

## Lesbos Bulletin

### Update on the EU response in Lesbos, by the Greek Council for Refugees & Oxfam



Camp residents wearing masks stand on the seashore that runs along the Mavrovouni camp. March 2021.  
Photo by Giorgos Moutafis.

## SUMMARY

One year on from the devastating fire which burned Moria Camp on Lesbos to the ground, living conditions for refugees on the island remain highly substandard. The extremely high summer temperatures make life difficult for residents of Mavrovouni camp (“Moria 2”) and women still report fear and danger in accessing parts of the camp at night. Up to 91% of the camp’s residents remain without COVID-19 vaccinations. In recent months European solidarity mechanisms have dried up and relocations to other European member states stall, leaving thousands of men, women, in children in Mavrovouni, as another winter in tents looms. Though number of refugees in Lesbos continues to decrease as a result of very limited arrivals and relocations to the mainland, this decrease should be framed against ongoing reports on pushbacks at Greek borders.

A Joint Ministerial Decision of the Greek government, published on 7 June 2021 designates for the first time Turkey as a safe third country for asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia, which means that their applications will be rejected in Greece as ‘inadmissible’ if they transited through Turkey. This decision raises serious concerns at the possibility of a fair examination of asylum applications for asylum seekers from those countries, who are the majority of applicants in Greece. It also threatens to turn the Greek islands, Lesbos between them, into a dead-end for asylum seekers, as its implementation would leave thousands of asylum seekers in danger of being trapped in limbo, denied protection in the EU and unable to return to Turkey, which has not accepted forced returns from Greece since 2020.

## CALL TO ACTION

The Greek Council for Refugees and Oxfam are calling on all EU member states' governments, with the support of the European Commission, to act urgently to continue to relocate asylum seekers from Greece, in accordance with clearly defined and transparent criteria.

The Greek Council for Refugees and Oxfam are calling on the government of Greece, with the support of all other EU member states' governments and the European Commission, to:

- Revoke the recent Joint Ministerial Decision declaring Turkey a safe third country for five nationalities and review all asylum applications on their merits. To meet their obligations in respecting the right to seek asylum and avoid issuing inadmissibility decisions. The Greek government and other EU member states, together with the European Commission must not deny their responsibility for the international protection of refugees and should not push their responsibilities on to neighbouring countries.
- Ensure that transfers of asylum seekers from the Aegean islands to the mainland will be part and parcel of a comprehensive integration strategy that begins from the very first day of arrival. While GCR and Oxfam encourage the attempts by the Greek government to transfer refugees from the islands to the mainland, refugees should not be left in informal or formal camps, isolated from the local communities.
- Reverse the decision to operate the Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Centres (MPRICs) as "closed and controlled" centres, as they are incompatible with any genuine attempts of integration.
- Ensure independent, effective and thorough investigations of pushback cases and stop the stigmatization of organisations and individuals who make such claims. The continued and persistent allegations need to be given a proper and well-founded answer.

## One Year on From the Moria Fire – Update on the Situation of Refugees in Moria 2 on Lesbos.

On 9 September 2020 a fire destroyed the notorious refugee camp in Moria, Lesbos. At the time of the fire the camp was dangerously overcrowded with more than 12,000 people, most of who women and children.<sup>1</sup> In the days and week that followed the blaze, these same residents were left destitute and homeless on the streets of Lesbos, trapped between roadblocks set by the police to prevent them from reaching Mytilene city.<sup>2</sup> In response to the unraveling disaster, contingency plans were set in motion and within three days of the fire, 400 unaccompanied minors had been evacuated to mainland Greece for their safety.<sup>3</sup> This highlights the level of coordination and results that can be accomplished when the necessary political will is in place. On the other hand, repeated pleas by asylum seekers and civil society organizations to the Greek government and to other EU Member States to transfer the rest of Moria’s now twice displaced residents to safety on the Greek mainland and in other EU Member States, were largely left unanswered.<sup>4</sup> Had these calls been heeded, it would have shown an active indication of the EU’s willingness to finally move towards durable solutions to mitigate a policy-made disaster. Instead, the majority of Moria’s displaced were transferred to a temporary/emergency facility that was set up in Mavrovouni, Lesbos, with just a few EU countries (predominantly Germany) agreeing to increase the number of pledges they had made under parallel, yet voluntary, relocation schemes.

