INTRODUCTION

This report provides a non-exhaustive overview of publications about the conditions on the Greek islands Lesvos, Samos, Chios, Leros and Kos from EU and UN bodies and non-governmental organisations between 2016 and 2023. During this period, tens of thousands of people were trapped on these islands due to agreements made in the EU Turkey deal of 18 March 2016.

The publications all have one common denominator: they describe how, immediately after the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement came into force [18th of March], the conditions in the hotspots on the Greek islands rapidly deteriorated. Each chapter includes photos* and personal stories of those who were forced to stay in the hotspots providing testimonies of the emotional, psychological, and social impact of the EU-Turkey Statement.

Publications have been arranged chronologically by their date of publication, potentially covering content from a deviating timeframe. For each publication, the source and key content describing the situation in the hotspots have been provided, as well as indicators for location [Lesvos, Leros, Chios, Samos, and Kos]. Indicators of which group the content covers [Vulnerable groups, Children, Woman] and specific subjects such as [Reception conditions, Legal, Healthcare].

Boat Refugee Foundation wishes to thank the following people for their editorial and research assistance:

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* Faces of children in this report have been blurred as informed consent cannot be guaranteed and to protect their privacy

18 March 2024

Editor: Nick van der Steenhoven - Advocacy and Policy Coordinator Boat Refugee Foundation (advocacy@bootvluchteling.nl)

Cover: Lesvos, Moria hotspot (Boat Refugee Foundation, 2017)

Design: Sander Rast - sanderrast Grafisch Ontwerp (info@sanderrast.nl)
THE YEAR

2016
## February 2016

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<td>1.</td>
<td>IFRC</td>
<td>Spanish Red Cross hands over health clinics on Chios and Samos&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;In 2015 more than 120,000 migrants arrived in Chios and a further 70,000 in Samos. Basic needs such as food, water, clothing and bedding were desperately needed. But psychosocial support for adults and children, as well as emergency medical care were also paramount.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>FRA</td>
<td>Monthly data collection on the current migration situation in the EU&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Page 49: In Chios, there was no special residence area for unaccompanied children. As a result, children were detained at police headquarters, in places used as rest houses for police officers.</td>
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## March 2016

18 March 2016 - The European Council announces the EU-Turkey statement. Immediately restricting the freedom of movement of newly-arrived people confining them to the reception and identification Centers on Lesvos, Rhodes, Samos, Kos, Leros and Chios.

### March 2016

3. **UNHCR’s reaction to Statement of the EU Heads of State and Government of Turkey, 7 March**<br><br>On the face of what appears to have been agreed, we are, however, concerned about any arrangement that involves the blanket return of all individuals from one country to another without sufficiently spelt out refugee protection safeguards in keeping with international obligations.<br><br>Legal safeguards would need to govern any mechanism under which responsibility would be transferred for assessing an asylum claim. Pre-departure screening would also need to be in place to identify heightened risk categories that may not be appropriate for return even if the above conditions are met. Details of all these safeguards should be clarified before the next meeting of the EU Council on 17 March.

### Links to publications
1. IFRC: “Spanish Red Cross hands over health clinics on Chios and Samos” [9 February 2016]
2. FRA: “Monthly data collection on the current migration situation in the EU February 2016 monthly report” [February 2016]
3. UNHCR: “UNHCR’s reaction to Statement of the EU Heads of State and Government of Turkey, 7 March” [8 March 2016]
4. **UNHCR redefines role in Greece as EU-Turkey deal comes into effect**

UNHCR is concerned that the EU-Turkey deal is being implemented before the required safeguards are in place in Greece. At present, Greece does not have sufficient capacity on the islands for assessing asylum claims, nor the proper conditions to accommodate people decently and safely pending an examination of their cases.

5. **Hotspots and emergency relocation: State of play**

Page 9: The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) has repeatedly pointed to shortcomings in reception conditions in Greece. After the first hotspot was opened in Moria on the island of Lesvos on 16 October 2015, ECRE echoed reports from NGOs on the grounds of inadequate reception conditions in the face of increased migratory flows and worsening weather conditions.

6. **Greece: Asylum Seekers Locked Up**

Amnesty International, which visited Moria on April 5, reported that the packed facility was holding people with disabilities, pregnant women, and a large number of children, including a baby with health complications from an attack in Syria. Only three doctors were regularly available to provide medical care, Amnesty International said.

In visits to Lesbos and Chios from April 3 to 9, 2016, Human Rights Watch found that the police-guarded camps on both islands were holding a wide array of people with special needs, including women with young children, pregnant women, unaccompanied children, elderly men and women, and people with physical and psychosocial disabilities. None of the detainees had proper access to health care, sanitation facilities, or legal aid.

The authorities had made no provisions to separate children from unrelated adults or to address protection concerns for women.
Lesvos, new arrivals (UNHCR/Achilleas Zavallis, 2016)

Lesvos, Mytilini Boat Refugee Foundation (Shutterstock, 25 February 2016)

Lesvos, new arrivals (Boat Refugee Foundation, 2016)
UNHCR urges immediate safeguards to be in place before any returns begin under EU-Turkey deal

On Lesvos, conditions have been deteriorating at the Moria “hotspot” facility, which since 20 March has been used to detain people pending a decision on deportation. There are now some 2,300 people there. This is above its stated capacity of 2,000. People are sleeping in the open, and food supply is insufficient. Anxiety and frustration is widespread. Making matters worse, many families have become separated, with family members now scattered across Greece - and presenting an additional worry should returns begin.

On Samos, at the Vathy hotspot, reception conditions have also been worsening. Sanitation is poor, there is little help available for persons with special needs, and food distributions are chaotic.

There are currently up to 1,700 people staying at the Vial hotspot on Chios, which has a maximum capacity of 1,100. We are very worried about the situation there. Rioting last night left three people with stab injuries.

Greece: Refugees detained in dire conditions amid rush to implement EU-Turkey deal

People detained on Lesvos and Chios have virtually no access to legal aid, limited access to services and support, and hardly any information about their current status or possible fate. The fear and desperation are palpable.

Many refugees spoke about the lack of access to doctors or other medical staff in both centres. This was especially acute for vulnerable groups in need of highly specialized medical assistance.

Overcrowding in Moria has also meant there is simply not enough space to house the 3,150 people inside – around 1,000 over capacity. Amnesty International observed at least 70 flimsy tents clustered against the perimeter fence and other areas within the camp, where many families and vulnerable people sleep, sometimes five or more to a tiny tent. With people still arriving on the Greek islands in significant numbers, this situation will only deteriorate.

In the detention centres, Amnesty International saw or spoke to a large number of vulnerable people including mothers with babies, small children and people with disabilities, trauma and serious illnesses.

Key issues people complained about in both Moria and VIAL were the poor quality of food, lack of blankets and privacy, and inadequate access to appropriate medical care.

In VIAL, which was just about at capacity with around 1,200 people, several families were packed into tight quarters in fenced-off containers of either 30 or 40 square metres.
The situation of refugees and migrants under the EU-Turkey Agreement of 18 March 2016

Page 3: the Greek asylum system lacks the capacity to ensure timely registration of asylum applications, issue of first instance decisions or determination of appeals; the new Greek Law 4375/2016 may help to address earlier shortcomings but will not ensure adequate capacity.

Page 3: remedies against decisions to return asylum seekers to Turkey do not always have automatic suspensive effect, as required by the European Convention on Human Rights.

Para 22: Serious practical problems are already emerging. The UNHCR reported that of the 202 people returned to Turkey on 4 April, Greek police had “forgotten” to process the asylum applications of 13 of them, mainly Afghans.

Report of the fact-finding mission by Ambassador Tomáš Boček (7-11 March 2016)

Para. 3(d): All refugees and migrants are meant to be registered in first-line reception facilities. These include the hotspots. When I visited the one on Chios, the reception centre adjacent to it was practically empty. The conditions were adequate, although the space in the dormitories, which had to host up to eight persons in four double bunk beds, was very limited. As I have already indicated, following my mission the reception centre next to the Vial hotspot became overcrowded and very soon the authorities lost control of the situation there. According to some of my interlocutors, this was to be expected for the following reasons: after the conclusion of the EU-Turkey Agreement, asylum seekers arriving in the Greek islands were meant to submit their claims in the hotspots; requiring them to stay there pending the examination of their claims would soon stretch the reception centres’ capacity to their limits.

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Links to publications

9. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The situation of refugees and migrants under the EU-Turkey Agreement of 18 March 2016 (Doc. 14028) 19 April 2016
10. Council of Europe. Report of the fact-finding mission by Ambassador Tomáš Boček Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees to Greece and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (26 April 2016)
### MAY 2016

#### 11. The mismanagement and poor planning Europe is demonstrating is beyond belief

On the shores of the Greek islands thousands of people, the majority of whom fled wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, are detained behind layers of razor wire. Following the hasty implementation of the EU-Turkey deal, men, women and children are locked up without charge, many beyond the maximum 25 day period and in putrid spaces designed to temporarily host people for only a few days.

#### 12. MSF calls for immediate opening of hotspots

According to information obtained by MSF’s teams, water and shelters are in short supply in some centres, sanitary facilities are poorly maintained, hygiene is deplorable and food distributions are haphazard. The teams have also observed a considerable increase in people suffering from stress and wounds caused by violence.

#### 13. Greece: Refugee “Hotspots” Unsafe, Unsanitary

Women reported frequent sexual harassment in all three hotspots. [...] Women in the Moria hotspot on Lesbos and VIAL hotspot on Chios spoke of similar problems and expressed deep concerns about their and their children’s safety.

On visits from May 9 to May 15, Human Rights Watch found all three facilities to be severely overcrowded, with significant shortages of basic shelter and filthy, unhygienic conditions. Long lines for poor quality food, mismanagement, and lack of information contribute to the chaotic and volatile atmosphere in the three hotspots.

All three hotspots were overcrowded and in all three many people were sleeping on the ground in small tents or makeshift shelters constructed of blankets, plastic sheeting, and scraps of fencing, cardboard, and other building materials.

#### 14. Dispatches: Dignity at Stake for Refugees with Disabilities in Greece

[A]bsmal conditions exist in closed, European Union-sponsored facilities on the islands, created to register and process new arrivals. Thousands of asylum seekers, including many people with disabilities, are living there in deplorable conditions, and fights are breaking out between residents. The EU and Greece urgently need to respond to the specific needs of refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities. Their rights and dignity are at stake.

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**Links to publications**

1. MSF: "The mismanagement and poor planning Europe is demonstrating is beyond belief" (12 May 2016)
2. MSF: "MSF calls for immediate opening of hotspots" (18 May 2016)
4. Human Rights Watch: "Dispatches: Dignity at Stake for Refugees with Disabilities in Greece" (23 May 2016)
15. **UNHCR Greece Factsheet - January - May 2016**

Page 2: Reception conditions for new arrivals have deteriorated and some facilities became overcrowded, such as Moria hotspot in Lesvos, Vial hotspot in Chios and Vathy hotspot in Samos. Anxiety among refugees and migrants has been mounting due to uncertainties about their future treatment, creating security risks for the refugee community and the actors operating at the hotspots.

16. **Refugees arrive often cold, scared, unsure, confused and in distress**

The living conditions have deteriorated and those locked up have little information advising them of what will happen or how long they will be held. Access to clean and safe water is often threatened, previously stable health conditions worsen, and the risk of infectious diseases spreading increases.

17. **Refugees at risk in Greece**

Page 7: Overall, hundreds of children have been detained in the hotspots in inappropriate, poor conditions, at risk of abuse.

Page 13-14: Greece is bearing a grotesquely disproportionate responsibility for responding to the refugee and migration crisis in the eastern Mediterranean and western Balkans, simply because of its place on the map. Yet in every other respect it is perhaps the least well-placed of all EU countries to bear this responsibility, on account of prolonged economic depression, budgetary austerity, and resulting administrative chaos and social unrest, which exacerbate long-standing failures of its asylum system.

Page 14: On the Aegean islands, refugees who have committed no crime are locked up in conditions worse than prison, in a soul-destroying state of administrative limbo, not knowing what is happening to them or what will be their future. Vulnerable persons, including children, are held alongside angry, frustrated young men, at risk of violence, exploitation and abuse.

18. **Greece: Refugees stranded on the islands crushed by fear and uncertainty over their fate**

Nearly 8,500 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are trapped on the Greek islands, having arrived since the EU-Turkey deal went into effect on 20 March. Many fear the imminent risk of being returned to Turkey, where concerns over their safety abound. Most are languishing in dreadful living conditions amid a painfully slow and opaque asylum process.

**Links to publications**

15. UNHCR 'Greece Factsheet - January - May 2016' (31 May 2016)
16. MSF 'Refugees arrive often cold, scared, unsure, confused and in distress' (15 June 2016)
17. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 'Refugees at risk in Greece' (7 June 2016) Doc. 14082
18. Amnesty International 'Greece: Refugees stranded on the islands crushed by fear and uncertainty over their fate' (15 June 2016)
Mission Report following the mission to Greece (17-20 May 2016)

Page 15: [T]he great majority of “guests” were vulnerable persons: unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, refugees with disabilities and post traumatic stress disorder, female headed households, families with young children, some with disabilities, torture victims. Due to the long stay in the camps and uncertainty about their future, refugees develop psychological disorders. Children should go to school and have a more stable life.

Page 18: Different issues were discussed by Members in their informal exchanges with the NGOs present. For instance, MSF highlighted three main issues as a result of the closure of the hotspots and people having to remain on the islands: Increase of gender-based violence; Increase of prostitution; Increase of self-harm cases.

Page 21-22: The Members participating in the mission [...] are worried that the procedures carried out after the EU-Turkey statement are taking place in closed facilities and take too much time which result in factual detention for at least the first 25 days of the asylum procedure;

Page 22: [D]raws attention to the deteriorating effect of this situation on health and living and working conditions of asylum seekers, officials and volunteers in the hotspots as well as the related increased security risks, and gender-based violence; calls upon all actors to find as quickly as possible alternative solutions while speeding up the procedures through additional staff.

Second Report on the progress made in the Implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement

Page 6: [A]round 8,450 migrants remain on the Greek islands, which exceeds the reception capacity designed to accommodate 7,450 people. This leads to overcrowding and excessive pressure on facilities, including for minors and other vulnerable groups. Shortcomings in the coordination in the hotspots by the authorities continue to hamper the effective management of this situation.

Links to publications
JULY 2016


The situation on the Greek eastern Aegean islands housing the so-called refugee “hotspots” has taken a dangerous turn over the past week. According to reports by the media and non-governmental organizations, residents have attacked and intimidated asylum seekers, migrants, and international aid workers on Leros, which shelters about 690 of the approximately 57,000 migrants that are currently in Greece. Similar reports have emerged from other Greek islands, including Lesbos.

AUGUST 2016

22. UNHCR Greece Factsheet - August 2016

Page 8: With an average daily arrival of 111 to the Aegean Islands in August, RICs on all islands have surpassed official capacity and allocation of space for new arrivals is a growing challenge. Each island is addressing the challenge to the best of their abilities with support from UNHCR. The maximum capacity on the islands remains 7,450 while the total presence on the islands was 11,690 as of 31 August.

Page 8: Despite the steady flow of appointments and interviews with the Greek Asylum Service for the full lodging of their asylum claims, asylum seekers in all sites in Greece express their frustration over the slowness of the asylum process.

23. FRA ‘Monthly data collection on the current migration situation in the EU Thematic focus: Disability’

Page 53: On 7 July 2016, a Syrian man threatened to commit suicide in Chios, where he was staying since April 2016. He requested that his asylum claim will be processed in a faster way.
24. **Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU October 2016**

Page 4: A 16-year-old was raped by four other unaccompanied children in the safe zone for unaccompanied children in Moria.

Page 4: Poor reception conditions, prolonged detention, lack of primary and specialised healthcare, and slow identification and protection procedures all continue to affect unaccompanied children in Greece.

25. **“Why Are You Keeping Me Here?”: Unaccompanied Children Detained in Greece**

[...] Greece has a chronic shortage of suitable accommodation and lacks a comprehensive protection system for child asylum seekers and migrants. These factors have led to the prolonged arbitrary detention of children—often in poor and degrading conditions—in protective custody at police stations, in pre-removal detention centers, and in closed facilities on the Greek islands while they await transfer to a dedicated shelter facility.

26. **Regional Bureau Weekly Report**

Page 1: With an average of 119 daily sea arrivals thus far in September coupled with slow transfers to the mainland, Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) on the Aegean islands continue to face serious challenges with capacity and shelter allocation for new arrivals.

27. **Third Report on the Progress Made in the Implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement**

Document 1, Page 6: The total number of migrants present on the islands is 13,863 on 27 September, significantly larger than the reception capacity of only 7,450. The situation can only be alleviated by reducing the number of people required to stay on the islands.

28. **UNHCR Greece Factsheet - September 2016**

Page 7: Tensions among asylum-seekers on the islands are on the rise, due to overcrowding and length of the asylum registration and processing, particularly for some nationalities such as Afghans and Iraqis, among others.

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**Links to publications**

24. FRA ‘Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU October 2016 monthly report’ (September 2016)


26. UNHCR ‘Regional Bureau Europe Weekly Report’ (22 September 2016)


28. UNHCR ‘Greece Factsheet - September 2016’ (30 September 2016)
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination - Concluding observations on the twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports of Greece

Page 6, para 22: The Committee is aware that the recent migrant crisis has put a heavy burden on the State party. The Committee welcomes the many steps taken in that regard, including the reforms undertaken in the asylum system and the opening of several new regional asylum offices and extending the coverage of basic health care to vulnerable undocumented migrants. The Committee however remains concerned about: [...] Substandard conditions at the reception and identification centres on the islands and the chaotic situation in those centres, which have a disproportionate impact on women and children, who face higher risks of sexual violence, with inadequate response from the authorities.

Greece: Population Movement - Emergency Appeal Operations Update

Page 2-3: While the Greek government is continuously dedicating efforts in improving site conditions, they remain inadequate. The overcrowding and sub-standard conditions of the sites, lengthiness of the asylum registration and processing, inter-ethnic clashes, growing distrust of the migrant population towards humanitarian agencies, coordination challenges as well as the increasing lack of tolerance from the host communities are contributing to escalating security incidents in the previous few months. All these not only significantly undermine the humanitarian operations in delivering much needed services on the ground, but more importantly, pose severe physical, emotional and mental health risks to the migrant population, in particular to the vulnerable.


Page 6: Contributing factors to the deteriorating security situation include: lack of information about legal and asylum rights and timelines for various steps of the process; substandard living conditions and food; lack of PSS and mental health services; sanitation facilities without adequate lighting at night or locks on doors; insufficient activities to encourage cross-cultural learning and communication (e.g., lack of interpreters and cultural mediators); and lack of appropriate and timely police involvement when an incident occurs. There is also limited control of who enters and exits sites, and little police involvement or patrolling at night. Consequently, there have been several incidents of violence and suicide attempts.

Links to publications

29. UN ‘Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Concluding observations on the twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports of Greece’ (3 October 2016) UN Doc CERD/C/GRC/CO/20-22
Lesvos (Boat Refugee Foundation, 2016)

Chios, Vial hotspot (Alamy, 28 November 2016)

Kos, the port of Kos island (Shutterstock, 27 September 2015)
Greece in 2016 – Vulnerable people left behind

Page 7: On Samos, MSF distributed tents through a volunteer’s network in the hotspot since the facility is overcrowded. It was problematic because pregnant women and new borns were sleeping inside tents in unbearable conditions (rain, heavy sun).

Page 24: Our findings indicate that many suffer from symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. For example, medical data from the first 6 months of 2016 from our activities in Lesvos shows that 26.64% of our patients show signs of depression.

Page 25: In the hotspots, MSF, through its legal partner on Samos, noticed a clear attempt from the authorities to minimize access to legal assistance (lawyers are not always allowed to enter the hotspots although they are legally entitled to do so; appointments are announced the same day as the date of the interview which prevents the lawyers from supporting the applicants at the first stage; etc.).

33. Human Rights Watch ‘Winter is Coming for Refugees in Greece’ (7 November 2016)

On the islands, efforts are underway to transfer a small number of people, who are presently living in severely overcrowded and filthy conditions, to the mainland. But Greece is under pressure from the European Commission to contain most asylum seekers on the islands to prevent onward movement to other EU countries.

34. Human Rights Watch ‘Winter is Coming for Refugees in Greece’ (14 November 2016)

Human Rights Watch and other groups have documented severely overcrowded and filthy conditions in hotspots on the islands, where police fail to protect camp residents – including women and children – from violence and harassment. Fights occur daily, particularly in the food lines, with no police intervention. Many people sleep on the ground in small tents or makeshift shelters constructed of blankets, plastic sheeting, and scraps of fencing and cardboard. Health care is inadequate, and food is insufficient and of poor quality.
35. Greece: Police must protect refugees from ongoing far-rights attacks

Attacks by suspected far-right extremists against refugees in Souda camp on the Greek island of Chios continue for a third day.

For the last two nights, suspected right-wing extremists have thrown petrol bombs, stones and rocks down on the camp from castle walls, causing injuries and panic. At least one refugee was injured by a stone just this afternoon.

36. Fire breaks out at Moria migrant camp on Greek island of Lesbos

Two people were killed and two others were injured after a fire broke out at a migrant camp on the Greek island of Lesbos late on Thursday, a police official told Reuters.

The official said that a 66-year-old woman and a six-year old child were killed when a tent caught fire in the camp of Moria. Two other people were seriously injured.

DECEMBER 2016

37. UNHCR Greece Factsheet - December 2016

Page 8: Throughout December, in Moria RIC on Lesvos, several communities protested against the slow pace of asylum procedures and persisting uncertainty over their future.

38. Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU December 2016

Page 5: Two persons – including a 6-year-old – die and several are severely injured when a cooking gas canister explodes at the centre in Moria (Lesvos). Tensions subsequently escalate in the centre, leading to fires that leave some 400 persons without accommodation, mainly families.

Links to publications
35. Amnesty International ‘Greece: Police must protect refugees from ongoing far-rights attacks’ [18 November 2016]
36. The Guardian ‘Fire breaks out at Moria migrant camp on Greek island of Lesbos’ [25 November 2016]
37. UNHCR ‘Greece Factsheet - December 2016’ [31 December 2016]
38. FRA ‘Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU December 2016 Highlights’ [November 2016]
Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe - January to December 2017

Page 49-50: Since November 2016, the RICs in Lesvos and Samos have been hosting more than twice their actual capacity. Restrictions on freedom of movement in the islands further contribute to this congestion, with dire impacts on living conditions. The congestion has also provoked an alarming increase in incidents of xenophobia and violent attacks against refugees and migrants. Lengthy asylum procedures, long waiting periods coupled with the implementation of ‘admissibility procedures’ (which may result in involuntary return to Turkey) in the RICs is creating enormous frustration among asylum-seekers.

