



3 July 2022, Thessaloniki

Pushbacks: the Greek government and the *National Transparency Authority*



Hundreds of people gathered at Lesvos harbour, Mytilene, yesterday (Saturday 2 July 2022) to [protest against pushbacks carried out by the Greek government](#).

The protestors carried banners reading ‘Burn the borders’ and ‘Pushbacks kill people.’

The Greek government has, from its Aegean Sea borders alone, carried out 1,606 pushbacks since 1 March 2020, pushing back a total of 34,863 men, women, and children. We must note, of course, that this is almost certainly a huge underestimate, and that it does not include anyone pushed back at the Evros border.

This is about 1.8 pushbacks per day, and means on average the government has pushed back 41 people per day, since 1 March 2020.

In the same period, 10,169 people were registered as new arrivals, meaning that through this period the Greek government has pushed back 77.4 per cent – more than three in every four – of the people who have reached Greece via the Aegean Sea.

In the last month (1-30 June 2022) the Greek government pushed-back 2,235 men, women and children from the Aegean border and Aegean islands, in 81 incidents. That is an average of 2.7 incidents and 74.5 people pushed back each day.





In the same period, the government registered 965 people as new arrivals on the islands, an average of 32.2 people per day. This means that in June, [the government pushed back at least 69.8 per cent of people](#) who arrived on the Aegean islands.

Unfortunately, Greece's Shipping Minister Giannis Plakiotakis claimed: 'The first priority is protecting lives, in line with international law.'

The problem is that even the Greek government's own statements, which almost always focus on 'protecting Greece and EU borders' (a concept which has no legal legitimacy when applied to people hoping to apply for asylum) indicate that this is not the case, while the fact that the government illegally pushes back at least 77.4 per cent of all people who arrive via the Aegean Sea alone, while pushing people back is not only illegal (and in combination with the beatings, abuse and robberies to which Greek uniformed officers subject people they push back is a policy of absolute, outright barbarism by the Greek government) but also clearly more dangerous than not pushing people back, proves that 'protecting lives' is far from the Greek government's 'first priority'. It is clear from its activities that illegally preventing people entering Greece is the government's first priority, and illegally forcing out those who do, is its second.

Plakiotakis also claimed that: 'All complaints about pushbacks by Greek forces have been shown to be unsubstantiated.'

This claim, too, is far from the truth.

The Greek government has simply refused to investigate the vast majority of pushbacks reported on its borders, and in the one investigation it recognises, it set the *National Transparency Authority* to do so.

The *Authority* is a body which was never intended, and whose members are absolutely unqualified, to investigate pushbacks (it was formed in the early days of the *Nea Dimokratia* government to demonstrate the latter's 'house-cleaning' and to 'investigate' 'corruption' because of the *Novartis* scandal: it did not even do that, because the government – in a measure now [judged absolutely unjustified by the Greek Judicial Council](#) – instead halted the criminal case against those of its and *PASOK*'s members who were accused of having accepted bribes and instead accused everyone involved in the case of abusing their positions in a 'conspiracy' against *Nea Dimokratia*. Once again, of course the Greek Judicial Council found all of these claims by *Nea Dimokratia* to be false).

It was also hand-picked by the Greek government, and is headed by a man who is certainly a close personal friend of Greece's Prime Minister Kiriakos Mitsotakis, and is widely reported to have been the best man at the latter's wedding (we note, once again, we do not know for certain that he was Mitsotakis' best man).

That is, it is probably not particularly inclined to find the Greek government has broken the law, but even if it is, it is absolutely not competent to do so.

And this was, of course, illustrated in the sole 'investigation' the government recognises, the one to which Plakiotakis refers.

In this, the *Authority* made an early public statement that there was 'no evidence' pushbacks had taken place, but in its report, issued on Thursday 12 May 2022 (now removed from its website, but available [here](#)) revealed that in fact there was a great deal of evidence, including photographs, interviews with people who had been pushed back





and videos of pushbacks taking place, but it had decided to disregard this evidence on the advice of the Greek police – *who were themselves implicated in carrying out the crime the Authority was supposed to be investigating.*

We must make no mistake: Pushbacks are being carried out, by the Greek government. They are illegal and are acts of barbarity. They must be stopped, and you can help.

Simply find the e-mail in the appropriate language by clicking on the box at the [bottom of the page](#), and send your message to your MEP.

There is only so much any of us can do alone. But together, there is nothing we can't achieve.

[artwork by Yorgos Konstantinou: www.imagistan.com](http://www.imagistan.com)