Twelve months since the fire and the call by European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, for “no more Moria’s”, the relocation schemes have halted.<sup>5</sup> Since April 2020, around 4,000 persons in total have been relocated from Greece to other member states which include unaccompanied minors, children with medical conditions and their families and beneficiaries of international protection.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, following the Greek government’s decision to close alternative and dignified accommodation sites like Pipka and Kara Tepe, the Mavrovouni camp remains as a stark reminder of yet another missed opportunity by the EU.

### **Current Conditions in Mavrovouni (“Moria 2”)**

According to the most recent data, about 4130 refugees live in Lesbos. The vast majority of them, 3571 (86%), are left in Mavrovouni in substandard conditions.<sup>7</sup> Women account for 20% of the population and children for 32%, of whom nearly 7 out of 10 are younger than 12 years old.<sup>8</sup>

Conditions in Mavrovouni camp continue to be below EU legal standards, as recently re-affirmed by the European Court for Human Rights. On 19 July 2021, the Court granted interim measures in the cases of three highly vulnerable asylum seekers, two of who minors, that have been living in Mavrovouni camp without access to necessary healthcare. The Court ordered the Greek authorities to guarantee them living conditions compatible with the absolute prohibition of torture and inhumane treatment, as per article 3 of the EU Convention on Human Rights. The case was brought to the Court by the NGO Fenix.<sup>9</sup> The European Committee on Social Rights also found, in a decision given on 12 July, that the treatment of asylum-seeking children on the Greek islands violated international human rights law, following a collective complaint that had been submitted by ECRE and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) with the support of GCR in 2018.<sup>10</sup>

The European Committee on Social Rights had previously and exceptionally indicated immediate measures to protect the rights of children on the move in Greece.<sup>11</sup> This included providing children with accommodation suitable for their age, by removing all unaccompanied minors from detention and from Reception

*“We don’t have food nor water. They are handing us bottles of water and some portions of food once per day. If you are smart, you go at the front [of the waiting line] and manage to get these. Otherwise, you just pass another day without anything.”*

-R. September 2020, Interviewed by GCR in the days immediately after Moria Fire

and Identification Centers (RICs) at the borders (such as Mavrovouni), and by ensuring children's access to mainstream/formal education. In contradiction to this, as of 15 August 2021, 64 unaccompanied children were still living in border RICs in Greece and 21 under "protective custody" detention throughout the country.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the ongoing lack of space for education activities in Mavrovouni, continues to create challenges to children's access even to informal education, as highlighted by competent professionals in Lesbos.<sup>13</sup>

Amid the worst heatwave in Greece in 30 years, residents of Mavrovouni camp suffer as there does not seem to be any protection from the heat. "There is no shade outside here, not even a tree in the camp, and my tent sits right under the sun," says Mohammadi, a refugee living in the camp.<sup>14</sup> Refugees are housed in tents on the shore of the sea with no shade and no access to indoor cooling as temperatures reached 42 degrees.

Under these conditions, refugees are still subjected to disproportionate restrictions on their movement. During weekdays, they are only permitted to exit the camp for three hours, between 7am-7pm and only once every day and a half. On Saturdays, they are only permitted to exit until 5pm, and on Sundays, they are prohibited from exiting the camp.<sup>15</sup>

As found in a survey conducted by Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) actors in Mavrovouni, single women express their fear around accessing toilets, showers, and water points after dark. The need to expand female police presence during such hours, as well as enhancing lighting would improve quality of life.<sup>16</sup> The possibility for dedicated water and sanitation facilities for women and for bringing such facilities closer to single women's section should also be assessed, though the potential complexities of such an endeavor ultimately highlight the challenges endemic to camp-based accommodation. However, as long as the Greek authorities and their EU counterparts view the camp as temporary, every investment in infrastructural upgrades is faced with questions. This is despite the fact that the construction of an alternative site has not yet begun. This once more reaffirms the fundamental flaws of a policy approach aimed at restricting asylum seekers at the borders, where services and infrastructure are not adjusted to their needs.