Page 50-51: [...] some camps have shower and toilet facilities that do not offer adequate privacy and lighting. Limited access to services, poor living conditions, and scarce livelihood opportunities increase the risks of sexual exploitation, trafficking, survival sex and early and forced marriages.

Link to publications
39. UNHCR ‘Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe - January to December 2017’ (December 2016)
STORIES FROM THE ‘HOTSPOTS’

LESVOS: Children kept in detention, deprived of their childhood. Today, Moria is dangerously overcrowded and many people are sleeping in the open, with nothing more than plastic sheeting or cardboard for protection from the elements. - Dr Federica Zamatto

LESVOS: The most outrageous thing I saw however was many, many children kept in detention, left in miserable and indecent conditions, without proper food, education or even the chance to play, like children normally do. They were everywhere, running, sleeping, being pushed in their strollers. - Dr Federica Zamatto.

CHIOS: One of the most notorious camps in Greece is known as VIAL, on the island of Chios. There, too, fights often break out. “Men fight and we run and hide. The police just laugh and refuse to help,” a woman there told Amnesty International.

LESVOS: In a detention centre on Lesvos I met Ahmed, a one-year-old baby who has been sick for almost all of his short life from what his mother described as a chemical attack. [...] Instead of quickly providing Ahmed with the urgent medical care he needed, a doctor first gave the family a box of paracetamol.

SAMOS: “There is no mercy left on earth, look at us, and look at my children!” says 37-year-old Waleed as he stands with his wife, who is seven months pregnant, behind the fence that separates them and hundreds of other asylum seekers from freedom. “I’m doing my best, but is this a way to treat human beings? They are supposed to protect us, not put us in a big cage like animals, without any information on when our case will be processed. My wife is pregnant and she can’t remain a prisoner any longer in this dirty, crowded place, while all the NGOs are pulling out and leaving us in the hands of police,” Waleed said angrily, as his wife and children wept.

CHIOS - One elderly couple from Khanaqin in Iraq said they did not have access to the medical treatment they needed. “My husband has a heart ailment and Alzheimer’s,” the woman said. “All of his tablets fell into the sea.”

CHIOS - Detainees said they had limited running water, a lack of hot water, and poor hygienic conditions. “It is so difficult here,” said a 25-year-old single mother from Afghanistan with a 5-year-old son. “You are inside a prison. The food is not edible, and every day, half of the day, there is no running water. Conditions are not clean and who knows what kind of diseases are here. We didn’t commit any crime to be in this prison.”

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Documenting Conditions in the Greek Hotspots 2016-2023

THE YEAR

2017
40. Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU

As a result of lack of space, some children are obliged to either share the adult sleeping areas or overcrowd the containers; 19 unaccompanied and separated children are crammed in each container, which results in increased tensions, violent outbursts and increased risk of abuse.

41. Refugees and migrants face high risks in winter weather in Europe

We are deeply worried at the situation of refugees and migrants faced with harsh winter conditions across Europe. In Greece, we have transferred hundreds of people to better accommodation in Lesvos, and Chios over the past few days. However we are deeply worried at the situation of some 1,000 people, including families with young children, who continue to live under unheated tents and dormitories in Samos.

42. Dire Refugee Conditions on Islands

On Samos and Chios, hundreds of refugees living in unheated dormitories and tents are exposed to the cold, damp, and heavy rain and winds.

43. Letter by UN Special Rapporteurs

The situation seems to be particularly alarming with regards to reception and information centres in the Aegean islands, where more than 16,000 migrants are sheltered in overcrowded camps. Heavy snow has fallen on tents and containers in which migrants have been accommodated.

44. Greece: Population Movement - Emergency Appeal Operations Update

Some 15,000 are stranded on the islands, while new arrivals are still registered (with an average of 60 per day) and expected to continue in the future. With the pace of the asylum process going slower than planned, migrants are still in need of basic services. The situation is worse in the islands where overcrowding is a concern and there is limited space for proper emergency shelter assistance.
45. **Europe: Extreme Winter Weather**

Page 2: One of the key challenges on the islands is the overcrowding and congestion not allowing proper winterization activities.

46. **Greece: Refugees with Disabilities Overlooked, Underserved**

Thousands of refugees are enduring extremely harsh winter conditions in flimsy tents across Greece with temperatures as low as -14 degrees Celsius. Those with disabilities are among those at particular risk.

Heavy snowfall covered the tents in the Moria refugee camps on Lesbos on January 9, where thousands of asylum seekers lived, according to aid organizations.

47. **Greece Factsheet**

In RIC Moria, three men died in unknown circumstances and another was hospitalized for suspected inhalation of carbon monoxide. A Syrian, an Egyptian, and a Pakistani man passed away within two weeks of each other.

48. **Keep Talking Greece**

**Lesvos: Second refugee dies at the hot spot of Moria**

A Syrian refugee was found dead inside a tent at the refugee camp of Moria on the Greek island of Lesbos (Lesbos) on Saturday morning. The incident marks the second refugee death in Moria in a week.

On Tuesday, a 22-year-old Egyptian man was found dead in the same refugee camp. In Greek media it was reported that he had died of pathological reasons.

On Wednesday, on the island of Samos, a 41 year old Iraqi died in hospital after suffering a cardiac arrest at the refugee camp where he had lived since early last December with his wife and three children.

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**Link to publications**

45. IFRC 'Europe: Extreme Winter Weather' [17 January 2017]
46. Human Rights Watch 'Greece: Refugees with Disabilities Overlooked, Underserved' [18 January 2017]
47. UNHCR 'Greece Factsheet - January 2017' [31 January 2017]
| 49. | **Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU**<br> Six persons died at the centres of Moria (Lesvos) and in Samos (the cause of death is yet unknown); and three persons attempted suicide at the centre in Samos.<br>Freezing temperatures and heavy snow affected the Aegean islands in Greece, exacerbating the already overcrowded and sub-standard conditions in Reception and Identification Centres, causing further health and safety risks. |
| 50. | **Current migration situation in the EU: Torture, trauma and its possible impact on drug use**<br>Page 13: In Greece, the availability of psychological and psychiatric care is limited, especially in remote areas and on the islands: asylum seekers and immigrants in need of psychiatric care are referred to the local hospitals, where capacity is limited. In Samos, for example, there is only one psychiatrist for the whole island. |
| 51. | **EU: Human rights cost of refugee deal with Turkey too high to be replicated elsewhere**<br>Conditions on the islands are not only degrading but also put the physical well-being and lives of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants at risk. In the evening of 24 November 2016, a gas canister used for cooking in Moria camp on the island of Lesvos exploded and led to the death of a 66-year old Iraqi woman and a 6 year-old child living in the adjoining tent.<br>The hardships imposed by the poor reception conditions on the islands are compounded by residents’ fears for their own security. The poor conditions in the camps, the uncertainty refugees and migrants face about their futures, and the uneasy relations with local populations, all contribute to the significant tensions that have on occasion flared into violence. Refugees were also victims of hate-motivated attacks in the Souda camp on Chios. |
| 52. | **Samos Fact Sheet**<br>Page 4: Extremely unhygienic conditions are observed in the RIC. Facilities are generally overused due to the RIC hosting almost twice its capacity, resulting in very dirty, broken or otherwise unusable facilities.<br>Page 4: UNHCR is concerned about the high number of around 50 UAC residing in Vathy RIC, with limited protection mechanisms in place. |

53. **Death and Despair in Lesbos**

Three men died on Lesbos in the six days between January 24th and 30th. Although there is no official statement on the cause of these deaths, they have been attributed to carbon monoxide poisoning from makeshift heating devices that refugees have been using to warm their freezing tents.

54. **Middle East - EU Migration Scenarios**

The situation at already overcrowded reception centres on Greek islands is exacerbated by the continued arrival of new asylum-seekers, which, although low, exceeds movement off the islands. Rising tensions between host communities, asylum-seekers, and humanitarian staff result in targeted attacks on asylum-seekers and NGO staff.

55. **Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU**

Page 5: Despite transfers to the mainland, most of the Reception and Identification Centres on the Aegean islands remained overcrowded.

Page 5: Incidents of self-harm, suicide attempts and panic attacks were regularly reported on Samos. Overcrowding, cold and wet weather, and poor sanitation conditions have been of particular concern at the Vathy centre.

Page 7: Violent incidents occurred on Leros and Samos, which affected, among others, unaccompanied children accommodated at the Vathy centre on 9 and 10 February.

56. **Fifth Report on the Progress Made in the Implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement**

Page 2: Living conditions in overstretched reception facilities on the islands continued to be very difficult, in particular during the period of unusually harsh winter weather.

Page 3: The humanitarian and public order risks of the presence of a high number of irregular migrants and asylum seekers in the islands with limited reception capacities reinforce the imperative for Member States to urgently respond to the needs identified by the European Asylum Support Office and the European Border and Coast Guard.

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**Link to publications**

53. Human Rights Watch ‘Death and Despair in Lesbos’ (3 February 2017)
54. ACAPS ‘Middle East - EU Migration Scenarios’ (9 February 2017)
55. FRA ‘Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU March 2017 Highlights’ (March 2017)
A tide of self harm and depression

Page 8: Basic services in the camps remain overstretched. Children and families wait for hours to receive food, use the bathroom and wash their clothes. These conditions strip people of their dignity, forcing them to live in dirty clothes and to only wash every few days. Many people have told our staff they feel like trapped animals.

Page 10: According to the observations of our staff, children stranded in the camps are starting to show symptoms of depression, distress and anxiety. Concerning behaviour includes enuresis (bed-wetting), clinginess, nightmares, disturbing drawings with negative messages and disinterest in attending classes and activities.

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants on his mission to Greece

Page 3 para 8: With the European Union-Turkey statement of 18 March 2016 [...] having been implemented, migrants arriving on the islands after 20 March 2016 have had only two options: to apply for asylum or to be returned to Turkey. This has resulted in 90 per cent of migrants trying to apply for asylum in Greece. The situation has stretched the capacity of the Greek Asylum Service and has led to a complicated system of registration and pre-registration.

Page 3 para 9: Following the European Union-Turkey statement, migrants were no longer transferred from the Greek islands to the mainland, resulting in overcrowded situations in the reception and identification centres on the islands, with migrants often lacking access to sanitary facilities, medicine, adequate shelter and food.

Page 6 para. 31: Greece was put under considerable pressure to implement provisions from the statement well before its entry into force and to apply maximum constraints on migrants, in order to achieve the objective of returning most migrants to Turkey. Therefore, 13 out of the 202 migrants returned on 4 April 2016 may have been mistakenly returned, as their asylum claims had not been registered.

Page 9 para 53: Reception and identification centres and open reception centres on the Greek islands of Chios, Samos, Lesvos, Kos and Leros, while the facilities had a capacity of 7,450 places. The overcrowded conditions in Moria in Lesvos, and in Vathy in Samos, were particularly shocking: Moria was housing around 3,000 people, with a capacity for only 2,000.
Page 9 para 54: The Special Rapporteur visited the Vathy reception and identification centre on Samos following a night of fighting, which left behind shattered tents and containers, pools of dried blood, several persons injured and families with small children completely traumatized, and left single females feeling unsafe.

Page 10 para 63: Substandard living conditions, and a lack of adequate food, health care and information have led to anxiety, depression, confusion and frustration among the migrant population both on the mainland and on the islands.

Page 11 para 64: Access to a medical doctor and medical staff is insufficient, particularly for vulnerable groups in need of highly specialized medical assistance.

Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU

Page 6: On the Greek islands, sexual and gender-based violence remains a critical issue due to the lack of basic standards in reception and identification centres (RICs), particularly in Lesvos (RIC Moria) and Samos (RIC Vathy).

Page 7: Healthcare and basic services - on Samos and Chios mental health among asylum seekers has deteriorated and attempts at self-harm and suicide have escalated.

Page 6: Twelve Syrian asylum seekers in Moria reception and identification centre in Lesvos, Greece, staged a hunger strike in protest against the slow pace of the asylum procedure.

Page 6: Facilities on the Greek islands continue to be overcrowded. Nearly 12,900 persons are in these facilities, exceeding the official capacity of 8,645. In the Souda camp on the island of Chios, a group of Afghans attacked an Iraqi asylum seeker and inflicted severe stab wounds.

Link to publications
59. FRA ‘Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU April 2017 highlights’ (March 2017)
60. FRA ‘Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU May 2017 Highlights’ (April 2017)
Greece Factsheet

Page 2: The overcrowded conditions also add pressure on the services that are provided and create tension over the limited available resources. The situation increases protection risks and demands ongoing work to improve living conditions and address protection concerns.

Page 6: A number of worrying violent incidents during consecutive days occurred on Leros between the refugee and the local population, including a physical assault of an LGBTI asylum-seeker. The recent incident highlights the need for expedited processing of registration, identification and asylum processing of LGBTI people, and their prompt transfer to a safe place in the mainland where they cannot be easily traced and identified.

JUNE 2017

EU/Greece: Pressure to Minimize Numbers of Migrants Identified As ‘Vulnerable’

In contrast to the EU official’s claim of too many asylum seekers being deemed “vulnerable,” a representative of Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors without Borders, MSF) told Human Rights Watch that, in fact, MSF is providing treatment on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Samos to a high number of people who have not been identified as “vulnerable” despite meeting the criteria, including victims of torture and people with disabilities that are not readily apparent.

Human rights implications of the European response to transit migration across the Mediterranean

Para 5: Serious concerns remain in many important areas, including delays in the registration and processing of asylum claims, despite the significant efforts made by the Greek Asylum Service; “protective detention” of unaccompanied children in police stations, even for short periods; inappropriate age-assessment procedures; the absence of an effective guardianship system for unaccompanied minors; sexual and gender-based violence in reception facilities; insufficient access to education and health care; and inadequate integration measures, despite the Greek authorities’ implementation of an integration action plan.

Link to publications

61. UNHCR ‘Greece Factsheet - May 2017’ [31 May 2017]
62. Human Rights Watch ‘EU/Greece: Pressure to Minimize Numbers of Migrants Identified As ‘Vulnerable’’ [1 June 2017]
63. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe ‘Human rights implications of the European response to transit migration across the Mediterranean’ [28 June 2017]
Sixth Report on the Progress Made in the Implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement

Page 7: According to the Greek authorities there are currently 13,968 migrants present on the islands, whilst there are only 7,450 places in official reception facilities, and a further 1,223 places under the rental scheme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The heavy burden placed on the Greek authorities also complicates the management of the situation in the hotspots.

Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU

Page 62 para 7.2: The situation was particularly alarming in Souda (Chios), where migrants and refugees, including babies and pregnant women, have been sleeping rough in 120 tents and in unhygienic conditions for some weeks.

EU/Greece: Asylum Seekers’ Silent Mental Health Crisis

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which provides medical care on the islands of Samos and Lesbos, reported a high prevalence of depression, anxiety, and psychosis, and a significant increase in suicide attempts and incidents of self-harm, particularly since January 2017.

Medical personnel interviewed said that mental health of asylum seekers and migrants has been impacted by factors related to the EU-Turkey deal. These include insecurity; harsh camp conditions; lack of access to services and information about the asylum process and their prospects for the future; delays in the asylum procedure; detention and fears of being detained and deported to Turkey; and feelings of hopelessness.

Extremely bad living conditions in overcrowded hotspots with little to no access to services is another key factor that contributes to deteriorated mental health. An MSF representative said that on Samos, they see more and more refugees intentionally harming themselves.

Unnecessary Suffering for Asylum Seekers on the Greek Islands

One Syrian man, who was tortured during his imprisonment in Syria and has bullet wounds in his back from the war, has been on the island of Lesvos for a year. Even though he has been accepted in a program for the rehabilitation of torture survivors in Athens, the authorities have not lifted his geographic restriction.

Link to publications
65. FRA ‘Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU July 2017 monthly report’ [July 2017]
67. Refugees International ‘Unnecessary Suffering for Asylum Seekers on the Greek Islands’ [13 July 2017]
68. **Pain and Anxiety for Refugees Stuck on the Greek Islands**

Mental health is deteriorating particularly among asylum-seekers who have been forced to stay on the islands for a long period of time.

While all asylum-seekers pass through a medical screening upon entering the islands, medical services for them are very limited. In some cases, there is just one doctor to care for thousands of asylum-seekers, and specialists are few in number.

69. **A Dramatic Deterioration for Asylum Seekers on Lesbos**

Page 3: 80% of the mental health assessments we carried out met our criteria of severity to be taken into our care. Two thirds of our mental health patients reported having been victims of violence before arriving in Greece, and a fifth reported having been tortured. Approximately half of the women who came to our clinic for a gynaecological consultation had been victims of sexual violence. Far from being over-identified, vulnerable people are falling through the cracks and are not being adequately identified and cared for. 70% of people referred to our social worker were very vulnerable patients (victims of torture, sexual violence etc) who had not been identified as such. Less than 15% of our mental health patients, who have severe conditions, have been identified as vulnerable. Less than 30% of our patients that are victims of torture had been identified as vulnerable.

Page 5: Self-harm and suicidality are quite prevalent with this current refugee population. It is common to see scars from cutting or cigarette burns on patients’ arms and legs, and many share thoughts of wishing to drown themselves or fall from a tall building or cliff.

Page 9: During the summer of 2016, the extreme temperatures represented a health and a protection risk for the population stuck on the islands. MSF witnessed several breakdowns of water supply in the hotspots of Lesbos. On Lesbos our teams treated people suffering from heat stroke and dehydration.

Page 10: As a result of this decrease in capacity and the increase in the number of arrivals on the islands, our teams witnessed in late June 2017 important and critical gaps in the provision of healthcare in Moria and Lesbos. […] Aside from the lack medical and vulnerability screenings, the people in Moria also had a very limited access to medical consultations and medicine. In the space of an hour, our team saw three people self-harming in front of the clinic in Moria, desperately seeking psychiatric medication that wasn’t available.

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**Link to publications**

68. Refugees International ‘Pain and Anxiety for Refugees Stuck on the Greek Islands’ [21 July 2017]
69. MSF ‘A Dramatic Deterioration for Asylum Seekers on Lesbos’ [24 July 2017]
UNHCR Greece Factsheet August 2017

Page 3: The overcrowded conditions in the reception centres of the islands translate into poor shelter allocation and a lack of privacy, both of which heighten the risk for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). This adds to the volatility of refugees already suffering from the sudden breakdown of family and community structures as a result of their forced displacement.

“Like a Prison”: Asylum Seekers Confined to the Greek Islands

Page 11: In January, three people living in tents in the Moria camp died within a week during particularly harsh winter conditions. Greek media reported that they inhaled toxic fumes from heaters as they tried to keep warm.

Page 12: Deteriorating mental health was reported to RI by asylum seekers on the islands and by humanitarian workers. These circumstances include self-harm, suicide attempts, and increasing feelings of despair and frustration, all resulting from experiences of detention, torture or other ill-treatment in their country of origin, the dangerous journey to Europe, their living conditions on the islands, the lack of clarity and information as to their status and future, their inability to travel to the mainland to access care and services, and feelings of being imprisoned on the islands.

Page 12: Sexual harassment and sexual abuse in camps was also reported to RI by humanitarian workers and women who had experienced it. One woman said she had been sexually abused when living in a tent. She said she was moved to living space with families after she reported the abuse, only to be sexually abused again by another man. Another woman, who was pregnant and traveling with her young son, said she was placed in a container with two men and a woman. She told RI that one night, one of those men tried to sexually abuse her.
**UNHCR urges action to ease conditions on Greek islands**

Arrivals on Lesvos, Samos and Leros have now outpaced the rate at which people are being authorized by the authorities to transfer to the mainland, further worsening already very challenging living conditions.

The situation is most critical in Samos. Despite the recent transfer of some 640 people to the mainland from the island, more than 1,900 people remain crammed into an area meant for 700 at the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) in Vathy. Among them there are more than 600 children as well as pregnant women, serious medical cases and people with disabilities. We are concerned at the growing risks to their health and welfare, due to water shortages and poor hygienic conditions.

Many of the people have been staying on the islands for months and the conditions have affected their physical and mental health. The threat of violence, self-harm and sexual assault is extremely worrying and more security is needed.

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**CPT Committee Report on a Visit to Greece**

Page 5: At the time of the July 2016 visit, the Moria and VIAL Centres and the Vathi Centre on the island of Samos were no longer closed centres. Nevertheless, the situation remained highly explosive and many of the problems identified in April persisted, such as increasing anxiety and frustration due to uncertainty about the future; a perception of insecurity; inadequate material conditions and severe overcrowding; lack of coordination of health-care services and insufficient provision of information and legal aid.

Page 14 para 16: At the Moria Centre, the material conditions observed were particularly poor and unsuitable for accommodating persons for days let alone weeks, especially vulnerable persons such as pregnant women or families with small children or even new-born babies. With around 3,000 persons deprived of their liberty, the facility was operating at about 200% of its official capacity with more persons arriving on a daily basis. Overcrowding in the centre was so severe that most persons had to stay either in squalid and cramped conditions in one of the pre-fabricated housing units or in tents (many persons had to purchase their own tents).

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**Link to publications**

72. UNHCR ‘UNHCR urges action to ease conditions on Greek islands’ (8 September 2017)
73. CPT Committee ‘Report to the Greek Government on the visits to Greece from 13 to 18 April and 19 to 25 July 2016’ CPT/Inf (2017) 25
Lesvos, outside the Moria hotspot (Giorgos Kosmopoulos/ ProAsyl, January 2017)

Samos, outside the Vathi hotspot (ANP, 13 Oktober 2017)
Page 14 para 16: [Adult and unaccompanied juvenile foreign nationals who were detained in Section B] - Many sanitary annexes of the housing units were either damaged or in an extremely dilapidated and unhygienic state; several had been flooded with sewage. They were neither cleaned nor regularly maintained. No hygienic products or cleaning material had been provided by the authorities. Further, waste had not been collected and was piling up in the courtyard. Such conditions are unacceptable and, in the CPT’s view, could be considered as inhuman and degrading.

Page 15 para 18: [T]he CPT’s delegation observed an absence of the Greek State in providing health-care services and consequently an over-reliance on NGOs for the delivery of health-care services, which were insufficient for the needs of the detainee population in both centres visited, and a complete lack of coordination in the provision of such services.

UNHCR Greece Factsheet September 2017

Page 1: Border reception centres became critically overcrowded, conditions deteriorated and protection risks increased including of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Children and vulnerable people were at particular risk.

Page 3: The overcrowded conditions in the reception centres of the islands and the poor conditions of some sites in the mainland translate into poor shelter allocation, a lack of privacy, and constrain safe access to WASH facilities. They thus heighten the risk for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). This adds to the volatility of refugees who are already suffering from the sudden breakdown of family and community structures as a result of their forced displacement.

