**Amnesty Europe Newsletter February 2025**

Dear Amnesty Activists and supporters

Please find attached our latest Newsletter. Human Rights are under threat even more than before but sometimes there are some good news: Our Europe country coordinator team has been enriched by our newest member : little Petar, born just before Christmas to our wonderful Western Europe coordinator Jovana.

There is also some good news from Turkiye : three of the GEZI defendants have been acquitted. And in Greece court proceedings into the action of the Greek coastguard regarding the deaths of over 600 people are slowly progressing. Campaigning works, but Greek civil society who are pushing for justice for the victims of the Pylos shipwreck need our solidarity. I will be back with proposed actions soon. A new report into surveillance and suppression of civil society in Serbia makes disturbing reading, and I am in conversation with the International Secretariat on campaigning guidelines.

And most importantly, please take **Urgent Action** for Nimet Tanrikulu who has been imprisoned on baseless accusations.

And as always : Please contact us for further information, visits, talks….

For Turkiye : Chris Ramsey [chris.ramsey@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:chris.ramsey@amnesty.org.uk)

For Central Europe : Lucja Jastrebzka [Lucja.Jastrzebska@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:Lucja.Jastrzebska@amnesty.org.uk)

For Western and Northern Europe : Jovana Bosnjak [Jovana.Bosnjak@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:Jovana.Bosnjak@amnesty.org.uk)

For South East Europe and Balkans: Ulrike Schmidt [Ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:Ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk)

Content : page:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Turkiye Urgent Action | 2 |
| Turkiye Prisoners of Conscience acquittal and News reports | 2 |
| Serbia a digital prison New Amnesty report | 6 |
| Poland: Green Border screening and up to date background information | 9 |
| Greece: Pylos Shipwreck: initial investigations by the maritime court. | 11 |

**Turkiye Chris Ramsey** [**Chris.ramsey@amnesty.org.uk**](mailto:Chris.ramsey@amnesty.org.uk)

**Urgent Action Nimet Tanrıkulu**

Attached with this newsletter is a revised Urgent Action, calling for the release of human rights defender Nimet Tanrıkulu.

The update is because Nimet’s prosecution was transferred from Ankara to Istanbul although she is still being held in Ankara’s Sincan prison.

The first hearing in her trial will take place on 4 March 2025 at the Istanbul Heavy Penal Court No. 24.

On 26 November, prominent human rights defender Nimet Tanrıkulu was detained from her home by the police in Istanbul. After a short period of detention at a police station, she was transferred to the anti-terrorism branch of the Ankara Security Directorate. Following four days in police custody, Nimet Tanrıkulu was remanded in pre-trial detention on 30 November, accused of “membership to a terrorist organization”.

She is still held at Ankara’s Sincan women’s prison. Amnesty International believes that her detention on what appear to be baseless accusations is arbitrary, and she should be released immediately.

**Gezi Prisoners of Conscience-** at last some good news!

**The acquittal of three Gezi defendants on 11 February brings one part of a chronicle of injustice to an end**

Three defendants in the Gezi Park trial have been acquitted after a **retrial** following the Court of Cassation’s decision to overturn their previous 18-year prison sentences. Mücella Yapıcı, Ali Hakan Altınay, and Yiğit Ali Ekmekçi (who was not part of the original Gezi 7) were acquitted today by the İstanbul 13th Heavy Penal Court due to lack of evidence.

The defendants were not present in court, but their attorneys attended the hearing. Necla Saadet Durdu, representing the General Directorate of Security, was also present.

**In his final opinion, the prosecutor stated that there was no clear, concrete, or material evidence proving the defendants committed the alleged crime, and therefore recommended acquittal**. The defence lawyers supported this assessment and asked for a ruling in line with the prosecutor’s opinion.

The court ruled that there was insufficient evidence to convict Yapıcı, Altınay, and Ekmekçi on charges of "attempting to overthrow the government of the Republic of Turkey or obstruct its functions." The panel concluded that the defendants should be acquitted on the grounds that no definitive and legally admissible evidence was found.

