



*Embassy of Greece*  
*The Ambassador*

Ankara, 22 November 2015

Dear Sir/Madame,

With reference to a series of articles, which appeared in the Turkish media during the last few days, containing allegations that a Greek Coast Guard vessel deliberately tried to sink a boat carrying tens of irregular migrants and refugees, I would like to inform you of the following:

- As formally set out in the attached statement by the Greek Coast Guard, the allegation itself is completely fabricated and untrue. A video posted on certain websites purporting to show the alleged incident is in fact part of a video of a search and rescue operation during which a Greek and a Turkish Coast Guard vessel cooperated in order to rescue a boat full of refugees. The fact that the video footage was deliberately tampered with in order to portray the opposite is extremely disappointing, as is the fact that a variety of Turkish media outlets hastened to publish it as factual, without any attempt to verify it.
- The assertion that the video in question was shown by the Commander of the Turkish Coast Guard to his Greek counterpart during the latter's recent visit to Turkey on 18 November 2015 is also untrue. There was no such discussion at the meeting in question, which, on the contrary, focused on further strengthening cooperation between the Greek and Turkish Coast Guards. The fact that the meeting was exploited in this way undermines its very essence, given that these meetings take place in the framework of the Confidence Building Measures agreed between Greece and Turkey, exactly in order to strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation.
- The subsequent allegation that the Prime Minister of Greece, Alexis Tsipras, made statements accepting the veracity of the aforementioned video is also completely untrue and its reproduction by a series of Turkish media outlets shows an unacceptable lack of professionalism, given that no effort was made to ascertain the veracity of this information.

- It is indeed at least unfair that such allegations should be circulated concerning the behavior of the Greek Coast Guard, which has saved over 90.000 lives at sea since the beginning of the year and contributed to the reception of over 650.000 desperate refugees and irregular migrants that have flooded the Greek islands from Turkey in 2015. The Greek Coast Guard has consistently acted in conformity with international law and basic human decency and will continue to do so. There is no simpler evidence of the fact that the Greek Authorities concentrate their efforts solely on ensuring the safety of life at sea, than the number of arrivals that are flooding the Greek islands every day.

- The root of the problem, as Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras emphasized during his recent visit to Turkey, is the Syrian civil war and the fact that not enough is being done to fight the human smuggling networks that are operating between the Turkish coasts and the Greek islands. More efforts must be undertaken by the international community to address the Syrian crisis and, at the same time more efforts must be made to ensure that these desperate migrants do not risk their lives at sea in the first place. Because, once they are at sea it is simply too late and there is nothing left to do but to try to ensure their safety. The Greek Prime Minister emphasized that this requires more burden sharing on the part of the EU, the establishment of an efficient and dependable resettlement mechanism of refugees from Turkey and greater efforts to prevent human smuggling from Turkey towards the EU.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that such organized attempts to disinform the Turkish and international media and public serve no other purpose than to distract attention from our common enemy, which is the network of human traffickers, who, with criminal irresponsibility, encourage migrants to risk their lives at sea, adding even greater tragedy to the current humanitarian crisis.



Kyriakos Loukakis

## HELLENIC COAST GUARD

### PRESS RELEASE

1. The Coast Guard Command categorically denies foreign press reports as well as audiovisual material, which has been tampered with and uploaded on a foreign website, according to which a Hellenic Coast Guard vessel is purportedly trying to sink a boat with refugees. This allegation is in fact unworthy of being refuted, given the efforts being made by a member of the crew to pull a small inflatable boat towards a large rescue vessel using a naval hook (that is to say a tool which according to international maritime practice is used for this purpose), while a vessel of the Turkish Coast Guard is lighting the scene with a projector and facilitating the operation.
2. We consider it as at least contradictory that the Hellenic Coast Guard should be accused of undertaking such actions - which are contrary to our values and civilization and are to be absolutely condemned - at a time when the Coast Guard, during the course of 2015, has rescued from the sea approximately 90.000 refugees in the framework of hundreds of search and rescue operations.
3. Furthermore, it is categorically denied that dialogues between the Commanders of the Greek and Turkish Coast Guards ever took place as reported in certain articles of the Turkish Press.