Greece: asylum seekers in abysmal conditions on islands

The situation is particularly critical on Samos and Lesbos, where a total of more than 8,300 asylum seekers and migrants are living in hotspot facilities meant for just 3,000. The recent announcement that 2,000 asylum seekers will be moved from the two islands to the mainland in the coming weeks as an emergency decongestion measure is a positive development, the groups said. But it is not sufficient to alleviate the current overcrowding of the facilities and does not sustainably address the systemic issues that have created this emergency situation – namely the containment policy.
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<td>76.</td>
<td>Joint letter to Prime Minister Tsipras - deteriorating conditions for asylum seekers trapped on the Aegean islands</td>
<td>Page 2: On Lesbos, more than 5,400 people live in overcrowded tents and containers, with little access to proper shelter, food, water, sanitation, health care, or protection.</td>
<td>Lesvos</td>
<td>Reception conditions</td>
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<td>77.</td>
<td>Growing number of unaccompanied refugee and migrant children in Greece</td>
<td>On the islands, some reception facilities for unaccompanied children are now hosting twice as many as they were designed for, compromising the safety and wellbeing of the children. They are particularly vulnerable at night without proper safeguards in place. Long delays of up to five months in transferring children from the islands to the mainland are compounding their emotional and mental strain.</td>
<td>Aegean Islands</td>
<td>Children</td>
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<td>78.</td>
<td>Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU October 2017</td>
<td>Page 7: Some 2,000 people were crowded in the RIC in Samos, which had a capacity of 700; hundreds were forced to sleep in the woods close to the reception centre, without access to sanitation.</td>
<td>Samos</td>
<td>Reception conditions</td>
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**NOVEMBER 2017**

| 79. | Progress report on the European Agenda on Migration | Page 4: The increasing pressure caused by recent high numbers of arrivals may add further pressure. Improving the availability and quality of reception places, including by better addressing the specific needs of vulnerable groups, remains an urgent priority. Immediate action by the Greek authorities is needed to further address the shortcomings of reception facilities on the islands and prepare for winter conditions. The Commission stands ready to provide the appropriate support. | Aegean Islands | Reception conditions | Vulnerable groups |

**Link to publications**

76. Amnesty International et al. ‘Joint letter to Prime Minister Tsipras - deteriorating conditions for asylum seekers trapped on the Aegean islands’ [23 October 2017]
77. UNICEF ‘Growing number of unaccompanied refugee and migrant children in Greece in urgent need of shelter, care and protection’ [27 October 2017]
78. FRA ‘Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU October Highlights’ [October 2017]
Greece: As winter nears, asylum seekers stuck in tents on islands

Thousands, including single women, female heads of households, and very young children, are being forced to live in summer tents, essentially sleeping on the ground, as the weather worsens. Some women are forced to share tents with unrelated men, putting their privacy and safety at risk. This will be the second winter asylum seekers have had to spend in unsuitable facilities on the islands since the EU-Turkey Deal went into effect.

DECEMBER 2017

Situation on Greek islands still grim despite speeded transfers

Since mid-October, some 6,000 asylum seekers have been moved by the Greek government out of the islands with UNHCR’s support.

However, some 10,000 asylum seekers are still crammed into government-run facilities on the islands, double the design capacity.

Move asylum seekers to safety before winter hits

This will be the second winter asylum seekers have had to spend in unsuitable facilities on the islands since the EU-Turkey Deal came into effect in March 2016.

Some who arrived on the islands in the early days of the deal have remained stuck there for 20 months.

Families trapped on islands on the brink of a humanitarian emergency

In Samos, 1,500 people are living in a camp designed for 700 people, and hundreds are sleeping under tents without any heating, and in poor hygiene conditions.

Link to publications

80. International Rescue Committee ‘Greece: As winter nears, asylum seekers stuck in tents on islands’ (22 November 2017)
81. UNHCR ‘Situation on Greek islands still grim despite speeded transfers’ (December 2017)
82. Amnesty International ‘Greece: move asylum seekers to safety before winter hits’ (December 2017)
83. MSF ‘Families trapped on islands on the brink of a humanitarian emergency’ (5 December 2017)
Emergency Appeal Operations Update: Population Movement

There is in general a lack of security in camps, and at many sites entry and egress are not controlled. Camp residents find that people come into the camp from outside completely unimpeded, often for the purpose of drugs, crime, sex work, and other problematic activities.

People have continued to arrive in camps, resulting in large unregistered populations. These people cannot have access to cash, so are reliant on savings, generosity from friends and neighbours, or other sources of income in order to meet their basic needs.

The lack of registration also means that people cannot be allocated a caravan officially, which is fuelling an exploitative black market whereby community leaders allocate caravans in return for payments amounting to hundreds of euros.
STORIES FROM THE ‘HOTSPOTS’

SAMOS: I have been under a sheet in the woods for 10 days now. I have three small children. They get bitten by the insects at night and can’t sleep. I had protected them until now from the war, but I can no longer protect them here. It makes me want to scream, but I can’t, not in front of the children. - 32-year-old woman from Syria.8

AEGEAN ISLANDS: Majid, a Syrian asylum-seeker, was tortured and detained for eight and a half years in Syria before the war, and then he was shot in the back during the war. He suffers from panic attacks, PTSD, depression, and insomnia, among other pressing health issues. He told RI that despite being accepted in a program for the rehabilitation of victims of torture four months earlier, he was not allowed to leave the island.9

LESVOS: People died in cold in the camp... an Iranian attempted suicide and an Egyptian hung himself. Yesterday, a Pakistani died, and last week, an [Egyptian] died in the bathroom. I attempted suicide by cutting my vein last week but I am still alive.... This is the heart-breaking text message Human Rights Watch received from Arash, a 30-year-old Iranian asylum seeker who’s been stuck on the Greek island of Lesbos since last September.10

CHIOS: Manal from Syria told RI that she had been in Chios for almost a month and a half with her husband and six-month-old son who needed heart surgery. Although their geographic restriction was lifted three weeks earlier, when RI met Manal and her family, they were sharing a tent in the Souda camp with a woman and another family. “Since we have been here, my son has been hospitalized twice for five days,” she said. She told RI that doctors informed her that the heart surgery her son needed had to be performed in Athens, because there was no equipment to operate on children in Chios.14

41 Boat Refugee Foundation | Documenting Conditions in the Greek Hotspots 2016 - 2023

8 MSF ‘EU Border policies fuel mental health crisis for asylum seekers’ [10 October 2017]
9 Refugees International ‘Pain and Anxiety for Refugees Stuck on the Greek’ [21 July 2017]
10 Human Rights Watch ‘Death and Despair in Lesbos’ [3 February 2017]
11 Amnesty International ‘Greece: A blueprint for despair. Human rights impact of the EU-Turkey deal’ [February 2017]
12 Human Rights Watch ‘Greece: A Year of Suffering for Asylum Seekers’ [15 March 2017]
13 Save the Children ‘Self-harm and depression in the Greek camps’ [26 March 2017]
14 Refugees International ‘Like a Prison: Asylum Seekers Confined to the Greek Islands’ [August 2017]
The Year
2018

Documenting Conditions in the Greek Hotspots 2016-2023

~ Chios, Vial hotspot (Giorgos Moutafis/Amnesty International, 2018)
# JANUARY 2018

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<tr>
<td>85.</td>
<td>European Migration Network 2017 report</td>
<td>Page 22: Implementation of the Reception Directive is a challenge, as the number of benefiting service providers exceeds the hosting capacity in Reception and Identification Centres on the Islands. The large number of asylum claims leading to longer stays in Reception and Identification Centres is also a challenge. The lack of medical specialities at local hospitals on the islands which severely hampers the full medical coverage and needs, is also a challenge.</td>
<td>🌐 Aegean Islands 🔄 Reception conditions 🏽 Healthcare 🦴 Legal</td>
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## JANUARY 2018

25 January 2018 - The European Court of Human Rights decided it lacks jurisdiction on the EU-Turkey Statement because it is an instrument between individual Member States and Turkey and not EU legislation.¹⁵

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<tr>
<td>86.</td>
<td>UNHCR Factsheet - January 2018</td>
<td>Page 3: The overcrowded conditions in the reception centres of the islands and poor conditions in some mainland sites translate into poor shelter allocation. This leads to a lack of privacy and compromises safe access to WASH facilities, thus heightening the risk of sexual and gender-based violence [SGBV]. It therefore adds to the vulnerability of refugees who are already suffering from the sudden breakdown of family and community structures as a result of their forced displacement.</td>
<td>🌐 Aegean Islands 🔄 Reception conditions</td>
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### Periodic data collection on the migration situation in the EU

Page 10 para 2: Protests against inadequate reception conditions took place in the Reception and Identification Centre in Lesvos and Chios, leaving several injured. In Chios, residents blocked the government’s efforts to expand the Reception and Identification Centre with additional prefabricated housing units. In Greece, in the hotspots on the islands of Chios and Samos, several people – including families with very small children – were living in tents without heating and faced harsh weather conditions.

### Periodic data collection on the migration situation in the EU

Page 11 para 4: Some 3,350 unaccompanied children were estimated to be in Greece. A total of 2,290 were on waiting lists for appropriate shelter. Some of them remained in completely inadequate facilities, including 438 in Reception and Identification Centres (hotspots) and 54 in protective custody – not considered adequate accommodation for children. The total number of available places for unaccompanied children in all of Greece was 1,101 at year’s end. These figures demonstrate a persisting protection gap over the past months.

Page 13 para 2: Challenges include age assessment, missing children, reception conditions, guardianship and accessing schools.

### Refugee women and children face heightened risk of sexual violence amid tensions and overcrowding at reception facilities on Greek islands

In 2017, UNHCR received reports from 622 survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) on the Greek Aegean islands, out of which at least 28 per cent experienced SGBV after arriving in Greece. Women reported inappropriate behaviour, sexual harassment and attempted sexual attacks as the most common forms of SGBV.

### Link to publications

87. FRA 'Periodic data collection on the migration situation in the EU - February 2018 Highlights' (February 2018)
88. FRA 'Periodic data collection on the migration situation in the EU - February 2018 Highlights' (February 2018)
89. UN News 'Women and children threatened by sexual violence at refugee reception centres in Greek islands' (9 February 2018)
90. UNHCR 'Refugee women and children face heightened risk of sexual violence amid tensions and overcrowding at reception facilities on Greek islands' (9 February 2018)
Amnesty International report: Thousands of asylum-seekers and migrants remained trapped on the Greek islands in appalling conditions

Page 178: In January, three men died within one week in Moria camp on the island of Lesvos. Their deaths were suspected to be linked to carbon monoxide poisoning from makeshift heaters used to heat their tents. By the end of the year, the investigation into the deaths had not been concluded. Following these deaths, the Greek authorities transferred thousands of vulnerable asylum-seekers from the islands to the mainland. However, in August, rising numbers of people arrived on the islands and reception facilities returned to being overcrowded. The authorities had not been able to provide reception conditions on the islands that met minimum standards under EU law by the end of the year.

Periodic Data collection on the migration situation in the EU

Page 9 para 1: According to a recent UNHCR report, sexual and gender based violence remained an issue of grave concern in the Greek hotspots, notably in Samos.

Page 18 para 4: In Greece, a farmer in Moria (Lesvos) opened fire on three asylum seekers he claimed were trying to steal his sheep, near the Reception and Identification Centre, according to media reports.

If you want to know the true meaning of fear, hunger and cold, come here

Women and girls are particularly exposed to human rights violations under such circumstances. Every day in the camps is a struggle, the women I met told me. Basic everyday activities like washing up or sleeping are almost impossible.

Two years on, deal continues to fail thousands of people seeking asylum

Every day MSF teams treat scars, both mental and physical, created or made worse by these inhumane policies. After the consultations, they can do nothing more than send these people back to the same tents, overcrowded containers and limbo situation that produces the suffering.

Link to publications

91. Amnesty International ‘Report 2017/18: The state of the world’s humanrights’ (February 2018)
92. FRA ‘Periodic data collection on the migration situation in the EU - March 2018 Highlights’ (2018)
93. FRA ‘Periodic data collection on the migration situation in the EU - March 2018 Highlights’ (2018)
94. Amnesty International ‘If you want to know the true meaning of fear, hunger and cold, come here’ (March 2018)
95. MSF ‘Two years on, deal continues to fail thousands of people seeking asylum’ (16 March 2018)
Chios, Vial hotspot (Amnesty International, 2018)

Samos, outside the Vathy hotspot (Samos Volunteers, 2018)

Lesvos, outside the Moria hotspot (Boat Refugee Foundation, 2018)

Leros, hotspot (Echo100Plus, 2018)
**APRIL 2018**

96. **Amnesty International**

Greece government defies court on asylum seekers

Page 2: Greece’s abusive containment policy was put in place in March 2016, with the support of the European Union and its member states. By the latest government count, more than 15,400 asylum seekers are on the Greek islands. Many are living in crowded and filthy processing centers, and many spent the winter in lightweight tents or even sleeping outside on the ground.

97. **UNHCR**

UNHCR Greece Factsheet

Page 3: Children risk spending extended periods in the reception and identification centres (RICs) and in protective custody in police stations.

Page 3: Poor shelter allocation and a lack of privacy as a result of overcrowding in island reception centres and some mainland sites compromise safe access to WASH facilities. This increases the risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

**APRIL 2018**

17 April 2018 - Greek Council of State decision annuls a decision to impose geographic restrictions. Three days later the Asylum Service reinstates the geographical restrictions citing public interest as a ground “especially for the purpose of implementing the EU-Turkey Joint Statement”, a ground accepted buy the Council of State.16

**MAY 2018**

98. **FRA**

Periodic Data collection on the migration situation in the EU

Page 21, para 3: In Greece, nine human rights and humanitarian organisations called on the Greek government to lift the geographical restrictions on the freedom of movement of asylum seekers present on the islands and move people to the mainland, where they can find safety. Médecins Sans Frontières also urged the Greek authorities to put an end to the containment policy, which is highly detrimental to vulnerable people.

**Link to publications**

96. Amnesty International and others ‘Greece: government defies court on asylum seekers: Joint NGO statement’ [April 2018]

97. UNHCR ‘Greece Factsheet - April 2018’ [30 Apr 2018]

98. FRA ‘Periodic data collection on the migration situation in the EU – May 2018 highlights’ [2018]

16 EDAL ', 17 April 2018’ (April 2018); Hellenic Republic Decision 8269/20.04.2018 of the Director of the Asylum Service (Gazette B- 1366 – 20.04.2018)
### Overcrowded, dangerous and insufficient access to healthcare in Moria

Moria camp is both unsafe and unsanitary, especially for children. Every day we treat many hygiene-related conditions such as vomiting, diarrhoea, skin infections and other infectious diseases, and we must then return these people to the same risky living conditions.

The mix of unhygienic and dangerous living conditions which increase the rate of childhood illnesses, the obstacles to providing appropriate recovery conditions for sick children, and the inadequate access to healthcare services, represent a perfect storm for the health and well-being of children.

The living conditions and the reduction in the provision of medical care represent a high risk to the health and lives of the people trapped on the island.

The provision of primary healthcare for adults in Moria camp is extremely limited, with very few other medical consultants providing healthcare during the week, and just one volunteer organisation providing a reduced healthcare service during nights and on weekends. The only public hospital in Lesbos is overwhelmed and understaffed, and patients struggle to access the specialised services it does provide.

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### Greece Factsheet - June 2018

Page 1: The shortage of accommodation countrywide has led to overcrowding in some mainland sites while in Lesbos, Chios and Samos, 11,400 live in centres intended for 5,100. Many sleep in makeshift shelter while the high, summer temperatures increased hardship particularly for the vulnerable. Overcrowding and limited services increase protection risks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>101.</th>
<th>Periodic Data collection on the migration situation in the EU</th>
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<td>Page 4, para 2: The Reception and Identification Centres on the Aegean islands in Greece (&quot;hotspots&quot;) remained severely overcrowded, with the exception of the hotspot in Leros. 14,356 people resided in accommodation facilities that have a total capacity of 6,338.</td>
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<th>102.</th>
<th>Denial of education to child asylum seekers on the Greek Islands</th>
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<tr>
<td>Human Rights Watch is not aware of any cases where children living in the government-run camps on the islands have been able to enroll in public primary or secondary schools, or where information about public school enrollment, transportation to the schools, or other support has been made available to them. The only formal education that has been made available to children in government-run camps is pre-school classes.</td>
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<th>103.</th>
<th>How a European refugee camp is traumatising people on Lesbos?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Currently, there are over 8,000 people crammed into a space designed for 3,000 in Moria. Conditions are so bad that people’s medical and mental health is being heavily compromised. In the past few months, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has witnessed further escalations of everyday violence in Moria, and treated cases of sexual violence that have occurred in and around the camp.</td>
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In the main area of Moria camp and in the adjacent overflow camp known as Olive Grove, there are 72 people per functioning toilet and 84 people per functioning shower. This is well below the recommended humanitarian standards in emergency situation. |

What is also deeply worrying is that we know, through our mental health group therapy for children, that both unaccompanied children and children with family in the camp are being re-traumatised by their experiences of living in Moria. |

**Links to article**

101. FRA ‘Periodic data collection on the migration situation in the EU - July 2018 Highlights’ (July 2018)
102. Human Rights Watch ‘Without Education They Lose Their Future”: Denial of Education to Child Asylum Seekers on the Greek Islands’ (18 July 2018)
103. MSF ‘Confinement, violence and chaos: How a European refugee camp is traumatising people on Lesbos’ (18 July 2018)
Periodic Data collection on the migration situation in the EU

Page 4, para 2: Key persisting fundamental rights concerns: The Reception and Identification Centres on the Aegean islands in Greece (‘hotspots’) remained severely overcrowded, with the exception of the hotspot in Leros.

Page 12, para 4: Reception conditions for children: In the hotspots on the Eastern Aegean islands in Greece, children – including hundreds of unaccompanied boys and girls – newborn babies, pregnant women, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and other extremely vulnerable people were particularly at risk due to the extremely poor reception conditions.

Self-harm and attempted suicides increasing for child refugees in Lesbos

MSF teams are seeing multiple cases each week of teenagers who have attempted to commit suicide or have self-harmed. Teams are also responding to numerous critical incidents as a result of violence, child self-harm and the lack of access to urgent medical care, highlighting significant gaps in the protection of children and other vulnerable people.

Moreover, the environment in the camp is unsafe and unsanitary, and as a result we see many cases of recurrent diarrhoea and skin infections in children of all ages. At this level of overcrowding and unsanitary conditions, the risk of outbreaks of disease is very high.

Mental health needs at Moria are immense

Moria is dangerously overcrowded. It has the capacity for 3,100 people, and yet currently hosts over 8,500. Asylum seekers are expected to live in conditions which do not meet humanitarian standards. Approximately eighty-four people share one shower. Approximately seventy-two people share one toilet. The sewage system is so overwhelmed that raw sewage has been known to reach the mattresses where children sleep, and flows untreated into open drains and sewers. Fights are a daily occurrence. Riots, which force refugees to flee the site, happen far too often. Women are particularly vulnerable and do not feel safe.

Links to article

104. FRA, "Periodic data collection on the migration situation in the EU – September 2018 highlights" (September 2018)
105. MSF, "Self-harm and attempted suicides increasing for child refugees in Lesbos" (17 September 2018)
106. International Rescue Committee, "Mental health needs at Moria are immense - IRC psychologists merely ‘chipping away at an iceberg’" (25 September 2018)
**Women face daily danger in Greek refugee camps**

Severe overcrowding and dire living conditions are making the camps, especially on the islands, extremely dangerous places for everyone.

Women, children and people fleeing persecution because of their sexual orientation or gender identity are even more exposed to security and safety risks.

**UNHCR Greece Factsheet**

Page 2: The conditions in the islands’ Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) have reached a critical level, particularly in Lesvos and Samos where thousands of refugees have set up pop-up tents in nearby fields. On other islands like Chios and Kos, refugees, including many pregnant women and elderly live cramped in inappropriate shelter or lack basic relief items, such as hygiene kits.

Page 3: The situation is particularly worrying in Moria RIC, Lesvos where children often share shelter with adults and in Vathy RIC, Samos where the designated area lacks the basics with broken doors and limited mattresses.

**“I want to decide about my future” - Uprooted woman in Greece speak out**

The majority stay in EU-sponsored camps on the islands of Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Leros. Overcrowding in most of these camps is at a crisis point with more than 15,500 people living in five camps which were designed for 6,400.

Lack of hygiene and sanitation, insufficient clean drinking water, streams of raw sewage and infestations of mice and rats are common in all camps.

Several pregnant women described to Amnesty International having to sleep on the floor and having very little, if any, access to antenatal care. Women also have to spend their limited cash on sanitary pads which are not always provided.

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**Links to article**

107. Amnesty International ‘Women face daily dangers in Greek refugee camps’ (October 2018)
108. UNHCR ‘Greece Factsheet - October 2018’ (31 October 2018)
109. Amnesty International ‘I want to decide about my future (statement)’ (October 2018)
Chios, new arrivals at the Mía hotspot (Greek Reporter, 2018)

Lesvos, Moria hotspot (Amnesty International, 2018)

Samos, Vathy hotspot (Markel Redondo/UNHCR, 2018)

^ Chios, new arrivals at the Mía hotspot (Greek Reporter, 2018)

^ Lesvos, Moria hotspot (Amnesty International, 2018)

^ Samos, Vathy hotspot (Markel Redondo/UNHCR, 2018)
**Greece should safeguard social right for all and improve the reception and integration of migrants**

The Commissioner warns that despite the commendable efforts made by Greece’s people and authorities to welcome migrants, the reception conditions remain well below acceptable standards, especially on the islands. The authorities have to urgently address the poor hygiene conditions, the psychological distress and the uncertainty that are threatening the health of migrants and asylum seekers on the islands.

Living conditions in the islands’ RICs are extremely worrying. During her visit to Moria, the Commissioner observed that asylum seekers were hosted in containers, or large tents hosting up to 125 persons in very precarious conditions and with almost no privacy. Others slept in makeshift shelters, at the mercy of the weather.

The Commissioner received reports about pregnant women sleeping in tents with no mattresses, mothers being returned to the RIC with their new-born babies, and individuals returned to the RIC immediately after release from hospital after surgery. Clearly insufficient sanitation facilities obliged people to queue for extended periods of time for access to toilets and showers, which women told the Commissioner they were afraid to do for security reasons, especially at night.

**UNHCR urges Greece to accelerate emergency measures to address conditions on Samos and Lesvos**

Many of the asylum-seekers arrive in Greece in a vulnerable state, but even those who turn up at the RIC in good condition soon find themselves suffering from health problems. A single doctor per shift provides medical care to the entire population and often only the most urgent cases get seen. Doctors at the local hospital are also overwhelmed.

