



The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) is the Greek NHRI, accredited with A-status since 2001. This report covers the GNCHR's activities on the protection of migrants' rights at borders in 2020, taking into consideration major developments such as the entry into force of a new legal regime on international protection, tensions occurred at the Greek-Turkish land borders, and the pandemic.

## RETURNS AND VIOLENCE

On informal forced returns:



The GNCHR was informed of **pushbacks** at the Greek-Turkish border and the use of **life-threatening methods** during operations at sea



Greek authorities **dismissed these allegations**, no case of pushback has ever resulted in a trial



The GNCHR will soon launch a **mechanism for recording incidents** of informal forced returns.

## SITUATION IN RECEPTION CENTRES

During a visit at the **Vathy Reception and Identification Centre** and the surrounding **makeshift camp**, the GNCHR found:



Severe **overcrowding** and **insufficient access** to essential services



**Lack of control** by authorities over a large portion of the informal camp, with **frequent security incidents** happening



**Big gaps** in the provision of **health and psychological services** due to staff and medicine shortages



**Unaccompanied children** living in unsuitable conditions with no access to formal education.

## FAIR AND EFFECTIVE PROCEDURES

The GNCHR noted:



Widespread practice of **notifying decisions on asylum applications to third parties**, thus hindering the applicant's ability to appeal



**Insufficient provision of free legal aid** at the appeal stage



**Irregularities** in the screening of persons belonging to vulnerable groups.

## DETENTION CONDITIONS



The GNCHR reported **detention pilot programs** in Lesbos, Kos and Leros, and asylum seekers being **automatically deprived of their liberty** upon arrival



NGOs and human rights bodies have called for the **release of all migrants detained** in asylum and return procedures due to lack of prospect for removal.

## HUMAN RIGHTS ACCOUNTABILITY



NGOs working on asylum and migration issues are required to **register under strict conditions**



There are widespread reports of NGO members facing **criminal charges under numerous grounds** (espionage, violation of state secrets and the Immigration Code).