



REFUGEE RIGHTS EUROPE



THE STATE OF REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PEOPLE IN EUROPE

A SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ACROSS EUROPE

2017 - 2018

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DATES OF RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

Refugee Rights Europe (RRE) is a human rights organisation advocating for the human rights of refugees and displaced people across Europe. RRE was formed in late 2015 in response to the absence of a strong human rights narrative around those seeking protection in Europe: those human rights norms so frequently propounded by European decision-makers when addressing international crises, appeared to be blatantly disregarded in the European context. We therefore made it our mission to investigate and document the human rights situation and living standards experienced by displaced persons across Europe, and to advocate for change through local, national, European and international policy and advocacy channels.

RRE WAS FORMED IN LATE 2015 IN RESPONSE TO THE ABSENCE OF A STRONG HUMAN RIGHTS NARRATIVE AROUND THOSE SEEKING PROTECTION IN EUROPE.

OUR RESEARCH WORKS ON A SMALLER SCALE, AND EXPLICITLY AIMS TO INFORM PUBLIC DEBATE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS.

Whereas the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provide statistics regarding refugee arrivals, demographics and similar large-scale data sets, our research works on a smaller scale, and explicitly aims to inform public debate about human rights matters in order to contribute to constructive policy-debates with the goal of alleviating the human suffering of refugees and displaced persons in Europe.

By conducting in-depth data collection with some of the world's most marginalised groups, RRE seeks to bring the voices of refugees and displaced persons to the 'corridors of power' where European asylum and migration policy is discussed at local, national and European and international levels. We generate a strong and informed call for change, which demands that human rights, and specifically the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are placed at the centre of policy-making.

RRE is made up of professionals from diverse sectors. As of October 2017, the organisation has had a small management team consisting of three part-time staff and up to three paid internship placements at any given time. Beyond that, the

organisation is largely powered by volunteers and professionals offering their support on a pro bono basis. As at November 2018, RRE had trained and deployed more than 120 volunteers, interviewed more than 6,000 displaced individuals, resulting in the publication of 19 independently researched field reports from 12 research locations.

120 VOLUNTEERS INTERVIEWED MORE THAN 6,000 DISPLACED INDIVIDUALS, RESULTING IN THE PUBLICATION OF 19 INDEPENDENTLY RESEARCHED FIELD REPORTS FROM 12 RESEARCH LOCATIONS.

In the final section of this report, we present a number of policy recommendations emerging from our field research. We call on those who hold the power to effect change to do so, and transform the lived realities of the women, men and children seeking sanctuary in Europe. We believe that a different reality can, and must, be possible.



METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS



The research presented in this report is a non-exhaustive summary of the key findings from seven field research studies in five countries conducted by Refugee Rights Europe (RRE) during the period 2017-2018, and is structured around the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These studies were carried out in Ventimiglia, Italy (2017); Calais, France (2017); London, UK (2018); Paris, France (2018); Brussels, Belgium (2018); Lesbos, Greece (2018), and Birmingham, UK (2018). The full original reports, including details about the methodology and context of each individual study, are available online at: www.RefugeeRights.org.uk/Reports

THE RESEARCH PRESENTED IN THIS REPORT IS A NON-EXHAUSTIVE SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS FROM SEVEN FIELD RESEARCH STUDIES IN FIVE COUNTRIES CONDUCTED BY REFUGEE RIGHTS EUROPE (RRE) DURING THE PERIOD 2017-2018

The majority of the surveys and interviews carried out by Refugee Rights Europe were done so in respondents' native languages, through semi-structured surveys, conducted by researchers who were trained by RRE and independent of any other organisation or interest.

THE MAJORITY OF THE SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS CARRIED OUT BY RRE WERE DONE SO IN RESPONDENTS' NATIVE LANGUAGES

Our studies are guided by ethical checklists that were underpinned by data protection policies, child safeguarding policies and a robust risk register to ensure the security and dignity of all participants. Researchers were expected to observe strict adherence to all Refugee Rights Europe's data protection policies, referral policies, child safeguarding and principles of full and informed consent.

