/july-22-2020-0000-thessaloniki-greece/>

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/august-24-2020-2100-evros-meric-river-edirne-turkey/>

Pushbacks mentioning the use of unmarked red vans in the last month:

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/march-21-2022-0500-petrades-gr-to-eskikoy-tr/>

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/march-15-2022-1030-orestias-gr-to-karakasim-tr/>

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/march-2-2022-0000-kissari-gr-karayusuflu-tr/>

Police sweeps in Athens resulting in arrests and detention:

<https://www.powergame.gr/politiki/221237/theodorikakos-3-000-paratypoi-metanastes-epestrep-an-stis-chores-tous/>

<https://greekcitytimes.com/2022/03/18/greek-police-monastiraki-square/>

<https://www.thenationalherald.com/greek-police-sweep-central-athens-round-up-usual-suspects/>

<https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/561763918/epicheirisi-skoypa-sto-kentro-tis-athinas/>

As the above information demonstrates, concerns about fundamental violations of human rights as a direct result of these operations are well-founded on the basis of previous experience. We urge independent human rights monitoring bodies to respond, to ensure that any individuals apprehended as a part of these operations have access to asylum procedures, and are not subject to police violence or treatment that would amount to torture, in line with their fundamental rights.

The Border Violence Monitoring Network