New arrivals are left having to buy flimsy tents from local stores, which they are pitching on a steep slope in adjacent fields. This offers little protection from the cold weather, without electricity, running water or toilets. There are snakes in the area, and rats are thriving in the uncollected waste.

### Links to article

110. Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights ‘Greece should safeguard social rights for all and improve the reception and integration of migrants’ (November 2018)
111. UNHCR ‘UNHCR urges Greece to accelerate emergency measures to address conditions on Samos and Lesvos’ (November 2018)
Vaccinating over 2,000 refugee children in Moria, Lesbos

Due to the terrible living conditions, including the lack of basic sanitation, severe overcrowding, and extremely limited access to healthcare, coupled with the forthcoming winter, migrant children living on the Greek islands are extremely vulnerable to illness. "The conditions in the camps are completely unacceptable and as a result, children are at a greater risk of getting seriously ill," says Dr Declan Barry, medical coordinator for MSF in Greece.

On Lesbos and Chios, MSF teams treat hundreds of children every day with upper-respiratory tract infections, skin infections, and diarrhoea, as well as mental health issues. These issues are all consequences of the unacceptable living conditions in the camp, as well as a lack of access to decent food and healthcare.

Dire conditions for asylum seekers on Lesbos

The Moria camp is a hotbed of avoidable risks and suffering for asylum seekers. Residents described daily struggles to get safe and adequate accommodation, basic hygiene, food and non-food items, and health care. Asylum seekers, including families with young children, are living in flimsy tents and cramped containers, with an insufficient number of toilets and showers that are also poorly maintained, risking exposure to faecal matter and other health concerns, in a camp with rats and insects.

Gaps in access to maternal and pregnancy health care, previously documented by Human Rights Watch, remained. Two nursing mothers, staying in unheated tents in the Olive Grove, with their children, one 6 months old and the other 10 months, said they could not get medication, or hot water, even to bathe their infants. Two others said that pregnant women in their family did not have access to timely pregnancy care.
Greece and the EU must move asylum seekers to safety

Despite the Greek government’s recent efforts to transfer asylum seekers from the islands to more suitable accommodation in the mainland, as of December 3, 2018, over 12,500 people were still living in tents and containers unsuitable for winter in five EU-sponsored camps known as hotspots on Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Kos, and Leros – almost triple their capacity. In addition to serious overcrowding, asylum seekers continue facing unsanitary and unhygienic conditions and physical violence, including violence based on gender.

The lack of basic protection measures leaves women and girls, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT+) people, particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault, and afraid to use site facilities including bathrooms and showers. Medical care, trauma counselling, and psychosocial – or mental health – are insufficient, as is legal counselling and support during the different stages of the asylum procedure. Mental health among asylum seekers has deteriorated amid harsh living conditions and emotional distress.

UNHCR Greece Factsheet

Page 2: Overcrowding in the islands’ Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) has eased in Chios where the centre hosts as many people as its capacity for the second month.

Page 2: The sites of Samos and Lesbos continue to operate beyond their capacity with thousands of refugees living in unsuitable tents or makeshift shelter in nearby fields. The situation is critical in Samos, and the worsening weather conditions make matters worse.

Page 3: The situation is particularly worrying in Moria RIC, Lesbos where children often share shelter with adults and in Vathy RIC, Samos where the designated area lacks mattresses leaving limited options to children but to sleep in shifts.
STORIES FROM THE ‘HOTSPOTS’

LESVOS: MSF clinical psychiatrist Dr Alessandro Barberi - In all of my years of medical practice, I have never witnessed such overwhelming numbers of people suffering from serious mental health conditions, as I am witnessing now amongst refugees on the island of Lesbos. The vast majority of people I see are presenting with psychotic symptoms, suicidal thoughts – even attempts at suicide – and are confused. Many are unable to meet or perform even their most basic everyday functions, such as sleeping, eating well, maintaining personal hygiene, and communicating.17

LESVOS: Hooriyah, an Afghan woman in her twenties, has lived with her husband and their sons, ages 3 and 8, in a crowded container with another family of five since early September. Their asylum interview is scheduled for late November. “How long we can stay we don’t know,” she said. “They say that you have to be vulnerable to be able to move from here. We don’t know what it should mean for a family with small children and basic health issues. When we go to the doctor, they only give painkillers, not proper medicine”.21

LESVOS: Nabila, an Afghani mother of three children, ages 10 months, and 3 and 7 years, had been living in a tent in Moria camp for three months. Her children fell sick after the tent flooded in heavy rains in early October. She spoke of boredom, depression, and constant fear: “All days pass standing in line for food, and for other things. We don’t have anything to do in the camp. Personally, I’m very depressed.” The family’s asylum interview is scheduled for January 2019. The waiting is exacerbated by other fears caused by lack of privacy and safety in the tents and the common areas. “We can’t do anything during this time,” she said. The reason we left was insecurity, and now we feel unsafe here”.22

LESVOS: Farzaad and his family of seven – his children, wife and other close relatives – have lived since September in two small tents in the Olive Grove, which they bought for 15 euros. He said that hygiene was their biggest concern: “When we came, the police registered us, and then told to find a place in the “jungle” because there was no space in the camp. I have two children, both of them have dermatological issues. Soon, the showers will be so cold you will not be able to wash yourself. It will be a big problem, especially for the children”.23

SAMOS: “I don’t feel safe or comfortable in the tent with... strangers. I leave the camp early in the morning and then I return at night”, Maysa*, 25, from Syria told us when we spoke to her in Vathy camp on Samos.18

AEGEAN ISLANDS: “For two months, we slept in a small tent near the toilet... There was no electricity and it was very cold. And when it rained, the water soaked through the tent. We are now in a container with another family of four. Still difficult. My mother suffers from severe back pain and cannot climb up and down the camp to see a doctor.” Saman*, 19, from Afghanistan.79

LESVOS: Ahmed, in his early twenties from Mosul, Iraq who has a psychosocial disability, has spent four months in Moria camp. He left Iraq after losing all his family there. He showed Human Rights Watch rashes on his arms and legs he said were caused by unhygienic conditions, as well as cuts on his arms he said were caused by the anxiety of living in the extremely crowded container. He shares a two-meter-by-two-meter space with three unrelated men as a sleeping area, separated from the rest of the container by hanging blankets. A total of 15 men were accommodated in the container at the time of the visit. “I have to wait here until 2019 despite being mentally unwell,” Ahmed said. “I tried to commit suicide. My friends are protecting me from harming myself”.20

AEGEAN ISLANDS: “For two months, we slept in a small tent near the toilet... There was no electricity and it was very cold. And when it rained, the water soaked through the tent. We are now in a container with another family of four. Still difficult. My mother suffers from severe back pain and cannot climb up and down the camp to see a doctor.” Saman*, 19, from Afghanistan.18

SAMOS: “I don’t feel safe or comfortable in the tent with... strangers. I leave the camp early in the morning and then I return at night”, Maysa*, 25, from Syria told us when we spoke to her in Vathy camp on Samos.18

57 Boat Refugee Foundation | Documenting Conditions in the Greek Hotspots 2016 - 2023
Lesvos, outside the Moria hotspot (The Guardian, 2019)
# PUBLICATIONS FROM 2019

## JANUARY 2019

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<th>No.</th>
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| 116. | [ekathimerini.com](https://ekathimerini.com) | **Migrant found dead in Moria camp**  
A 24-year-old man from Cameroon was found dead inside the Moria migrant camp on the eastern Aegean island of Lesvos early Tuesday morning, according to state-run news agency ANA-MPA.  
Three migrants died of carbon monoxide poisoning in Moria January 2017 while trying to stay warm with makeshift stoves. | 📍 Lesvos 🛋️ Reception conditions |

| 117. | [UNHCR](https://www.unhcr.org) | **UNHCR Greece Factsheet - January 2019**  
Page 1: The harsh weather this month affected thousands of people staying in unheated shelter in the reception centres on the islands. The situation was better in mainland sites, overall better prepared for the cold.  
Page 4: Sexual harassment and violence, including against men and boys, is a major risk in the reception centres and some mainland sites. | 📍 Aegean Islands 🛋️ Reception conditions |

## FEBRUARY 2019

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| 118. | [CPT Committee](https://www.cpt.org) | **CPT report to the Greek Government**  
Page 33, para 75: at Moria Pre-removal Centre, a foreign national detained in Wing A alleged that four masked police officers had entered his detention room to search for drugs during the night of 1st April 2018 and had subjected him to several baton blows, because he had been screaming on account of an acute headache. Upon examination by the delegation’s medical doctor, two weeks later, he displayed four abrasions on his right lower leg beneath the knee and one abrasion beneath the left knee, which were consistent with the ill-treatment alleged.  
Page 33, para 75: Another detained person claimed that he had received a kick by a police officer to his head behind the right ear during the same incident. Both of these acts of alleged police ill-treatment had been observed by all other persons detained in the same room who were still present at the time of the delegation’s visit. | 📍 Lesvos 🛋️ Reception conditions |

### Links to publications
- 116. Ekathimerini ‘Migrant found dead in Moria camp’ (8 January 2019)
- 117. UNHCR ‘UNHCR Greece Factsheet - January 2019’ (January 2019)
- 118. CPT Committee ‘Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece’ from 10 to 19 April 2018 (2019) CPT/Inf (2019) 4
At Moria Pre-removal Centre, material conditions remained poor.

There were also many detained persons in the pre-removal centres and the RIC visited who approached the delegation and complained that they had not been granted access to a doctor. Although some had high fever or were in acute pain or psychotic crisis, despite their repeated requests to see a doctor, police officers at Fylakio and Moria Pre-removal Centre had not taken appropriate action. This was also partly due to the lack of staff and interpretation services available.

The Assembly is particularly alarmed by reports about sexual violence, sexual exploitation and human trafficking by camp gangs, smugglers and other forms of organised crime, which cause psychological distress beyond, and adding to, the traumatic situations many experienced on route while fleeing to Turkey and continuing to Greece.

As riots, violence, different types of exploitation and abuse, and even rape were frequent in such an overcrowded situation, female refugees and minors were locked into their rooms at night for protection. Clothing and provisional shelters for refugees were inadequate for winter temperatures. In addition, vulnerabilities of refugees were not dealt with adequately and women and girls did not receive gender-sensitive protection, treatment and care. Therefore, traumatic stress continued inside the camp, leading to panic and attempted suicide.

Links to publications
119. UNHCR ‘Greece Factsheet - February 2019’ (February 2019)
120. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe ‘The situation of migrants and refugees on the Greek islands: more needs to be done’ (4 March 2019) Doc. 14837
Page 8: During my visit, I noticed that the several thousand inhabitants of the camp at Moria had to share a very small number of toilets and bathrooms. The food distribution points had very long waiting lines with waiting periods of hours. One official medical doctor, who had a waiting list of several months, examined cases of physical or mental signs of torture in the context of asylum applications.

121. Lena Headey calls for action in face of refugees' mental health crisis in Lesvos

Para 1: A recent IRC report revealed that over 60% of refugees treated at the IRC’s mental health centre in Moria have considered suicide, with 30% having already attempted it - unprotected, unsupported and uncertain about their futures.

122. European leaders must end the humanitarian and human rights crisis at Europe’s borders

Para 4: As many as 20,000 asylum seekers were stranded in unsafe, unhygienic and degrading conditions on the Greek islands in 2018. Currently, around 12,000 people are still forced to live in inadequate reception and identification centres built for a maximum capacity of half this population: sleeping in unheated tents or overcrowded containers with limited access to running water and electricity, and often exposed to ongoing violence, harassment and exploitation, amid high tensions, lack of security and minimal protection.


Page 5: At the end of 2018 there were 14,615 people on the islands, [...] The situation in Samos continues to remain dire, where the reception centre hosts six times its capacity. Over 2,500 people continue to stay in tents and makeshift shelter in Moria, Lesvos.
124. **UNHCR Greece Factsheet - April 2019**

Page 1: Refugee flows remained steady this month compared to March’s 3,150 new arrivals, with 1,150 people crossing the land borders and 1,850 reaching the Greek Aegean islands.

Page 4: The situation remains alarming in the reception centres, especially on Lesvos where there are 294 unaccompanied children; the highest number of children in a reception centre in Greece.

125. **Supervision of the execution of the European Court’s judgments M.S.S. and Rahimi groups v. Greece**

Living conditions of asylum seekers: 6. took into account the continuing and increasing arrival of third country nationals, including asylum seekers; noted, furthermore the concerns expressed by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and NGOs that the living conditions of asylum seekers have remained critical, despite the commendable efforts and the achievements of the authorities to date; therefore called on the authorities to continue and step up their efforts;

Reception and protection of unaccompanied minors: 9. expressed, however, concern about the inadequate number of suitable places available in accommodation facilities for minors and the significant number of minors placed in “protective custody” or in reception centres at the borders, and called on the authorities to intensify their efforts to increase the capacity of accommodation suitable for unaccompanied minors.

126. **Greece Factsheet - June 2019**

Page 2: Overcrowding in the islands reception centres worsened this month. Inadequate measures for the high temperatures of the season deteriorated the already difficult hygienic and sanitary situation fuelling frustration among refugees. The population on Kos and Leros reached a record high with approximately 3,700 people in a total estimated capacity of 2,000. Demands for basic assistance items, such as hygiene kits, mattresses and clothes were high as a result of the increased population. Meanwhile, the difficult conditions in the reception centres on Lesvos and Samos persisted, despite governmental efforts to transfer asylum-seekers and refugees to other sites.

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**Links to publications**

124. UNHCR ‘Greece Factsheet - April 2019’ [May 2019]
126. UNHCR ‘Greece Factsheet - June 2019’ [June 2019]
127. **Greek and EU authorities deliberately neglecting people trapped on islands**

MSF’s paediatric mental health teams working on Lesbos saw child referrals double in July compared to previous months. In July and August, 73 children were referred to our teams: three had attempted to kill themselves and 17 were self-harming. Ten of the 73 children were under the age of six, with the youngest just two years old.

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**AUGUST 2019**

128. **Minor killed at Moira migrant camp on Lesbos**

A 15-year-old Afghan minor has been killed at the Moria migrant camp on the island of Lesbos during a violent brawl. The UN refugee agency UNHCR has in response called on the Greek government to urgently transfer migrant youths away to safe areas.

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**SEPTEMBER 2019**

129. **Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Greece**

Page 5, para 20: [T]he Committee draws the attention of the State party to reports that there has been a systematic failure to provide and ensure access to medical care and safe shelter, and that those living in the camps have been inadequately protected and, therefore, exposed to violence, including gender-based violence, on a daily basis. The Committee is further concerned at reports of ill-treatment, including beatings, of detained asylum seekers and migrants by police officers.

Page 5, para 20: The Committee also observes with concern that the containment policies applied as part of the implementation of the agreement of 18 March 2016 between the European Union and Turkey have resulted in migrants and asylum seekers being exposed to appalling and unsanitary living conditions, especially in the case of those held in overcrowded reception and identification centres at “hotspots”, such as the centres in Samos and in Moria, Lesbos.

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**Links to publications**

127. MSF "Greek and EU authorities deliberately neglecting people trapped on islands" (5 September 2019)
128. Sertan Sanderson "Minor killed at Moira migrant camp on Lesbos" (Info Migrations, 26 August 2019)
129. UN ‘CAT Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Greece’ (3 September 2019) UN DOC CAT/C/GRC/CO/7
Page 5, para 22: Unaccompanied migrant and asylum-seeking children - Lack of shelter space leads, in many cases, to the prolonged detention of unaccompanied children in police holding cells, pre-removal centres and reception and identification centres at the above-mentioned “hotspots”, where living conditions are substandard and basic services are often not available.

Page 6, para 24: Gender based violence - The Committee is concerned, in particular, at reports indicating an increasing incidence of sexual harassment and assaults at some refugee reception centres, mainly due to a lack of adequate and secure accommodation and facilities.

Page 7, para 26: extensive use of tear gas against migrants and asylum seekers protesting about living conditions in the reception and identification centres at the “hotspots” of Moria, Lesbos, and of Samos, in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

130. Can you hear us? Unaccompanied minors in Moria Camp ask ...

Page 2, para 1: The systematic failure to meet the needs of these children coupled with their exposition to the existing living conditions in the various Sections of Moria Camp, aggravates their already unstable psychological state and heightens the risk of triggering additional acts of despair.

131. Greece Fire in Moria camp highlights failure to protect refugees

In recent weeks, Amnesty International has witnessed a drastic deterioration of the conditions for refugees on the Aegean Islands, with a disconcerting 30,000 and more currently present in the various facilities. Overcrowding has reached its worst levels since 2016, with Lesbos and Samos hosting up to four and eight times’ their respective capacities. The situation of children in the islands also deteriorated sharply, with tragic death of a 15-year-old Afghan in the ‘safe zone’ of the Moria camp testifying to the fundamental lack of safety for the thousands children forced to live in the hotspot.
Chios, Vial hotspot (Refugee Biryani & Bananas, 2019)

Samos, outside the Vathi hotspot (Refugee Support Aegean, 2019)

Lesvos, Moria hotspot (Boat Refugee Foundation, 2019)
132. **Greece must act to end dangerous overcrowding in island reception centres**

Sea arrivals in September, mostly of Afghan and Syrian families, increased to 10,258 - the highest monthly level since 2016 – worsening conditions on the islands which now host 30,000 asylum-seekers. The situation on Lesvos, Samos and Kos is critical.

The situation on Lesvos, Samos and Kos is critical. The Moria centre on Lesvos is already at five times its capacity with 12,600 people. At a nearby informal settlement, 100 people share a single toilet.

On Samos, the Vathy reception centre houses 5,500 people – eight times its capacity. Most sleep in tents with little access to latrines, clean water, or medical care. Conditions have also deteriorated sharply on Kos, where 3,000 people are staying in a space for 700.

133. **Concluding observations on the initial report of Greece**

Page 4, para 15: The Committee is concerned about: (b) The insufficient measures taken to identify asylum seekers with disabilities, refugees with disabilities and persons with disabilities who are in refugee-like situations who are arriving in the State party, to ensure their access to health care, adequate accommodation, basic facilities, security and safety, and to take specific measures and provide for individualized support, such as personal assistance, particularly for women and children with disabilities.

**Links to publications**

132. UNHCR “Greece must act to end dangerous overcrowding in island reception centres, EU support crucial” (1 October 2019)
133. UN “Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Concluding observations on the initial report of Greece” (29 October 2019)
Greece must urgently transfer asylum seekers from the Aegean islands and improve living conditions in reception facilities

The situation of migrants, including asylum seekers, in the Greek Aegean islands has dramatically worsened over the past 12 months. Urgent measures are needed to address the desperate conditions in which thousands of human beings are living,” said today the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, at the end of a five-day visit to Greece during which she visited reception facilities in Lesvos, Samos, and Corinth.

The Commissioner is appalled by the unhygienic conditions in which migrants are kept in the islands. “It is an explosive situation. There is a desperate lack of medical care and sanitation in the vastly overcrowded camps I have visited. People queue for hours to get food and to go to bathrooms, when these are available.

The authorities must boost the capacities of local hospitals, set up ad hoc medical facilities in the reception camps and increase the number of healthcare professionals in the islands in order to provide migrants and local residents with the medical care they are entitled to.

Special report No 24/2019 - Asylum, relocation and return of migrants

Page 16 box 1: On Samos, we visited the minors’ section of the hotspot. It had seven containers, each housing one bathroom and two living rooms. Some containers had no doors, windows, beds or air-conditioning devices. The official capacity of each container was 8-10 minors, but around 16 unaccompanied minors were staying in each, and even sleeping on the ground. The minors’ section hosted only boys. Seventy-eight unaccompanied minors were in tents or abandoned derelict houses outside the hotspot, in unofficial extensions to the facility. Nine unaccompanied girls were sleeping on the floor in a 10 m2 container next to the police office, with no bathroom or shower.

Page 49, footnote 36: From August 2018, there were no Ministry of Health doctors in Chios while the two doctors posted on Lesbos resigned at the end of October 2018. On the islands of Leros, Samos and Kos, from December 2017, there was mostly one Ministry of Health doctor per island hotspot.
Lesvos, Moria hotspot (Achilleas Zavallis/UNHCR, 2019)

Chios, Vial hotspot (Refugee Biryani & Bananas, 2019)

Chios, outside the Vial hotspot (The Guardian, 2019)

Kos, hotspot (Socrates Baltagiaannis/UNHCR, 2019)

Lesvos, outside the Moria hotspot (Achilleas Zavallis/UNHCR, 2019)

Lesvos, Moria hotspot (Anna Pantelia/MSF, 2019)
**136.** Greek Reporter

**Baby in Greek Migrant Camp Dies From Severe Dehydration**

A nine-month-old baby has died of “severe dehydration” at the Moria migrant camp on the Greek island of Lesvos, the aid organization Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said on Saturday.

**137.** European leaders: Stop punishing asylum seekers on the Greek islands

One woman, a child and a nine-month-old baby have died just in the last three months because of the unsafe and appalling conditions in Moria and the lack of adequate care. They were looking for safety in Europe; they found death in a European reception centre.

**DECEMBER 2019**

**138.** Greece Factsheet - December 2019

Page 1: The islands’ reception centres are now dangerously overcrowded with 36,400 people sharing the space and services intended for 5,400.

Page 2: Low temperatures and heavy rainfall had a serious impact on refugees. Mainland sites were overall better prepared, but in certain locations refugees did not have adequate heating. On the islands, thousands of people had to endure the extreme cold in tents and makeshift shelter with many lighting small fires to warm up in the persisting overcrowded reception centres.

