



Taller Map Smaller Map

## 19/3 Alarm Phone alerted to 5 emergency situation in the Aegean Sea, Lesvos, Chios and Pasas -one person dead, one child still missing

In Distress + Dead ? Missing

VERIFIED

20.03.2016 / 14:42 / Aegean Sea, Lesvos, Chios and Pasas

### Watch The Med Alarm Phone Investigations – 19th of March 2016

Case name: 2016\_03\_19-AEG237

Situation: Alarm Phone alerted to 5 emergency situations in the Aegean Sea

Status of WTM Investigation: Concluded

Place of Incident: Aegean Sea

**Summary of the Cases:** On Saturday the 19th of March 2016, our Alarm Phone shift teams were alerted to 5 emergency situations in the Aegean region. The travellers on two boats were brought to Greece while those on three other boats were returned to Turkey. In one distress case, following the account of the travellers, 2 people went missing and later we learned that the dead body of one person was found and identified. One group had stranded on Pasas Island and were later found and transferred off the island.

At 2.05am, one of our activist allies contacted us, informing us about a boat south of Lesvos island (case 1). He told us that he had lost contact to the boat. We localised the boat, south of Lesvos and still in Turkish waters. We then reached out to the boat repeatedly and reached them at 2.15am. The woman who we spoke to did not seem in distress, at least not anymore. A few minutes later we found out that the Turkish coastguards had found them and were in the process of returning them to Turkey.

At 3.21am, activist allies told us about a boat, again moving toward southern Lesvos (case 2). There were about 40 people on board, including 15 children. The position showed them still in Turkish waters but we were informed that the boat was still able to move on. We agreed that we would monitor the situation. At 3.32am we received an updated GPS position, showing them closer to Greek waters. When they reached Greek territory we called the Greek coastguards at 3.50am and they confirm that they would take on the case. At 3.59am we learned that the travellers were facing higher waves. At 4.16am we were informed that a rescue vessel was approaching them and their rescue to Greece can be presumed.

At 5.14am, one of our activist allies told us via WhatsApp about a boat in distress on its way to Chios (case 3). Its engine had broken down about 15-20 minutes earlier. There were 40 people on the vessel, including 20 children. We asked our contact person to pass on a guide on how to re-start boat engines to the travellers. At 5.32am we were able to contact the travellers directly who seemed relatively calm. It was not clear whether they were in distress or not as communication was difficult. At 6.11am our contact person informed us that they had been detected by the Turkish coastguards who would return them to Turkey.

At 7.15am, our shift team received a call from a man who was anxiously shouting for help (case 3). He said that they were 65 people, including 10 women and 20 children. We agree to communicate via WhatsApp so that GPS positions could be passed on. However, the passengers could not be reached via WhatsApp. We called them again at 7.22am, and the woman who answered this time asked for help but did not provide more information. We then found them on Viber and tried to contact them, however, unsuccessfully. At 7.27am they called us again on the Alarm Phone asking for help. Before retrieving more information, the phone line cuts off. Fortunately, only a few minutes later at 7.35am, one of the travellers confirmed that the Greek coastguards had detected them and they were safe.

At 9.33am, a contact person informed us about a group that had stranded on Pasas Island (case 4). About 100 people, including children had landed on the island and needed to be transferred to Chios. We tried to call them and also reached out via WhatsApp but without success. A few minutes later another contact person told us that the coastguard had arrived. We reached out to the Chios Port Authority at 10.02am and were informed that a rescue operation was currently taking place.

At 8.47pm, two contact persons informed us about a boat carrying dozens of people that had entered a distress situation in Turkish waters, east of Lesvos Island (case 5). We reached the travellers at 8.48pm but all we heard were noises in the background. In the following minutes we tried repeatedly to reach them, without success. We spoke to one of our contact persons who confirmed that he would alert the responsible coastguards. At 9.02pm we received voice messages from the boat, saying that water was entering and that 2 people had fallen into the water. Due to this piece of information we then

### Related Reports

09:45 Mar 16, 2018 / Aegean Sea Kms

15/03 Boat in distress with about 65 people on board, including 25 children, safely arrived on the Greek island of Lesvos

16:20 May 17, 2020 / Aegean Sea Kms

16/05: 10 travellers pulled back from Greek shore

11:04 Mar 13, 2018 / Lesvos, Aegean Sea Kms

12/03: Boat carrying 36 people in distress south of Lesvos, rescued to Greece

20:50 Jul 28, 2017 / Lesvos/Greece Kms

27/07: Boat carrying 50 people rescued to Lesvos Island

23:30 Sep 15, 2013 / Lesvos Kms

12 Syrians saved by cargo Yalker and fisher boat near Lesvos



that two people had fallen into the water. Due to this piece of information we then decided to also immediately call the Turkish coastguards. At 9.03pm they confirmed that they knew of the case and had sent a rescue vessel. We tried again to reach the travellers but were unable to get through to them. At 9.32pm, the coastguards had not yet arrived. At 9.41pm we learned that the Turkish coastguards had arrived. When we spoke to the authorities at 10.19pm, they confirmed that two people had gone missing. At 00.03am they were still searching for them. The next morning, at 7.53am, the Turkish coastguards confirmed that they had rescued 25 people and following survivors' accounts, two people had gone missing. They said that a SAR operation was ongoing. We then called the authorities again at 12.41pm, 2.23pm and 5.17pm and they had no news on the two missing persons but said that they would continue with the search. Through exchanges with several contact persons, we learned that they had alerted the Turkish coastguards even before we did, at 8.35pm. At that time, one of the contact persons knew already that the two persons had fallen into the water but it took the coastguards more than an hour before they arrived at the scene, at 9.41pm. Also when they arrived, following accounts of survivors, they did not immediately launch rescue procedures. In a phone conversation with the Turkish authorities at 8.50am on the 22nd of March, we found out that they had found one of the two missing persons, who had passed away. They informed us that they had also been able to identify the identity of the dead person. In the evening we received a phone call from a person in Germany, the brother of the man whose 8 year old son had fallen into the water and remains missing. We then reached out to the Turkish coastguards again and they said that they had been unable to find the second person. They passed on the name of the dead person they had recovered and, in turn, we passed it on to the brother of the man who confirmed that this was the other person who had gone missing. We called the Turkish coastguards again on the 23rd of March but the child remains missing. The Turkish authorities stated that they had closed the case and the Greek coastguards stated that they had also not found the child.

**Last update:** 01:24 Apr 17, 2016

[Home](#) | [Impressum](#) | [Contact Us](#)