



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Ministry of Migration & Asylum

The Minister

Agios Ioannis Rentis

Mr. Margaritis Schinas

Vice President of the European Commission

Ms. Ylva Johansson

European Commissioner for Home Affairs

Subject: Request for Emergency Relocations – SAR Operation Mediterranean Sea

Dear Margaritis, Dear Ylva,

I am writing to you in order to bring to your attention a SAR operation which was undertaken by the Hellenic Coast Guard off the south coast of Crete.

The vessel in question sent a distress signal via the Emergency Communication number 112 today, around at 01:00 am, while approximately 15 nautical miles south of Crete. The vessel, a 30-meter fishing vessel, was sailing on the high seas, within the Greek SAR region. According to the information made available thus far, there are approximately 400 migrants onboard. The vessel was already being monitored by the Coast Guard as it was sailing at an extremely low speed but did not request assistance at first. The distress signal came after the vessel started taking on water. There is no information relating to the flag or the port of origin yet. We will provide further information as soon as it becomes available.

All passengers are now safe at a port in Crete.

Greece has repeatedly drawn attention to the new modus operandi of migrant smugglers employing larger vessels and trying to cross to Europe and has stressed the point that we need to collectively act in order to prevent this type of trafficking activity that puts the lives of migrants at risk.

First reception countries cannot be expected to shoulder an ever-increasing burden out of proportion to their respective capacities. Europe must prove that it is in a position to provide immediate and tangible solidarity, in far speedier timeframes and in higher numbers than the ones we have witnessed thus far.

In light of the above, **we ask the Commission to immediately undertake and coordinate a relocation initiative in response to this SAR operation, ensuring the responsibility, in saving lives at sea, is fairly shared among Member States.**

As has been the case with other SAR operation in the Mediterranean Sea.

I remain at your disposal.

Regards,

[e-signed]

Notis Mitarachi

CC:

- EU/Schengen Area Ministers responsible for Migration
- Frontex Executive Director