Reacting to the acquittal at the retrial of Gezi PoCs Mücella Yapıcı, Hakan Altınay (and Yiğit Ekmekçi), whose initial convictions and 18-year prison sentences in connection with mass protests in 2013 were overturned by the Court of Cassation in September 2023, Milena Buyum, Amnesty International’s Senior Türkiye Campaigner, said:

“Today’s decision brings an end to the politically motivated prosecution of Mücella Yapıcı, Hakan Altınay and Yiğit Ekmekçi, and the chronicle of injustice they have suffered. Over the course of more than seven years, prosecuting authorities repeatedly failed to provide credible evidence to substantiate the baseless charges laid against them. They should never have been subjected to any charges, let alone spent any time in prison.

“Their unfair prosecution – and that of the other five Gezi Park defendants – not only resulted in grave violations of their rights, but also became a shameful example of the way in which Türkiye’s justice system is used as a tool of political repression.

“Their acquittals must now be followed by the immediate release of Osman Kavala and the other four Gezi prisoners of conscience who remain behind bars.”

Speaking to Amnesty International, Mücella Yapıcı said: “It is very hard to feel happy when all the others are still behind bars. **Why are they still imprisoned when they are as innocent as us?** I want to thank everyone who stood by us and supported us during this thoroughly unfair prosecution.”

**Background**

Click  [here](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2024/12/turkiye-gezi-park-defendants-must-be-acquitted-and-the-chronicle-of-injustice-brought-to-an-end/) for information about to remind you about the prosecutions of Mücella Yapıcı, Hakan Altınay, Yiğit Ekmekçi, Çiğdem Mater, Tayfun Kahraman, Mine Özerden, Can Atalay and Osman Kavala.

Osman Kavala remains in prison, serving a life sentence, despite two binding European Court of Human Rights judgments calling on him to be freed. Can Atalay remains behind bars despite two equally binding Turkish Constitutional Court rulings which remain unimplemented, as do  Çiğdem Mater, Tayfun Kahraman and Mine Özerden. All were sentenced to 18 years.

The final acquittals of Mücella Yapıcı, Hakan Altınay and Yiğit Ekmekçi were not expected so they are even more welcome. They come after years of legal battles and international pressure, including a critical stance from the European Union and the US who criticized the trials as attempts to suppress dissent. The acquittals are not only a victory for the defendants but also a hopeful sign of Türkiye’s judicial independence and a step towards aligning with international human rights standards.

The Gezi Park protests started as a minor environmental sit-in opposing urban development proposals for Istanbul’s Gezi Park but quickly grew into extensive anti-government rallies throughout Türkiye. The movement represented a rising dissatisfaction with what was seen as escalating authoritarianism. Even though the protests were peaceful, they resulted in harsh legal repercussions for those involved. Allegations of trying to topple the government were highlighted by the contentious ongoing imprisonment and trials of activists such as Osman Kavala.

**Action**

Please continue with your solidarity messages to the remaining Gezi PoCs as set out in previous newsletters. They are very much appreciated.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Blue text on a white background  AI-generated content may be incorrect. | A logo for a company  AI-generated content may be incorrect. |

**Türkiye: Expert dismayed by continued misuse of counter terrorism law to keep human rights defenders in long-term detention**

GENEVA (16 January 2025) – The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, today expressed deep concern at the continued long-term detention in Türkiye of nine prominent human rights defenders and lawyers, all of whom were arbitrarily arrested in connection with their peaceful work and convicted in unfair trials on spurious terrorism-related charges.

“I find it alarming that Türkiye has used counter-terrorism laws to target and silence human rights defenders and peaceful voices who are critical of government policies, sentencing them to lengthy prison terms,” Lawlor said. “This is contrary to Türkiye’s international human rights obligations”.

The Special Rapporteur noted that since the start of her mandate in May 2020, she has written twice to the Turkish authorities about the case of the human rights defenders. “While I thank the Government for its reply to one of my letters, I remain dismayed that the criminalisation of their human rights work has not stopped,” she said.

