

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000548/26
to the Commission**

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(10 February 2026)

Subject: Tragic incident in Chios

On the evening of Tuesday, 3 February 2026, a coast guard vessel collided off the coast of Greek island Chios with a boat carrying an estimated 40 migrants, resulting in the tragic loss of 15 lives (eleven men and four women), several injured and missing, and two miscarriages.

According to reports, a coast guard patrol spotted the boat and signalled it to alter course. An incident reportedly followed in which the boat violently collided with the coast guard vessel, throwing people overboard and fatally injuring others. Reports state that at least for the moment, no deaths by drowning have been documented, it appears that the victims suffered fatal injuries as a result of the ferocity of the impact.

We ask the Commission:

1. As the boat was in Greek territorial waters, can the Commission indicate if, under current EU *acquis* on migration and asylum, competent border guard authorities of Member States are entitled to derogate from the principle of non-refoulement and push back asylum seekers at sea?
2. What role did Frontex play in the tragic incident? Has the agency gathered surveillance footage of the incident and will the fundamental rights office investigate the matter further?
3. What immediate initiatives does the Commission intend to launch to ensure the observance of EU and international law, including international maritime law, and the prevention of further deaths at sea?

Submitted: 10.2.2026

Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission

(8 April 2026)

Saving lives at sea is a moral duty, as well as a legal obligation for Member States under international law, regardless of the circumstances that have led people to be in distress at sea.

All actors involved in search and rescue operations should comply with the relevant international legal framework and act in a lawful, swift, and coordinated way to make sure that those in distress at sea are brought to safety as rapidly as possible.

The principle of non-refoulement should be respected.

According to information available to the Commission, European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) assets were not present during the incident.

Every life lost at sea is a tragedy. It is up to Member State authorities to investigate incidents, such as the one referred to by the Honourable Members, in order to establish the facts and act accordingly.

The Commission followed the events on Chios closely and remains in contact with the Greek authorities. As per the information received, an investigation has been launched by the Central Port Authority of Chios which will establish the facts and determine the circumstances of this incident.