Page 4: Prevention and response to incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including domestic violence, is increasingly challenging. With overfilled reception centres and many unlit areas around them, risks are prevalent, especially for single women as well as boys and girls who are unaccompanied.
STORIES FROM THE ‘HOTSPOTS’

SAMOS: Vasillis Stravaridis, General Director of MSF Greece. “Today in Vathy, on Samos, more than half the camp’s population are living in summer tents or under plastic sheeting, surrounded by rubbish and human excrement. In the month since MSF returned to Samos, we have been treating pregnant women and people with chronic health conditions, and providing group sessions for mental health patients.”25

LESVOS: They told me about a 12-year-old boy who came to our clinic in Moria, on Lesbos, after repeatedly self-harming by cutting his head with a knife. And they told me about another child, a nine-year-old girl with serious injuries from a bomb blast in Afghanistan. She was still smiling when she arrived in Greece. But in the months that she’s been trapped on Lesbos, she has stopped talking, stopped eating, and completely withdrawn from life. - Dr Christos Christou, International President, Médecins Sans Frontières.26

LESVOS: “More and more of these children stop playing, have nightmares, are afraid to go out of their tents and start to withdraw from life,” says Katrin Brubakk, MSF’s mental health activity manager on Lesbos. “Some of them completely stop talking. With the increasing overcrowding, violence and lack of safety in the camp, the situation for children is deteriorating day by day. To prevent permanent damage, these children need to be removed from Moria camp immediately.”27

25 MSF “EU-Turkey deal continues cycle of containment and despair” [18 March 2019]
26 MSF “European leaders: Stop punishing asylum seekers on the Greek islands” [27 November 2019]
27 MSF “Greek and EU authorities deliberately neglecting people trapped on islands” [5 September 2019]
THE YEAR

2020

Lesvos, Moria hotspot after it burned down (MSF, September 2020)
## JANUARY 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>139.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Hill: People Are Struggling to Survive on Our Borders, But Solutions are in Reach</strong></td>
<td>Aegian Islands, Reception conditions, Children</td>
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<td>Greece — which receives more asylum seekers than any other country in Europe relative to its population — restricts them to the island where they first arrive. Some 40,000 people are waiting on several small islands, settling into muddy hillsides wherever they can find room to pitch a tent.</td>
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<td>This has become a struggle for survival. The situation has become so desperate that a number of people, including children as young as ten years old, have attempted suicide.</td>
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<td>140.</td>
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<td><strong>Greece denies healthcare to seriously ill refugee children on Lesbos</strong></td>
<td>Lesvos, Children, Healthcare</td>
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<td>Seriously ill children – including those with life-threatening diseases – living on Lesbos, Greece, are being deprived of medical care.</td>
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<td>In Moria camp, on the island of Lesbos, Greece, the Greek government is deliberately depriving at least 140 children with chronic, complex and life-threatening diseases of adequate medical care.</td>
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<td>141.</td>
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<td><strong>Moria nightmare</strong></td>
<td>Lesvos, Reception conditions, Children, Woman</td>
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<td>In the middle of November 2019, a 9-month old baby from Congo died in Moria hotspot. According to the assessment of the Médecins Sans Frontières the cause of death was dehydration. This is the seventh confirmed death in Moria within a few months (September 2019 to January 2020).</td>
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<td>Lack of lighting and sufficient number of police officers supervising the area increases the sense of insecurity, mainly for women. There is also a continuous fear for criminality and violence. A few days ago, two young males – one from Yemen and one from Congo - died after being lethally stabbed in the camp.</td>
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<td>On November 25, 2019, an Afghan man died from a heart attack in Moria hotspot.</td>
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<td>On September 24, 2019, a van swept away and kills a five-year-old Afghan boy in a place outside Moria. The child was playing in a cardboard box in the backyard of a building used by a business and NGO that distributed essentials at the Moria hotspot.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Links to publications**

139. Refugees International 'The Hill: People Are Struggling to Survive on Our Borders, But Solutions Are in Reach' (23 January 2020)
140. MSF 'Greece denies healthcare to seriously ill refugee children on Lesbos' (23 January 2020)
141. Refugee Support Aegean 'Moria nightmare' (24 January 2020)
**UNHCR Greece Factsheet- February 2020**

Living conditions remained dangerous on the islands and thousands of women, men, and children who live in small tents are exposed to cold and rain with little or no access to heating, electricity or hot water.

Asylum-seekers and refugees in the islands reception centres struggle to access healthcare as available services are negligible with few doctors at the reception centres and the public hospitals.

**Seeking Asylum in Greece: Women and Unaccompanied Children Struggle to Survive**

NGO personnel told Refugees International that SGBV within the camps—including intimate partner violence, rape, sexual harassment, transactional sex, and physical assault—is rampant.

At the time Refugees International visited Lesvos, there were only two guardians for the 1,200 UAC on the island. According to a former guardian on Lesvos, each guardian can handle a caseload of 20 children at most at any one time.

In Samos, one doctor serves 7,000 people. Alone, he is able to conduct screenings only three to four months after an asylum seeker has arrived and has no time to engage meaningfully with an individual.
Parliamentary question Answer given by Ms Johansson

The Commission is following the situation on the Greek islands closely and shares concerns about the living conditions in Moria. Winter weather is now also adding to the suffering on the islands. Many people are without power, and even water, living amid filth and garbage. Health services are negligible. The risks faced by the most vulnerable individuals, pregnant women, new mothers, the elderly and children are among the worst seen in refugee crises around the world.

A criminal complaint was filed regarding the death of a 31-year-old Iranian national at the pre-removal detention centre of Moria

The 31-year-old Iranian man, who, according to the report of the online journal “StoNisi”, dated 06/01/2020, was found hanged in the pre-removal detention center of Moria in the morning of that day. The criminal complaint raises the issue of the insufficient medical and psychosocial services in the Pre-Removal Detention Center of Moria. Specifically, the sole provider of medical services at the Pre-Removal Detention Center, AEMY S.A., employs only one psychologist since April 2019, while there is no interpreter for any language for over a year.

MARCH 2020

Parliamentary question Answer given by Ms Johansson

The Commission is following the situation on the Greek islands closely and shares concerns about the living conditions in Moria.

MARCH 2020

March 2020 - Greece suspends the right to seek asylum for one month for all people entering the country irregularly. Imposing immediate deportation for those entering the Greek territory, without registration, to their countries of origin or transit (Türkiye).30

March 2020 - Turkish authorities suspendend returns under the EU-Turkey Statement, citing COVID-19 restrictions.31

Links to publications

144. UNHCR ‘Act now to alleviate suffering at reception centres on Greek islands - UNHCR’s Grandi’ [21 February 2020]
145. Legal Centre Lesvos ‘A criminal complaint was filed regarding the death of a 31-year-old Iranian national at the pre-removal detention centre of Moria’ [7 February 2020]

30 Decision on 'Suspension of the submission of asylum applications' Gazette A' 45/2.3.2020
31 European Commission 'State of play of EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations' (22 March 2021) JOIN(2021) 8 final/2
Lesvos, outside Moria hotspot (Boat Refugee Foundation, 2020)
**Greece and Turkey: Population Movement**

Page 1: More than 41,000 people remain stranded in reception centres across five islands which were originally designed for 5,400 people:

Page 1: On Samos 6,782 people are staying in a centre designed for 660 while others are in makeshift shelters pitched on surrounding fields on a steep slope.

Page 2: Moria camp on Lesvos is hosting 21,752 people inside a facility for 2,800 and others are staying in adjacent olive groves. The camp is known for its poor hygiene conditions and outbreaks of violence.

Page 2: Reception centres on Chios, Kos, and Leros are also overcrowded. The majority of the residents in the camp are families.

**Evacuation of squalid Greek camps more urgent than ever over COVID-19 fears**

In some parts of Moria camp there is just one water tap for every 1,300 people and no soap available. Families of five or six have to sleep in spaces of no more than 3m².

**Child dies in fire in Greek migrant camp**

A young child died in a fire in an overcrowded migrant camp on the Greek island of Lesvos on Monday, fire brigade officials said.

The fire burned through two containers used as living quarters by people in the Moria camp, as well as some tents, a spokesman said.

**Immediately honour commitments to relocate unaccompanied children**

Tens of thousands of people remain trapped in the camps on the Greek islands, including older people, people with disabilities, those with serious health conditions, families with children and pregnant women. Amongst them are 1,752 unaccompanied children. Most of them are deprived of access to their most basic rights, such as shelter and adequate food, medical, psychosocial care, as well as education. Overcrowding and extremely limited access to running water, toilets and showers, make it impossible to abide by the guidelines for protecting oneself from COVID-19, putting them at significantly heightened risk of infection, serious illness or death, especially those with underlying health conditions.

**Links to publications**

147. IFRC 'Greece and Turkey: Population Movement - Information Bulletin N° 1' (5 March 2020)
148. MSF 'Evacuation of squalid Greek camps more urgent than ever over COVID-19 fears' (12 March 2020)
149. Ekathimerini 'Child dies in fire in Greek migrant camp' (16 March 2020)
150. International Rescue Committee 'Immediately honour commitments to relocate unaccompanied children' (3 April 2020)
Without Essential Protections: A Roadmap to Safeguard the Rights of Asylum Seekers

Because of overcrowding, thousands of asylum seekers are forced to live outside of the RICs in the nearby olive groves, in tents without electricity or running water and with limited access to sanitation facilities. Indeed, asylum seekers throughout the islands have extremely limited access to basic rights and services, including health care, social services, legal assistance, and information about the asylum process.

Greece: with camps on fire, transfer of vulnerable asylum seekers to mainland must urgently resume

Three fires have raged through the Vathy refugee camp on the Greek island of Samos destroying many tents and containers and leaving around 200 people homeless. Two fires on Sunday 26 April and one today, Monday 27 April, have destroyed much of the camp which houses almost 7000 asylum seekers despite having a capacity for only 648. Greek authorities indicate that the Sunday fires started due to clashes between residents of the camp.

It comes just a week after another fire hit the similarly overcrowded camp of Vial in Chios.

APRIL 2020

19 April 2020 - A fire ripped through the VIAL reception center on Chios, leaving widespread damage and many people homeless after the death of an Iraqi woman sparked unrest.32

27 April 2020 - At least 200 people have been left homeless after a fire tore through the reception centre on the Greek island of Samos.33

Greece: Island Camps Not Prepared for Covid-19

Greek authorities have not done enough to address the acute overcrowding and lack of health care, access to adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene products to limit the spread of Covid-19 in camps for asylum seekers.

Links to publications

151. Refuges International ‘Without Essential Protections: A Roadmap to Safeguard the Rights of Asylum Seekers in Greece’ [23 April 2020]
152. Amnesty International ‘Greece: with camps on fire, transfer of vulnerable asylum seekers to mainland must urgently resume’ [April 2020]

32 The Guardian ‘Fire wrecks Greek refugee camp after unrest over woman’s death’ [19 April 2020]
33 Al Jazeera ‘Greece: Hundreds homeless after migrant camp fire on Samos island’ [27 April 2020]
MAY 2020

154. “Is This Really Europe?” Asylum Seekers Living in Dismal Conditions in Greece

There are almost 14,000 children living in the asylum seeker camps on the Greek Aegean islands. None of them have access to formal school.

155. N.E. and others v. Greece no. 8716/20

The applications concern the living conditions of the applicants, [nine red.] pregnant women at the time of lodging the applications with the Court and, in cases nos. 8716/20 and 10279/20, their new-born babies. They lived either in tents in the forest outside the hotspot, or in a container inside the [Samos red.] hotspot. The applicants requested interim measures under Rule 39 of the Court, which were granted.

JUNE 2020

156. One Afghan Asylum Seeker’s Hope for the Future: ‘Help People Get Asylum’

Due to a 2016 deal signed between the European Union and Turkey, the land and sea between Greece and Turkey is heavily patrolled to prevent asylum seekers like Sofia [Afghanistan red.] from crossing the border. As a result, Sofia and her husband had no choice but to turn to smugglers.

157. 16-year-old Dies From Heroin Overdose in Greek Migrant Camp

A 16-year-old migrant who had illegally entered Greece with his family died of a heroin overdose. He was found dead on Friday by his parents in the tent where they all lived together in the Moria migrant camp on the island of Lesvos.

Links to publications

154. Refugees International ‘Is This Really Europe?’ Asylum Seekers Living in Dismal Conditions in Greece’ [15 May 2020]
155. N.E. and others v. Greece no. 8716/20 [ECtHR, 25 May 2020]
157. Greek City Times ‘16-year-old Dies From Heroin Overdose In Greek Migrant Camp’ [27 June 2020]

14 Eva Cosse ‘Greece Again Extends Covid-19 Lockdown at Refugee Camps’ [12 June 2020]
Lesvos, Moria hotspot after it burned down (MSF, September 2020)

Lesvos, Moria hotspot after it burned down (Giorgos Moutafis, September 2020)

Lesvos, outside the Moria hotspot (Shutterstock, 19 February 2020)

Lesvos, outside the Moria hotspot (Alamy, 21 January 2020)
UN Human Rights Council - Visit to Greece Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

Page 15 para 68: [visit to Lesvos, from 1 to 12 April 2019] - The experts learned that the overwhelming majority of the women in Moria refugee camp were considered vulnerable, from multiple points of view. Many have been victims of human rights violations in their countries of origin and endured further suffering on their journeys, including at the hands of human traffickers and smugglers.

Page 16 para 70: [visit to Lesvos, from 1 to 12 April 2019] - With regard to gender based violence, including domestic violence, within the confines of the camp, the available solutions are not working in practice, with the requirement of confidentiality often being breached, making the victim an easily identifiable target to all, including the perpetrator.

Page 16 para 72: The situation has deteriorated since the experts’ visit in April 2019. Following his visit to Greece in November 2019, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees spoke of “extremely disturbing” conditions in Moria refugee camp, called for the urgent improvement of living conditions on the islands and welcomed the Government’s intended measures to alleviate the situation.

JULY 2020

Greece Factsheet - May 2020

Page 3: Reception centres remain overcrowded and poorly serviced with over 31,600 people in spaces for almost 5,500. Security has deteriorated, especially in Moria on Lesvos where violent incidents have become more frequent. Police officers, especially women, are not sufficient leaving many, especially children, exposed to risks.

Page 5: Access to medical treatment and essential medication is hindered for many asylum-seekers mainly due to the pending issuance of the limited capacity of EODY staff and the temporary health number (PAAYPA) which, in principle, allows asylum-seekers to obtain free healthcare.


Page 10 para 57: [Visited Greece from 2 to 13 December 2019] The Working Group [...] notes with particular concern the policy of geographical restriction on the movement of asylum seekers from the islands and the lack of awareness among asylum seekers of the consequences of breaching this restriction, namely placement in detention.

Links to publications

158. UN ‘Human Rights Council - Visit to Greece Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls’ (29 June 2020) UN Doc A/HRC/44/51/Add.1
159. UNHCR ‘Greece Factsheet - May 2020’ (7 July 2020)
Council of Europe - Concerning the cases of M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece and RAHIMI v. Greece

Page 5: In both camps [Lesvos and Samos red.], Amnesty International researchers observed profoundly inadequate living conditions. All the interviewees lived in makeshift shelters or tents that exposed the residents to the winter conditions. Often, residents had to build the shelters themselves. Their shelters had no heating, and residents resorted to makeshift wood or coal burners to warm up and heat water. Most of the dwellings had no electricity.

Page 5: The two informal areas of the RICs visited by Amnesty International researchers had zones overflowing with garbage, exacerbating the already unsanitary and unhygienic conditions. The common toilets and showers were also insufficient for the number of residents of the informal camps, and in some cases too remote to be reached quickly and safely, especially at night.

Page 5: People interviewed by the organisation’s researchers described a bleak picture of their everyday lives, including long lines and hours of waiting for food or to see the camp’s doctor/s; obstacles in accessing healthcare due to the seriously insufficient number of medical staff in the RICs and/or because they did not have a social security number (see below section on access to healthcare).

Many of the young children also had signs of skin diseases linked to the unhygienic conditions. Residents in both camps complained about the quality of the food provided by the RIC services, which many said was undercooked and needed to be recooked in order to be edible. In late February-early March 2020, several attacks took place against refugees, journalists, NGO workers, activists and members of organizations on Chios, Lesvos and Kos.

Hotspots at EU external borders - State of play

Page 5: There are five hotspots in Greece (on the islands of Chios, Kos, Leros, Lesvos and Samos), with a current total capacity of 6 095 places. However, the occupancy rate is nearly four times as high, at 23 269 persons, indicating serious overcrowding.
Protection beyond reach

Page 3: As a result, on any given day since August 2019, on average 10,000 children were stranded on the Greek islands in inhumane conditions.

Page 13: While vulnerable groups – including unaccompanied minors – are sometimes exempt from these procedures, on the Greek islands, authorities often fail to assess their vulnerability, with many ending up living under inhumane circumstances.

Commissioner calls on the Greek authorities to provide adequate support to all those affected by the fire in Moria

Major problems, including the containment of asylum seekers and migrants on the Aegean islands, the lack of reception capacity both on the islands and on the mainland, and flawed integration and asylum policies have remained unresolved by the Greek authorities. At the same time, the lack of support from other member states to Greece in terms of relocation and, more broadly the lack of European solidarity is also responsible for the catastrophic situation that has been exposed for years by so many international and national bodies. This is not only a Greek problem. It is a European one, too.

UNHCR shocked by fires at Moria asylum center, ramping up support for affected asylum seekers

While no casualties have been reported to date, the fires have now left 11,500 asylum seekers, among them 2,200 women and 4,000 children, without adequate shelter, sleeping out in the open over the past few nights in the streets, field and beaches. Among them are vulnerable people, very young children, pregnant women, elderly people and people with disabilities.

Links to publications

163. Save the children ‘Protection beyond reach’ (September 2020)
164. Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights ‘Commissioner calls on the Greek authorities to provide adequate support to all those affected by the fire in Moria’ (September 2020)
165. UNHCR ‘UNHCR shocked by fires at Moria asylum center, ramping up support for affected asylum seekers’ (11 September 2020)

35 Elias Kondilis et al ‘The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugees and asylum seekers in Greece: A retrospective analysis of national surveillance data, from 2020’ (eClinicalMedicine, July 2021) Volume 37
36 European Commission ‘Migration: A European taskforce to resolve emergency situation on Lesvos’ (23 September 2020)
Lesvos, Moria hotspot (MSF, 2020)

Lesvos, Moria hotspot burning down (Giorgos-Moutafis/RSA, September 2020)

Lesvos, thousands displaced after Moria hotspot burned down (Refugee Support Aegean, 2020)
The coronavirus pandemic is also adding to an already desperate situation. People tested positive for COVID-19 need to be provided the soonest possible with special care, isolation and treatment arrangements and medical support.

166. **IFRC**

**Information bulletin no. 1 Greece population movement (Moria camp fire)**

Page 1: On Tuesday night, 8 September 2020, a devastating fire ripped through the Reception and Identification Centre in Moria, on the island of Lesvos.

Page 1: The camp was at more than four times its capacity and the fire has all but destroyed it, prompting close to 13,000 refugees who had been living there to flee. More than 4,000 children, including 408 unaccompanied children, had been living in the camp.

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**OCTOBER 2020**

167. **IFRC**

**Greece and other countries: Population Movement - Emergency Appeal**

Page 2: According to the latest assessments by IFRC and other humanitarian actors, living conditions in the new camp are particularly challenging for persons with specific needs, such as persons with serious/chronic illnesses, persons with impairments and disabilities.

Page 2: The new camp is hosted at a military shooting ground with no access to communal water supply and no sewage or waste management systems.

168. **MSF**

**EU must stop trapping people in miserable conditions on the Greek islands**

More than 7,500 people are still trapped in inhumane conditions in a newly built camp on Lesbos.

The new camp on Lesbos is reminiscent of the misery that characterised Moria camp; men, women and children are sleeping in tents on mats, there is no running water, and food is distributed just once daily. Parents wash themselves and their children in the sea, no showers are available, and there are only a limited number of chemical toilets.
Negligent and dangerous COVID-19 response in Vathy camp

Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is urging the Greek authorities to immediately scale up their response to COVID-19 in Vathy camp on Samos island and transfer people at high risk to safe accommodation on Greece’s mainland or in other EU states.

Vathy camp, which hosts 4,300 people, has registered more than 100 positive cases of COVID-19, yet the authorities have so far failed to put an appropriate medical response in place. Forty asylum seekers in the camp are at risk of developing severe symptoms and at least 10 people have serious medical conditions that cannot be addressed at Samos hospital. Only one army doctor and three nurses are available at the camp.

MSF has heard alarming accounts of newborn babies isolated with their mothers in containers without mattresses. At least one person discharged from hospital following surgery was left on the floor of a container with very limited medical attention.

Among the patients our staff are treating in the camp are people with mental health issues, pregnant women and victims of sexual violence. All of them are extremely vulnerable. Many people in the camp have told our health promoters that they will not see a doctor in the camp because they fear the atrocious conditions in the isolation containers.

A month after Moria fires, UNHCR warns of worsening conditions ahead of winter

Heavy rains on 8 October have exacerbated the situation for residents in the emergency site. Some have seen their tents flooded with water. UNHCR conducted protection monitoring visits to assess the situation in the site following the heavy rainfalls and prioritised tarpaulins for people whose tents were affected by the rain. Refugees themselves also found other interim solutions such as digging water channels and trenches around their tents to prevent flooding as proper drainage throughout the site is lacking.

Displacement in Lesvos: fires and Covid 19

Page 2: Built for approximately 8,000 people, by 30 September Kara Tepe camp was hosting 9,370 refugees (IFRC 30/09/2020). It presents many dangers and has been referred to as “worse than Moria” by its residents, local NGOs, as well as MSF (ECRE 02/10/2020, InfoMigrants 28/09/2020). A toxicology expert says that the camp, built on a former military site, could present high risk of lead pollution due to lead particles in the air and ground, which can cause brain and kidney damage (Al Jazeera 2/10/2020). The camp lacks stable electricity, sanitary facilities, sufficient food delivery, and space for social distancing (ECRE 25/09/2020). The location of the new camp and its proximity to the sea exposes it to harsh weather conditions (UNHCR 18/09/2020).

Links to publications
170. UNHCR ‘A month after Moria fires, UNHCR warns of worsening conditions ahead of winter’ (9 October 2020)
171. ACAPS ‘Displacement in Lesvos: fires and Covid 19’ (13 October 2020)
Reports from inside the camp indicate that heavy rains have created unsanitary conditions in many areas, particularly where tents have inadequate drainage or flooring. Flash floods are likely to increase during the winter (ABR 09/10/2020).

Page 3: According to MSF, ‘the containment of these migrants is resulting in thousands of men, women and children being trapped in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, and has failed to create alternative options for those who are forced to flee (MSF 18/03/2019). These strict conditions have also pushed many migrants to self-harm and suicide (Joint Agency BN 17/03/2017; IRC 6/03/2019) and are also likely to increase their exposure to COVID-19.

Lesbos Bulletin: Update on the EU ‘hotspot’ Moria 2.0, by the Greek Council for Refugees & Oxfam

The flimsy tents, many of which are pitched only 20 meters from the sea, lack a solid foundation and provide no protection against the weather, including strong sea winds and rains. The first rainfall of the season on 8 October was sufficient to flood more than 80 tents and several areas of the camp. The rains turned the ground to mud and caused more damage to what little asylum seekers have left. Considering the placement of the camp by the sea, this should have been foreseen. However, the camp lacks critical drainage and sewerage systems, raising further concerns ahead of the coming winter period.

Almost 8,000 people – most of them families with children – have been moved to the new camp, which has been dubbed ‘Moria 2.0’ by residents. Many are living in flimsy tents, some of which are pitched just 20 metres from the sea and have already been flooded and battered by strong winds. The location of the new camp is on a former military shooting range, which had to be swept for landmines and unexploded grenades before being built on.

