



HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

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**Intersessional panel discussion on the human rights of migrants**  
**Oral intervention by the Greek National Commission for Human Rights**  
**16 February 2026**

Mr./Madam Chairperson,

Honourable High Commissioner,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights welcomes the comprehensive study of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on human rights monitoring in the context of migration. The Greek NHRI operates the Recording Mechanism of Informal Forced Returns, which is referenced in the OHCHR study as a best practice demonstrating effective synergies between NHRIs and civil society. The Recording Mechanism is a structured collaboration among civil society organisations operating throughout the Greek territory and functions with the technical support of UNHCR in Greece.

Since 2022, the Recording Mechanism has conducted in-depth personal interviews with alleged victims, using standardized documentation tools. Through this methodology, it has identified recurring patterns of informal forced returns of third-country nationals at the Greek borders. These patterns raise serious concerns under international and European human rights law, including violations of the principle of non-refoulement and the prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment. Collaboration among independent monitoring bodies is essential given the complexity of migration dynamics and the environments in which violations may occur.

The GNCHR seeks to fill the gap left by a shrinking civic space and stands firmly beside civil society organisations in Greece, which continue to operate under severe financial constraints and some of them even in a hostile environment facing threats and intimidation for their work in the refugee and migration context.

Guidance developed by ENNHRI and OHCHR underscores that effective border monitoring requires unhindered access, secure and reliable data collection, close cooperation with civil society, and transparent communication of findings to enhance accountability. The Recording Mechanism operationalizes these standards in Greece. Effective human rights monitoring is not only a tool for accountability but also a safeguard against repetition and future violations.

In 2025, the European Court of Human Rights delivered a landmark judgment in *A.R.E. v. Greece*, the first ruling against Greece recognizing the existence of a consistent or



systematic pushback practice by national authorities. The Greek NHRI was invited by the Court to intervene as a third party, and its submissions grounded in evidence from the Recording Mechanism illustrated how independent NHRI documentation can strengthen regional accountability.

The recent shipwreck near Chios Island in the Aegean Sea reminds us, in the most painful manner, of the recurring human cost resulting from deficiencies in migration management and gaps in accountability. As the State's independent human rights watchdog, the GNCHR issued a public statement recalling Greece's specific obligations under international law, including its duty to align with the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights.

The Greek NHRI stands ready to work with UN bodies, EU institutions, and civil society to embed accountability at every layer of migration governance. The European Pact on Migration and Asylum offers a critical opportunity for a meaningful restart. Ensuring the effective participation of the national NHRI in the national border monitoring mechanism is essential to safeguard transparency, reduce the risk of rights violations, and uphold rule-of-law standards in investigations.

Thank you for your attention.