



HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
Ministry of Migration & Asylum

The Minister

Monday September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Steffen Klusmann,  
Editor-in-Chief,  
Der Spiegel  
[steffen.klusmann@spiegel.de](mailto:steffen.klusmann@spiegel.de)

Dear Mr. Klusmann,

Evros Incident – August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022

As you may be aware, on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the Hellenic Police traced 38 asylum seekers in the Greek shores of the Evros River and transferred them in the Reception Center of Fylakio. All 38 were in good health. Previously, according to their statement, these 38 asylum seekers were “stranded” on an islet, in the Evros River.

For days, the incident was reported by Spiegel and from Spiegel journalists in their personal social media account, portraying the narrative as was given to them exclusively by NGOs.

I am writing on behalf of the Greek Government to bring to your attention new information that has come to light regarding the events that took place on the Greek-Turkish border this August and which your publication published a series of articles on August 10<sup>th</sup>, August 19<sup>th</sup> and August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

In these articles your reporting stated, among other allegations:

1. That the immigrants were in Greek territory and Greece was amiss in not rescuing them.

2. That there was a dead child among the immigrants and that the government “showed no empathy” etc. “Now Maria is dead. She died at the beginning of August at Europe's external border because the Greek authorities refused her any help. She was just five years old.”
3. That a second child was at imminent health risk, a pregnant woman as well

As you will recall, Greece’s position from the beginning was that the 38 migrants were located outside Greek territory, therefore inside Turkish territory. And that furthermore even at that point, no proof of the demise of such a child existed.

On the first point, Greece was called on by international media, your publication included, to urgently act to save the lives of 38 people in peril. Your assumption had been that the migrants were on Greek territory. Under that assumption, we understand that the concern for their wellbeing would lead to calls for Greece to take action. Nevertheless, as we maintained at the time, and can now conclusively prove, that assumption was false.

On Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September, the NGO HumanRights360, who represents the group of 38 asylum seekers at the European Court of Human rights, and who had been very critical of the Greek government’s position that Greece could not in fact intervene, conceded that the islet is indeed located within the territory of Turkey and that they had, in fact, been “misled”.

The Greek Police, the Greek Armed Forces, and the Greek government had the same position from the beginning: that the islet was on Turkish territory. Had we acted, Greece would have violated Turkish borders. Recall an event which occurred in 2018, on the same Greek – Turkish border, when two Greek soldiers were arrested by Turkey for accidentally entering Turkish territory while conducting a night patrol and were held for 5 months on suspicion of espionage. Their trial is still pending in Turkey. Also please be reminded that Turkey has been escalating its rhetoric against Greece, calling into question the sovereignty of Greek islands, the Turkish President going so far as to proclaim that they will “come at night” – meaning, that they are threatening to invade Greece.

Considering all the above, had Greece heeded the calls to violate Turkish borders for purported humanitarian reasons, it could have provoked a major geopolitical incident.

Furthermore, on the second point, it is clear now from the facts and all photographic evidence that there is no missing child, not to mention a dead child.

The filing to the European Court of Human Rights referred to 4 children (born 2013, 2013, 2017 & 2018); these children are all live and well in Greece. No fifth child was reported. Moreover, no fifth child appears in any pictures: in fact, all the children shown in all the released pictures are fortunately alive and well. Today, her parents claim not to remember where they buried her, not to have marked the grave and not to have taken a single picture of the grave. They now claim they do not want her body exhumed for her to be buried with dignity, and no longer wish to speak of the matter.

Finally, on the third point, the second child which was supposed to have been stung by a scorpion was in good health, as was the pregnant woman as well. No person was in need of hospitalization after their initial check-up.

**This incident had complicated parameters which took time to investigate, and potentially severe geopolitical repercussions which merited very careful handling.**

We are certain that an internationally respected publication such as yours, which has high journalistic standards with balanced and fair reporting, will take immediate steps to inform your readers as, in light of the new information, it would hardly be an exaggeration to claim that Greece was unfairly criticized, and its reputation wrongfully tarnished.

We are always available for any further questions.

Thank you in advance.

Your sincerely,

Notis Mitarachi