LAYERS ▼

© 2023 Microsoft Corporation Earthstar Geographics SIO

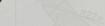Microsoft Bing

Scale = 1 : 433K

↑ Taller Map   ↑ Smaller Map

10/05: 24 people attacked and pushed back to Turkey

◉ In Distress   📢 Protest   ■ Push-Back   VERIFIED

11.05.2020 / 14:18 / Aegean Sea

Watch The Med Alarm Phone Investigations – 10th of May 2020
Case name: 2020_05_10-AEG669
Situation: 24 people attacked and pushed back to Turkey
Status of WTM Investigation: Concluded
Place of Incident: Aegean

Summary of the Case:

On 10 May 2020, an overcrowded dinghy carrying 24 persons from Afghanistan, Iran, Congo, Central African Republic and Mali, among them one woman and ten minors, left from Ayvacık district of Çanakkale province at around 4h CEST. At 8:16h, Alarm Phone was alerted to the boat. It was in the middle of the sea between Lesvos and Turkey. The boat was drifting. The passengers informed us that they had been attacked by a Greek coastguard boat in Turkish waters and their fuel had been taken away. Their boat was taking on water and they asked for rescue as they were left adrift. The Alarm Phone alerted the Turkish coastguard at 8:22h and was soon informed that Turkish authorities had reached the vessel for rescue.

The survivors stated:

"We started when the sun was coming out in the early morning. Among the passengers were two women and many underage boys. After maybe one hour, the Greek coastguard stopped us while we were in the middle of the sea between Turkey and Lesvos. There were maybe 500 metres left to reach Greek waters. Their boat approached us with high speed coming from Lesvos towards us. It was white and grey. One officer had a long metal stick. He was wearing a mask. There was one more masked officer and a third person steering their boat who seemed to be the captain. He had no mask. They wear blue uniforms. The man with the stick threatened us with it. He shouted from the speaker: "Stop. Stop! Move away from the engine!" We stopped and their boat halted next to ours. He pulled of the pipe from the engine with this stick and took the petrol. The boat had a Greek flag, a blue-white stripe and a writing in non-latin characters in white colour. They tried to scare us by shouting angrily at us and threatening to beat our dinghy with the stick. Then they slightly pushed our boat with theirs. All this happened within few minutes. I think they were in great hurry, as they illegally had entered Turkish waters.

After, they quickly left returning back towards Lesvos, we noticed another big grey boat in Greek waters that was stopped in distance between us and Lesvos. It seemed to belong to the navy. I think they were observing us and making sure we would not try again to reach Greece. This boat was bigger. Our boat was taking on water and we were scared to sink. Most of us were only carrying tubes to save themselves from drowning and others had nothing to protect themselves. Two other boats appeared from Lesvos and left again – one looking like a navy boat and the other was a speedboat. But they didn't act. Two hours later, the Turkish coastguard arrived. They brought us to a camp near Ayvalik where we were fingerprinted and they took a flu test for Corona. We stayed 3 hours there. They took away all of our money for our transfer to Bursa where we were then released."

Based on witness accounts, Alarm Phone understands that the Greek coastguard had entered Turkish waters, not for rescue, but for the purpose to deter a migrant boat from reaching Greek territory. The Turkish media later wrote on this case, amongst others, pointing to the fact that the Turkish coastguard had rescued these people and other boats which the Greek coastguard had forced into life-threatening situations. People on board later reported to Alarm Phone that they had been brought in distress by the Greek coastguard, but that they wanted to emphasise that while Turkish mainstream media was celebrating each rescue and presenting the Turkish authorities as the "good guys", the Turkish authorities in their case had stolen their last money and returned them to where they had tried to escape from.

Turkish Coastguard: https://www.sg.gov.tr/canakkale-aciklarinda-24-duzensiz-gocmen-kurtarilmistir-11-5-20
Turkish News: https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/turkey-rescues-77-migrants-forced-by-greece-into-turkish-territorial-waters/news

Last update: 10:01 Mar 22, 2021

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