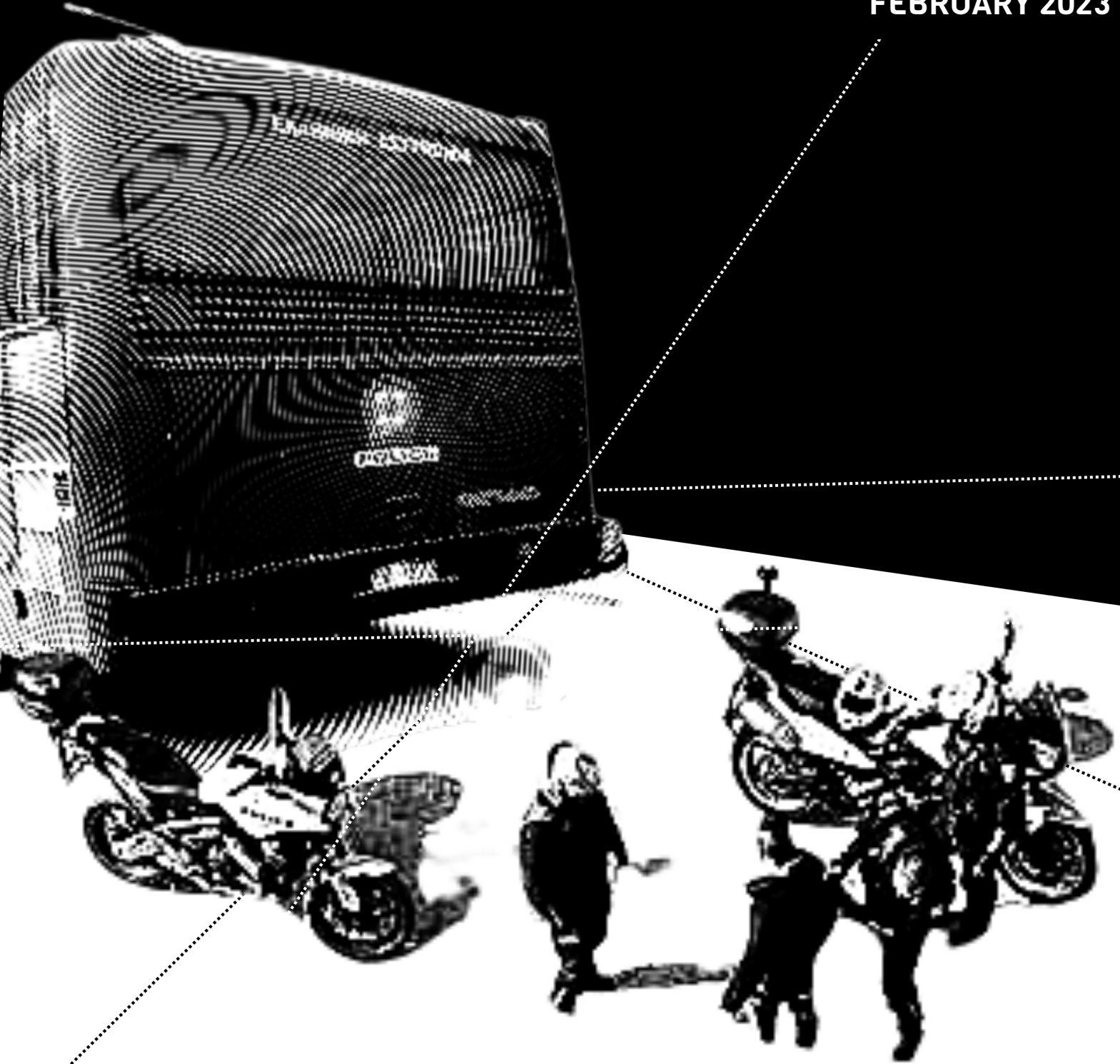


PERSISTENCE OF GREEK POLICE TARGETING PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IN THESSALONIKI

GREECE
FEBRUARY 2023



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



PERSISTENCE OF GREEK POLICE OPERATIONS TARGETING PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IN THESSALONIKI

15th February 2023

On the 30th of April, 2022, the Border Violence Monitoring Network published [a press release](#) calling attention to the police operations that targeted people on the move who were on their way to collect food from a humanitarian distribution site in Thessaloniki. By July, our records showed that authorities had been present at least once a week throughout the months of May and June in unmarked police cars or on motorbikes, and that police waited until after distribution activities to raid the area and ask people to present their documents. More than eight months later, despite a change of location, [these operations](#) continue to take place on a regular basis with authorities systematically raiding targeted areas of the city and informal housing settlements to arrest people who are unable to provide legal documentation.