### **COVID-19 Response**

The Greek government's decision to close PIKPA and Kara Tepe – the two smaller sites which operated in Lesbos – remains baffling. The goal of the Greek government is to gather the refugee population in larger, centralized camps, but this policy will contribute to overcrowding and it adds to the risk of deteriorating physical and mental health, particularly amidst an ongoing pandemic.

In February 2021, researchers found that the risk of COVID-19 infection amongst third country nationals living in border reception facilities in Greece has been "significantly higher" (up to 3 times) compared to the general population.<sup>17</sup> They strongly recommended including asylum seekers and refugees in COVID-19 vaccination plans as a matter of priority. By 7 July 2021, it was estimated that only 1,000 asylum seekers and refugees living in Greece had been vaccinated, out of more than 28,000 people living in government-run sites, most of them are women and children.<sup>18</sup> In Mavrovouni alone, as of 20 June, only 372 people, less than 9% of the population of the camp, which contains medically vulnerable persons, was vaccinated. More recently, the Secretary General of Reception in the Greek Ministry

of Migration and Asylum, Mr. Manos Logothetis, also recognized that an estimated 30% of asylum seekers living in the reception and identification centres on the Aegean islands had already contracted COVID-19 in the past.<sup>19</sup>

### **A controversial trial for Moria fire**

Following the fires that burned down Moria camp in September 2020, six refugees were arrested. Two of them were recognized as minors and were referred to a Minors' Court. As for the other four, their trial took place in June 2021 in Chios and each one has been sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment.

However, there seem to be serious questions concerning the compatibility of the procedure to the principles of a fair trial. The defense lawyers denounced the ruling, stating that the sentence has been based on a testimony of only one witness who did not appear in the court. They also claimed that the four accused had submitted documents that proved that at the time of the fire they were minors and should be tried as such.<sup>20</sup> Still this argument was rejected by the Court. It is also problematic that at the time of their arrest both Ministers for Public Order and Migration and Asylum, Michalis Chrisochoidis and Notis Mitarakis respectively, declared in public that the "arsonists of Moria were arrested" expressing certainty of their guilt before they were brought before the court.<sup>21</sup> International observers were not allowed to watch the trial with the invocation of public health protection measures.

### **One year after Moria fire: Isolation or integration for the refugees?**

On 28 July 2021, the day of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Geneva Refugee Convention, the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum sent a new request to the European Commission and FRONTEX asking to return 1,908 asylum seekers, many of whom are likely refugees, to Turkey.<sup>22</sup> On the same day, Lesvos Solidarity published a video which highlights the geographic isolation of the new Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Centre (MPRIC) planned on Lesbos. The proposed site is located next the island's waste landfill.<sup>23</sup> On the next day, the Ministry announced the operationalization of the first MPRIC in Samos in September, stating that the new camp "is expected to function as a deterrent factor with respect to new arrivals on the island, in line with the Greek government's broader approach".<sup>24</sup>

The Greek Government continues to support the construction and operation of "closed and limited-access" Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Centers (MPRICs).<sup>25</sup> This will seemingly guarantee that asylum seekers will continue living in conditions that are not only unsuitable, but that also place them at a disproportionate risk, while still increasing their isolation from Greek society. Both international and European law require Member States to provide decent reception conditions that should "protect [applicants'] physical and mental health".<sup>26</sup> Based on the current realities in Mavrovouni camp and the expected realities of the closed camps, Greece is likely to fail to meet this legal requirement.

Considering that the construction of the new MPRICs is heavily financed by the European Commission, it can be presumed that the Commission is both fully aware and supportive of this deterrent approach towards people that are fleeing conflict, persecution, and severe poverty.

Accommodation in isolating conditions cannot be a solution for asylum seekers as it clearly undermines any future integration process. If refugee integration is supposed to be an intended goal and a durable solution for any EU Member State, the process should not start in isolated camps, where access to basic services and dignified living conditions cannot be guaranteed. It appears that, one year after the fire that burnt down Moria, this lesson has still not been internalized by the officials

who design the refugee response in Greece, and the needs of refugees in these living conditions continue to be ignored by the European Commission