Wherever possible, RRE adopts a methodology of random selection - using stratification and continuously monitoring the breakdown of demographic groups within the sample throughout its research

studies, to ensure that the final data is reasonably representative of each given context. However, given the volatility and instability of many of the contexts in which we have worked it has sometimes been necessary for us to be flexible in our approach. As a result, selection bias cannot always be avoided, and we are not always able to steer the sample and stratification as much as we would ideally have liked.

WE BELIEVE THAT OUR RESEARCH FINDINGS PROVIDE CRUCIAL INSIGHTS INTO WHAT CONTINUES TO CONSTITUTE A BLIND SPOT IN THE EYE OF DECISION-MAKERS AND THE PUBLIC

Additional data have been drawn from observations made by our research team, as well as informal interviews with charities and NGO staff, and used to complement interviews conducted with displaced people themselves. We believe that our research findings provide crucial insights into what continues to constitute a blind spot in the eye of decision-makers and the public - the unacceptable lived realities and human rights violations experienced by refugees and displaced people in Europe.

*Refugee Rights Europe relays the voices of displaced people in Europe, reporting what respondents tell us. Meanwhile, we have not been able to verify claims through official sources. Throughout the report, wording such as "30% had experienced police violence" means that 30% of respondents said they had experienced police violence, but such claims have not been possible to verify.

