



**Border Violence  
Monitoring Network**



## Press Release: Collective Expulsion from Greek Centres

5th May 2020

In response to the recent spike in pushbacks from Greece to Turkey, the [Border Violence Monitoring Network](#)<sup>1</sup>, with members [Mobile Info Team](#) and [Wave Thessaloniki](#), are releasing first hand testimony and photographic evidence indicating the existence of violent collective expulsions. In the space of six weeks, the teams received reports of 194 people removed and pushed back into Turkey from the refugee camp in Diavata and the Drama Paranesti Pre-removal Detention Centre.

In the case of Diavata, respondents report being removed from this accommodation centre by police with the information that they would be issued a document to temporarily regularise their stay (informally known as a “*Khartia*”). Instead they shared experiences of being beaten, robbed and detained before being driven to the border area where military personnel used boats to return them to Turkey across the Evros river. Meanwhile, another large group was taken from detention in Drama Paranesti and expelled with the same means. Though the pushbacks seem to be a regular occurrence from Greece to Turkey, rarely have groups been removed from inner city camps halfway across the territory or at such a scale from inland detention spaces. Within the existing closure of the Greek asylum office and restriction measures due to COVID-19, the repression of asylum seekers and wider transit community looks to have reached a zenith in these cases.

### **Pushback: GRK - TUR**

**Date: 31st March 2020**

[\[Read full report\]](#)

The respondents had been living in Diavata camp for several weeks (as pictured during March) when officers took them in a van under the pretense of being issued a temporary document - “*Where is your khartia? How long have you been in Greece?*”. In the station the Greek police used violence against the group, ignoring those making verbal claims for asylum. All 40 persons were detained in a site close to Alexandroupolis (GR). The respondents report that after two days of inhumane treatment they were driven to the border, beaten half naked and taken on boats to Turkey.



*“They were unloaded in the dark next to the river and ordered to strip to their underwear. The Greek authorities used batons and fists to hit some members of the group.”*

<sup>1</sup> BVMN is a network of watchdog organisations active in Greece and Western Balkans such as No Name Kitchen, Rigardu, Are You Syrious, Mobile Info Team, Wave Thessaloniki, Infokolpa, Escuela con Alma and Centre for Peace Studies, who work together on documenting border violence

### Pushback GRK - TUR

Date: 16th April 2020

[\[Read full report\]](#)

Approximately 50 people were taken from Diavata camp in the morning according to the respondent and removed to a nearby police station where they were ordered to lie on the ground - “*Sleep here, don’t move*”. Then they were beaten with batons, while others were attacked with electric tasers. They were held overnight in a detention space near the border, and beaten further by Greek military officers. The next day they were boated across the river to Turkey by authorities with:

*“Military uniform, masks, guns, electric [taser]”*



### Police removal from Diavata

Date: 28th April 2020

[\[View full video\]](#)



In late April camp residents filmed further police incursions at the site, with another large number of people being taken this time with more force. One witness describes seeing a police officer kicking a man as they rounded up around 30 people and drove them to an unknown location. Contact with police and camp management produced no transparent information on what occurred, why the people had been taken and where they were now.

### Drama Paranesti Case

Pushback GRK-TUR

Date: 23rd April 2020

[\[Read full report\]](#)

The respondent shared that a large number of people were taken from Paranesti Pre-removal Centre in Drama ([pictured](#)) to the Evros border region. Here, they were allegedly tortured across a period of six hours by Greek authorities using electricity tasers and water immersion, as well as beatings with batons. The respondent was in a group of around 24 but alleges this is standard practice and that around 400 individuals have been subject to the same process in recent weeks, taken to the border in coach-loads and shipped across back to Turkey. Recalling the threats of the officers in the detention centre regarding their pushback during Ramadan, the respondent shared how:



*“They tell us, ‘we will let you go to fast with Erdogan’.”*

**Pushback: GRK - TUR**

**Date: 28th April 2020**

[\[Read Full Report\]](#)

In this case the respondent shared how he and 30 other people were taken from the camp in Diavata to a police station nearby. While the officers had promised to issue them a new document, he stated:

*“They didn’t take us inside, just outside, and they took our stuff and then transferred us.”*



Despite having a valid Khartia, the respondent was driven for around three and a half hours to the Evros river, and alleges being beaten with batons as the Greek authorities loaded him and the others into small boats.

*“In ten minutes they took all people to Turkey”*

**Pushback: GRK - TUR**

**17th April 2020**

[\[Read Full Report\]](#)

Taken from outside Diavata camp the respondent reports how the officers:

*“Forcefully pushed [people] in the van while the policemen were kicking them with their legs and shouting at them”*

They were detained, forced to sign untranslated documents and then pushed back across the Evros river at night. The Turkish authorities returned them to Greece in the following days, but the respondent reports how they were pushed back again from Greece



If you have any questions relating to this press release, or would like further comment from the organisations involved, please contact the below:

Border Violence Monitoring Network:

[press@borderviolence.eu](mailto:press@borderviolence.eu)

+447592389699 (whatsapp/signal)

Wave-Thessaloniki:

[hope@wave-thessaloniki.com](mailto:hope@wave-thessaloniki.com)

Mobile Info Team:

[advocacy@mobileinfoteam.org](mailto:advocacy@mobileinfoteam.org)