## The Greek Joint Ministerial Decision: Refugees Trapped in Limbo

On 7 June 2021, a Joint Ministerial Decision has been issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Migration and Asylum.<sup>27</sup> The decision designates Turkey as a safe third country for citizens of Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia. The concept of a “safe third country” is included in the Directive 2013/32/EU, Article 38, according to which Member States may apply the concept of “safe third country” when they consider that the treatment of asylum seekers may fulfill several criteria including the respect to the principle of non-refoulement and the possibility to be awarded international protection as provided by the 1951 Geneva refugee Convention. This decision means that Greece can deny examining asylum applications on their merit, reject them as inadmissible and issue a decision to return asylum applicants of the above-mentioned nationalities to Turkey.<sup>28</sup>

A fundamental piece of applying the “safe third country” concept –is that the country designated as “safe” agrees to accept back the asylum seeker(s) concerned. If this is not the case, then the Member State is obliged to ensure that the asylum seekers concerned have access to the regular asylum procedure in its territory.<sup>29</sup> As Turkey has not accepted returns of asylum seekers since March 2020 citing public health reasons, Greece has the obligation to process the asylum claims of these nationalities in Greece. The notion of a “third safe country” is ultimately an example of a growing trend of externalization policies which endanger the principle of *non-refoulement* and individuals’ right to seek asylum, all while pushing responsibilities for meeting the international protection needs of refugees and asylum seekers on neighbouring countries.

The designation of Turkey as a safe third country may lead to a situation where thousands of applications for international protection may not be examined in Greece and declared inadmissible by the Greek Asylum authorities. According to official data, applicants from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia represented 65.8% of applicants in 2020, and 63% of current residents in Mavrovouni are Afghan citizens, who are directly affected by the decision.<sup>30</sup> As this percentage is not likely to decrease in light of the current situation in Afghanistan, the Joint Ministerial Decision is likely to lead to denial of protection on a large scale in Greece in coming months. The Greek government seems to believe that this will discourage asylum seekers from the five nationalities from trying to seek protection in Greece and will constitute a decisive deterrence factor, much like the closed MPRICs. This line of decision-making continues to run contrary to the basic principles of international law and of human rights, which do not subject people to degrading treatment for the sole reason of achieving political goals.

The Joint Ministerial Decision expands the use of inadmissibility procedures, which were introduced for Syrians following the EU-Turkey Statement. Hundreds of Syrians have already been affected by this practice, with their applications for international protection being rejected by the Greek authorities as inadmissible. Yet as mentioned above, Turkey has denied their return since March 2020 leaving these Syrian refugees face a dramatic dead-end, as they remain in limbo for months on end, often in detention. They cannot access health services, any kind of work or financial support, and the Government denies them the support of organizations working with asylum seekers. Based on these risks, European

Commissioner Ylva Johansson has urged the Greek authorities to reverse the inadmissibility decisions for those who cannot be returned and examine their merits.<sup>31</sup> There is no positive response to this suggestion by the Greek authorities at the moment, and the Joint Ministerial Decision is only likely to make things worse.

Shockingly, the Minister of Migration and Asylum Notis Mitarakis is one of the six EU ministers that urged the Commission – even five days before the fall of Kabul – to intensify talks with the Afghan government to ensure the deportations of Afghan nationals. This callous action reveals the intentions of the Greek and European governments and highlights its reluctance to examine the claims of asylum seekers from Afghanistan.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the day after the fall of Kabul, Minister Mitarakis stated that “it is clear that Greece may not become a gate of entrance for a new wave of refugees” reminding the fact that “two months ago Greece designated Turkey as a safe third country for Afghan nationals”.<sup>33</sup>

The Joint Ministerial Decisions and the responses of the Greek ministers to the situation in Afghanistan are extreme example of the trend of externalization, i.e. the passing of responsibility for the examination of applications for international protection from EU to third countries. The policy of externalization is denying refugees the protection which they deserve, and plays countries against each other, using people in vulnerable situations as game pieces. The policy of externalization is denying refugees the protection which they deserve, plays countries against each other by using people in vulnerable situations as game pieces, and is against the spirit of international responsibility sharing as outlined by the Global Compact on Refugees, adopted by all member States of the EU.<sup>34</sup>

