

Greek forces pushback dozens of Syrian refugees into Turkey

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Greek forces have forcibly pushed 94 Syrian refugees, 30 of whom were children trapped in an islet in the Meriç River that forms the Turkish-Greek border, for four days using violence.

According to the Efsyn newspaper, after the non-governmental organizations “Human Right 360” and “Greek Council for Refugees” were informed, some 94 Syrian refugees, including 30 children, landed on an islet near Pithio village of Demoteka (Didimotiho) district in Athens on May 22.

Both non-governmental organizations that asylum seekers contacted informed Greek authorities for their rescue and applied to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for an interim injunction.

The ECHR accepted their application on May 25 and called on Greek authorities to rescue 94 asylum seekers and provide them with the necessary assistance.

Greek authorities claimed that there were no refugees in the region.

In response to Greek authorities, the asylum seekers sent the videos they recorded from their mobile phones to the NGOs.

The footage shows Greek forces from the opposite shore of the islet questioning the asylum seekers by asking them “Where are you from” and urging them to “Go back to Turkey.”

According to the Efsyn newspaper, Syrian asylum seekers were forcibly pushed back into Turkey with an operation that took place on May 26.

Masked Greek forces went to the islet and battered refugees, forcing them to undress, and then forcibly pushed them into the Turkish side of Meriç River, as they confiscated their mobile phones and personal belongings, the newspaper wrote.

“So far, no one has been found in the area in question. The searches continue,” the Macedonian-Thrace Police Department said in a statement.

The Greek forces insistently deny that they forcibly pushed back thousands of asylum seekers who wanted to come to the Meriç River or the Aegean islands at the risk of their lives.

In the meantime, the next director to be appointed to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) has become a matter of concern in Athens, as they have been ignoring the inhumane practices against refugees for nearly three years.

Fabrice Leggeri, the Frontex director since 2015, was forced to resign in April amid the accusations that Greece was indeed informed of the human rights violations against asylum seekers but declined to report them to the authorities.

It was stated in the Greek media that the new director to be appointed might request Frontex to reduce its operational contribution in border inspections and even halt its activities in the Aegean and Meriç River.

The fourth paragraph of Article 46 of the Frontex regulation grants such powers to the director.