



--- Press Release ---

>>For the 1st time>>

## **SYRIAN REFUGEE WHO WAS A VICTIM OF 'PUSHBACK'** **SUES FRONTEX FOR HALF A MILLION EURO**

A.H. FILED THE DAMAGES CLAIM TO THE **EU COURT OF JUSTICE** AFTER HE WAS **KIDNAPPED FROM A GREEK ISLAND**, TRANSFERRED TO AN UNWORTHY RAFT, **ABANDONED AT SEA FOR 17 HOURS**, AND COLLECTIVELY **EXPULSED TO TURKEY**, WHERE HE'S CURRENTLY LIVING CLANDESTINELY IN DIRE CONDITIONS.

In a **ground-breaking legal action**, a *first* in an **avalanche of 'pushback' lawsuits**, *front-LEX* filed a case against the EU Border Agency for a **17-hour long 'pushback' operation in the Aegean Sea**. The case was filed by *front-LEX* legal team Omer Shatz, Iftach Cohen, Amanda Musco Eklund, Francesco Gatta and Estelle Nandnaba.

Between 2020-2021, **43,000 human beings were arrested by European agents on EU territory. Then they disappeared**. What happened to them? Are they alive? What were their names? Stories? A.H. is one of them. In April 2020 he landed on a Greek island with 21 other refugees. They asked locals to call the police. They wanted to apply for asylum.

Instead of processing their asylum claims, the authorities abducted, detained, forcibly transferred them to and abandoned them on a **'death raft' with no life-vests, water, food, means of navigation or communication. They were left adrift for 17 hours. They were at grave risk for their lives**, as a Greek vessel repeatedly pushed the dinghy back into Turkish territory while a **FRONTEX plane surveilled from above**.

*"It was a horrible, hard time," says A.H. in a video interview. "It's unforgettable. They threw us onto a boat as if we had committed a crime. I lost all my hope. All my dreams and ambitions disappeared because of the pushback."*

The case reveals that since March 2020, **Frontex's 'Rapid Border Intervention Aegean' Operation** was part of a new policy tasked with unlawful 'prevention of departure' and 'prevention of entry' of refugees to Greece through the Aegean Sea at *all* costs. The 'new tactics', 'special measures' and 'early detection' methods adopted for this criminal enterprise of mass violence included the detection, interception and monitoring by Frontex, then forcible transfer, abandonment at sea and collective expulsion by Greece.

This incident was first exposed by a joint forensic investigation of Bellingcat, Lighthouse Reports, Der Spiegel, ARD & Liberation. Frontex's Executive Director **Fabrice Leggeri lied** about it to the EU Parliament. FRONTEX's Board, the **EU Commission**, the **EU Parliament's LIBE Committee**, and the **EU Ombudsman** have all failed to investigate it.

**Now that the EU's own Anti-Fraud Agency (OLAF) corroborates A.H.'s claims and this case's findings, the EU Court is the last resort to provide legal remedy to A.H., to prevent the ongoing victimisation of countless others, and to judicially control a corrupt EU agency and its Executive Director.**



## **Quotes**

Front-LEX's legal team Omer Shatz, Iftach Cohen and Amanda Musco Eklund said:

*"We already won this case: the EU own's Anti-Corruption agency found Leggeri corrupt, the Court will find him guilty. Whilst Commissioner Johansson and the Parliament failed to react, investigative journalists found the exceptional evidence that enabled us to go to court and OLAF to investigate. front-LEX is already working on lawsuits worth tens of millions of euros in order to get justice for the victims, hold the culprits to account, and make sure this horrific practice is terminated. Frontex has been hijacked by a corrupt EU official who is a threat to the EU's legal order. Unless Frontex's board removes him from office, the EU is no different than Russia."*

## **Contact information**

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