



22nd February 2021

Dear commissioner Johansson,

for several months now, we have been hearing more and more reports about illegal pushbacks from the EU Member States, i.e. the European Union. Although both the European Commission and the respective Member States have already been confronted with the accusations, we fail to notice any improvement. On the contrary: the accusations and reports of illegal pushbacks continue to increase.

Very recently, we were informed about a new terrible incident. According to the report, 13 people –including three women and five children - were taken out of a refugee camp on Lesbos last Wednesday night by armed officers. The refugees had allegedly arrived on Lesbos the same evening and had gone to the Megala Therma camp, where residents of the camp gave them blankets against the cold, as the officials did not care. In the end, the refugees were forced to leave the camp with the pretext of testing them for Covid-19. It is very questionable that this happens late in the evening, which was also expressed by the camp residents. In fact, the refugees were forced into a container and after some time four men wearing unmarked dark uniforms arrived and allegedly beat them brutally with batons, robbed them of their belongings and assaulted the women. They then allegedly forced the refugees into a van and took them to a port. The refugees were only allowed to look down and were beaten regularly. At the harbour, the refugees were put into a small rubber boat and after about 30 minutes at sea, were pushed into an orange tent-shaped inflatable life raft. The men left the refugees in it alone, in the dark, at sea and without life jackets. According to reports, the refugees were rescued by the Turkish coast guard off Behram early in the morning. There are videos and several locations of the mobile phones of the refugees, as well as numerous witnesses who prove that these 13 refugees were inside the camp on Lesbos in Greece and were found the following day in Turkey. According to reports, there is no doubt in the case that Greek authorities illegally deported the 13 refugees.

Dear commissioner Johansson, this latest news is again deeply disturbing and shocking. The alleged incidents would be in violation of European and international law. The Greek government's claims that they are complying with all international laws and obligations are highly questionable. We, the Members of the European Parliament, would like to urge you to address this level of pushbacks in the European Union as a matter of priority and to do everything you can to stop these incidents and take appropriate action.

Yours sincerely,

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