The Greek government’s decision to designate Turkey as a “safe third country” was based on a recommendation of the Head of the Greek Asylum Service (GAS). This is in accordance with Greek legislation, which states that designation of any third (i.e. non-EU) country as “safe” needs to be preceded by a recommendation.<sup>35</sup> Worryingly, the Greek administration has initially refused to make this recommendation available in public. It was only released following a prosecutorial order obtained after interventions by NGOs HIAS and Equal Rights Beyond Borders.<sup>36</sup> The 84-page document of the recommendation contains only one paragraph that simply affirms the designation of Turkey as a “safe third country” for the nationalities concerned, with no analysis, explanation, or justification.<sup>37</sup>

It is still not fully clear how the Asylum service will implement this Joint Ministerial Decision. However, based on testimonies of lawyers who attend and review interviews of asylum seekers, the purpose of these interviews has shifted in many cases to examine the admissibility of the application, rather than its details. The interviewers ask questions to identify whether the asylum seekers has any links with Turkey, so that they could be returned there. GCR has found that this link is sometimes concluded arbitrarily and with very poor evidence.

*In one case, an application of a family from Afghanistan has been rejected as inadmissible within 5 days of arriving to Greece. The family had only spent a few days in Turkey before entering Greece. Despite this short period of time, the Asylum Agency accepted that a link had been established between Turkey and the family and, therefore, Turkey might have been considered as a safe third country for them. If this standard will continue to be applied to other cases, it is clear that the number of rejected applications will rise dramatically.*

In response to the Joint Ministerial Decision, 41 NGOs in Greece, including GCR have issued a joint declaration calling on the Greek government to revoke the Joint Ministerial Decision and both Greek and European authorities “to honour their responsibility to protect refugees and to avoid further undermining the European asylum acquis and the fundamental principles and values for protecting human rights”.<sup>38</sup>

Contrary to the Joint Ministerial Decision, a fair and thorough examination of the asylum application according to international law is a fundamental right for all applicants and an obligation for Greece.<sup>39</sup>

## Pushback Allegation Confrontations

Since the publication of the June Lesbos Bulletin which discussed allegations of pushbacks on Greece’s land and sea borders, European Commissioner Ylva Johansson addressed a letter to five representatives of civil society, including GCR president Vasileios Papadopoulos, in which she asserted that the issue of alleged pushbacks “is highly concerning”.<sup>40</sup> She also reiterated her position “regarding the specific need for thorough and transparent investigations by the Greek authorities into such allegations”.<sup>41</sup>

In a statement marking the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, expressed alarm at recent attempts by some governments to disregard or circumvent the Convention’s principles, from expulsions and pushbacks of refugees and asylum seekers at land and sea borders, to the proposals to forcibly transfer them to third states for processing without proper protection safeguards.<sup>42</sup>

At the same time, a report by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament (LIBE) confirms that Frontex disregarded evidence that migrants were being illegally pushed back from EU borders and were exposed to violations of their basic rights and failed to adequately respond to internal observations about probable fundamental rights violations which were raised in incident reports.<sup>43</sup> The accusation against Frontex is clear and unambiguous, while the report outlines serious allegations on violations of human rights in the EU borders.

These developments only highlight the persistent denial of the Greek government and of FRONTEX to provide convincing answers to the constant allegations of pushbacks. Greece continues to attribute these allegations to smugglers or Turkish propaganda. This is an easy evasion of the need to conduct thorough investigations and reforms. It is pertinent to continue and draw attention to the matter and scrutinize the situation at the borders.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> According to UNHCR data, by 30 August 2020, out of the 14,007 asylum seekers and refugees living in Lesbos, 85% were residing in Moria camp. Out of the total population on the island 62% were women (23%) and children (39%). UNHCR, Lesbos Weekly Snapshot (24-30 August 2020), 31 August 2020. As per official data, on 8 September 2020, out of the estimated 15,734 asylum seekers and refugees on Lesbos, 12,767 (81%) were living in Moria. National Coordination Center for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum (NCCBCIA), National Situational Picture Regarding the Islands at Eastern Aegean Sea (8/9/2020), 9 September 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3x7WFCv>.

