

Deadly violence at Europe's external borders

Greek Coast Guard rams refugee boat, killing and injuring dozens

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The Mediterranean is one of the most dangerous places in the world for migrants.

Early Wednesday morning, another incident became known in a long series of deadly confrontations between migrants and the border forces of Mediterranean states.

A boat carrying an estimated 35 people, traveling from the Turkish coast to the nearby island of Chios, was rammed by the Greek Coast Guard. At least 15 people were killed. Twenty-six injured individuals were taken to hospitals, including 12 children. Two surviving women lost their unborn children. As of Wednesday, the search for additional missing persons had not yet been completed.

The exact circumstances of the collision remain unclear. According to the Coast Guard, a patrol discovered the migrant boat and ordered it to turn back. Dangerous maneuvers by the speedboat allegedly followed, and during the ensuing pursuit the vessels collided. This version of events has not yet been independently verified. Serious doubts are warranted, as border guards have repeatedly drawn attention through brutal, unlawful and inhumane actions that have led to the deaths of refugees.

In the past year alone, there were several cases in which refugee boats capsized while being pursued by the Coast Guard. In October 2025, a man and a boy died off the island of Rhodes under such circumstances. Human rights and maritime rescue organizations regularly accuse Greek authorities of pushing migrants back into international waters or shortly after they reach Greek waters, without examining their right to asylum, thereby placing them in life-threatening distress at sea.

In the worst known disaster, on June 14, 2023,

hundreds of people died when the fishing trawler *Adriana* sank. Witnesses accused the Greek Coast Guard of causing the severely overcrowded vessel—carrying up to 700 people—to capsize. They also alleged that necessary rescue measures were deliberately withheld, and no assistance was requested. One hundred and four people survived, and 79 bodies were recovered. Hundreds more went down with the ship, including, according to witness testimony, many women and children trapped in the ship's hold. Attempts to investigate the incident were obstructed by the authorities. Following international investigations, including by ARD, Arte, the BBC and CNN, the Greek public prosecutor has since brought charges against 17 members of the Coast Guard, including senior officers.

Numerous further allegations are documented: Migrants were violently forced onto unsafe boats, sent out to sea without life jackets or even pushed into the water—often with fatal consequences. Based on news sources and witness testimony, the BBC documented at least 43 deaths caused by the Greek Coast Guard in 15 incidents between 2020 and 2023.

Earlier, *Der Spiegel* had already proven that the Coast Guard intercepts boat refugees and abandons them on life rafts off the Turkish coast, leaving them to their fate.

All of these practices violate human rights and international legal obligations to admit asylum seekers. The Greek Coast Guard is particularly notorious, but it acts in full knowledge that its methods align with the asylum and deportation policies of EU member states. For decades, “Fortress Europe” has been expanded—with deadly consequences for refugees and migrants, especially in the Mediterranean. The UN

migration agency IOM now describes the central Mediterranean as the “deadliest migration corridor in the world.” In January 2026 alone, hundreds of people reportedly drowned there or died from hypothermia.

European states are responsible for these deadly migration routes and the associated human suffering. Their migration policy is designed to recruit skilled workers trained around the world, while sealing off Europe to people without immediate “economic value.”

Those affected by the most recent disaster off Chios are predominantly people from Afghanistan, a country devastated by years of war in which the European powers were also involved. Today, the Islamist Taliban rule there with brutal arbitrariness. Welthungerhilfe (WWF, World Without Hunger) describes the situation as “catastrophic.” According to the UN, 97 percent of Afghanistan’s population lives in poverty, and more than 1 million children under the age of five are severely malnourished. The education system has collapsed, and roughly two-thirds of the population is illiterate. Who could be more in need of protection than the people from Afghanistan?

Nevertheless, Afghan refugees have little chance of receiving asylum in Europe. Increasingly, they are even being deported back to their country of origin. EU states are progressively adopting the agenda of the far right and preparing measures similar to those implemented by US President Trump in the United States.

Just last week, the European Commission announced a further tightening of its migration and asylum policy. The responsible EU Commissioner, Magnus Brunner, stated: “We must use all the means at our disposal if we want to decide who is allowed to enter the European Union and who must leave it again.” This should be understood as a clear warning. Among the planned measures is the establishment of deportation centers outside EU territory in order to deliberately undermine asylum rights and deter migrants.

This so-called “deterrence” also includes state-organized terror against boat refugees in the Mediterranean. Violence and injustice against those seeking protection are to be institutionally entrenched in the planned “return hubs” outside Europe.

The constant escalation of measures against refugees is also part of the construction of a European police state. The accompanying legal and moral boundary

shifts do not affect migrants alone. The repressive apparatus can quickly be deployed against the entire working class as soon as resistance to social cuts and war policies grows, as current developments in the United States clearly demonstrate.

Defending the fundamental and human rights of refugees and migrants is not only an act of necessary solidarity. It lies in the direct interests of the European and international working class and is a central component of the struggle against fascism, militarism and war.



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