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Searching for people who went missing in Greece

(November 2024)

The Alarm Phone frequently receives requests from relatives and friends who are searching for loved ones that went missing during their journey to Europe. We know you are in a very painful situation and that it is difficult to find out what the right moves are.

The following information is based on knowledge collected by Alarm Phone within the last years in the Aegean Sea. When people went missing in Greece, Greek authorities did not provide information to their families, neither was there a support structure to guide them in their search.

We hope this information will help you in the search for answers. If your family member or friend went missing in Greek waters or in the North of Greece in the Evros region, you can follow these steps:

STEP 1

Make a document with all information about the missing:

- his/her name and family name
- his/her parents 'names
- city of birth
- age / date of birth
- copies of all documents available like passport or ID
- phone number
- GPS positions before the person went missing
- when and where was the person when you were in contact the last time?
- what clothes the person was wearing (also rings or backpacks)
- Remarkable Body characteristics (like scars, tattoos or moles)
- any contact to co-travelers? Witnesses?
- Telephone number and name of a family member, so that the family can be contacted directly by coroners etc.

Additionally

If there are witnesses write down exactly what they told you, their names and contact (phone number)

This document you will need in your research and it can help to have all information at hand and together once you reach out to authorities etc.

If you do a request about a missing person at authorities in Greece, it is important to **ask for a protocol number**. This means that your request was officially passed on to authorities. A protocol number is an official proof that you went to the authorities with your request. You will need it in the further search.

STEP 2

In case you or any other family member of the missing are able to travel, have documents and financial possibility, you can **travel to Greece to search**. Appearing personally can help make the search faster and gives you also the feeling of doing everything that is possible for the search.

You should directly go to the area where the person went missing. There you could go personally to the local police station or coastguard and register the family member as missing.

If you know names and any information of other people who went missing on the same boat it can be very helpful for the search of other families to mention this as well.

With the official Registration sheet of the missing from the police or the Red Cross you can go to the Coroner of the city where the person went missing and also to the Police station of ~~the this area the person went missing~~ or you can talk with an NGO like the Greek Refugee Council (GCR) to support you.

See: <https://www.gcr.gr/en/>

Coroner for the North of Greece/Evros:

General University Hospital of Alexandroupolis

Address: Alexandroupoli 681 00, Greece

Opening hours: not limited

Telephone: +30 2551 353000

Go there and ask for Dr. Pavlidis. He is the coroner in this area with the most experience.

Also in each bigger city hospital there is also a responsible coroner for this area. So you can go to the big hospitals and ask there.

STEP 3

Go to the **RED CROSS**, you can do that already in parallel to your search in Greece. The Red Cross is not actively searching and informing you about all steps. But they will register the missing request in the official data-bases of the authorities, which is very important.

1. Go to the **Red Cross in your city of residency** and ask for the TRACING services to register the person as missing, with all details possible. Don't expect, that they will actually search, but it ensures, that if other authorities of the country deal with this person (alive or dead) it is known that you search the person. Maybe you will face difficult bureaucratic steps in the institution and officers who are not supportive - still you need to insist to do a missing request and get a registration number for it. You could also take a friend/a person who supports you to feel more comfortable (because of language/bureaucracy complexity) in the situation.

People who are searching for a family member are asked to contact the National Society or the ICRC delegation in the country where they live and are resident in the moment of their request. They do not ask for 'documentation' (e.g. legal residence). The searching family can find the contact details on the website of ICRC RFL:
<http://familylinks.icrc.org/>

In the top section of the website click on 'Contact Us.' Then choose the country of which the searching family is currently a resident and you will find all necessary contact details of the RC/RC RFL offices and – if present – the relevant RFL ICRC office.

The National Society or the ICRC will then contact other members of the Family Links Network in other countries if necessary. This allows to provide personal follow-ups for the tracing request. See more at: <https://familylinks.icrc.org/how-it-works>

Sending an email instead of going there in person is also possible and it is a written proof – but it could maybe not get answered. So, if you don't receive an answer it is recommended to call and get appointment in a local office.

2. Go to the **Red Cross in Greece** to register the missing person officially.

Hellenic Red Cross

Tracing Service

21, 3rd Septemvriou

104 32 Athens – Greece

Tel: +30 210 523 0043 (8.00am – 14.00pm)

Fax: +30 210 523 7700

Email: tracingstaff@redcross.gr

STEP 4

DNA: After you went to the Red Cross in Greece you can also, if you are a close relative (father/mother/sister/brother/child of the missing person), ask to **hand in DNA** (this is done by the police) so that the identification can be done.

STEP 5

Please note that the **Alarm Phone is not able to assist in sending the bodies to your country of origin.** For this please contact the Coroner, the local Funeral parlour and your embassy or people in your community, who are known for their experience in these cases and ask them for advice. Unfortunately, we cannot help you in this.

We wish you to find the persons you are searching for alive.
If you find them, please remember to inform the Red Cross to delete the missing search request.

Additional possibilities to check:

In case that the missing is in **DETENTION** you need to talk to an NGO having lawyers that will then ask the authorities about the whereabouts of this person.

For example, you could try: **Greek Council of Refugees (GCR)** or **Legal CenterLesvos**. This depends on where the person went missing.

Often the **MOBILE PHONES** of people arriving are taken by the Coastguard or the police so contact to the families is not possible. It is very important for travelers to remember the most important phone numbers by heart.

You can contact as well:

- the **local Greek Coastguard/port authority** of the area the person went missing. Usually, they have an officer who is able to answer your questions and collects names of missing persons and details in cases of shipwrecks. You should register the missing family member there!
- The **local coroner**. It is then useful to give him the document of step 1 with the details of the missing person.
- **Local hospitals**, in case the person has been transferred there with medical issues.

BE CAREFUL!!!

OFTEN, people misuse such situations and sometimes contact family members pretending they have seen the missing person or know where he/she is. Please check and be very careful – it is a way to take money from family members in this desperate situation.

WHAT ELSE YOU CAN DO:

You can **make a complaint to the GREEK OMBUDSMAN**

<https://www.synigoros.gr/en?i=stp.en.home>

and also, to other local authorities in case you want to complain about the procedure that Greek authorities use to: inform, support, search and identify your family member.

Write down the problems you were confronted with, like:

- no information given by authorities
- no social support from local authorities
- no translation provided
- no protocol number provided
- no information given by the red cross

Family members or solidarity people can send an official letter with the post , with receipt (called SYSTIMENI EPISTOLI) that gets an electronical number.

Letter needs to be send to:

1. **the Coroner (in Greek Iatrodikastis) of the nearest hospital**
2. **the Cemetery (in Greek: Nekrotafio) of the nearest town**
3. **the Red Cross**

with similar complaints like to the Greek Ombudsman and with a **request to them to intervene**.

Always put a phone number and name of a person who can be contacted to be informed.