

**Question for written answer E-005517/2020
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Prosecution of NGOs in Greece

Greek authorities are prosecuting 35 persons working for NGOs for the facilitation of trafficking in human beings. Some of them are foreign nationals, and the NGOs are primarily European search and rescue organisations. The authorities are claiming they disguise their activities as humanitarian operations. In the light of Greek policies related to asylum, it is clear that the life-saving and watchdog activities of these NGOs are at odds with the political objectives of the Greek authorities. The criminalisation of NGOs or any other non-state actors that carry out search and rescue operations at sea while complying with the relevant legal framework amounts to a breach of international law, and therefore is not permitted under EU law, as reiterated by the Commission in its recent guidance on the Facilitation Directive.

1. What will the Commission do to ensure the implementation of its guidance, given that those providing assistance by rescuing people at sea cannot be prosecuted in Greece?
2. How does the Commission plan to protect European Union citizens from unlawful prosecution by Member States?
3. As the active persecution of NGOs hinders necessary humanitarian and advocacy activity, lives are being lost daily. What strategies does the Commission have to ensure that Greece respects the obligation to save lives at sea?