



## 29/04: Greek coastguard pushes 48 protection seekers back to Turkey

In Distress Push-Back

VERIFIED

30.04.2020 / 15:34 / Aegean Sea

### Watch The Med Alarm Phone Investigations – 29th of April 2020

Case name: 2020\_04\_29 AEG668

Situation: 35 people, 10 women, 16 children, pushed back North of Lesvos, Human Rights Violation

Status of WTM Investigation: Still investigating

Place of Incident: Aegean Sea

#### Summary of the Case:

On 29 April 2020, a boat carrying 48 refugees from Afghanistan, Congo and Iran, including 18 children, tried to reach Lesvos Island in the early hours of the day. According to witness accounts, after about 1 ½ hours of moving, the people suddenly found themselves confronted with a big grey boat with a blue-white line. The boat had reportedly a Greek flag and many officers on board. Alarm Phone was alerted to this group of people after they had been pushed back to Turkish waters. Unable to move by themselves in a boat with water leaking in, the people were desperately asking for rescue. At 12:36h CEST, we informed the Greek coastguard about the boat in distress and were told that it was in Turkish waters and a Turkish coastguard vessel was nearby.

“We were very scared. We tried to continue towards Lesvos Island. It was only 20 minutes more driving to reach the Greek coast. The big boat let a highspeed boat down, which hunted us down. There were six masked men in black clothes. They stopped us and made many waves. With a long stick they took away our petrol and they broke our engine. They had guns and knives. Then they threw a rope to us and ordered us to fix it on our boat. Then they started pulling us back towards Turkey. After a while they stopped and cut the rope. They returned to the big boat and took distance from us. It was around 6am.

Then two other boats of the Greek coastguard arrived which were white and grey and drove very fast towards us, starting to make circles around our boat. They created big waves which were pushing us in the direction of Turkish waters. Our boat was taking in water and the kids were screaming. Our boat started breaking from the bottom. We were taking out the water with our boots. We threw all our belongings in the sea to make our boat lighter. Many of us had no life vests. A pregnant lady fainted. The Greeks continued making waves for a long period. A Turkish coastguard boat arrived and stood aside watching and taking photos and videos for more than six hours. Only after 13:30 o'clock the Turkish coastguard boat finally saved us. We were brought to Çanakalle police station and detained for five days.”

Later on the Turkish coastguard released a statement: “On 29 April 2020 at 06.10 a.m., it was reported by Greek authorities that there was a migrant boat off the coast of Çanakalle’s Ayvacık district/Sivrice Burnu. CG boats were dispatched to the area immediately. However; it was detected that the mentioned migrant boat was in the Greek side and Greek Coast Guard boats were putting the lives of the irregular migrants in danger by doing dangerous maneuvers around the migrant boat instead of rescuing them. The migrants were pushed back towards Turkish territorial waters. The fuel can of the migrant boat was taken and the engine of it was broken. 25 Afghan, 22 Congolese and 1 Iranian, totally 48 irregular migrants on board (20 men, 10 women and 18 children) were rescued by CG boat.”

Alarm Phone understands that the dinghy carrying protection seekers escaping from war-torn and conflict-ridden countries has been unlawfully returned by Greek authorities, pushed back from Greek to Turkish waters. They were actively brought into a situation of distress at sea. At the same time, the lack of action by the Turkish authorities who stood by for many hours, also put their lives in danger.

See video: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=261732498277246>

Turkish Coastguard: <https://en.sg.gov.tr/48-irregular-migrants-were-rescued-off-the-coast-of-sivrice-burnu>

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Coast-Of-Sivrice-Durmu

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