<sup>2</sup> BBC, “Moria migrants: Greek ships to help shelter 13,000 after fire”, 10 September 2020, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-5409468>



- <sup>3</sup> Also see ECRE, "Greece: Moria Fire – Thousands Sleeping Rough, Chaos Prevails, Calls for Structural Solutions", 11 September 2020, available at: <https://ecre.org/greece-moria-fire-thousands-sleeping-rough-chaos-prevails-calls-for-structural-solutions/>.
- <sup>4</sup> Amongst others, Joint GCR & Oxfam Statement, "Independent investigation needed after fire destroys infamous Moria refugee camp", 9 September 2020, <https://www.gcr.gr/el/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1501-press-release-joint-gcr-and-oxfam-statement>; Urgent Call to Action from Civil Society Organisations across Europe, "MORIA FIRES: European Governments must urgently relocate displaced individuals from Greece", 11 September 2020, [https://www.gcr.gr/media/k2/attachments/Moria\\_Fire-Renewed\\_Call\\_for\\_Relocation.pdf](https://www.gcr.gr/media/k2/attachments/Moria_Fire-Renewed_Call_for_Relocation.pdf) and Joint state-ment of 48 NGOs, "Greece: Transfer Refugees and Asylum seekers to Safety on Mainland: Respect for Human Rights should Prevail over Use of Force", 11 September 2020, Euronews, "Displaced migrants on Lesbos island protest in wake of fire at Moria camp", 14 September 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3BOopQ6>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/2020/09/22/eu-migration-chief-vows-new-pact-will-stop-overcrowded-refugee-camps>
- <sup>6</sup> <https://greece.iom.int/en/news/un-agencies-welcome-relocation-4000-vulnerable-asylum-seekers-and-refugees-greece>
- <sup>7</sup> Lesbos Weekly Snapshot 02-08 August 2021
- <sup>8</sup> Lesbos Weekly Snapshot, op. cit.
- <sup>9</sup> Fenix, "European Court of Human Rights GRANTS INTERIM MEASURES FOR 3 FENIX CLIENTS", July 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3y9nM1y>.
- <sup>10</sup> For more, Council of Europe, "The decision on the merits in International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) v. Greece, Complaint No. 173/2018, is now public", 12 July 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3iVvhTp>; ECRE, ICJ & GCR, "Greece: landmark European Committee on Social Rights decision upholds rights of migrant children", 12 July 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/375WxZW>.
- <sup>11</sup> ICJ, ECRE & GCR, "Greece: European Committee on Social Rights decision on « immediate measures » for migrant children requires urgent action", 4 June 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2VbM7VM>
- <sup>12</sup> [https://www.ekka.org.gr/images/KOINONIKON-PAREMBASEON/%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%91%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%9A%CE%91\\_2021/GR\\_EKKA\\_Dashboard\\_2021815.pdf](https://www.ekka.org.gr/images/KOINONIKON-PAREMBASEON/%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%91%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%9A%CE%91_2021/GR_EKKA_Dashboard_2021815.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> Information acquired at the Lesbos Inter-Agency Consultation Forum of 1 July 2021.
- <sup>14</sup> <https://www.vice.com/en/article/5db4y3/i-cant-take-it-anymore-refugees-struggle-to-cope-in-extreme-heat?fbclid=IwAR1i772FAOusmHqcDA2-SZw2uBd6CNeXqFBauEnwJRpCE-dHYLKfv270174>
- <sup>15</sup> Information acquired at the Lesbos Protection Working Group 21 July 2021.
- <sup>16</sup> As per field level assessment and discussions with actors (UN, NGOs etc) operating in the Site. Information received on 4 August.
- <sup>17</sup> Kondilis, E. et al., The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Greece: A Retrospective Analysis of National Surveillance Data (Feb-Nov 2020). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3788086> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3788086>
- <sup>18</sup> Specifically, out of the 21,854 asylum seekers/refugees recorded as residing in mainland camps at the end of June, 5,418 (25%) were women and 8,892 (41%) were children. As far as GCR is aware no relevant breakdown for the population in island RICs is publicly available, yet from the 8,700 asylum seekers/refugees recorded as residing on the islands up to 27 June, most of who in RICs (6,400 or 73%), 19% were women and 23% were children. IOM, Supporting the Greek Authorities in Managing the National Reception System for Asylum Seekers and Vulnerable Migrants (SMS), June 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3yoll5E> and UNHCR, Aegean Islands Weekly Snapshot (21-27 June 2021), 29 June 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3jgf6jl>.
- <sup>19</sup> Kathimerini, "Vaccinations begin in refugee and migrant camps on the islands", 2 June 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3fJxgJN>.
- <sup>20</sup> <https://thepressproject.gr/oi-exi-tis-morias-varies-katadikes-kata-efivon-prosfigon-pou-moiazoun-proapofasismenes>
- <sup>21</sup> <https://www.protothema.gr/greece/article/1044567/fotia-sti-moria-exi-sullipseis-gia-ton-ebrismo-tou-kut/>  
See also <https://greekreporter.com/2020/09/15/five-arrested-in-suspected-arson-at-moria-camp/>
- <sup>22</sup> Ministry of Migration and Asylum, "New request by Greece for the return of 1,908 illegal economic migrants to Turkey", 28 July 2021, available in Greek at: <https://bit.ly/3igRsEh>
- <sup>23</sup> Lesbos Solidarity, People in the dumps. A "joint pilot" on Lesbos, a "new start on migration" for the EU, 27 July 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3joqpXc>
- <sup>24</sup> Ministry of Migration and Asylum, "The new Closed Controlled Facility in Samos to become operational in September", 29 July 2021, available in Greek at: <https://bit.ly/3xqdyZk>
- <sup>25</sup> <https://migration.gov.gr/apantisi-poyorgoy-metanasteysis-kai-asyloy-k-noti-mitaraki-stin-erotisi-tis-voyleyti-toy-kke-k-marias-kominaka-sti-voyli-2/>
- <sup>26</sup> Article 17(2) DIRECTIVE 2013/33/EU
- <sup>27</sup> KYA 42799/ΦΕΚ 2425/Β/7-6-2021, Joint Ministerial Decision 42799/Gov. Gazette 2425/Β/7-6-2021, available in Greek at: <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-allodapoi/prosphuges-politiko-asulo/koine-upourgike-apophase-42799-2021.html>.
- <sup>28</sup> L.4636/2019, Article 84
- <sup>29</sup> Article 38 (4) Directive 2013/32/EU

