UPR Pre-Session Speech August 2026

Introductions of Organisations - Slide 2

Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) is a coalition of organisations working to document illegal pushbacks, collective expulsions, detention, and violence along the EU's external borders.

I Have Rights (IHR) is a non-profit legal organisation providing individualised legal information to people on the move on Samos while advocating for the change of policies and practices responsible for human rights violations.

Mobile Info Team (MIT) is a non-profit organisation that provides accessible information and tailored case and legal support to people on the move in Greece, and advocates for change at national and EU levels.

National Consultations

We are not aware of a national consultation taking place for the 53rd Cycle

Introduction of Themes - slide 3

At the 3rd cycle (2021–2022), Greece accepted a significant cluster of recommendations on non-refoulement, individual asylum assessment, reception conditions, gender-based violence, child detention, and the protection of human rights defenders. However, in the last 5 years no substantive action or improvements were made, and instead we see pushbacks, violence and harmful detention conditions continue to be carried out with impunity. Today, I will discuss three main areas related to the abuse of migrant rights based on our Network's first-hand evidence. These include, the continued practice of illegal pushbacks, the intersectional violence carried out during these pushbacks, and harmful/illegal detention practices that also fail to meet international standards.

1. Pushbacks or illegal collective expulsions that violate the principle non-refoulement - IHR - Slide 4

Over the last two decades and across the last 3 UPR cycles, civil society organisations, treaty body committees, and special rapporteurs have expressed concerns over pushbacks and the lack of state investigation. Notably, in 2016, the Human Rights Committee urged Greece to investigate all allegations of ill-treatment and pushback practices. In 2020, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants stated concern about the “pushbacks of asylum seekers and migrants, which constitutes a violation of the prohibition of collective expulsions and the principle of non-refoulement.”

In the 39th session of the UPR, Greece received 15 recommendations regarding pushbacks, non-refoulement and expulsions, yet these actions continue to be systematic, violent, and carried out by state officials with no accountability.

Despite Greece's ongoing denial, BVMN’s member organisations have documented 151 testimonies of people who have been pushed back and recorded at least 10,000 people affected since 2021. According to a cross-verified dataset by Collective Aid covering the period of 2024 and 2025, the Hellenic Coast Guard was linked to 595 pushback incidents, affecting 17,105 people.

Pushbacks can cause deaths. In the shipwreck of Pylos in June 2023, over 600 people drowned and there remains an ongoing investigation into the criminal responsibility of state actors. In February of this year, after a collision with a boat of the Hellenic Coast Guard off the shores of Chios, at least 15 people died, the majority from head injuries not drowning, while we are yet to see accountability.

On Samos, we frequently document pushbacks amounting to enforced disappearance from smaller islands, pushbacks amounting to torture and physical violence during pushbacks. Between 2023 and 2025 we have documented 61 instances of people being pushed back at sea in the Eastern Aegean and at least 22 incidents of enforced disappearance of people within Greek territory.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Slide 5

1. Greece should immediately accept the individual complaints procedure under Article 31 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

2. Greece should sign and ratify Protocol 4 to the European Convention on Human Rights within 12 months, prohibiting collective expulsion of aliens under Article 4.

3. Greece should immediately ensure that all individuals apprehended at its land and sea borders are provided with individual assessment.

2. Intersectional Violence - BVMN - slide 6

Within these pushback operations, our Network has documented a pattern of further crimes: racist violence, gender-based violence, and religious discrimination, carried out by state officials with impunity. People on the move, especially women, were subjected to forced undressing in 64% of cases, forced body and intimate searches in 78%, sexual assault and harassment in 24%, penetrative sexual violence in at least 4%, and pregnant women beaten or denied food and water in 5%. These figures are likely significant underestimates, given the stigma, trauma, and other barriers to reporting that surround sexual violence everywhere. This violence is also racialised: Hellenic Coast Guard officers have been reported shouting "We'll kill you, you Africans" and "go back, you Arabs" at people during pushback operations.This verbal abuse is accompanied by physical violence that in a majority of cases amounts to torture and inhumane or degrading treatment. The pattern also extends into detention: in Samos alone, one member organisation documented 16 incidents of violence affecting at least 242 people, including a case in which masked officers beat Muslim detainees, including minors, during prayer, and ordered them not to speak about it.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Slide 7

1. Greece should, within 12 months, adopt and implement a protocol for the documentation and investigation of all allegations of sexual and gender-based violence committed during border operations.

2. Greece should, within six months of this review, establish an independent border monitoring mechanism with a mandate to access all land and maritime border zones.

3. Greece should, within 12 months, establish an independent complaints body with jurisdiction to receive and investigate allegations of pushbacks, torture, and enforced disappearance at the border, with the authority to refer cases for prosecution, and

must publish annual data on complaints received, investigations initiated, and outcomes.

3. Detention - MIT - Slide 8

In the last cycle, Greece accepted more than twenty recommendations concerning detention, including limiting its use for certain groups and improving conditions and safeguards. Yet, since 2021, evidence demonstrates persistent non-implementation of these obligations across detention sites.

Our submission documented the clandestine but widespread use of police immigration detention. Research with 31 people found that 30% were detained beyond the legal maximum of 30 days; 100% reported inhumane conditions and no access to information on their rights, mobile phones or essential items. 88% experienced physical or verbal violence, while 53% lacked adequate legal support. One person reported police officers telling detainees to “drink water from the toilets.”

In the context of the 2025 asylum suspension, people arriving in Crete were systematically detained without detention orders, in makeshift facilities described as “very harsh” and like a “morgue” or “slaughterhouse”. Minors, women, men and children were detained together, sleeping on floors, with inadequate access sanitation, food, water and healthcare. On the mainland, people faced severe overcrowding and similarly limited access to basic services, alongside extreme “psychological pressure” and demands to sign for ‘voluntary return’.

Beyond the context of the suspension, automatic and unlawful de facto detention upon arrival continues, without procedural safeguards or adequate conditions, while less coercive alternatives are systematically overlooked.

RECOMMENDATIONS: - Slide 9

1. Greece should immediately cease the practice of child immigration detention, as well as the use of police stations as places of prolonged immigration detention.

2. Greece should, within 6 months, ensure that all sites of detention comply with the Nelson Mandela Rules and can guarantee detainees’ fundamental rights.

3. Greece should, within 6 months, establish and publish a standardised legal basis for all immigration detention decisions, ensuring individualised necessity and proportionality assessments.