



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
GREEK NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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GNCHR statement on the shipwreck in the south-west area of Pylos¹

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Since 2015, dangerous routes have been followed by people seeking access to safe territory and procedures for international or other protection, resulting in a large number of shipwreck victims, driven to irregular and unsafe border crossings in search of protection and a better life as legal access routes to the European Union, are either non-existent or poorly functioning. The tragic shipwreck of the fishing vessel south-west of the coastal town of Pylos is a typical case.

The fact is that though several of the victims of the shipwreck have been rescued, hundreds of people are still missing. In the face of such a tragedy, with full respect for the memory of the victims, the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) stresses that respect for the value of the human being and human life is the foundation of the rule of law and urges the Greek State to ensure decent reception and living conditions for those rescued, immediate provision of medical care and adequate psychosocial support as well as unimpeded access to asylum procedures for those making such a request. In addition, it is calling on the Greek State to ensure the search for missing persons and the identification of the bodies, as required by respect for human dignity and for the effective investigation of the circumstances of the shipwreck.

The GNCHR as the National Human Rights Institution in Greece and Member of the European Network of NHRIs (ENNHRI) has contributed with on site visits, analytical reports, substantiated proposals and specific recommendations, as well as with the establishment of the Recording Mechanism of Informal Forced Returns, towards a human-centred policy for dealing with the refugee and migration issue in our country, with a particular focus on the borders, where Greece is subject to increased pressure, as the first country of entry into the European Union.

¹The present Statement has been adopted by the GNCHR Plenary on 15.6.2023 Rapporteurs: Professor Maria Gavouneli, President of the GNCHR and Eva Tzavala, GNCHR Legal Officer.



The tragedy in the south-west area of Pylos highlights the need to reach a new agreement to jointly address the refugee and migration issue in the EU, demonstrating that the delay in adopting a common European policy on asylum and migration issues has cost human lives, a fact which is not in line with the European tradition of protecting human rights and law. *“Every person searching for a better life deserves safety and dignity”* (United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres). Safe and legal pathways for refugees and migrants to enter EU territory should finally be established since they constitute, according to the repeated recommendations by all relevant international organisations in recent years, the only way to protect human life.

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) is the independent advisory

body to the Greek State on matters pertaining to human rights protection and the National

Human Rights Institution (NHRI). It was established with Law 2667/1998 in accordance

with the UN Paris Principles and is governed by Law 4780/2021. Its members are persons appointed by twenty institutions (independent Authorities, third level trade unions, NGOs, universities and research institutions)