

STATEMENT BY THE DEFENSE LAWYERS OF THE NINE SURVIVORS OF THE PYLOS SHIPWRECK WHO WERE ACQUITTED

Our clients, nine survivors of the shipwreck off the coast of Pylos, were unjustly detained for eleven months in prisons, accused of serious crimes and stigmatized by the mainstream media, which, from the very first moment, not only failed to respect the presumption of innocence, but also published photos of them even from inside the hospital, with the aim of disorienting public opinion and covering up the real reasons for the deadly shipwreck. Furthermore, the objective was to serve the narrative of the suppression of the people responsible for illegal immigration and the shipwrecks that occur in the Greek SAR.

It seems that the acquittal of our clients by the Three-Member Criminal Court of Appeal does not serve the above-mentioned objectives. For this reason, the Greek state, instead of making amends for the unjust lengthy deprivation of their freedom, by providing psychological support and all the necessary means for their smooth return to a life of freedom and their integration into society, insists on treating them with cruelty and inhumanity. Instead of being released, they are administratively detained! For eleven months, we have been watching how victims of this shipwreck, like the 9 who are now administratively detained, are constantly re-victimized, either by their unjust pre-trial detention or by their unfair, and vindictive administrative detention.

The decision to impose administrative detention to our clients is in direct contradiction with Greek legislation and EU law as neither the formal nor the substantive requirements for its imposition are fulfilled. The detention decision has no legal basis, is imposed completely arbitrarily and abusively, and our clients should be treated in the same way as the other survivors of the shipwreck, which is a vulnerable group of people according to the legislation in force, the detention of whom the authorities did not even consider, beyond the first few days. The application for international protection of the nine has already been registered and there is no reason, either formal or substantive, for their detention.

In view of the above, and in compliance with the decisions of the Greek Courts, we call upon

- The Ministry of Civil Protection to ensure that the competent police authorities refrain from arbitrary arrest and revoke the illegal decisions issued concerning their administrative detention
- The Ministry of Migration and Asylum to ensure that national and EU law is applied and that our clients enjoy the rights provided for in the relevant legislation, including the right to reside legally while their application is being examined, access to reception conditions and protection from arbitrary detention.
- The UNHCR not to allow the Greek authorities to expose our clients, who have requested protection in the country, to serious violations of fundamental rights and to be exposed to yet another practice of arbitrary detention.
- The Independent Authority of the Ombudsperson to intervene within the framework of its competence and to guarantee the implementation of the legislation in force to the clients by the competent authorities.

We demand the release of the nine survivors of the shipwreck from detention.

The Defence Lawyers