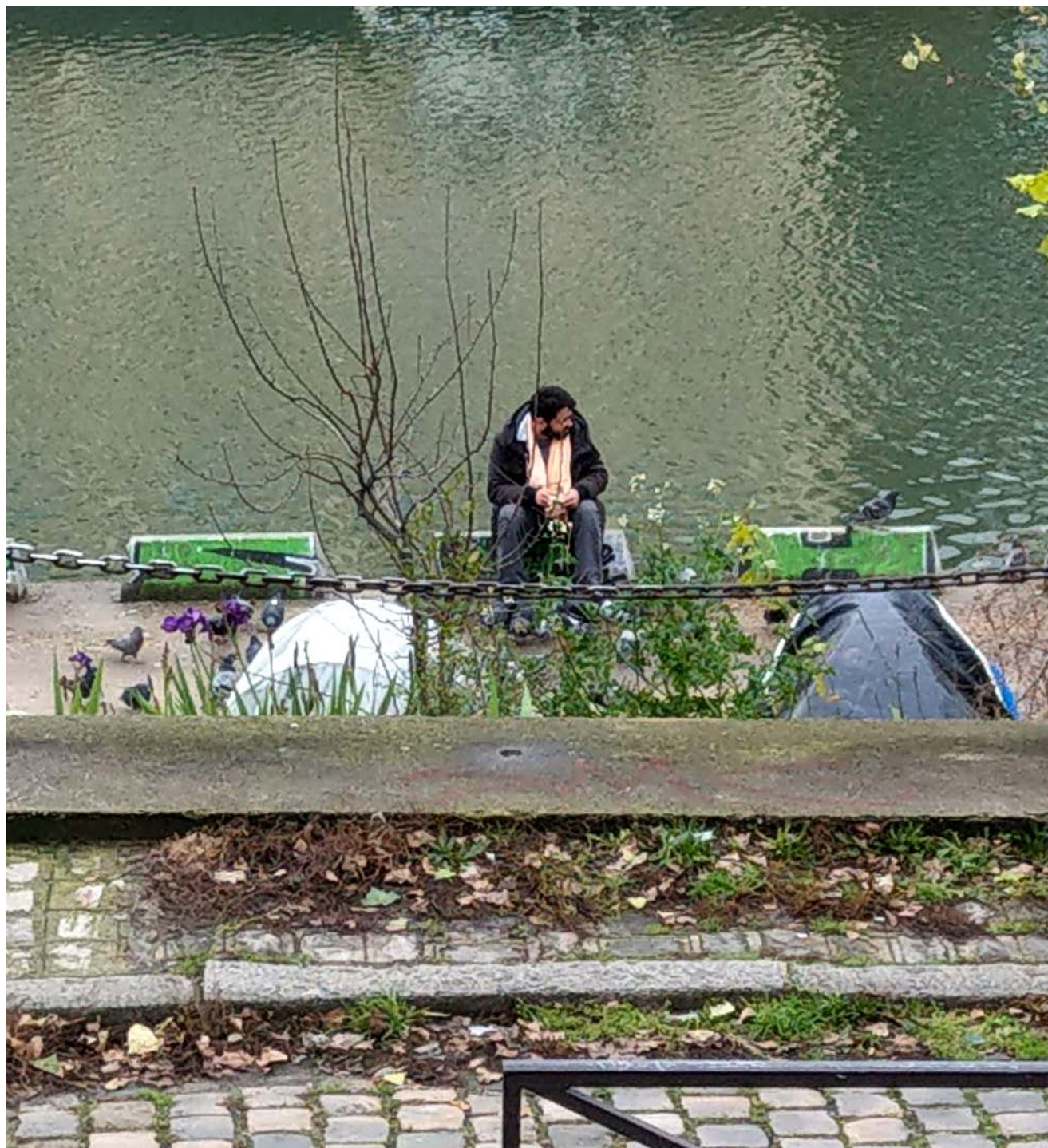
ARTICLE ONE

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

The central tenet of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is that *“all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”*. As this summary report illustrates, Refugee Rights Europe has documented systematic infringements on the basic human rights of displaced people and unmet humanitarian standards in multiple research

**THE SPIRIT OF
'BROTHERHOOD' ADDRESSED
IN THE DECLARATION HAS
NOT BEEN EXTENDED TO
DISPLACED PEOPLE.**

locations across Europe over the past two years. In these cases, the spirit of 'brotherhood' addressed in the Declaration has not been extended to displaced people, who face an uncertain future amid insecure subsistence, housing and medical care; poor access to information; and a constant threat of violence.



ARTICLE THREE

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The lack of personal safety and security was a commonly cited concern among respondents across all of RRE's research locations throughout 2017-2018.

In August 2017, RRE conducted a study in Ventimiglia, an Italian transit town for numerous displaced people trying to reach France, where 71% of respondents stated that they 'didn't feel safe at all'. The reality for displaced persons in Ventimiglia is one of destitution and a complete lack of personal safety, and has been deemed a 'failure' on the part of Italian and French authorities by established NGOs.¹ According to the respondents of RRE's research, the main risks and reasons for feeling unsafe included: an absence of security measures, potentially lethal dangers experienced during border-crossings, and insufficient food, water and medical care. An alarming 8.8% of those who felt unsafe cited the risk of violence or sexual abuse by police or the public as a key risk.

"I DON'T SLEEP WELL HERE. IT'S VERY, VERY BAD HERE FOR ME – NOT JUST VERY BAD."

ANONYMOUS

In Calais, our study conducted in October 2017 found that 90% of respondents said they 'didn't feel safe' or 'didn't feel safe at

IN CALAIS
5%

SAID THEY HAD EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE FROM FRENCH CITIZENS

all'. Meanwhile, in our second study on displaced persons living on the streets of Paris in January 2018, 42% of respondents stated they 'don't feel safe', allegedly due to the precarious living situation and endemic police violence, including tear gas. 75% of respondents stated that they had experienced verbal abuse by French citizens, with 5% of them saying they had experienced sexual violence from French citizens.

IN BRUSSELS
82.5%

OF RESPONDENTS TOLD US THAT THEY 'DON'T FEEL SAFE'

In May 2018, we conducted a study on the Greek island of Lesbos, where conditions have been deemed 'deplorable' by leading human rights groups.² Here, the lack of security was a major concern. 65.7% of respondents stated that they 'never feel safe' in Lesbos, and one Afghan interviewee described his perception of Moria camp as being "ten times more dangerous than Afghanistan."

In our June 2018 study of the deteriorating situation for displaced people in Brussels, Belgium, 82.5% of respondents told us that they 'don't feel safe'. Insecurity arose from the unhealthy living environment, as most respondents lived in parks, around train stations or on the street. Individuals cited widespread feelings of distrust towards various service providers or authorities they engaged with, such as the fear of deportation or the fear of having GPS chips inserted in clothing in order for police to track their movements. The latter appeared to be a relatively widespread rumor amongst individuals in the park.