Eight of the Turkish human rights defenders - Ms Barkin Timtik, Mr Aytaç Ünsal, Mr Özgür Yılmaz, Mr Behiç Aşçı, Mr Engin Gökoğlu, Mr Süleyman Gökten, Mr Selçuk Kozağaçlı and Ms Oya Aslan - are members of the Progressive Lawyers’ Association (Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği - ÇHD), representing victims of police violence and torture and citizens prosecuted for their opinions. They were arrested between 2018 and 2019, and charged with “membership of a terrorist organisation”; two of them were also charged with “propaganda for a terrorist organisation”. They were sentenced to up to 13 years in prison in a trial, known as the ÇHD II trial, that failed to meet international fair trial and due process standards.

The Supreme Court upheld their sentences in 2020 and convicted seven of them under the Turkish Anti-Terror Code. The eighth ÇHD human rights defender, Ms Oya Aslan, was arrested later, tried separately under terrorism-related charges and convicted in 2022. Her long-term sentence of 11 years was upheld by a regional court in November 2024.

Turan Canpolat, a lawyer with the Malatya Bar Association, was also tried under terrorism-related articles of the Turkish Penal Code. He has been held since 2016, when he was arrested based on incriminating evidence given by his client, who later admitted he was forced to make these statements. Nonetheless, Canpolat was sentenced to 10 years in prison for supposed links with the Gülen Movement, which Türkiye accuses of being behind an attempted coup in 2016.

All nine human rights defenders are held in high-security, closed prisons. “It is an outrage that they are detained in high security prisons, despite their history of peaceful human rights defence work,” Lawlor said.

The expert found it extremely disturbing to learn that one of the defendants, Mr Turan Canpolat, had been held in solitary confinement for almost three years, although no specific disciplinary orders had been issued.

“I urge the Turkish Government to abide by international human rights law, and ensure that no defendant is subjected to ill-treatment and that long-term detainees obtain a fair hearing in their appeals to higher courts. I am ready to discuss this further with Turkish authorities,” the Special Rapporteur said.

The Special Rapporteur is in contact with the Turkish authorities on this issue.

**New Amnesty report** [**Ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk**](mailto:Ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk)

**Serbia: “A Digital Prison”: Surveillance and the suppression of civil society in Serbia**

“A DIGITAL PRISON” SURVEILLANCE AND THE SUPPRESSION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SERBIA This report documents how Serbian authorities have deployed surveillance technology and digital repression tactics as instruments of wider state control and repression directed against civil society. The report reveals Serbia’s pervasive and routine use of spyware, including NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware, alongside a novel domestically-produced Android NoviSpy spyware system, disclosed for the first time in this report. The report also highlights widespread misuse of Cellebrite’s UFED mobile forensics tools against Serbian environmental activists and protest leaders.

Read the full report :

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur70/8813/2024/en/>

A joint European Regional Office (ERO) and Amnesty Tech Security Lab report titled: ***“A Digital Prison”: Surveillance and the Suppression of Civil Society in Serbia,”***documenting how Serbian authorities have used highly invasive spyware, including NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware and digital forensic tools, to target Serbian civil society activists and journalists.

Serbian police and intelligence authorities are using advanced phone spyware, alongside Cellebrite mobile phone forensic products, to unlawfully target journalists, environmental activists and other individuals in a covert surveillance campaign.

In particular, the investigation reveals for the first time how the Serbian police and the Security Information Agency (Bezbedonosno-informativna Agencija - BIA) have used a bespoke domestically made Android spyware system, NoviSpy, to covertly infect individuals during periods of detention or police interviews.

Amnesty International has also for the first time uncovered forensic evidence showing how Serbian authorities have used mobile phone forensic products from Cellebrite to enable NoviSpy spyware infections on the phones of activists and journalists. Cellebrite, a firm founded and headquartered in Israel but with offices globally, produces data extraction tools that are widely used by law enforcement agencies around the world.