In a recent survey, Oxfam found that food supplies were limited and the camp was ill-equipped to protect people against COVID-19. Due to the lack of running water, many people were having to wash in the sea, putting them at risk of drowning or getting sick from being exposed to sewage from the camp. It also found that women were more at risk of sexual violence, given the lack of toilets and lighting in the camp.

There is hardly any running water and showers are yet to be built. Consequently, many people have to wash themselves in the sea. This poses a safety risk, especially for children, both in terms of risk of drowning and because of the potential to get infected water contaminated by sewage.

Access to healthcare services is similarly lacking. Medical teams in the camp are mostly focused on COVID-19 testing and prevention, as is the local hospital in Mytilene. Meanwhile, the only competent Greek authority to conduct vulnerability assessments or refer asylum seekers to the hospital (the EODY) operates with only two doctors. This exacerbates the gap for those in need of a doctor or medication, or to those who need to have their vulnerability assessed in order to get access to the support their particular condition requires. Vulnerable asylum seekers now go unnoticed.
How Greece’s Policy of Exclusion Harms Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Even the immediate response to the fire fell short. Greek authorities argued they should not appear to reward protests by transferring people from Lesvos. They said most people would remain on the islands, used tear gas against protestors, and arrested five young asylum seekers charged with starting the fires.

Meanwhile, despite promises from European Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson that there would be “no more Morias,” a new, temporary camp was built and quickly coined “Moria 2.0.” Unsurprisingly, asylum seekers were reluctant to enter the camp. Those inside report that it has no stable electricity or running water, limited food, and insufficient space for social distancing needed to reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission. Poor weather has caused severe flooding, and UNHCR warns the camp is not ready for winter.

To compel individuals off the streets and into the new camp after Moria’s destruction, authorities announced that food and water would only be delivered inside the camp. Residents wait on long lines for food that is of poor quality, low nutritional value, and insufficient. With lockdowns in place, they can no longer go into the city to buy alternative or supplemental food.

Alarming mental health distress among asylum seekers on Greek islands

Recently, the horrific episode of a three-year-old girl raped inside the camp [Lesvos red.] showed the shocking inadequacy of the protection measures available in the camp as well the urgent need for safe and dignified accommodations for the most vulnerable.

Since the fire and the transfer to the new camp, MSF’s child psychologists have continued to note concerning symptoms in our patients, including sleepwalking, nightmares, regressive behaviour, as well as self-harm and suicidal ideation. In 2020, our child psychologists have treated 49 children with suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.
In November, the Greek Government re-introduced a country-wide lockdown. The situation is difficult for asylum-seekers and refugees particularly those who have to shelter-in-place in sites where social distancing is untenable.

The European Court of Human Rights provides interim measures to unaccompanied minors living on Samos island

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court, granted interim measures to five unaccompanied teenagers, asylum seekers, who have been living for many months in the Reception and Identification Center (RIC) and in the “jungle” of Samos island. The interim measures indicate to the Greek authorities their timely transfer to a centre for unaccompanied minors and to ensure that their reception conditions are compatible with Article 3 of the Convention (prohibition of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment) and the applicants’ particular status.

The children, before the Court, complain of their reception conditions, which constitute a gross violation of Article 3 of the ECHR: lack of access to adequate care, lack of adequate medical and psychosocial support services, lack of security, difficulty in accessing food, and inadequate hygiene facilities. Minors are exposed to violence, as fights, tension and riots are frequent in Samos RIC and to unsafe and unsecure conditions and a real risk of exploitation and abuse. Even in the so called “Minors Section” within the Samos RIC, where some of the minors live, the conditions are completely inadequate, and despite the alleged police control at its gate, adults have easy access to the Section.
STORIES FROM THE ‘HOTSPOTS’

LESVOS: My daughter, Zahra, is suffering from autism and we live in a tiny space with almost no electricity,” says Shamseyeh, from Afghanistan, who lives in Moria camp. “Often in the middle of the night she has seizures and there is no one to help us. I just want to be in a space where my daughter can play like other children and be treated by a good doctor.”

LESVOS: After arriving in Moria, a refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, Sofia [from Afghanistan red.] waited two days to register for an ID card. The registration interview itself took another two days. By Sofia’s account, “Sometimes [the translator] didn’t know the meaning of some words, so she had to ask questions. ... The translator wasn’t able to describe [my story] and couldn’t describe it as I wanted to in my own language. Unfortunately, this language barrier between asylum seekers and officials is a widespread problem in Greece.

Sofia is proud to translate for other asylum seekers in the refugee camps; however, her work puts her at risk.

“It’s very dangerous for me, several times the husband came and was screaming at me ... because we were handling dangerous cases of domestic violence,” she recalled.

Sofia often translates for women or LGBTQ asylum seekers who are subject to domestic violence. With little security in the camps, the threat of sexual and gender-based violence is rampant. Regardless, Sofia continues to translate in the camps. “You have this responsibility of people’s life, and you have to translate people’s words as they want to be translated,” she said.

Sofia recently heard that her asylum claim was denied, despite the fact that her lawyer said she had a “strong case.” Sofia said she had “lots of proof and lots of documents and pictures that were proving my story,” but with the pandemic, she has to wait for the courts to reopen to make an appeal. If her appeal is rejected, Sofia will be deported back to Turkey and she will have to start the perilous journey for asylum all over again.

KOS: In the words of A., a hotspot resident: “It’s almost in the middle of the forest. It is far away from everything such as supermarkets and hospitals. It’s basically that we’re detained in a military camp that is surrounded by barbed wire so it’s hard for us to go downtown as it costs a lot to go by bus here in Kos”.

Even access to basics like water for drinking, cooking and cleaning is limited, states A.: “Refugees have access to water two ways. The first is the faucets found in the containers which are cut off for almost 18 hours a day... The second source is the standpipes found outside the containers [where] the refugees stand in a queue for hours like what happened last summer”.

Asked how it feels to live in a space like this, he said: “Basically I don’t feel safe here. Everything around me makes me feel I’m in danger of diseases as we are living around garbage, fights among refugees on almost a daily basis that happen [as a] result of being detained here for too long, and lastly the oppression and bad treatment we get from the administration and the police.”

Refugee Rights Europe ‘The Invisible Islands’ (May 2020)
Refugees International ‘One Afghan Asylum Seeker’s Hope for the Future: ‘Help People Get Asylum’ (17 June 2020)
Boat Refugee Foundation | Documenting Conditions in the Greek Hotspots 2016 - 2023
THE YEAR

2021

Lesvos, medical clinic at the (temporary) Mavrovouni RIC (Boat Refugee Foundation 2021)
## JANUARY 2021

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<tr>
<td>177.</td>
<td>European Parliament</td>
<td>REPORT on the implementation of specific European guidelines on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection</td>
<td>Aegean Islands, Legal, Reception conditions</td>
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<td>Detention conditions at the borders are often inadequate. In case of large numbers of arrivals, such as on the Greek islands, border procedures amount to inhumane conditions.</td>
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<td>178.</td>
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<td>H.A. v Greece No. 59670/19</td>
<td>Samos, Reception conditions, Legal, Woman</td>
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<td>The applicant, who was pregnant at the material time, complained under Article 3 of the Convention about her living conditions in the hotspot of Samos and under Article 34 about the Government’s alleged failure to comply with the interim measures that had been indicated by the Court on 19 November 2019 under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court.</td>
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<td>179.</td>
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<td>N.A. and others v. Greece App no. 11216/20</td>
<td>Samos, Reception conditions, Legal, Woman</td>
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<td>The applications concern the living conditions of the applicants, pregnant women at the time of lodging their applications with the Court. They lived either in tents in the forest outside the hotspot, or in a container inside the hotspot. The applicants requested interim measures under Rule 39 of the Court, which were granted.</td>
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## FEBRUARY 2021

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<td>180.</td>
<td>IFRC</td>
<td>Greece and other countries: Population Movement Operation Update n° 2</td>
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<td>Page 2: While important improvements and infrastructure upgrades are continuing, the conditions at Mavrovouni site are still well below acceptable humanitarian standards, especially during the cold winter period.</td>
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<td>Page 6: With too few clean and operational toilets as well as security concerns for women and children, open defecation continues with an associated risk of infections and spread of viruses.</td>
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</tbody>
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### Links to publications

178. H.A. v Greece App No. 59670/19 [ECtHR, 21 January 2021]
180. IFRC: Turkey, Greece and other countries: Population Movement Operation Update n° 2 [MDR65003] (22 February 2021)
Page 6: According to the latest assessments by IFRC and other humanitarian actors, living conditions in the new camp are particularly challenging for vulnerable persons and persons with specific needs, such as children, single women, older persons, persons with serious/chronic illnesses and persons with disabilities.

Page 9: Drainage is a main challenge, and parts of the camp have been flooded following heavy rain or storms. [...] Beyond the cold, tents do not ensure humidity insulation, thereby increasing the number of people suffering infections and severe health conditions.

**MARCH 2021**


Page 1: UNHCR helped establishing screening, isolation and quarantine medical units near reception centres on the islands and Evros and for new arrivals. Unfortunately, the shortage of medical staff challenges the response.

182. [Amnesty International ‘EU: Anniversary of Turkey deal offers warning against further dangerous migration deals’](https://www.amnesty.org) (March 2021)

Five years after the deal was signed, 15 000 women, men and children remain trapped in overcrowded camps on the Greek islands and tens of thousands more have endured stays there. Many are forced to sleep in tents, braving cold weather in conditions so unsafe that some people have died as a result.

183. [Oxfam International ‘After five years of failed asylum policies, it is time for the EU to do better’](https://www.oxfam.org) (18 March 2021)

In the five years since the announcement of the EU-Turkey deal, news from the Greek islands has gone from bad to worse. The EU’s sustained push to block refugees on their path to safety has resulted in a humanitarian crisis with people forced to live in dehumanising conditions, sleeping in unheated tents or containers with limited access to running water and electricity. Women, in particular, tell us they do not feel safe, and that they are exposed to violence, harassment and exploitation.

**Links to publications**

181. UNHCR ‘Greece Factsheet – February 2021’ (28 February 2021)
182. Amnesty International ‘EU: Anniversary of Turkey deal offers warning against further dangerous migration deals’ (March 2021)
183. Oxfam International ‘After five years of failed asylum policies, it is time for the EU to do better’ (18 March 2021)
Samos, mandatory security check to enter or leave the Zervou Closed Controlled Access Centre (Romy van Baarsen/Romy Aimee, 2021)

Leros, inside the Leros hotspot (AFP, 8 September 2021)

Lesvos, (temporary) Mavrovouni RIC (Boat Refugee Foundation, 2021)

Kos, Closed Controlled Access Centre (AFP, 27 November 2021)
Closure of model camp on Greek islands amidst horrific living conditions is cause for concern

Seven months following the Moria blaze, the conditions in Mavrovouni remain essentially the same. Fragile tents facing fierce weather conditions. One in three toilets work. Occasional hot showers. Security is “the only thing better” according to some residents. Yet the step-up in police presence is not very reassuring to others. Stories of harassment and easily accessible tents coupled with the fact that reports to the police fall on deaf ears creates an unsafe atmosphere.

Within a period of one week, two people detained in administrative detention died. One was a 44-year-old Yemeni man who died after reportedly falling ill to a non-life threatening condition. A mere three days later, a 24-year-old man took his own life. He had been waiting to be released after a year and a half of administrative detention but instead was told that his detention would be prolonged.

The security situation for women is of particular concern. Women in the camps say they do not feel safe. Some do not feel safe enough to leave their tents to shower, so instead, they are bathing inside their tents. Lack of lighting, the accessibility of their tents and the challenges in reporting cases of harassment, are among the issues that create an unsafe atmosphere for women. For those who have already experienced sexual abuse, the scant support services and sense of fear can be a retraumatisation.

VIAL camp: Second refugee dies, woman gives birth on the road side

On Sunday night, a 51-year-old asylum seeker from Iran was found dead in his tent in the same refugee center. According to local media reports, the man had underlying health issues, mainly heart problems, and was living in VIAL for the last one and a half year.

A week ago, another resident had also died in his tent in VIAL camp. The 28-year-old Somali died in the night from Sunday to Monday and when his body was discovered by border guards several hours later it was covered by rodents that were eating the flesh. The man was recognized refugee and was staying in the camp due to coronavirus pandemic.
UNICEF Greece Country Office Annual Report 2020

More than 33,000 refugees and migrants were transferred from the Greek islands to the mainland within this period, however a significant number of people remained in Reception facilities on the islands – 14,265 refugees and migrants, including approximately 4,000 children, resided in RICs on the islands of Samos, Kos, Leros and Chios, as well as the new RIC site in Lesvos as of 31 December 2020.

In September 2020, several fires broke out at the Moria RIC in Lesvos which burnt down the facility and displaced the entire population (approximately 12,000 refugees and migrants, including 4,200 children). The Government of Greece quickly moved to erect a temporary site in the nearby vicinity and priority was made to transfer vulnerable children and families to the mainland in the weeks that followed. By the end of year, approximately 7,000 individuals were being hosted in the temporary RIC site, including 2,000 children.

Constructing Crisis at Europe’s Borders

Page 1: Over the past five years, an entirely avoidable and predictable policy-driven humanitarian crisis has been unfolding in the Greek islands of Lesvos, Samos, Chios, Leros, and Kos, with devastating consequences for the people trapped there.

Page 2: Major stressors for patients’ mental health included navigating daily life in poor living conditions and unclear administrative procedures, exposure to violence and insecurity, unaddressed medical needs, and fear of deportation.

Page 2: Children seeking mental health support often display trauma- and fear-induced symptoms triggered by their environment in the hotspots.

There are alarmingly high rates of self-harming and suicidal acts among children.

Links to publications

187. MSF ‘Constructing Crisis at Europe’s Borders’ [9 June 2021]

7 June 2021 - a Joint Ministerial Decision designates Türkiye as “safe third country” for applicants from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia, without providing any legal reasoning. 41
Page 10: In MSF’s paediatric health projects on Lesvos, we have cared for an alarming number of children with deteriorating mental health.

Page 10: There were alarming high rates of self-harm and suicidal acts among children. Out of the 180 MSF patients who had experienced self-harm, suicidal ideation or had attempted suicide, more than two thirds were children; the youngest of which was a six-year-old child.

Page 11: The most common issues for children were upper and lower respiratory tract infections (33%), skin infections, including scabies, lice and chickenpox (20%), and gastrointestinal conditions (19%), including watery and bloody diarrhoea. These issues are often linked to poor sanitation and exposure to cold weather. MSF treated children for injuries, wounds and burns (5% of consultations) often from accidents and hazards around the RIC, and those resulting from physical and sexual violence.

Page 11: MSF receives a high number of reports of sexual violence and harassment across the hotspots, where, risk reduction and response measures remain grossly inadequate.

Page 11: Since 2019, MSF has treated 325 survivors of sexual violence on Samos, Lesvos and Chios. Among them have been women who are travelling alone, pregnant women, people who identify as LGBTQI+, unaccompanied minors and people with disabilities.

Page 16: The impact of the hotspot containment policy on people’s physical and mental health is a humanitarian crisis with devastating consequences. Since 2016, chronic overcrowding, security issues, and a lack of access to adequate healthcare, sanitation, and food have contributed to at least 21 deaths, including a six-month-old baby who died of dehydration.

Page 23: MSF has serious concerns about the lack of safety and the potential for physical harm in the MPRICs, particularly for women, children and people who identify as LGBTQI+.

Page 20: A lack of access to reliable information and legal support at this stage in the procedure creates confusion and uncertainty. Asylum seekers are not provided with any record of their vulnerability status or details on the sharing of information between the reception service officials and asylum services officials conducting the border procedure.
Lesvos, flood at the (temporary) Mavrovouni RIC (Boat Refugee Foundation, 2021)

Kos, C.C.A.C. (Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 2021)

Samos, Vathi hotspot (Refugee Law Clinic Berlin, 2021)

Leros, C.C.A.C. (Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 2021)
European Social Charter – Follow-up to the decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) - Complaint N°173/2018

Para 15: The ECSR therefore holds that there is a violation of Article 31§1 due to the failure to provide adequate accommodation/housing to refugee and asylum-seeking children on the islands.

Para 16: The ECSR considers that the fact that some refugee and asylum-seeking unaccompanied children may remain for lengthy periods of time in this type of temporary accommodation facilities (emergency hotels and Safe zones) does not satisfy the requirements of long-term accommodation suited to their specific circumstances, needs and extreme vulnerability. These facilities do not offer the quality standards necessary for the long-term accommodation of unaccompanied children.

Para 33: Referring to its findings under Article 31§2 and 17§1 above, the ECSR considers that the accommodation situation of accompanied and unaccompanied migrant children, including unaccompanied children living on the streets, exposes these children to increased threats/risks to their health, physical and psychological integrity. The ECSR notes from the information and examples provided by the complainant organisations that the most commonly treated illnesses among these children (e.g. respiratory tract infections, watery diarrhoea, skin infections, depression, mental health deterioration leading to self-harm and suicide attempts) are linked to their living conditions (overcrowding, sanitation and hygiene conditions on the islands and homelessness and precarious housing arrangements on the mainland).

Para 34: The ECSR notes that according to ICJ and ECRE, these conditions are exacerbated by the lack of vulnerability assessment and a lack of access to primary, preventative and in some cases, emergency health care. This is due to the shortage of medical facilities and personnel on the islands (both at the RICs and in hospitals). UNCHR [UNHCR red.] also point to serious delays in the medical and psychosocial assessment of children at the RICs and to the lack of access to medical or psychosocial care for children outside the long-term care system on the mainland.

European Court of Human Rights recognises Greek authorities’ persistent disregard for migrants’ health and lives in Mavrovouni camp

The following persons were all granted interim measures by the European Court of Human Rights:
A young woman who suffers from severe, frequent and treatment-resistant epileptic seizures as a result of a major head trauma following an airstrike and had been living for 21 months first in Moria and then in Mavrovouni camps, during which time her health deteriorated to the extent that she became wholly dependent on the care of her brother.

A heavily pregnant woman at that time who suffers from a degenerative condition in her shoulders, chronic asthma and, owing to her living conditions, inflammation and a lung infection. She and her family were forced to reside in Moria and then Mavrovouni camp for the past 17 months.

A four year old child who suffers from severe epilepsy (the result of various head traumas), plagiocephaly (also known as flat head syndrome) and undiagnosed developmental and neurological complexities. She and her family were confined to Lesvos for 16 months.

A woman who suffers from a lump in her breast, for which she received no proper diagnosis or treatment on Lesvos, resulting in inflammation and severe pain. Her daughter suffers from arteriovenous dysplasia of the spinal cord, resulting in acute mobility issues. Together with their relatives, both the mother and the daughter were held in quarantine for two months upon arrival and after that spent around 10 months in Mavrovouni camp.

A seven months pregnant woman who is into a high risk pregnancy with a history of premature and traumatic embryo births and was already forced to spend 12 months in Mavrovouni camp with her family. She suffers from acute psychological issues and her young son also suffers from psychological issues in addition to seizures, severe sleep disturbances and psychosomatic symptoms of anxiety.

A man who suffers from several chronic conditions as a result of airstrike and gunshot injuries, in addition to other illnesses, including rectal bleeding, haemorrhoids, abdominal pain and bladder stones. He and his family have been in Lesvos for 20 months. His minor son also suffers from severe medical issues including ‘attacks’ during which he experiences seizures, loses his vision and hearing, and falls down. The Court refused the interim measure regarding the son, while granting that of his father.

A man who suffers from Hepatitis B, a potentially life-threatening condition for which he has received no treatment on Lesvos. He experiences severe symptoms and is at heightened risk of severe illness from the COVID-19 virus. Nevertheless, he spent the past 19 months in Moria and then Mavrovouni camp.
One year on from the Moria fire: 96% refugees supported by IRC in Lesvos, Greece continue to experience depression

The IRC saw a major increase in clients reporting anxiety, depression and showing behavioral problems in the immediate aftermath of the Moria fire.

One year later, 93% of clients report symptoms of anxiety, while 96% report depression and 80% now experience behavioural problems, including substance abuse and social isolation.

One year on from the fire that devastated the lives of 10,000 people who were confined in Moria, people remain trapped in undignified living conditions. People are now housed in a camp that is fiercely exposed to the elements and prone to flooding, as well as lacking sufficient infrastructure such as electricity to keep people warm, during the winter months, and safe.

The majority of our mental health patients on Samos present symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Between April and August 2021, a shocking 64 per cent of new patients that reached our mental health clinic presented thoughts of suicide, and 14 per cent were at an actual risk of suicide.

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SEPTEMBER 2021

18 September 2021 - Inauguration of the first Closed Controlled Access Centre (C.C.A.C) Zervou on Samos. Th next day a major fire breaks out at the Vathi Reception and Identification Centre on Samos, due for closure at the end of the month.42

27 September 2021 - Inauguration of the Closed Controlled Access Centre (C.C.A.C.) on Leros and Kos.43

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42 European Commission ‘Opening of the first new reception centre on Samos – Zervou’ (28 September 2021); France 24 ‘Major fire at migrant camp on Greek island of Samos’ (19 September 2021)

43 Josephine Joly and Apostolos Staikos ‘New migrant centre opens on the Greek island of Samos’ (euronews, 29 September 2021)
A broken asylum system: one unwilling and unable to welcome Afghan refugees

For refugees living in the hastily constructed and temporary “Moria 2”, the living conditions are as dire as ever. The European Court for Human Rights has recently said the Greek authorities failed to ensure that the camp lived up to European standards. The heatwaves this summer also highlighted the abysmal living conditions, and the Greek government’s lack of preparation means that, for the sixth year in a row, many people will spend the winter in tents.

Turkey – Greece and other countries: Population Movement - Emergency Appeal Revision n° 3

Decongestion of the islands remain a priority for the Greek government and the population in the Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) has dropped significantly. Although RICs are operating below capacity (for instance, Lesvos RIC is currently below 4,000 migrants) there remain real concerns about the living conditions of their residents. The hot spot approach has been reinforced through the EU Migration Pact and the new concept of closed and controlled camps known as Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Centres (MPRICs).

Detention as the Default: How Greece, with the support of the EU, is generalizing administrative detention of migrants

Page 10: Case concerned a 44-year-old man in Kos, where people applying for asylum receive blanket detention decisions. He died in detention while waiting for medical care for a treatable disease.

