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## Free the Pylos 9

### Call for international trial observers on 21 May 2024 in Kalamata, Greece

The nine defendants accused by the Greek State for the deadly Pylos shipwreck of 14 June 2023, will be tried starting on 21 May 2024 before the three member Appeal Court of Kalamata, Greece.

The defendants, who are also survivors of the shipwreck, were arbitrarily arrested and accused of being responsible for the tragedy in the aftermath of the shipwreck, based on dubious [copy-pasted testimonies from only a handful of other survivors](#) who were interrogated in the days following the shipwreck while still being detained in a warehouse in the port of Kalamata. The investigation of the Pylos 9 was [closed after only six months](#), without thorough consideration of the available evidence, in particular evidence that could have shed light on the [actual circumstances of the shipwreck](#). Now that a trial date has been scheduled, only two Hellenic Coast Guard officers have been called as witnesses for the prosecution, neither of whom identified any of the Pylos 9 as potential suspects.

As in [many criminalisation cases of migrants as alleged smugglers](#), the Pylos 9 face several life sentences in prison if convicted. The charges against them include (a) membership in a criminal organisation, (b) transporting as boat drivers, citizens of third countries from abroad to Greece, who do not have the right to enter Greek territory, with danger for human life, causing deaths (c) intentionally causing a shipwreck with danger to for human life and with fatal result and (d) unauthorised entry to Greek territory.

**The Legal Centre Lesvos' and Human Rights Legal Project Samos' lawyers who are representing five of the nine survivors facing criminal trial in Greece are seeking international trial observers to monitor the proceedings during the Pylos 9 trial, which is scheduled to start on 21 May 2024 before the three member Appeal Court of Kalamata, Greece.**

As advocates for justice and human rights, we are deeply concerned about the rushed nature of the prosecution of the Pylos 9 and the potential miscarriage of justice in this case. Several factors raise concerns about the fairness of the procedures:

1. **Highly Politicised Nature of the Trial:** Following the Pylos shipwreck, mainstream media in Greece and public statements from Greek authorities focused on the so-called responsibility

of smuggling networks for the tragedy, diverting attention from potential culpability of Greek authorities. Photographs of the Pylos 9 defendants were spread across news networks, demonising the nine before they had even been brought to trial.

2. **Obstruction of Evidence:** The defendants' legal team has faced repeated refusals to include crucial evidence in the case file during the pre-trial investigation, including testimonies from survivors, communications between the Hellenic Coast Guard and relevant authorities, and examination of confiscated mobile devices. These denials prevent relevant and potentially exculpatory evidence from being considered.
3. **Concerns Raised by Independent Investigations:** Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch conducted a [joint investigation](#) into the Pylos shipwreck, finding credible evidence that the Coast Guard's actions contributed to the tragedy and uncovering systemic failures in Greece's investigation of such incidents. Their findings cast doubt on the adequacy of ongoing judicial prosecution of the Pylos 9 defendants.
4. **Broader Context of Systematic Criminalization:** There is a troubling pattern in Greece of migrants being unjustly convicted of smuggling offences, often based on limited and questionable evidence. People imprisoned on smuggling charges and convictions make up the second highest prison population in Greece. As confirmed in a [July 2023 report](#) by Borderline Europe, fundamental rights violations during arrests and summary trials, along with disproportionate sentences, are commonplace in cases of migrants accused of smuggling.

The Pylos 9 trial is expected to be a politicised trial, with significant implications not only for the defendants but also for potential accountability of the Greek state in this tragic incident. We believe that international observation is crucial to ensure transparency, accountability, and fairness throughout the trial.

If you are interested in applying to act as a trial observer, please send your CV and a brief cover letter to [annina@legalcentrelesvos.org](mailto:annina@legalcentrelesvos.org) explaining why you are interested. Unfortunately, we are unable to cover any costs related to the travel or stay of trial observers and attendees.

**Priority will be given to:**

- Members of IADL / ELDH affiliated national associations
- Lawyers / Academics with expertise in Criminal law
- Individuals with experience in trial observation
- Fluency in Greek and/or English

**For further information about the Pylos 9 case:**

- [General updates and information from the Legal Centre Lesvos](#)
- [#FreePylos9 Campaign website](#)
- [Counter-investigation into the shipwreck by Forensic Architecture and Forensis](#)
- [Amnesty and Human Rights Watch's investigative report on the Pylos shipwreck](#)