In February 2024, Slaviša Milanov, an independent journalist from Dimitrovgrad in Serbia who covers local interest news stories, was brought into a police station after a seemingly routine traffic stop. After Slaviša was released, he noticed that his phone, which he had left at the police station reception at the request of the officers, was acting strangely – the data and wi-fi settings were turned off. Aware that this can be a sign of hacking, and mindful of the surveillance threats facing journalists in Serbia, Slaviša contacted Amnesty International’s Security Lab to request an analysis of his phone. Amnesty International’s analysis led to two remarkable discoveries. Firstly, forensic traces revealed that a Cellebrite product had been used to unlock his device. Cellebrite, whose forensic tool allows the extraction of all data on a device, and which is used by police departments around the world, claim that they have strict policies to prevent misuse of their product; yet, this discovery provides clear evidence of a journalist’s phone being targeted without any form of due process. Slaviša was neither asked for nor did he provide the passcode for his Android device. The authorities did not disclose to Slaviša that they wanted to search his device, nor did they declare any legal basis for such a search. Slaviša still does not know what data was taken from his phone. The second finding of the analysis was even more extraordinary. Amnesty International found traces of a previously unknown form of spyware, which it has named ‘NoviSpy’. NoviSpy allows for capturing sensitive personal data from a target’s phone after infection and provides the ability to turn on the phone’s microphone or camera remotely. Forensic evidence indicates that the spyware was installed while the Serbian police were in possession of Slaviša’s device, and the infection was dependent on the use of Cellebrite to unlock the device. Two forms of highly invasive technologies were used in combination to target the device of an independent journalist, leaving almost his entire digital life open to the Serbian authorities. The story does not end with Slaviša. Further research from Amnesty International has unveiled the breadth of digital surveillance in Serbia, including deployment of at least three different forms of spyware, as well as persistent misuse of Cellebrite’s highly sophisticated digital forensics technology. This report is a case study on how Serbian authorities have deployed surveillance technology and digital repression tactics as instruments of wider state control and repression directed against civil society.. This report comes at a time of intensifying state repression and in an increasingly hostile environment for free expression and open debate in the country. Serbia has seen several major waves of anti-government protests since 2021, each triggering increasingly harsher response from the authorities – from sustained and vicious smear campaigns against critical non-governmental organisations (NGOs), media outlets and journalists to persistent judicial harassment of citizens organizing peacefully and engaging in political dissent . The Serbian Security Information Agency, known in Serbia as BIA (Bezbedonosno-informativna Agencija) and the Serbian police have used the NoviSpy spyware alongside mobile forensic tools from Cellebrite to target independent think-tank activists, peaceful protesters and independent journalists. Together, these tools provide the state with an enormous capability to gather data both covertly, as in the case of spyware, and overtly, through the unlawful and illegitimate use of Cellebrite mobile phone extraction technology. The authorities in Serbia have systematically deployed these tools against peaceful protesters who are already all too often subjected to unjustified criminalization for their activism. The report details the history of use or procurement of highly invasive spyware, including systems from Finfisher, NSO Group, and Intellexa, by Serbian authorities over the past decade. Critically, the research shows that at least three activists and an independent journalist had the NoviSpy spyware covertly installed on their devices during the time they attended informational interviews with the Serbian police or BIA. The infections occurred while the phones were temporarily taken away from their owners and apparently deposited in lockers in the police stations. This exceptionally deceptive tactic, i.e. installing spyware covertly on people’s devices during informational interviews, appears to have been widely used. Technical evidence suggests that dozens, if not hundreds, of unique devices were targeted with the NoviSpy spyware over the last number of years. The full scope of targeting likely extends beyond the unlawful targeting of civil society. In October 2024, an activist with Belgrade-based NGO Krokodil, was invited to BIA’s office to provide information about an incident involving an attack on their organization. During the time they were attending the meeting, their phone was left unattended outside of the interview room. A subsequent forensic analysis by the Amnesty International Security Lab found evidence that the NoviSpy Android spyware was installed during that time. While less technically advanced than commercial spyware like Pegasus, the NoviSpy Android spyware still provides Serbian authorities with extensive surveillance capabilities once installed on the target’s device. In addition to Slaviša and the Krokodil activist, Amnesty International found evidence of installation or attempted installation of NoviSpy spyware in at least two other cases involving Serbian civil society activists.

