



Taller Map Smaller Map

13/06: 32 people, 11 women and 11 children denied rescue for several hours North of Lesbos, but finally rescued to Greece

In Distress Boza

VERIFIED

14.06.2020 / 17:57 / Aegean Sea

Watch The Med Alarm Phone Investigations – June 13th 2020

Case name: 2020_06_13-AEG677

Situation: 32 people denied rescue for several hours North of Lesbos, finally rescued to Greece

Status of WTM Investigation: Still investigating

Place of Incident: Aegean Sea

Summary of Case

In the morning of June 13th, Alarm Phone was alerted to a boat in distress in the North of Lesbos, carrying 32 people. People on board informed us of two attacks on their boat and that a Greek coast guard vessel was close by. Once we had received a GPS position, authorities in Greece were informed at 06.34h CEST, who copied the information and requested the boat in distress contact the coast guard directly. Meanwhile, people on the boat reported of more attacks, and informed us that their calls to the Greek coast guard remained unanswered. In total, people on the boat reported of three attacks, during which the engine and petrol were stolen, then first one person, then men and women, and in the last attack also children were beaten. The attackers threatened to kill everyone on board the boat. People in distress then reported of a Turkish coast guard vessel nearby, which was taking videos but refrained from intervening. Alarm Phone contacted the Greek coast guard again at 07.26h CEST to forward an updated GPS position. The officer answering refused to provide any information on this case. Neither did authorities in Mytilene/Lesvos provide any information on whether a rescue was being coordinated. At 07.40h CEST we were contacted by authorities in Mytilene who called into question the accuracy of the last GPS position conveyed. They appeared to be unaware of the work done by Alarm Phone. At 08.13h CEST the people in distress reported that, when calling the Greek police at 911, they received death threats from the officer answering the phone.

We received an updated position at 08.54h CEST which was forwarded to authorities via mail and phone call. When we mentioned that the people in distress could see a vessel with the number Alpha-Sigma 080 the operator abruptly ended the call. When we tried to also contact authorities in Mytilene / Lesbos, our calls remained unanswered. An hour later, people in distress reported that the coast guard vessel was still on site, making waves and endangering people on board while a pregnant woman was in a lot of pain and close to giving birth. We passed on an updated GPS position and details of the situation at sea to authorities in Turkey at 09.56h CEST, who informed us the position was in Greek waters and they would merely be monitoring. Then the same information was forwarded to authorities in Greece and the operator stated the position to be in Turkish waters and refused to confirm any responsibility to rescue lay with Greece.

People in distress sent an updated position at 10.25h CEST which was directly forwarded to authorities via e-mail. When Alarm Phone called authorities in Greece at 12.05h CEST they insisted that the position of the boat was in Turkish waters and refused to copy the updated location already forwarded via e-mail. The Turkish coast guard likewise refused to take any responsibility for rescuing the people in distress stating the boat was in Greek waters when called at 12.30h CEST.

Around 20min later, people in distress informed Alarm Phone that both the Greek and Turkish coast guard vessels were leaving the vicinity and sent an updated GPS position. This was forwarded again to all authorities.

Between 14.06h CEST and 14.33h CEST we received two updated positions, the first in Turkish waters, the second in Greek waters according to our maps. Authorities had left the boat drifting without working engine since 06.34h CEST. Still, both the Turkish and Greek coast guard refused to take responsibility for coordinating a rescue.

Related Reports

15:10 Jun 05, 2020 / Aegean Sea Kms

04/06: 3 boats with ~105 people heading to Lesbos, 2 boats rescued by Turkish coast guard to Turkey; after reportedly been pushed back by Greek coast guard, 1 boat rescued to Mytilene

19:30 Jun 19, 2015 / Aegean Sea, near Mithymna Kms

18 people in distress near Lesbos Island, all rescued

00:33 Jan 01, 2020 / Aegean Sea Kms

31/12: 42 people stranded on Lesbos, rescued by Refugee Rescue

15:27 Jun 26, 2020 / Aegean Sea Kms

25/06: 30 travellers disappeared in the Aegean Sea

23:28 Apr 01, 2021 / Aegean Sea Kms

31/03: Travellers stranded on Lesbos fear push-back, but were finally brought to quarantine camp Megala Therna



Briefly afterwards, people in distress reported of yet another vessel creating waves and endangering their lives. When calling the Greek coast guard, they refused to copy the updated GPS positions. The Greek coast guard kept insisting the boat was in Turkish waters, and vice versa. People in distress reached out to Alarm Phone repeatedly with urgent calls for help.

In the next hour, the situation on board continually worsened, the pregnant woman fainted several times. From what the people reported, it was unsure whether she had died. Food and water had run out. We informed authorities of the situation. The Turkish coast guard confirmed the reception of our mail, but kept repeating their inability to act as, according to them, the boat was in Greek waters. Upon calling the Greek coast guard, we received the same response. No head was taken of the absolutely dire situation aboard the boat in distress.

When Alarm Phone contacted the Maritime Medical Consultation Centre to ask for advice to be passed on via phone, the Centre refused to call the people in distress. Neither did the operator provide any useful information we could have passed on ourselves. Upon having received an updated position we called Greek authorities, who refused to copy the location. When informed of the woman in labour and possibly at risk of life the officer abruptly ended the call. We forwarded information provided by a midwife to the people in distress.

At 19.51h CEST people on the boat informed us that they believed the Greek coast guard might have been approaching them to rescue. When we called Greek authorities to confirm this, the officer answering the call hung up directly and did not pick up the phone thereafter.

An hour later, the boat still had not been rescued after 15 hours in distress. We contacted authorities again via e-mail. People in distress were urgently asking for a doctor to attend to the pregnant woman. At 22.18h CEST we found a tweet suggesting that "HCG rescued them!". The Greek coast guard in Pireaus confirmed the rescue of 35 people including a pregnant woman to Petra on Lesvos via phone at 22.38h CEST.

On June 14th, several actors on Lesvos confirmed that the pregnant lady was in hospital and well, the remainder of the people in quarantine.

Alarm Phone is still investigating the detailed developments and will include potential updates into this report.

Twitter Chronology:

08.32h CEST: https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1271690989195886593
12.40h CEST: https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1271738869248131072
13.26h CEST: https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1271767115897462784
14.33h CEST: https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1271780172216381441
15.06h CEST: https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1271790603895025664
16.40h CEST: https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/127181365837703424?s=20
18.30h CEST: https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1271840984867966978?s=20
18.50h CEST: https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1271848060742705158?s=20
20.56h CEST: https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1271879675757936640
00.50h CEST June 14th:
https://twitter.com/alarm_phone/status/1271938057424572417

Last update: 12:31 Feb 15, 2021