We, the Border Violence Monitoring Network, put forward our concerns about the potential repercussions of these operations. Through a collection of news articles and testimonies, we have collated a body of evidence that suggests detention and illegal pushbacks are often a subsequent outcome of police operations, which entail numerous violations of international human rights provisions such as access to asylum, non-refoulement, and the prohibition on collective expulsions.

A lack of documentation is often a direct consequence of the dysfunctional asylum system in Greece, which despite recent changes, has been consistently difficult to access. More than 7 months after [the termination of the online Skype pre-registration system](#), The Ministry of Migration and Asylum substituted the system with an online platform for the electronic registration of asylum seekers. People wishing to claim asylum must apply online for an interview date which will be held at one of the two Reception and Identification Centers (RIC) on the mainland: Diavata or Malakasa.

In practice, from the day it was launched, the [online platform](#) has failed to facilitate an effective forum for individuals to claim international protection, and has left people in a perpetuating state of irregular presence with the inability to remedy the situation. Some of the problematic features of the platform include: extensive delays or inaccessibility of appointment dates, lack of access to adequate information and support on how to navigate the system, insufficient availability of languages, the absence of official documentation proving the registration of people's asylum claim, individual responsibility to travel to and from the RICs for allocated appointments and a mandatory 25-day period of detention. Each of these obstacles impede people's right to claim



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international protection in Greece, and forces them into an irregular presence vulnerable to police apprehension, detention and pushbacks.

Since 2020, BVMN has been monitoring [arrests](#) taking place in the city and its surrounding areas - whereby people are subsequently driven to the Turkish border and are pushed back - in conjunction with recording instances of pushbacks from [administrative detention sites](#). This, along with the ongoing broom operations targeting people who are unable to access the asylum system, are indicative of a deliberate attempt by the Greek state to strengthen their system of containment, control, and illegal pushbacks.

We reiterate that Greek authorities are obliged to act in full respect of European Union law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Immigration detention should be used as a means of last resort and should not be applied to vulnerable persons. We urge the Greek state to act in full compliance with the principle of non-refoulement, the European Convention of Human Rights, and other relevant human rights instruments to refer people in need of protection and vulnerable persons apprehended to the competent authorities and to ensure their rights to access asylum.

We remind the Greek state to abide by the recommendations of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances that found that people-on-the-move who are pushed back are at [risk of being subjected to enforced disappearances](#).

We have collated the below press releases by the Greek police evidencing the systematic police checks and arrests of people on the move in Thessaloniki since November 2022. As the evidence collected in the previous press release demonstrated, concerns about fundamental violations of human rights as a direct result of these operations are well-founded on the basis of previous experience. These press releases, when analysed alongside monitoring of police presence throughout the city, advance the argument that people on the move are forced into irregular stay in Greece, exposing them to apprehension, detention, pushbacks and violence at the hands of the Greek state.

We urge independent human rights monitoring bodies to respond, to ensure that any individuals apprehended as a part of these operations have access to asylum procedures, and are not subject to police violence or treatment that would amount to torture, in line with their fundamental rights.

The Border Violence Monitoring Network



Arrests in Thessaloniki resulting in pushbacks:

- <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/april-30-2022-0000-apprehended-at-thessaloniki-bus-station-exact-location-of-pushback-unknown/>
- <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/may-29-2022-1030-orestiada/>
- <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/may-17-2022-1800-rigio-greece-to-sacli-musellim-turkey/>
- <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/april-30-2022-0000-apprehended-at-thessaloniki-bus-station-exact-location-of-pushback-unknown/>
- <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/january-29-2022-0900-neo-cheimenio-el-cili/>
- <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/november-9-2021-0430-close-to-lavara-a-libey/>
- <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/january-19-2022-2000-poros/>
- <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/april-6-2021-0000-approx-10km-from-edirne/>
- <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/march-14-2021-0930-evros-river-greece-estimated-location/>
- <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/march-3-2021-0000-ispala/>