- <sup>30</sup> Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Annual Note, available on <https://bit.ly/3wfCgfi>, p.13 and Lesvos Weekly Snapshot 02-08 August 2021.
- <sup>31</sup> EN P-000604/2021, Answer given by Ms Johansson on behalf of the European Commission (1.6.2021), available at: <https://bit.ly/3cuwEGb>
- <sup>32</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/europe-afghanistan-migration-386a7150f322b9022b50e63dacc0d00c>
- <sup>33</sup> <https://www.cnn.gr/politiki/story/278049/mitarakis-gia-afganistan-h-ellada-den-tha-einai-pyli-eisodoy-gia-ena-neo-kyma-prosfygon>
- <sup>34</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html>
- <sup>35</sup> Article 86 (3) L.4636/2019 (or IPA)
- <sup>36</sup> HIAS and Equal Rights Beyond Borders, "The Greek Asylum Service Finally Shares the "Opinion" On the Basis of which Turkey was Designated as a Safe Third Country - And it only seems to be Saying the Con-trary", 22 July 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3lpKrD9>.
- <sup>37</sup> [https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/greece\\_doc\\_save.pdf](https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/greece_doc_save.pdf)
- <sup>38</sup> <https://www.gcr.gr/en/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1735-greece-deems-turkey-safe-but-refugees-are-not-the-substantive-examination-of-asylum-applications-is-the-only-safe-solution-for-refugees>
- <sup>39</sup> Derived from the EU Charter and the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention.
- <sup>40</sup> <https://www.gcr.gr/en/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1769-apantisi-tis-epitropou-esoterikon-tis-evropaikis-epitropis-ilva-gioxanson-gia-tis-paranomes-epanaproothiseis>
- <sup>41</sup> <https://www.gcr.gr/en/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1769-apantisi-tis-epitropou-esoterikon-tis-evropaikis-epitropis-ilva-gioxanson-gia-tis-paranomes-epanaproothiseis>
- <sup>42</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/rs/en/18563-the-1951-refugee-convention-70-years-of-life-saving-protection-for-people-forced-to-flee.html>
- <sup>43</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014\\_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/LIBE/DV/2021/07-14/14072021FinalReportFSWG\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/LIBE/DV/2021/07-14/14072021FinalReportFSWG_EN.pdf)

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