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Frontex hearing on illegal pushbacks

Quote from Tineke Strik MEP

Today (1 December 2002), the Director of Frontex, Fabrice Leggeri attended a hearing of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee in the European Parliament, following multiple reports of illegal 'pushbacks' of refugees in the Mediterranean, involving the border agency. Despite evidence of these illegal activities taking place by the Greek authorities with apparent knowledge and even the alleged assistance of Frontex, Leggeri's answers did not reassure the concerns of the Greens/EFA MEPs at the hearing.

Tineke Strik MEP, Greens/EFA Coordinator in the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee, comments:

"The evidence continues to pile up that Frontex is aware of Greek authorities engaging in 'pushbacks' of refugees in the Mediterranean Sea. Pushbacks deprive refugees of their right to asylum, puts lives at risk and are illegal under international law. Director Fabrice Leggeri's answers were unsatisfactory and we see no real evidence that Frontex is taking these allegations seriously, nor what it intends to do in order to prevent pushbacks.

"Frontex doesn't criticize these violations and even seems to facilitate them. After so many denials by Frontex, it makes no sense to await another 'internal evaluation' by Frontex. That's why the Parliament must now set up an inquiry committee to independently investigate if and how Member States and Frontex violate our fundamental rights. The Parliament must use its investigative powers to examine evidence and take the necessary political steps to stop these terrible illegal pushbacks."

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