



Taller Map Smaller Map

21/04: Boat in distress in Greece's territorial waters after Hellenic Coast Guard destroyed engine



In Distress Push-Back Testimony

VERIFIED

22.04.2022 / 10:22 / Eastern Med

Watch The Med Alarm Phone Investigations – 21st of April 2022

Case name: 2022_04_21-AEG884

Situation: 35 people in distress after Hellenic Coast Guard destroyed their engine and left them adrift. All day neither coastguard assumed responsibility and left the boat in distress. Later people were taken by Hellenic Coast Guard, assaulted and pushed-back to Turkey's territorial waters onto life-raft

Status of WTM Investigation: Concluded

Place of Incident: Eastern Med

Summary of the Case:

In the very early hours of 21st April 2022, Alarm Phone received a call from someone crying and telling us about a group of 14 women including a pregnant woman, 15 men and 5 children in distress who were near Samos island in Greece's territorial waters. We managed to establish direct contact to the boat who told us that the Hellenic Coast Guard had found them, came onto their boat and destroyed the engine then left them adrift. We alerted the authorities at 03:37 CEST asking for help for the boat in distress, the Hellenic Coast Guard told us that they won't rescue the boat and the Turkish Coast Guard would come (even though it is in Greece's territorial waters). Throughout the morning the Hellenic Coast Guard refused to uphold their duty in rescuing the boat, denying that they were even in distress. Later we receive a call from the travellers telling us that the Turkish Coast Guard is close by but not rescuing because their boat is in Greece's territorial waters. At midday we receive news through their friend that the Hellenic Coast Guard has pushed them into Turkey's territorial waters. We then called the Hellenic Coast Guard who told us that no boat was found, and they are still investigating.

A few hours later we received news confirming that the travellers had been intercepted by the Turkish Coast Guard.

Testimony:

"At 11pm in the night we almost arrived in Samos island with our boat. Amongst us there was a baby on the boat. We could see the island with our eyes, it was maybe 20 minutes to Samos. Then the Greek Coast Guard came with their big ship and stopped us. They put masks on their faces. The colour of the Greek ship was grey. On the ship was a number and Greek letters. One of their coast guards came inside our boat and destroyed our engine and threw it in the water. They left us like this.

We called the Turkish Coast Guard several times during the night for help but they said that we are not in Turkish waters and that they cannot help. They confirmed that they know where we are. After that I think I spoke with Alarm Phone, because a friend alerted you. And Alarm Phone alerted the Greek Coast Guard; that is what they said. We stayed until 5am in the morning on the water. Water was coming inside the boat. In the early morning the Greek Coast Guard came again. They fixed our boat with a rope. We thought they will bring us to Samos but they pushed us back. Then they saw the Turkish Coast Guard on the water and they left us like this, without engine on the water. We called Turkish Coast Guard again but they said that we are still in Greek waters.

We stayed until 11am in the water like this. Three big Greek ships were watching us since the morning. Me and my friends we had to jump into the water to balance to the

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boat. We stayed around one hour in the water, but then we got so cold that we had to jump in the boat again. At 11am the boat was full with water. The Greek Coast Guard came again with a rope and they tried to push us to Turkish waters. When they saw the Turkish Coast Guard they left us again. We were afraid to die.

At 1pm in the afternoon we were in a very bad situation. The Greek Coast Guard came and took us on their ship. It was the same ship I described earlier. There were 2 more big ships. When they rescued us they beat us, they assaulted us, they took our phones and our money. They put their hands everywhere on our bodies, also on the women's bodies. They took us closer to Samos and they stopped the machine. We stayed there for around 2 hours. Afterwards they turned back but when they arrived to the water they saw the Turkish Coast Guard. So they brought us close to Samos again. Then they drove very fast with us and they took a small boat from inside their ship and they pushed us on that small boat. It was a small "canoe gonflable". They put us inside and left fast. It was around 6.30pm in the evening when the Turkish Coast Guard was approaching us and rescued us from the Sea. They took us to their office and gave us food and we slept there. They took our names and fingerprints. They took us to a prison-like place. They brought us on friday, we stayed until monday in the evening. Then they brought us to the north close to the Bulgarian border. They made us sign some documents and set us free. This is what happened. You know, I know why I had to run from the police in my home country, but I thought this is different in Europe. This is not Europe."

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