**Amnesty International calls upon Serbian authorities to ban highly invasive spyware, put in place a system of safeguards capable of preventing the abuse of surveillance powers, provide effective remedy to victims of unlawful targeted surveillance and hold those responsible accountable for the violations. Cellebrite and other digital forensic companies must conduct due diligence to ensure that their products are not used in a way which contributes to human rights violations. NSO Group, Intellexa and other technology vendors must cease the production, sale, transfer and support of Pegasus, Predator or other similarly highly invasive spyware.**

**Amnesty – Poland Green Border Screening**

**On 16th January we showed the film “Green Border” at the Human Rights Action Centre in London. A very powerful film about the plight of refugees and migrants caught in the Belarus-European Union crisis. Importantly it shows the humanity of all the people involved: refugee families, border guards, activists. It was a very moving evening with Q&A and a lively discussion.**

**The film is available on BFI player, Amazon Prime and other locations. If you haven’t seen it yet, watch it. You can also buy the film as DVD and organise a film screening in your local area. In a time where people seeking protection and a safe place to live for their children, are dehumanized and vilified it is important that as many people as possible see this film.**

**Here some background information by our Central Europe country coordinator Lucja Jastrzebska** [**Lucja.Jastrzebska@amnesty.org.uk**](mailto:Lucja.Jastrzebska@amnesty.org.uk)

The crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border has been growing since August 2021. Refugees and migrants reaching Poland via the Belarusian border continue to face hostility. Border guards violently force people back to the border, denying them international protection. These people forced back by Polish border guards are then subsequently also mistreated by Belarusian guards and sent back into the Białowieża Forest. From the beginning of this crisis in 2021 until the end of 2023, Amnesty International has reported at least 55 migrants and asylum seekers have died due to lack of medical care, malnutrition, exhaustion, hypothermia or heat (depending on the time of year). This includes men, women and children.

In October 2024, the Polish government’s new migration strategy posed to temporarily suspend the right to asylum. Amnesty International has stated that suspending the right to seek asylum is flagrantly unlawful and Prime Minister Tusk knows this. These proposals endanger the rights of people seeking safety and penalise people who may have been subjected to violence and trafficking, or lured to the EU borders under false pretences. These plans are the latest in the Polish government’s [efforts](https://www.amnesty.eu/news/poland-new-firearms-regulations-risk-undermining-the-rule-of-law/) to undermine the human rights of refugees and migrants arriving at the Polish-Belarussian border. The proposal also comes as Poland, together with Lithuania and Latvia (in separate but similar cases), faces imminent scrutiny at the [European Court of Human Rights](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng-press#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22003-7983149-11136336%22%5D%7D) for the situation of a group of Afghan people seeking asylum who were stranded at the border with Belarus in 2021, as the Polish authorities allegedly prevented from accessing asylum and summarily returned them.

This is an abuse of human rights practices as currently, if people are caught at the border, authorities did not allow applications for international protection to be lodged, but instead carried out a push-back procedure, which in essence meant taking people outside the Polish border to the Belarussian side. The procedure was also applied to women and children.

NGOs and journalists were excluded from any activity in the 3-kilometre border area. Migrants have no possibility of assistance – if they are apprehended, the authorities could use a push-back procedure without any restrictions, without registering people or providing support. The border Guard was supported in this by the Polish army, the military police and the police. And no one apart from residents are allowed in the zone, including medical assistance – ‘Medics on the Border’ – were not allowed in.

This is extremely prevalent as Amnesty International warns that asylum seekers, “including families with children, often in need of immediate help, have been beaten and threatened with security dogs by Belarusian forces” as they attempt to cross into safety in Poland.