Link to publication
191. Oxfam International ‘A broken asylum system: one unwilling and unable to welcome Afghan Refugees’ (8 October 2021)
192. IFRC ‘Turkey – Greece and other countries: Population Movement - Emergency Appeal Revision n° 3 (MDR65003)’ (26 October 2021)
193. Oxfam International ‘Detention as the Default: How Greece, with the support of the EU, is generalizing administrative detention of migrants - Oxfam Policy & Practice’ (16 November 2021)
Greece: Asylum seekers being illegally detained in new EU-funded camp

The new EU-funded “closed-controlled centre” (KEDN) of Samos has been constructed in an isolated spot 6 km from the main city, Vathi. It can house up to 3000 people and is equipped with a rigid system of containment and surveillance, including double barbed wire metal fencing, CCTV throughout, and the 24/7 presence of patrolling police officers and privately contracted security officers.

Since 17 November those without valid government-issued IDs (asylum cards) are barred from leaving the camp for an indefinite period of time. The decision applies to individuals who have had cards withdrawn as a result of unsuccessful asylum applications or newcomers yet to be issued with a card. According to unofficial estimates, around 100 of the approximately 450 residents have been prevented from leaving the prison-like premises for more than two weeks, in violation of their right to liberty.

The residents of Samos camp are being deprived of their liberty automatically and en masse, on untransparent and illegitimate legal grounds, without being able to challenge their confinement, for an indefinite period of time.

Greece and other countries: Population Movement Operation Update n° 3

Humanitarian actors remain concerned about the human cost of the new ‘closed camps’ and the impact that these camps will have on the health and well-being of their inhabitants. Mental Health remains a key concern, with people living in containers, surrounded by barbed wire fences, and an increasing dynamic of detention, securitization and segregation from the rest of society. The remote location of the camps also hinders access to livelihoods, goods and services.

Although RICs are operating below capacity, there remain real concerns about the living conditions of their residents. The hot spot approach has been reinforced through the approach outlined in the EU’s proposed new Asylum and Migration Pact and has led to the introduction the new concept of closed and controlled camps known as Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Centres (MPRICs).

In 2021, the needs of migrants in Greece remained significant including: shelter and winterization, health services, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) [e.g., provision of drinking water in the Sites, lack of showers, latrines and handwashing facilities, and proper sewage management]. Additionally, mental health services continue to be considered necessary, particularly as limited Psychosocial Support (PSS) activities or facilities are available.
Page 10: since November 2021, people who do not have a valid asylum applicant card have not been allowed to exit the CCAC except for legal or medical reasons following agreement with the camp management. This rule applies to newly arrived people who are registered at the CCAC in Samos for the first time and are yet to receive a valid asylum applicant card, hence detained for an unspecified period of time as well as to people whose asylum claim has been rejected. This measure resulted in further limited access of the population to MSF healthcare services.
LESVOS: A.J. is a heavily pregnant woman with shrapnel injuries causing seizures, numbness, immobility and pain. A.M. is an elderly, physically disabled woman unable to walk and suffering from multiple comorbidities. H.A. has facial paralysis, is a survivor of war and is also in a state of deteriorating physical and mental health. All three had survived the fires that destroyed old Moria refugee camp in September 2020, survived a week sleeping in the streets between police barricades, inhaling police tear gas, without food, water, shelter, basic amenities; only to be accommodated in the hastily constructed Mavrovouni RIC in conditions unfit for human habitation: exposed to lead poisoning, to Covid-19, and to all the elements on a rocky outcrop in winter. For all three individuals, the living conditions in Mavrovouni RIC have already caused irreparable harm to their physical and mental health. 

SAMSOS: Felicite*, a psychiatric patient at our clinic since February 2021, is a survivor of female genital mutilation, forced child marriage at the age of 14, and extreme sexual and physical violence for many years from her husband, 30 years her senior. She is a recognised victim of human trafficking and she has been on Samos for two years.

Her application for refugee status has already been rejected twice, and because of that, she does not have access to basic services provided inside the camp, such as food. She has already been waiting for four months for a new decision of her subsequent asylum request. She rightly wonders, “Will I starve to death?”.

SAMOS: What do you want us to say to a young boy who, even though has not committed a crime, is forced to remain locked up in a prison-like centre? One of our patients, a 19-year-old from Mali, who has been stuck on Samos for two years already, was forced to leave home a few years ago because he was being tortured. He began his journey to Europe with hope for a better life and for safety.

But now he is experiencing extreme frustration and doubts his very existence. His concerns about the new centre have already provoked a series of psycho-emotional reactions. For how much longer can he still see himself enduring all of this pain and frustration? When we ask him what he would like to have, his answer is, “My freedom. Until now I was a refugee, now I am going to be a prisoner too”.

KOS: Gloria is a woman from Togo. She asked for international protection after a forced marriage at 15 years old to an elderly man. She suffered intense domestic violence and did not get any protection from the Togolese authorities. She entered Greece via the island of Kos in February 2021 and immediately expressed her desire for international protection. However, she received a decision of return with readmission to Turkey as well as a detention decision within days. The detention decision had as justification the need to “verify of the details of her application”. She was held in detention in the Pre-Departure Center of Kos. The external medical assessment [limited to the question if she suffered from an illness] ignored Gloria’s vulnerability as a survivor of sexual and gender-based violence.

This case is an example of how the lack of a vulnerability evaluation and the practice of ‘automatic detention’ as followed by authorities in Kos can lead to the worsening in the conditions of women and other persons with vulnerabilities. Her vulnerability as a survivor of sexual and gender-based violence was stated again during her interview with the Asylum Service. In March 2021, Gloria was notified that her application was rejected as manifestly unfounded [safe country of origin]. In March 2021, while the second instance decision was pending, Gloria experienced intense pain in her left eye and asked the police for help.

Her request was ignored by the authorities, but a legal aid actor referred her to health services. Her medical examination discovered possible glaucoma and concluded she was in a severe psychological state. The detention centre scheduled an examination in Kos Hospital. Her deteriorating condition allowed for an objection against her detention before the Administrative Court of Rhodes, claiming that the detention measure was inappropriate for this specific vulnerable applicant. This objection was overruled stating that the detainee was receiving sufficient medical help in the detention centre. She therefore remained in very poor psychological and physical condition as she received a second instance rejection on the basis of the safe country of origin approach. Meanwhile, her detention was extended for an unspecified period of time as Turkey has not been accepting readmissions since March 2020. In July 2021, after failing to receive treatment from a psychiatric hospital in June, Gloria attempted suicide in her cell. She was saved by the guards and was transferred to Leros psychiatric clinic, where she was hospitalized.

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44 Legal Centre Lesvos ‘Greek Government Instructed by European Court of Human Rights to Guarantee Rights of 3 LCL Clients: an Indictment of Reception conditions in Lesvos’ [17 March 2021]
45 MSF ‘We can only help our patients to survive” new camp on Samos’ [17 September 2021]
46 Legal Centre Lesvos ‘Greek Government Instructed by European Court of Human Rights to Guarantee Rights of 3 LCL Clients: an Indictment of Reception conditions in Lesvos’ [17 March 2021]
47 Oxfam International ‘Detention as the Default: How Greece, with the support of the EU, is generalizing administrative detention of migrants - Oxfam Policy & Practice’ [16 November 2021]
SAMOS: I had a girlfriend; she was coming to my tent to see me. One day a guy stormed into the tent and beat us up. We were very afraid to be seen together. One day we decided to meet near the police, so we if something happened the police could come to intervene but as we were going there, I felt someone grab me around the neck and punch me in the face. I turned and saw also somebody else beating up my girlfriend.” Neta, 25-year-old woman in Samos, from Democratic Republic of Congo.48

SAMOS: When we arrived, they brought us to the police station in the camp. They did not tell us anything about the fact that we couldn’t leave the island. They asked us how we came here. They took all our documents, passports, everything we had, and then asked us who was the captain of the boat. They registered our names. No one told us about the medical screening, the asylum process or how to reach the hospital. Many people who were injured were asking for doctors, but they did nothing.” Abdul-Aziz, 32 years old in Samos, from Afghanistan.49

LESVOS: When I arrived, I was 17 years old and I had already gone through a lot. I didn’t have my passport and they didn’t believe that I was 17. When I told them my date of birth, they said no because you don’t have any passport[...] later when I went to the asylum interview, I told them my date of birth. They told me that since I was registered as an adult in the first place, they cannot change it.” Jeremy, 18 years old in Lesvos from Democratic Republic of Congo.50
THE YEAR

2022

Samos, abandoned Vathi Hotspot (Nick van der Steenhoven, 2022)
## JANUARY 2022

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| 197. | [International Rescue Committee](https://www.rescue.org/) | **People in Greece are going hungry, as over one third of those living refugee camps are denied food**

There are 16,559 people living in camps across Greece, comprising people who are waiting for their asylum claims to be heard and those who have had their claims accepted or denied. It has emerged that new catering contracts for the provision of food in these camps provide enough food to feed just 10,213 people, covering only those still in the asylum procedure and not those who had their asylum claims accepted or rejected. This comes despite calls from the European Commission that the Greek government ensures all persons, particularly the vulnerable, receive food irrespective of their status.

Worryingly high numbers of children, who make up 40 per cent of the population residing in camps, are among those going hungry. Teachers in local primary schools have reported children turning up to school without having eaten, without even a snack to see them through the day. |

## FEBRUARY 2022

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| 198. | [UNICEF](https://www.unicef.org/) | **ECARO Humanitarian Situation Report by UNICEF**

Page 3: Most of the refugees and migrants in the country are from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Pakistan. By end 2021, 3,211 refugee and migrants remained within the five Reception and Identification Centres (RIC)/Closed Control Access Centres (CCAC) in the Aegean islands, while over 14,000 were transferred to the mainland. |

| 199. | [Refugees International](https://refugeesinternational.org/) | **The Fallacy of Control: Tightened Asylum and Reception Policies Undermine Protection in Greece**

Page 10: The CCACs are highly securitized structures with restricted entry and exit, built in remote areas. Advocates warned the resulting containment and isolation would undermine residents’ access to aid and services, mental health, and integration. |

### Links to publications

- 197. International Rescue Committee ‘People in Greece are going hungry, as over one third of those living in refugee camps are denied food’ [24 January 2022]
Despite having experienced racism and discrimination in town, asylum seekers told Refugees International that being isolated far away was a major loss. Their marginalization is exacerbated by the camp’s restrictions and security. Residents can only come and go between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm. Three-meter-high walls topped with barbed wire form most of the perimeter; in the detention area, they reach four meters. Magnetic gates, X-ray machines, and metal detectors control access to the main entrance and certain areas within the camp, including the safe zone for unaccompanied minors (UAM) and medical unit. All residents and staff must present a valid, government-issued ID card and fingerprint to pass. Cameras throughout the facility allow constant surveillance. Security is managed by a joint force of 300 local police and private security officers. A camp official suggested using private security was “more humane,” but the firm, G4S Global, has been mired in scandals over rights violations before.

Just one psychologist works in the CCAC and refers patients who need a psychiatrist to a doctor in town. She said she typically saw ten patients per day in the RIC. Asked about plans to increase healthcare capacity, a camp official acknowledged it was a major gap proving difficult to fill. Authorities tried to incentivize local doctors to work in the CCAC by offering double pay but were unsuccessful. The strong anti-refugee sentiment in Samos partly explains this resistance. But humanitarian workers said some doctors were simply reluctant to work in an under-resourced facility for fear they could be held liable for inadvertent harm.

Asylum seekers also spoke of the urgent need for better healthcare. One man said he waited six months to see a dentist and five months to see the doctor, who could not provide the medication he needed. Instead of seeing the psychologist in-camp, he continues going to Vathy for mental healthcare at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) counseling center. Another said the quality of healthcare in the CCAC was “indescribably” bad.

NGOs are particularly concerned about their inability to provide services and monitor conditions in the new reception facilities.

New Oxfam report uncovers stories from ‘prison-like’ EU funded refugee center

This reception center in Samos will serve as the blueprint for the EU’s rollout of centers across the Greek islands. Costing the EU 276 million euros, they are a “new chapter in migration management” according to EU officials, and have the explicit aim to “discourage them from coming in the first place” according to the Greek Minister for Migration and Asylum. The EU has already invested in building two new centers on the islands of Kos and Leros and have plans to build two new centers on Chios and Lesvos.
What we saw when visiting the new Samos center and what people told us is that their previous degrading living conditions at the old Vathy camp just turned into prison like conditions in the new facility. The security guards are all over and you feel followed at every step. One resident we talked to told us how it felt like there were three security guards to one person.

Update on Lesbos and Aegean Islands, by the Greek Council for Refugees & Oxfam

Page 4: On 17 December 2021, the Administrative Court of Syros, ruling in the case of an Afghan resident of the facility, confirmed that the prohibition of exit from the Samos CCAC imposed by the Greek state was unlawful.

Page 4: Despite the court’s decision on the arbitrary nature of this practice, recent residents' testimonies and civil society organizations report that the Administration of the camp continue to impose this illegal detention measure on dozens of residents, although the administration officially denies the practice. Additionally, civil society organizations observe that since the illegal detention practice became known and some residents have proceeded with legal actions, the administration has adopted "revenge tactics". These have included sudden police incursion inside residents’ containers in early morning hours, transfers to the police station and oral eviction notices to residents with a second instance rejection, pending for the registration of their subsequent application.

Page 5: The Medical and Psychosocial Unit of the RIC (staffed by EODY, National Organization for Public Health), based in the Samos CCAC, has 4 nurses, 2 social workers, 1 psychologist, 4 interpreters and 1 supervisor. There is no doctor on staff. Currently, a military doctor visits the facility for a few hours regularly but not during the weekends or even every weekday. EODY can refer cases to Samos General Hospital for further examination, preparing every Friday a list of appointments in consultation with the hospital. However, EODY only operates between 8:00-16:00; the remaining 16 hours per day, there is no one to provide medical first aid and assess health risks. Unskilled and untrained security and police personnel are responsible for identifying urgent medical cases and it is left to their discretion if someone should be transferred to the hospital or not.

Page 5: The hospital is 9 km away, the bus is unaffordable and only available during the limited hours. There is just one ambulance serving the whole island of more than 30,000 people. It is only a matter of time before asylum seekers under the care and protection of the RIC will need urgent medical care and will suffer great health risks due to the lack of medical infrastructure.
What is the EU-Turkey deal?

Out of the 12,570 decisions of admissibility on the basis of the JMD in 2021 (from 1 July to 31 December 2021) of the five nationalities, 47% (5,907) were found inadmissible. This means that almost half of all applications of people from Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Bangladesh and Pakistan are not examined ‘on the merits’. In other words, asylum applications from people of these five nationalities are not examined based on their individual circumstances and the risks they face in their country of origin.

Greece: Population Movement 24 Month Operation Update

Page 4: The JMD [Joint Ministerial Decision red.] increased in the number of nationalities considered “safe third countries” for Turkey and has meant that an increasing number of asylum seekers whose cases were considered inadmissible have been waiting in limbo. This could be as long as 3-4 years wait either in the island or the mainland, causing distress and mental health issues to those seeking safety.

Application no. 51688 S.A. against Greece

Lodged on 21 October 2021: The application concerns the living conditions and the medical treatment of the applicant, a five-year-old Syrian national seeking asylum and residing with her family in Mavrovouni Reception and Identification Centre (RIC), in Lesvos Island. Pointing out to her vulnerability as a child, the applicant argues that she lives in inappropriate conditions and that she suffers from various health issues, including difficult breathing and spinal dysraphism [innate malformation of the spines], for which she had allegedly not received adequate medical care. The Court applied Rule 39 of the Rules of Court.
**Interim Measure Concerning Denial of Emergency Medical Treatment**

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has granted an urgent interim measure pursuant to Article 39 of the Rules of Court in the cases C.N. v. Greece (Application no. 32683/22) and R.M. v. Greece (Application no. 32755/22). The cases concerned two people, represented by I HAVE RIGHTS (IHR), with Hepatitis B who for months were denied urgent medical treatment.

Without the Court’s intervention, it is likely that the authorities would have continued to leave them abandoned on Samos, without access to urgent medical treatment.

**EU LIBE Committee Mission Report:**

Page 10: Aegean islands - Access to legal aid was questionable, as due to the short notice procedures (such as 1 day) lawyers were de facto not available.

Page 11: Samos - An increase in mental health problems (with 16% of the MPRIC population), including of suicidal nature (10%) was also reported. The absence of a vulnerability assessment upon arrival, before the initiation of the asylum procedure was considered as problematic. The speakers also mentioned reports that LGTBQi-related physical and sexual violence incidents would not be taken into account in the vulnerability assessments. Speakers reported the absence of a doctor in the camp, and the shortage of medicines.

**IFRC Greece Network Country Plan Report**

Page 7: On the Aegean islands the number of people hosted has decreased from 28,000 in August 2020 to 3,300 in December 2021. This significant decongestion on the Aegean islands and on sites on the mainland is a result of reduced arrivals to Greece, an increase of returns, deportations, relocations and transfers, an acceleration of asylum procedures and a reduction of pending actions.

**Links to publications**

205. I Have Rights ‘Interim measure granted in case concerning denial of emergency medical treatment for two of IHR’s beneficiaries’ [10 August 2022]

206. European Parliament LIBE Committee ‘MISSION REPORT following the LIBE mission to Greece, Athens and Samos, 2-4 November 2021’ [28 October 2022]

207. IFRC ‘Greece 2023 IFRC network country plan (MAAGR001)’ [30 November 2022]
Closed Centres for Refugees Exacerbate Psychological Trauma

Trying to see a doctor; getting hold of insulin treatment for diabetes; seeking legal advice prior to an asylum interview. These are the challenges faced by refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers stuck in the isolated and highly securitised Zervou centre on the Greek island of Samos.

Living conditions in the centre are poor as a result of infrastructure problems, with stoppages in the water supply and frequent breakdowns of air conditioning and heating.

IRC 'Winter Hardships faced by refugees across Europe'

Meanwhile, refugees living in camps in Lesvos, Greece, are experiencing electricity cuts and lack of hot water and heating.

Links to publications

208. MSF 'Closed centres for refugees on Greek islands exacerbate psychological trauma' [30 November 2022]
209. International Rescue Committee 'As temperatures plummet, IRC warns of winter hardships faced by refugees across Europe' (5 December 2022)
STORIES FROM THE ‘HOTSPOTS’

SAMOS: We met with an Afghan young man, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, that has turned to self-harm several times as he is trapped on the island for the last 3 years. For two months, he could not even exit the new facility due to an illegal exit ban. Many asked ‘what are we being punished for, when all we want is to rebuild our lives and be safe in Europe?’

SAMOS: There are some days that the food is really bad; you can get sick from the bad quality. At night, we have to beg for just some bread. I have a medical problem with my eyes. There is no doctor here to examine me. - R. Young Somali Man.

SAMOS: I just want to go outside. They don’t let me. They are keeping me here as a prisoner. If I had to choose, I would say that I would prefer the previous camp – at least, there, I was free. I was not living in a cage. At least, I had my freedom to go somewhere. - T. Young Afghan man, trapped on Samos since 2019.

SAMOS: Asylum seekers also spoke of the urgent need for better healthcare. One man said he waited six months to see a dentist and five months to see the doctor, who could not provide the medication he needed. Instead of seeing the psychologist in-camp, he continues going to Vathy for mental healthcare at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) counseling center. Another said the quality of healthcare in the CCAC was “indescribably” bad.

SAMOS: “People in Zervou centre tell us of having survived trafficking, sexual assault, forced labour and beatings,” says Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) head of mission Nicholas Papachrysostomou.

“Some have seen their family members die during previous forced returns or during shipwrecks. The prison-like centres fail to provide for their basic needs and cause preventable harm to their mental and physical health.”

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52 Oxfam International ‘New Oxfam report uncovers stories from “prison-like” EU funded refugee center’ (6 March 2022)
53 Oxfam International ‘New Oxfam report uncovers stories from “prison-like” EU funded refugee center’ (6 March 2022)
54 Oxfam International ‘New Oxfam report uncovers stories from “prison-like” EU funded refugee center’ (6 March 2022)
55 Refugees International ‘The Fallacy of Control: Tightened Asylum and Reception Policies Undermine Protection in Greece’ (February 2022)
56 MSF ‘Closed centres for refugees on Greek islands exacerbate psychological trauma’ (30 November 2022)
THE YEAR

2023
### No. 210. Contribution to the European Ombudsman’s Strategic Inquiry

**Content**: The remote location of the Samos CCAC, 8km away from Vathy, the closest town, has direct negative implications on asylum seekers’ access to services and basic necessities, as well as their interactions with local communities.

Considering there is no permanent state-appointed EODY (national public health agency) doctor inside the camp, as required by law, from 6 April 2022 medical humanitarian aid agency Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) mounted an emergency response to fill the gap for primary medical care with a mobile clinic three days a week until the end of 2022. However, at the time of writing, and since the beginning of 2023, MSF has been denied access to the CCAC.

Moreover, there are recurring and significant infrastructural shortcomings in the CCAC that also severely impact quality of life, wellbeing and dignity for residents. This includes lack of access to sufficient water and of temperature control in both the winter and summer. On top of this, in this CCAC’s first year of operation, residents have had their access to water severely limited or completely cut off for two extended periods.

Unaccompanied children were not identified prior to quarantine, which resulted in them being placed in shared dormitories with adults, in breach of multiple safeguards enshrined in European and Greek law.

NGOs and aid actors face several challenges in providing support, including the distance and limited transport options to the centre, insufficient or unstable WiFi access within the centres, the prison like environment and measures of detention, and the stringent security environment.

Single women and families with children are still not hosted in designated areas that are physically separated from the rest of the camp population on Samos. There is a designated area for single women and single parent families, Section B, but it is not operational.

There are no designated SGBV (sexual and gender-based violence) focal points inside the CCAC, and Diotima, the GBV (gender-based violence) protection and care actor, stopped operations in Samos in March 2022.

### Links to publications

210. IRC and I Have Rights ‘Contribution to the European Ombudsman’s strategic inquiry into how the European Commission ensures respect for fundamental rights in EU-funded migration management facilities in Greece’ (January 2023)
**European Commission infringement decisions**

The Commission has decided to open infringement procedures by sending letters of formal notice to [...] Greece ([INF(2022)]2156 [...] for failing to transpose in a fully conform manner all provisions of the Directive laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection ([Directive 2013/33/EU](#)).

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**MARCH 2023**

**Evaluation Report**

Para 15: [U]ntil November 2022, women (and children) were detained in these zones of the C.C.A.C. alongside men, in violation of multiple safeguards enshrined in European law.

Para 17: Recognising their special vulnerability has recently become very difficult. For almost a year, there is no state doctor permanently present in the C.C.A.C. on Samos. As a result, for the past few months vulnerability assessments are conducted by a volunteer doctor from the Samos hospital who visits the site for one or two afternoons a week. It is the doctor in question who must refer a patient to the camp psychologist for a psycho-social evaluation [an essential step for certification as a survivor of trafficking].