Reports of “Broom” Operations in Thessaloniki

- <https://alterthess.gr/ratsistikes-epicheiriseis-skoypa-sti-dytiki-thessaloniki/>
- <https://en.rua.gr/2022/06/16/police-operation-to-eliminate-the-criminal-network-traffickers-15-arrests/>
- <https://alterthess.gr/nea-astynomiki-epicheirisi-kata-ton-prosfygon-sti-thessaloniki/>
- <https://hellas.postsen.com/local/229901/Barrage-of-checks-for-irregular-immigrants-in-Thessaloniki.html>
- <https://europe-cities.com/2022/05/17/dozens-of-arrests-by-police-operations-in-athens-and-thessaloniki/>



Astynomia releases

November 2022

30-11-2022: Checks of (111) persons and arrests of (5)

persons <https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/11/30/30-11-2022-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimeto-pisi-tis-paravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

19-11-2022: Checks of (151) persons and arrests of (4) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/11/19/19-11-2022-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

17-11-2022: Checks of (132) persons and arrests of (2) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/12/17/17-12-2022-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

16-11-2022: Arrests of (29) persons in the context of special actions, of which (12) persons

http://www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang=%27..%27&perform=view&id=114169&Itemid=2915&lang=

12-11-2022: Checks of (123) persons and arrests of (6) foreigners

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/11/12/12-11-2022-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

10-11-2022: Checks of (148) persons and arrests of (9)

foreigners <https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/11/10/10-11-2022-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-paravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

08-11-2022: Checks of (102) persons and (3) vehicles and arrests of (3) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/11/08/08-11-2022-synelifthisan-tria-atoma-gia-periptoseis-paranomis-metaforas-allodapon/>

04-11-2022: Checks of (165) persons and arrests of (2)

persons <https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/11/04/04-11-2022-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimeto-pisi-tis-paravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

December 2022



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02-12-2022: Arrests of (11) persons of which (5) persons were arrested

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/12/02/02-12-2022-synelifthisan-11-atoma-sto-plaisio-eidikon-dra-seon-tis-genikis-astynomikis-diefthynsis-thessalonikis/>

06-12-2022: Checks of (155) persons arrests of (8) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/12/06/06-12-2022-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

06-12-2022: Arrests of (18) persons of which (9) persons were arrested

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/12/06/06-12-2022-synelifthisan-18-atoma-sto-plaisio-eidikon-dra-seon-tis-genikis-astynomikis-diefthynsis-thessalonikis/>

14-12-2022: Arrests of (8) persons of which (3) were arrested

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/12/14/14-12-2022-synelifthisan-8-atoma-sto-plaisio-eidikon-dras-eon-tis-genikis-astynomikis-diefthynsis-thessalonikis/>

17-12-2022: Checks of (132) persons and (9) vehicles and arrests of (2) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/12/17/17-12-2022-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

21-12-2022: Checks of (112) persons and (8) vehicles, and arrests of (1)

persons <https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/12/21/21-12-2022-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-paravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

30-12-2022: Checks of (118) persons and (8) vehicles and arrests of (3) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2022/12/30/30-12-2022-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

January 2022

05-01-2023: Checks of (132) persons and (7) vehicles and arrests of (4) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2023/01/05/05-01-2023-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

09-01-2023: Checks of (141) persons and (7) vehicles and arrests of (3) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2023/01/09/09-01-2023-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

11-01-2023: Checks of (147) persons and (6) vehicles and arrests of (2) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2023/01/11/11-01-2023-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>



13-01-2023: Checks of (158) persons and (6) vehicles and arrests of (4) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2023/01/13/13-01-2023-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

15-01-2023: Arrests of (135) persons and (30) vehicles and arrests of (3) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2023/01/15/15-01-2023-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

17-01-2023: Checks of (141) persons and (17) vehicles and arrests of (3) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2023/01/17/17-01-2023-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

22-01-2023: Checks of (127) persons and (16) vehicles and arrests of (1) person

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2023/01/22/22-01-2023-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

25-01-23: Checks of (131) persons and arrests of (2) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2023/01/25/25-01-2023-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>

27-01-23: Checks of (137) persons and arrests of (3) persons

<https://www.astynomia.gr/2023/01/27/27-01-2023-astynomikoi-elegchoi-gia-tin-antimetopisi-tis-p-aravatikotitas-kai-ton-entopismo-atomon-pou-diamenoun-paranoma-stin-elliniki-epikrateia/>