On the other hand, in the case of areas outside the 3-kilometre zone, social organisations could already act. However, in this case there was a kind of race against time. If a given group of migrants was previously tracked down by social organisations, there was a chance that those persons would be included in the procedure for verification of their status and directed to centres for foreigners or to hospitals, rather than subjected to the push-back procedure. If these persons were detained by the authorities, they generally had no chance to stay in Poland and the push-back procedure was applied immediately.

**The argument of safe routes –**

Unfortunately, the situation in Poland is not unique. Similar actions are taking place at the borders of other countries, such as the UK and refugees seeking safety on small boats in life-threatening journeys. Solutions need to be taken into account and one such solution to reduce the amount of refugees loosing their lives, be it in forests in Poland or in the English Channel, is access to safe routes when seeking asylum to respect the basic value of human dignity.

By ‘safe and legal’ route, we mean the formal sanction by the UK of journeys to the UK – e.g. where a visa is granted or available for the journey or the person is permitted to travel to the UK without a visa. A journey under any other circumstances is not by a safe and legal route. However, this does not mean the journey is either unlawful or unsafe, though its being made in circumstances that are not formally sanctioned gives rise to significant risks of exploitation, abuse and other harm.

In the UK, safe and legal routes are available to some people already recognised as refugees and to some family members of people recognised as refugees in the UK. For example, the Afghanistan Scheme, the Ukrainian Scheme, The Syrian Scheme and the Hong Kong Scheme. The adequacy of these routes is a matter of concern, including the extent to which certain people are excluded from them. However, there are no such routes available to people seeking asylum. Many of those who had to flee Afghanistan after the withdrawal of Western forces have not been able to use safe and legal routes and are forced to put their lives into the hands of smugglers or turn to the Belarussian offer of entering the EU through Belarus.

Pylos Shipwreck Initial Investigation by the prosecution of the Piraeus Maritime Court closed.

[Ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:Ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk)

You will remember the shocking death of more than 600 people ( of whom over 100 were children) on 23rd June 2023 when the “Adriana” a small fishing vessel packed with 750 refugees sank near the Greek coast of Pylos. After distress calls had been ignored by the Greek authorities for 15 hours, a coast guard patrol boat was dispatched which towed the stricken vessel so violently that it overturned. The patrol boat then moved away, instead of rescuing the drowning people in the water.

The BBC produced a shocking documentary, proving that callous manslaughter and outright murder of refugees by members of the Greek police and coastguard was no isolated incident. You can watch the documentary on Apple TV and BBC I-player :

[Dead Calm Killing in the Med ?](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0020ct1)

Initially the Greek authorities tried to deflect their responsibility for these deaths by indicting the survivors. This was rejected by the Greek court. The investigation into the actions and omissions by the Greek authorities had been very slow moving. Now the preliminary investigation has been closed.

Please find below the full statement and a summary about the on-going court case.

<https://rsaegean.org/en/closure-of-the-preliminary-examination-by-the-prosecution-of-the-piraeus-maritime-court-on-the-pylos-shipwreck/>

**Closure of the preliminary investigation by the prosecution of the Piraeus Maritime Court on the Pylos shipwreck**

**The absence of any investigation into the responsibilities of the competent search and rescue bodies and the leadership of the Greek Coast Guard is deafening**

The lawyers representing the survivors and victims of the shipwreck of the fishing vessel “Adriana”, which took place west of Pylos on 14/06/2023, were informed a few days ago of the completion of the preliminary examination conducted by the competent Deputy Prosecutor of the Piraeus Maritime Court and the transmission of the case file to the Head Prosecutor of the Court. At the same time, we were invited to collect a copy of the case file.

From the initial review of the voluminous file, the following points have emerged:

* The captain and the crew members of the PPLS 920 (Hellenic Coastguard boat) and the members of the Special Missions Squad (KEA) of the Coast Guard on board were summoned by the competent Public Prosecutor to provide written explanations for the offences of a) causing a shipwreck that resulted in the death of a large number of people (Article 277 (1) of the Penal Code ), (b) dangerous interference with vessel traffic resulting in the death of others (Article 291(1)(dd) of the Penal Code), (c) exposure resulting in death (Article 306(2) of the Penal Code), (d) failure to render assistance (Article 307 of the Penal Code), and (e) aggravated involuntary manslaughter (Article 302 of the Penal Code) and aggravated involuntary assault (Article 314(1) and (2) of the Penal Code).

