



Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) is a coalition of organizations working to document illegal pushbacks, collective expulsions and state violence along the EU's external borders on the so-called Balkan Route, Greece and Turkey since the Network's formulation in 2016. The collection of data on illegal pushbacks and police violence is done by a consortium of independent field volunteers who are part of or cooperate with humanitarian support groups united through the Network. Currently (January 2022) the database contains 1,323 testimonies documenting illegal pushbacks. Over 22,646 persons were affected by these pushbacks.

In September 2020, after a long period of postponements, in the context of systematic fundamental rights violations, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum was announced. It was hoped that the legislative proposals would bring more state cooperation and "burden"-sharing, a pragmatic reform to Dublin, and very significantly, a mechanism to monitor respect for human rights at borders.

The new legislative proposals include a pre-screening regulation that is meant to replicate the "hotspot" model throughout European states, despite experts denouncing the model and proclaiming its failure in Lampedusa and on the Greek islands. The failures referred to ensuring decent living conditions, to recognizing vulnerable persons, to guaranteeing access to legal aid and to health care. In addition, it has been repeatedly assessed that camps are detrimental to integration. The new pre-screening regulation legislates the multiplication of this model and adds a legal fiction of non-entry, speedy assessments without safeguarding access to legal aid, and the creation of independent border monitoring mechanisms.

While a truly independent monitoring mechanism with the ability to protect fundamental rights and hold human rights perpetrators accountable is welcomed, BVMN is concerned that a mechanism that lacks methodological scope, capacity, independence and institutional accountability will not only be incapable of monitoring and defending fundamental rights but may also be used to discredit claims of human rights violations and as a white-washing tool for member states perpetrating abuses and the EU's border management. The failed Croatian model of the independent border monitoring mechanism is exemplary in this sense. The Greek model, currently being designed, is due to follow in the same footsteps.

By now, it is clear to BVMN that pushbacks, torture and arbitrary detention, including the use of black sites, are systematic to the management of the EU's external borders. In December 2020, BVMN published the Black Book of Pushbacks, 1,500 pages documenting the horrific violence suffered by over 12,000 people at the hands of authorities on the EU's external borders. The third volume will soon follow to include pushbacks and violence exerted against over 10,000 persons in addition to what we have documented since the publication of the first edition.