

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
The Chairman

IPOL-COM-LIBE D(2023)24106

Ms Ylva Johansson
Commissioner for Home Affairs
European Commission
Rue de la Loi, 200
B - 1049 Brussels

D 307341 28.06.2023

Mr Miltiadis Varvitsiotis
Minister of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy

cc Mrs Ursula Von Der Leyen
President of the Commission

Subject: *Establishment of an independent and transparent international investigation into the migrant boat shipwreck off the coast of Greece*

Dear Commissioner Johansson,
Dear Minister of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy,

On 14 June 2023, a boat sank in international waters off the coast of Greece after having allegedly left Libya on 10 June, carrying an estimated 400 to 750 people of different nationalities, including Egyptians, Syrians, Pakistanis, Afghans, and Palestinians. The full death toll of this large-scale disaster in the Mediterranean is still unknown.

The Central Mediterranean route from Northern Africa has been described as the world's deadliest migration route by the International Organization for Migration, which has recorded 21,000 deaths in the Central Mediterranean since 2014. Such maritime migration routes into Europe have seen an increasing number and proportion of fatal incidents. Almost 4000 persons died in 2022 while traversing migration routes from and within the Middle East and North Africa, the majority of whom died on sea-based routes in and around the region.

Media reports of the causes of the recent incident off the coast of Pylos suggest that both the Greek authorities and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) had been alerted to the emergency situation of the vessel hours before it sank. Frontex itself has stated that it informed the Greek authorities of the presence of the "unsafe" boat early on Tuesday 13 June 2023. Despite this warning from Frontex, no action was taken by the Greek Coast Guard with tragic consequences and an enormous cost to human lives. There have been differing versions in the media of the events that occurred during the evening/night of 13/14 June.

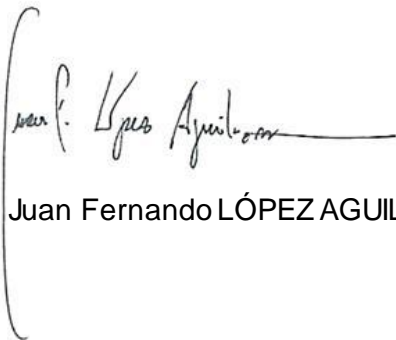
In this context, and in the absence of clarity regarding the events that led to the boat capsizing, the LIBE Committee of the European Parliament calls upon the Greek authorities and the European Commission to establish, as a matter of urgency, an independent and transparent international investigation into the incident, in order to examine the actions of the Greek authorities and Frontex and their compliance with EU and international law, particularly legislation on search and rescue at sea.

The LIBE Committee suggests that this independent and transparent international investigation is conducted by an established and relevant international body, such as the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights and/or the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees or jointly by the relevant United Nations (UN) bodies, notably the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants.

The conclusions of such an independent international investigation should help to establish accountability, to prevent the repetition of such incidents and, ultimately, put an end to further loss of lives.

We are confident of your commitment to uncover the root causes and all circumstances surrounding and factors contributing to this disaster, and look forward to your prompt response in regards to our request.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Juan F. López Aguilar", enclosed within a large, thin, hand-drawn bracket on the left side.

Juan Fernando LÓPEZ AGUILAR