**The situation of Article 2 TEU values in Greece**

Page 32: The CCACIs are located far from the cities on the islands, as for example the CCACI on Leros as the closest is 7km away from the city Argia Marina and the CCACI on Lesvos 30km from Mitilini. They each have a capacity from 1780 to 5000 persons.

Page 32: NGOs criticise the modern facilities as prison-like; the CCACI in Samos is surrounded by a double NATO-type security fence, and conditions as precarious with limited or no access to basic services, constant surveillance and extreme restrictions on the residents’ freedom of movement. According to residents in the CCACI of Samos there is only one doctor operating, which leaves people without access to health care. Residents have few possibilities to inform themselves about their rights and leaving the facility is difficult because of intimidating security checks: the facilities are guarded 24 hours a day by Greek police and private security and features turnstiles, magnetic gates, x-rays, a fingerprint access system, and closed circuit surveillance throughout. In Samos there are reportedly two to three drones passing constantly over the facility.

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**Links to publications**

211. European Commission ‘[Infringement decisions, January Infringements package: key decisions](#)’ [26 January 2023]

212. Human Rights Legal Project and I Have Rights ’[GREVIO evaluation report on the implementation of the Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#)’ (7 March 2023)

213. European Parliamentary Research Service ‘[The situation of Article 2 TEU values in Greece LIBE mission to Greece 6 - 8 March 2023](#)’ [March 2023] PE 745.609
Page 32: The situation in the CCACs is also criticised by the European Commission. The package of infringement decisions released in January reveals that the European Commission has issued several letters of formal notice to Greece for failing to comply with the provisions of the Reception Conditions Directive and the Qualification Directive.

MAY AND JUNE 2023

214. **Input to the OHCHR Secretary-General Report on the Human Rights of Migrants**

Page 2: As a result of the default de facto detention measure, people are deprived of access to legal advice and counsel, as well as community and psycho-social services.

Page 2: [U]naccompanied children (UACs) on Samos are de facto detained in the so called ‘safe zone’, a fenced off area of the CCAC they are only permitted to leave for two hours of ‘free time’ a day where they remain restricted to the wider structure of the CCAC.

Page 3: We assert that there is a widespread and systematic lack of access to legal counselling, information and translation and legal services within PRDCs on the mainland and in the Samos CCAC.

215. **What is happening today in the refugee structures on the Aegean islands**

The new structures were heralded as open accommodation structures, providing better conditions and security, but are actually more akin to prisons. Asylum applicants residing in the CCAC on the five Aegean islands are living under increased control, surveillance and repression. In all structures there are multiple security measures.

In particular, the CCAC in Samos, Kos and Leros are surrounded by an external NATO-type double security fence [in Lesvos and Chios the construction of the respective centres is pending]. Control systems such as turnstiles, magnetic gates, x-rays, two-factor access control system [identity and fingerprint] have been installed at the entrance of the structures and must be passed by in order for the residents to enter and exit the structure. Also, every time they return they are subjected to bag check and body check and pass again by metal detectors. Children residing in Samos and Leros CCAC also undergo a security check even when they return from school.

Links to publications

214. Mobile Info Team and I Have Rights ‘Input to the OHCHR Secretary-General Report on the Human Rights of Migrants: Key challenges relating to immigration detention in Greece’ [May 2023]

215. RSA and PRO ASYL ‘What is happening today in the refugee structures on the Aegean islands. Serious problems in the EU-funded structures’ [3 May 2023]
[A] Closed Monitoring System (CCTV) has been installed throughout the structures, using “smart” software in order to early warn about any incidents, and has the ability to give alerts and image to the Local Event Centre, the Control Centre in Athens and the Control Centres of other stakeholders (e.g. Greek Police). Fencing, as well as turnstiles with card readers, have been placed in the separate sections of the structures.

Newcomers are not allowed to leave the structure or go to another wing of the CCAC until they have received an asylum seeker’s card - this is a restriction of liberty granted under the reception and identification procedure before an asylum application is registered under the law. At least in the cases of Lesvos and Kos, mainly due to delays in registrations, this restriction of liberty extends in some cases beyond the 25 days provided for in the legislation as the maximum limitation period for the purpose of completing the reception and identification procedures.

All structures are located outside urban fabric and/or in remote areas, where access is very difficult, contributing to their further isolation. Apart from the fact that those moving have to pay for a ticket (from EUR 1 to 2.10 per person every time depending on the island - an important cost given the poor financial situation of applicants), in some cases transport is particularly scarce, and residents, in order to move, have to walk many kilometres, take a taxi - or simply avoid moving.

There are serious shortages of medical staff and psychosocial support, and deficiencies in the provision of interpretation in all islands. Especially after the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has stopped providing interpretation services, and until METAdrasi’s interpretation services are fully developed, the problem has become increasingly acute in all islands.

In CCAC, there are also, in certain cases, shortcomings in hot water and baby milk, in baby diapers and bed linen, and poor quality of mattresses. Poor quality and quantity of food are among the most serious problems, and it also seems that there is no provision for a special diet in cases of serious health problems, nor for baby foods. There are also significant maintenance problems in containers.

What is happening today in the refugee structures on the Aegean islands

In internal correspondence obtained by Al Jazeera through freedom of information requests, EU representatives overseeing operations at the facilities on Samos, Leros and Kos islands reported nearly daily struggles ranging from staff shortages delaying asylum procedures to allegations of sexual and other violence impacting children.

Links to publications

216. Lydia Emmanouilidou, Ludek Stavinoha and Apostolis Fotiadis ‘EU details violations at Greece’s “mode” refugee camps’ (Al Jazeera, 11 May 2023)
At the Samos camp, where security personnel have at points outnumbered residents, commission staffers warned for months of shortages in specialised caregivers for unaccompanied minors, who are placed in designated “safe zones” in the camps.

On Leros, the commission documented “almost daily problems” with “violence” and “vandalism” in the minors’ accommodation as authorities scrambled to safeguard about 40 children left without caregivers when the contract of an NGO expired a year ago.

Another commission report from Samos in June included allegations that a seven-year-old camp resident had been sexually assaulted and Greek police were investigating.

Commission emails also raised concerns about a “tremendous gap” in interpreter services delaying “all procedures” from initial registrations to asylum interviews and frequently flagged problems caused by severely limited access to healthcare in the camps.

The lack of permanent doctors in the camps was described in emails as “a huge issue” leading to gaps in medical support for residents and delays in medical checks required to determine the age and vulnerability status of new arrivals who may qualify for special protections and procedures.

When a malfunctioning water pump left residents of the 43-million-euro ($47m) Samos camp with almost no running water for more than two weeks last year.

International organizations, NGOs, and media continued to report a serious lack of government efforts to screen migrants and asylum-seekers, including unaccompanied children, at border crossings.

In a letter made public on June 15, 2023 Human Rights Watch joined 41 other organizations in sending an open letter to a series of high-level Greek and EU officials about a decision to stop providing food and water to people outside of the asylum procedure living in the Mavrovouni Closed Controlled Access Centre (C.C.A.C.) on the island of Lesvos. The decision affects hundreds of people, including children.

No exceptions have been made for at-risk people, including those with disabilities, older people, pregnant people, and nursing mothers. Authorities have indicated that all children under 18, regardless of status, will continue to receive food but their adult caretakers will not. Moreover, children under 18 might still be denied food if they have been subjected to an incorrect age assessment.
**European Ombudsman strategic inquiry**

In addition to the external barbed wire fencing, extensive surveillance systems are used as well. The external fencing and surveillance infrastructure do not create a physical environment conducive to wellbeing and are, rather, reminiscent of detention facilities. The external and internal fences may also have negative health (including mental health) consequences on vulnerable migrants and those who have fled difficult circumstances. It is questionable how respect for human dignity and protection of the best interests of the child and of vulnerable individuals can be ensured if residents are forced to stay in such an environment.

If the residents are not able to afford the bus and cannot reach the nearest town by other means, such bus connections do not give them the freedom to access essential services.

The Commission should conduct a fundamental rights impact assessment of the existing MPRICs, including setting out mitigating measures where it identifies problems. It should publish this assessment on its website. The fundamental rights impact should be assessed periodically throughout the course of the MPRICs’ operation.

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**Submission of Fenix to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

Page 16: [On] Lesvos, while the average waiting time was reduced from six months to ten days, 83 medical and vulnerability assessments were systematically completed after the asylum interviews occurred. These delays deprive applicants of several substantive and procedural rights, including the determination of special procedural guarantees.

Page 16: [The] National Public Health Organization (hereinafter ‘EODY’) personnel are regularly not adequately qualified or specifically trained to identify and engage with many of the vulnerable groups, such as survivors of human trafficking, survivors of torture and other forms of violence, and persons suffering from serious mental conditions.

Page 17: On 17 July 2023, the Greek Ombudsman responded to Fenix’s complaint, and specified, among others, that [i] the psychosocial assessment is mandatory for all new arrivals at the RICs and CCACs, and [ii] in addition to the clinical examination by a doctor, it is explicitly stated that the psychosocial assessment must occur, according to Greek legislation into force.

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**Links to publications**

219. European Ombudsman “Decision in the strategic inquiry OI/3/2022/MHZ on how the European Commission ensures respect for fundamental rights in EU-funded migration management facilities in Greece” (7 June 2023)

220. Fenix “Submission of Fenix to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning the group of cases of MSS v. Greece” (July 2023)
221. **The State of the Greek asylum system**

All structures are located outside urban fabric and/or in remote areas, where access is very difficult, contributing to their further isolation.

No doctor is permanently present in several of the camps, including Samos, Chios and Kos. The European Commission highlights this gap as “huge issue” and “always an issue”.

The RIS has no interpreters in the camps managed throughout Greece.

222. **Submission of the Greek Council for Refugees to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

Page 6: In what regards the islands, prevailing conditions in the new Closed-Controlled Access Centers (CCACs), which include barbed-wired fences, extensive security controls, disproportionate surveillance measures, and disproportionate limitations to residents’ freedom of movement, which in some cases have included arbitrary detention practices that were deemed illegal by competent Courts Decisions, have, as noted by the EU Ombudsman, resulted in creating an environment “reminiscent of detention facilities” that resembles a reception environment only in name.

Page 7: Challenges related to the safety and quality of the accommodation provided, including poor conditions and/or uninhabitable housing units (containers), insufficient availability of electricity, hot water, heating or cooling, as well as concerns with regards to hygiene and the safety of women, have continued being reported in 2023 as well.

Page 7: Access to medical and mental health support have continued being a cause of concern, with shortages in sufficient professionals being reported particularly on the islands.

223. **OHCHR Communication UN Special Rapporteurs**

Page 1: We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on the right to food; Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context and Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 49/13, 52/10 and 52/20.

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**Links to publications**

221. RSA  *The State of the Greek asylum system: twelve years since M.S.S. A Glance at compliance with the landmark 2011 European Court of Human Rights judgment* (July 2023)

222. GCR  *Submission of the Greek Council for Refugees to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning the groups of cases of M.S.S. v. Greece (Application No. 30696/09) and Rahimi v. Greece [6687/08]* (July 2023)

223. Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food; the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to nondiscrimination in this context and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants *‘Communication’* (3 July 2023) UN Doc UA GRC 1/2023
In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency’s Government information we have received concerning the halt of food provision to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the Mavrovouni Closed Controlled Access Centre (C.C.A.C.) on the island of Lesvos in Greece and the detrimental effects it has on the human rights of the individuals residing in this reception facility. The reported instances of deliberate food insecurity imposed upon individuals who are not part of the formal asylum process (including recognized refugees and individuals whose protection claims have been rejected) in Lesvos, constitute clear violations of their human rights to sufficient access to food, healthcare, and clean water.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person responsible of the alleged violations.

Visit to Greece - Report of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights

The use of private security guards may contribute to increased safety levels in reception centres by the scanning of objects, verification of the individuals who enter the facilities and the reporting to the police in case of incidents. The Working Group notes that those safety measures have improved the conditions in the newly established centres, particularly in comparison to their predecessors such as the “The Jungle” settlement in Samos. Nevertheless, the Working Group considers that the structure and operation of those facilities contribute to a highly securitized and oppressive environment, which poses a risk to human rights. The Working Group is concerned about the impact that the environment has on the well-being and mental health of the migrants in the Closed Controlled Access Centres, considering their situation of vulnerability and the possible re-traumatization that some individuals may experience by being exposed to that environment.

OHCHR Communication UN Special Rapporteurs

The Special Rapporteur has received allegations that pushbacks over the land border are also reportedly carried out from urban areas, including reception and detention centres. An increase in pushbacks in the Aegean Sea, from Greek territorial waters, as well as from the islands of Rhodes, Samos and Symi, has also been documented.
They Are Killing Minds’: Life in the Samos closed Controlled Access Center

Page 3: When arriving to the CCAC, people are automatically de facto detained for up to 25 days. After, they are subjected to intensive surveillance and security infrastructure including: multiple layers of barbed wires, 24/7 CCTV watched from the control centre in Athens, drone monitoring, police (including riot police), private security, airport-style security upon entry and exit, check-points throughout the structure and a strict curfew.

Page 7: People’s treatment in the CCAC left respondents feeling like they are being treated as criminals rather than people seeking refuge.

Page 9: All respondents complained about the lack of essential medical support in the CCAC. All reported feeling high stress levels with many reporting other forms of mental distress, including thoughts of self-harm.

Page 11: The food provided in the Samos CCAC was described by respondents as inedible or to have gone bad upon distribution.

Page 14: Living conditions in the containers are often described by people in the CCAC as overcrowded and unsanitary. Many report severe cockroach infestations.

SEPTEMBER 2023

Three years after Moria burned down, the promise “No more Morias” remains an empty one

A severe lack of medical staff, psychologists, psychiatrists and interpreters at the Kara Tepe C.C.A.C. persists. Organisations report an increase in medical emergencies, suicidality, substance dependency and gender-based violence inside the C.C.A.C.

The lack of capacity is exacerbated by a considerable number of (medical) organisations ceasing operations or being forced to leave.

Despite improvements made, the capacity to provide dignified up-to-standard reception conditions is lacking at the Kara Tepe C.C.A.C. People are put in Rubb halls with no privacy or partitions and forced to share rooms and containers with complete strangers, often without a mattress.

Links to publications

226. I Have Rights ’They Are Killing Minds’: Life in the Samos closed Controlled Access Center’ (20 August 2023)
227. Lighthouse Relief and other organisations ’Three years after Moria burned down, the promise “No more Morias” remains an empty one’ (8 September 2023)
The "safe area" and shelters at the Kara Tepe C.C.A.C. on Lesvos cannot be considered safe due to a lack of appropriate protection measures that guarantee safety and security.

Vulnerable people, including unaccompanied children, single mothers and survivors of gender-based violence are sheltered in the former “quarantine area” for long stretches of time and are not separated according to gender or vulnerability. Adults have unrestricted access and no permanent security is present in the area, increasing the risk of abuse.

Joint Statement Unlawful detention and worsening conditions: Over 4,000 asylum seekers unlawfully detained on Samos and Lesvos

Page 2: On Samos, hundreds of people have been restricted to the “Temporary Accommodation Zones” of the CCAC, the sections of the CCAC that were previously used for Covid-19 quarantine. These enclosed areas are composed of accommodation containers only and are surrounded by layers of barbed wire fences. Police provide 24/7 surveillance and residents are only permitted to exit for urgent medical needs or for interviews with the authorities. Mobile phones are taken by the police upon arrival for between 7-10 days.

Page 2: As newly arrived persons on Lesvos are detained within subsections of the CCAC, they do not have access to any services, including medical support.

Page 2: On Lesvos, newly arrived persons are de facto detained inside the Lesvos CCAC, housed in large rubhalls. They can circulate throughout the CCAC, but are prohibited from leaving, except for specific medical emergencies or medical care, normally in coordination with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). Men, women, and children (including unaccompanied children and other vulnerable groups) are housed together in these rub-halls, without any privacy or safety measures to protect vulnerable individuals. As in Samos, there is 24/7 surveillance of the Lesvos CCAC by police both at the entrance and throughout the CCAC, and all the mobile phones of newly arrived persons are taken by police upon arrival for several days.

Page 2: Medical access is also severely limited. Newly arrived people have reported that they have been denied medical and psychological care by EODY, due to their lack of documentation in Greece, including persons with chronic medical issues.
Interim measures granted by the ECHR for a woman and her daughter on Samos

On the 2nd year anniversary of the Samos CCAC, HRLP filed a request for interim measures in front of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on behalf of Z.H., a survivor of SGBV and S.T.H., and her 6 months old daughter who has a congenital heart disease.

Interim measures were granted on 19 September 2023. The Court decided "in the interests of the parties and the proper conduct of the proceedings before it, to indicate to the Government of Greece, under Rule 39, that the second applicant should be provided with appropriate medical care and the applicants should be ensured adequate living conditions, taken into account their extreme vulnerability".

Reception of asylum seekers in Greece - the demand for humane conditions remains

On the islands, the reception facilities (CCACs) remain in a state of overcrowding, mostly in Kos, where the new arrivals are subject to an informal detention regime until their registration, without access to a doctor following the departure of the medical staff at the end of October. The situation is similar in Samos, where a military doctor has occasionally provided to meet the needs of almost 4,000 residents.

Absolutely inadequate conditions in the new Closed Controlled Access Center (CCAC) of Kos

The Applicants after their arrival in Greece they are residing at the Closed Controlled Access Center (CCAC) of Kos in absolutely inadequate conditions. The Court orders the Greek authorities to ensure that the Applicants "have full access to reception conditions which respect human dignity and take into account their multiple vulnerabilities".

Links to publications

229. Human Rights Legal Project ‘Interim measures granted by the ECHR for a woman and her daughter on Samos’ (20 September 2023)

230. GCR and 25 organizations, ‘Joint Press Release: Reception of asylum seekers in Greece - the demand for humane conditions remains’ (9 November 2023)

231. GCR ‘Absolutely inadequate conditions in the new Closed Controlled Access Center (CCAC) of Kos: The European Court of Human Rights has granted Interim Measures’ (December 2023)
Among others, due to the overpopulation in the facility, there is no available accommodation provided to the Applicants, single women with minor children and they have have been placed and live together with unrelated single men in the restaurant area, which is now used for accommodation. The place is lacking any security and privacy and they are exposed to harassment and the risk of gender violence. They are forced to sleep on the floor in crowded conditions and in a common area together with unrelated single men, they are exposed to absolutely inadequate sanitary conditions and insufficient provision of essential necessities and medical services, despite the numerous health issues they face. Moreover, they remain confined within this wing of the facility, from which they are not allowed to leave, and none of the required administrative procedures has taken place (reception and identification procedures/access to international protection).

Scabies and other contagious skin conditions have been spreading at alarming rates due to overcrowding, and infrastructure problems that have caused near-daily water cuts since the facility opened have grown notably worse as the population has increased, according to camp residents, MSF, and other NGOs.

Images taken by refugees inside the camp, which were shared with The New Humanitarian by residents and lawyers working on the island, show adults and children sleeping on cardboard and on thin mattresses on classroom floors, while prefabricated office containers have been converted into makeshift dormitories.

The Samos Closed Controlled Access Centre, which hosts asylum seekers in Greece, is experiencing overcrowding, which is putting pressure on the food, health, and WASH services that those living in the facility need. As at early December 2023, there were more than 3,500 people staying at the centre, a significant increase from 500 in early July. Besides having limited access to basic services, some asylum seekers experience detention-like conditions for up to one month before getting access to legal assistance as the authorities check their documents.

**Links to publications**

232. Lydia Emmanouilidou “This is inexcusable: What’s behind deteriorating conditions in Greek island asylum camps?” [The New Humanitarian, 4 December 2023]

233. ACAPS ‘Latest Updates on Country Situation - Greece’ [6 December 2023]
Due to a severe lack of capacity and lack of qualified staff, applicants are systematically not correctly examined, and many don’t have their vulnerabilities correctly acknowledged or acknowledged at all, especially when non-visible.

On Lesvos, there are currently 2 doctors of the Hellenic National Public Health Organization (EODY) responsible for conducting the medical examinations in the CCAC. However, considering that there are regularly more than 100 new arrivals per week, and that these doctors are also in charge of the public healthcare provision of approximately 5200 residents, it is clear that the capacity of EODY does not meet the needs of the facility and must urgently be adapted.

In September 2023, EODY acquired the treatment of asylum seekers with chronic diseases. Nonetheless, there has been a concern about the lack of care for patients with chronic medical problems, including diabetes.

Moreover, treatment for scabies is a huge concern for camp residents due to the lack of medication, ineffective coordination between EODY and non-governmental medical actors, and overcrowding conditions.
PERSONAL STORIES

STORIES FROM THE ‘HOTSPOTS’

SAMOS: We have no privacy, it stresses me a bit, I feel stressed. I am afraid that someone will come in the container - Our container is not locked, it is not safe. I don’t feel safe in this environment. They can always enter the containers when they want. Of course it’s bad, especially we ladies need privacy. Of course it stresses you, but there is nowhere you can go and complain. - People staying at the Samos C.C.A.C.

SAMOS: In May, for a week, respondents reported being subjected to body searches every time they entered the CCAC. They told you to stand outside the door and they touched all your body parts. We asked why you are doing this, they said they are just following orders. They put on gloves. We asked why and said they can’t do that. It was very weird, it’s not right, you can’t touch a woman like that. They don’t know my background. It was women who touched women and men who touched men. They check every time you enter and leave. They tell you to stand and open your legs, and they touch all your body parts. Men and women stand next to each other. It happens outside the door, not even in a room, it’s outside.

Many times they ask some guy to go inside this room, sometimes [to] hit them, sometimes make a double check, take off all the clothes, besides talking with bad words. It always happens. Five times at least in a week. - Everytime you come inside or outside they check you. Even inside the camp to go to the doctor or reception, they search you. What kind of life is this? If someone has stress, they build it up. They can attack you, to give you more stress. They can create a problem for you, even if you are a kind person minding your own business. - People staying at the Samos C.C.A.C.

SAMOS: Many respondents reported having issues sleeping in the CCAC, often citing their physical or mental health issues: Sometimes I use some sleeping tablets. MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières] gave them to me and I use them, but otherwise I cannot sleep because of the camp stress. If there was no MSF in the camp for us, some people would die there. Because the camp doctor makes no effort. You tell them you are feeling bad, they simply tell you to go out. The workers in the camp are very, very wicked. Sometimes I feel like harming myself because of the stress of being in the camp. - Person staying at the Samos C.C.A.C.

SAMOS: The food provided in the Samos CCAC was described by respondents as inedible or to have gone bad upon distribution. Respondents explain: We have to remove the green colour [mould] and eat it. - It’s not for humans. Some food is so old it has started to ferment, sweat, rise. The air inside the packet is puffed up. When you break the plastic seal, the smell is very bad. - People staying at the Samos C.C.A.C.

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