Greece urges EU to sanction Turkey over illegal fishing and behavior

By Al Mayadeen English | Source: Agencies | 12 Jan 2023 11:52 3 Min Read

Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias wrote a letter addressed to EU Foreign Policy chief Josep Borrell urging measures against Turkish behavior in the Aegean Sea.

A scene from the video footage shows a Turkish fisherman speaking with the Greek coast guard, on February 3, 2022 (AA).

In a letter to the EU Foreign Policy chief Josep Borrell, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias requested that sanctions be imposed against Turkey due to the provocative behavior of the Turkish coast guard and the continued illegal fishing activities in Greek territorial waters.

A Turkish patrol boat attempted to ram the Greek Coast Guard boat on January 5 while it was attempting to identify three Turkish fishing boats that were illegally fishing in the Aegean Sea adjacent to the island of Farmakonisi, according to Greek media. To prevent the Turkish vessel from approaching, Greek officers fired warning shots.

Dendias' letter, as reported by *Athens News Agency* on Wednesday, read, "The above-repeated Turkish practice creates a dangerous security environment and increases the risk of an 'accident' that could then be instrumentalized by Ankara in order to scale up tension between Greece and Turkey."

The Foreign Minister, according to the agency, demanded that Turkish fish products be prohibited from the EU market and emphasized the necessity of taking countermeasures if Turkey continued its unlawful conduct.

Moreover, Dendias stated that such a response would show the European Union's support for Greece on this matter and might serve as a warning to Turkey.

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Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar on January 1st accused Greece of continuing provocative actions aimed at escalating tensions in the region.

Earlier, Akar warned Greece about serious consequences if it arms islands in the Aegean Sea and extends its territorial waters.

According to media reports, Greece's maritime boundaries could double to 12 miles off Crete. However, Turkey said it will not allow Greece's waters to expand by even one mile into the Aegean Sea.

"Although we extend a hand of peace, Greece insists on continuing its provocative actions and statements that constantly increase tensions," Akar said, as quoted by the *TRT Haber broadcaster*.

On December 29, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu warned Athens against expanding its territorial waters in the Aegean Sea. Cavusoglu went on to recall how this was a casus belli - an act justifying war - for Turkey, adding that Ankara's 1995 decision on the issue was unambiguous and was still in force.

Turkey believes that if Greece extends its territorial waters, which are now six miles, to 12 miles, then this would practically cut off Turkish waters and deprive Turkey of access to international waters, effectively trapping it in its territorial waters.

In several instances since 2020, Ankara and Athens have been head-to-head and faced the risk of armed conflict over territorial claims in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Greek-Turkish divide in Cyprus, and the delimitation of maritime borders.

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