



HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Alert against Greece with regards to the detainment of three journalists covering the arrival of migrants in Lesbos (17 November 2020)

Response from the Greek Authorities Ministry for Shipping and Island Policy / Hellenic Coastguard

In 17 November 2020, Officers of the Mytilene Coastguard Station, upon information and investigation, located twenty five illegally incoming aliens in Lesbos Island. In the spot, arrived also three German journalists in two rented vehicles, who, however, did not possess the necessary license granted by the authorities in order to be able to exercise their journalistic duties.

The above-mentioned journalists were taken to the Coastguard Station of Mytilene, without being arrested, given that they had been located in a mountainous area, where a criminal violation had taken place, according to law 4251/2014 on aliens, without being able to justify their presence there. As a result, the authorities were obliged to further investigate this fact, in order to exclude any possibility of potential participation or aid to the smuggling of migrants from Turkey to Greece. The three individuals left the Coastguard Office, since there was not any incriminating evidence generated by the investigation performed on SIS II system and elsewhere. The public prosecutor of Mytilene First Instance Court had been duly informed.

It has to be noted that the procedure that was followed, during the detention of the journalists, was in full accordance with article 74, paragraph 15 of Presidential Decree 141/1991, which provides that a police or coastguard officer “in the course of investigation individuals, who do not possess evidential means of their identity or who, based on the place, time, circumstances or their behavior, generate suspicion of criminal action” The same provision provides that “the individuals detained in the Police-Coastguard Station should not remain in detention for a longer time than what is strictly necessary for the accomplishment of the purpose, they were detained for”

Furthermore, it should be noted that their transportation from the area, where they were located, to the Coastguard Station, took place in three official vehicles, according to the current legislation on COVID-19.

The Officers of the Hellenic Coastguard, in the framework of the sovereign rights of Greece and the struggle against the smuggling of migrants, risk their lives operating around the clock in a spirit of efficiency, professionalism and responsibility, in full respect of human life and human rights.