However, **the competent Public Prosecutor’s Office did not summon for written explanations those legally responsible for the failures and omissions of the Search & Rescue Operation, namely, the competent bodies of the National Search and Rescue Coordination Centre, the Operations Centre and their hierarchical superiors, i.e. the leadership of the Coast Guard.** **This is despite clear evidence in the case file** indicating that, beyond the responsibilities of the captain and the crew members of the PPLS 920, **there are responsibilities for all of the above, including the Chief and the Deputy Chief of the Coast Guard, as, while they had a particular legal obligation and were aware of the danger situation of the vessel** ‘**Adriana’, they did not act, as they should have done, in order to rescue the people on the vessel**. From the first moment the vessel ‘Adriana’ was sighted until its capsizing and sinking, the officers of the National Search and Rescue Coordination Centre and the Operations Centre, along with their hierarchical superiors, were exclusively responsible for supervising, managing, and coordinating actions. They were fully aware of the vessel’s distress and the urgent need to rescue those on board.

**Today, the lawyers representing the survivors and victims of the Pylos shipwreck, filed a request**before the competent Public Prosecutor of the Piraeus Maritime Court **requesting, among other things,** **the exercise of criminal prosecution and a thorough investigation and attribution of responsibility for the commission of these also to the competent executives of the National Search and Rescue Coordination Centre, and the Operations Centre and to the persons in charge of higher hierarchical or supervisory directorates and bodies**, who are responsible for acts and omissions that led to the shipwreck and the death of 600 people.

Meanwhile, we were informed that the Head of the Prosecutor’s Office has referred the case file back to the Prosecutor who conducted the preliminary investigation for further action.

**We have also requested** that additional investigative action be carried out in order to provide evidence for the many unanswered questions, **as the case file contains serious gaps and omissions**, particularly concerning:

* **the record of the communications of the National Search and Rescue Coordination Centre** throughout the period in question as, although it is clear from the testimonies of **the National Search and Rescue Coordination Centre**staff and the captain of the PPLS 920 that there were communications both internally and **with the Adriana**, they **have not been included in the case file**,
* **the incomplete examination of the mobile phone devices** of the crew members of PPLS 920, since this examination took place **without any evaluation or forensic analysis of** the extracted data,
* the urgent need to **lift the secrecy of telephone communications**for both business and private phones of the relevant officers of **the National Search and Rescue Coordination Centre, the Operations Centre, and**of the higher hierarchical or supervisory directorates and bodies, including the Chief and Deputy Chief of the Coast Guard.

Judicial investigation and accountability for the Pylos shipwreck are **matters of Rule of Law**. It is deeply concerning that, 18 months after, there **are still many unanswered questions**, even as regards the assessment of the actions of the competent port authorities. There must be **transparency**and access to all possible evidence in order for it to be investigated by the judicial authorities, since, to date, no reasonable explanation has been provided for the criminal acts and omissions of the Greek port authorities during the search and rescue operation of the Adriana vessel. **Accountability for the Pylos shipwreck and justice for the victims are essential for our democracy, as is the need to investigate all deaths, including the recent tragic deaths off Rhodes, which add to the hundreds of people lost at our country’s maritime borders.**

*The organisations*

**Network of Social Support for Refugees and Migrants**

**Hellenic League for Human Rights (HLHR)**

**Greek Council for Refugees (GCR)**

**Initiative of Lawyers and Jurists for the shipwreck of Pylos**

**Legal Centre Lesvos**

**Refugee Support Aegean (RSA)**

I am in contact with Greek organisations campaigning for justice for the victims of the Pylos shipwreck disaster, and in consultation with the International Secretariat about some more solidarity action in the UK.