

Cadus // Sea-Watch Pressrelease; 4th of April 2016
Ferries for a #safepassage, not for deportation!

CADUS // Sea-Watch condemn the deportations from Greece to Turkey which are taking place in line with the EU-Turkey deal since today morning, starting from our operational area Lesbos. Furthermore we sharply condemn pushback actions carried out by the Turkish coast guard, often by using violence against refugees.

The recent agreement is forcing refugees on even more dangerous routes, and is favoring the business of smugglers in the first place. Sometimes, it even comes to death at sea, as Turkey is carrying out brutal pushbacks, while effective rescue efforts through civil society organisations as Cadus // Sea-Watch are hindered by the authorities.

Today morning, a protest of CADUS // Sea-Watch amongst other SAR organisations took place in the harbour of Lesbos capital Mytilini, from which deportations to turkey are taking place since today. This led to a bizarre situation, when our crew had drive to a rescue case while refugees got deported with a ferry. "People are escaping war and other threads in their countries of origin, it is foolish to believe they could be stopped by fences and deportations", CADUS // Sea-Watch project leader Sebastian Jünemann says.

"The EU-Turkey deal is a confession of failure for the European Union, reacting with foreclosure to the pressure of right wing movements which are a minority. European governments and civil society have to take the challenge for a real solution, instead of closing our gates to people in need. What we need is ferries for a #safepassage, not for deportations," Jünemann says, who just came back from the operational area. "Today we got a clear picture, why the deal will not work out. People still cross, risking their lives on rubber boats, while others are deported - they come, and they will come, as they do not have other perspectives. The deal will only force them, to take even more risks and it will strengthen the business of smugglers and traffickers. Since the EU-Turkey agreement is in place, we witness a significant increase of dangerous missions, often in the night and in inaccessible areas, where people get dropped by smugglers who try to avoid the beaches", so Jünemann.

"A particular problem are furthermore the pushbacks, which are carried out by the Turkish Coast guard, under pressure of the EU. Often they do not even flinch from violence against people on the run. Cases are documented, where refugees get beaten up by Turkish coast guards with wooden sticks and our crew could witness multiple cases, when refugee boats got attacked with water cannons", says Jünemann. "On order of nobel peace price holder EU, human rights are violated here on a daily basis. The Turkish coast guard even takes death into account when they refuse support by civil rescue groups as CADUS // Sea-Watch."

"The night before the EU-Turkey-agreement came into force, two persons - a 20 years old boy and his 4 years old son - died in a shipwreck off the Turkish coast. The Turkish Coast Guard stopped the attempts of two rescue teams, including Sea-Watch, to provide assistance", Giorgia Linardi, CADUS // Sea-Watch legal adviser says. "Before the Turkish Coast guards (TCG) assets reached the position of the distress and without having confirmed information about the case, the rescue teams received a reiterated prohibition to cross the maritime border. The crew reported that the TCG took responsibility over the case and refused to classify it a distress. By doing so, the TCG took away from the rescue teams the "duty to rescue", an internationally recognised obligation and a basic principle of human solidarity at sea." Linardi explains.

"Right at the external borders of Europe, the right to life and the obligation to provide assistance to anyone in distress at sea are arbitrarily denied. The maritime border between Greece and Turkey has become the preferred scenario for repeated violations of basic human rights, where an imaginary

line in the water decides who lives and who dies," says Linardi.

“It is awful that people die at sea searching for a better, safer live. But it is inhumane to prevent rescue from happening with people dying in consequence for political reasons. This is what we and others have experienced. And we are afraid more such events will happen as a consequence of the political choices and decisions made. The deportations that took place today are just another step away from humanity”, CADUS // Sea-Watch project leader Sebastian Jünemann says.

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