



19 January 2023

Pushbacks: August-December 2022. Greece's capacity for illegality?



Due to a series of circumstances beyond our control, we were unable to continue updates as we should have done during most of the second half of 2022.

We are back and operating as we should be, so we are sharing the following.

As ever, all registration figures are taken directly from the Greek government's own officially issued updates, while all pushbacks figures are from **Aegean Boat Report**, the agency which is in our experience most 'across' the data we need.

All other content is our own.

August:

Registered arrivals: 1,101

Pushbacks: 3,232, in 107 incidents

Percentage of people pushed back: 74.59 per cent.

Very nearly three times (2.94) as many people were illegally pushed back as were registered as new arrivals.





September:

Registered arrivals: 1,420

Pushbacks: 3,302, in 117 incidents

Percentage of people pushed back: 69.9 per cent

While this is a lower proportion than in August of people pushed back compared to those registered as new arrivals, we must note that this is the highest number of people pushed back by the Greek authorities since the Nea Dimokratia government in March 2020 started to replace legally allowing people to enter Greece and the Greek asylum system with a 'policy' of beating, robbing, and illegally pushing people out of the country.

It is also very similar to the number of illegal pushbacks carried out in August, leading us to suggest that the Greek authorities reached, at this stage, the literal limits of their capacity to break the law. It may, in other words, have not been physically possible for the Greek government to push anyone else back: it broke the law in September 2022 to the absolute peak of its capacity.

October:

Registered arrivals: 1,155

Pushbacks: 2,618, in 105 incidents

Percentage of people pushed back: 69.4 per cent

This month marked another (very slight) fall in the proportion of pushbacks per people registered as new arrivals (their legal right), and while this could in part be explained by the fact that more people (1,155 people) arrived in October than in September, we must also note that the actual number of people pushed back fell (by 684), as did the number of incidents (by 12), compared with what we believe to be the Greek government's absolute capacity to vicious- and violently break the law by beating, robbing, injuring, in some cases killing, and absolutely illegally pushing people out of Greece.

We must here note that the context of this (quite small: 684 is just under 21 per cent of 3,302) drop is that Greece's government was [still claiming](#) – quite incorrectly, and of course entirely without proof – that its Turkish equivalent was deliberately forcing people out of Turkiye to Greece. In such circumstances, an increase in people arriving in Greece would benefit the government by seeming to 'prove' its claim, despite in fact being due to a small fall in the number of illegal pushbacks it carried out.

Simultaneously, and perhaps (hopefully) more importantly, the Greek government was being [shown to have lied](#) in its (ongoing) claims regarding the death of Maria, a five-year-old girl who died having been pushed back from Greece at least twice and then denied access to the country at the Evros border.

Even more pertinent was the final publication (seemingly against the wishes of the EU Commission) of the [report of the EU's fraud watchdog body OLAF](#), which showed that pushbacks were being carried out consistently by both the EU 'border guard' *Frontex* and the Greek authorities (later claims by the Commission's in no way compromised member of Nea Dimokratia, and vice president Margaritis Schinas that 'the report does not allege pushbacks were carried out by the Greek government' are simply and decisively disproved by the fact that the report clearly states that *Frontex* carried out pushbacks *and* worked to cover up pushbacks carried out by the Greek government.





It is at the very least possible that Nea Dimokratia had the sense to decrease the number of crimes it committed while these storms broke (particularly as doing so could be presented – deliberately misleadingly – as ‘proof’ of the Turkish government’s nefariousness) and it may even be that the Commission finally acted – perhaps to save what remains of its own ‘reputation’ – to order the government to reduce its illegal activity.

November:

Registered arrivals: 1,872

Pushbacks: 2,592, in 109 incidents

Percentage of people pushed back: 58.1 per cent

A further – larger – fall, in November, in the proportion who travelled to Greece seeking asylum, being brutally and illegally forced back by the Greek government, may reflect the government and Commission’s ongoing concern over growing publicity being given to this barbaric activity.

December:

Registered arrivals: 1,773

Pushbacks: 2,643, in 90 incidents

Percentage of people pushed back: 59.9 per cent

We must once again be clear here.

It can be easy, when confronted with a list of numbers, to forget that what we are talking about here is in fact people. Men, women and children, like your children or grandchildren, your parents, your friends, your grandparents. Like you.

Since March 2020, in direct contravention of international and EU law, the Greek government has been systematically apprehending, beating, stealing from, in some cases abusing, in some even killing, and in all pushing away from Greece, people who have committed no crime, and have in fact only exercised their legal right to travel to apply for safe places to live, learn and work.

This is an outrage, and it must not continue.

To help ensure it does not, please visit us at: <https://www.koraki.org/end-pushbacks> where you will be able to find letters to your Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and the addresses at which they can be reached.

Together, we can end this shameful, immoral and illegal smear on the human race.