The lack of safety among refugees and displaced people was not confined to those living in the streets or make-shift camps. In our study of one of London's

IN LONDON
64%

OF RESIDENTS REPORTED THAT THEY FELT UNSAFE

main asylum seeker accommodation centres in January 2018, 64% of residents reported that they felt unsafe. Half of the respondents said they had experienced physical or verbal abuse inside the accommodation, incidents which were allegedly ignored when reported to management. One respondent illustrated his sense of lack of safety: "I have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress because of what happened to me in detention in [my country of origin]. I don't sleep well here. It's very, very bad here for me - not just very bad."

IN BIRMINGHAM
41%

OF WOMEN SAID THEY DID NOT FEEL SAFE IN THEIR ACCOMMODATION

In our research on women's asylum accommodation in Birmingham, UK, published in November 2018, 41% of women said they did not feel safe in their accommodation. One key concern raised in multiple interviews were the relations with other residents, with some women reporting that they felt unsafe within their room or with flat mates, often because of large numbers of people or the quick turn over of residents. For instance, one woman said, "I do not know how the number of people who live here because it is too busy".

¹ Oxfam, June 2018. See: https://d1tn3vj7xz9fdh.cloudfront.net/s3fs-public/file_attachments/bp-nowhere-but-out-refugees-migrants-ventimiglia-150618-en.pdf

² Human Rights Watch, March 2018. See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/06/greece-13000-still-trapped-islands>

FATALITIES

The quest to reach protection in Europe has been described by UNHCR as being 'deadlier than ever', with deaths in the Mediterranean having skyrocketed in the second part of 2018 in particular, largely due to the obstructions against search and rescue vessels including the criminalisation of humanitarian rescue.³ According to a report by UNHCR in November 2018, approximately 1 in 8 people trying to cross the Mediterranean died in September the same year, with 2,000 deaths so far in 2018.⁴ Fatalities on European soil have also been reported by displaced persons in almost all of RRE's research locations. For instance, in Lesvos, 48% of respondents had witnessed another camp resident die; the majority describing violence as the cause of the death, followed by untreated health problems. Many of these respondents appear to have been referring to the same incident.

THE QUEST TO REACH PROTECTION IN EUROPE HAS BEEN DESCRIBED BY UNHCR AS BEING 'DEADLIER THAN EVER', WITH DEATHS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN HAVING SKYROCKETED IN THE SECOND PART OF 2018.

IN LESVOS,
48%

OF RESPONDENTS HAD WITNESSED ANOTHER CAMP RESIDENT DIE

In Ventimiglia, a similar proportion, 43%, knew of at least one refugee who had died in Italy or at the French border, again with many respondents referring to the same cases. The predominant cause was that of individuals falling off cliffs while attempting to cross the border, in addition to road

accidents on dangerous foot paths close to highways. 59% of respondents in Brussels had witnessed another refugee die, often in road accidents or while holding on to the bottom of an international coach in an attempt to reach the UK. A worrying 12% of individuals we spoke to in Paris had witnessed a refugee die while in the capital, suicide being the most frequent cause of death due to the extremely difficult living situation.



CITIZEN VIOLENCE

IN VENTIMIGLIA
92%
OF THOSE WHO HAD EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE HAD ALLEGEDLY BEEN SUBJECT TO VERBAL, OFTEN RACIAL, ABUSE

Violence, including racially motivated violence, perpetrated by members of the public was reported across RRE's locations in Europe, and indicates the urgent need to

mitigate tensions between local populations and displaced communities. In Ventimiglia, just over half of respondents said they had experienced violence from Italian citizens, with 92% of those who had experienced violence having allegedly been subjected to verbal, often racial, abuse. One 17-year-old Eritrean boy described this treatment as 'inhuman'. Six respondents described incidents of sexual abuse.

In Calais, 40% said that they had experienced violence from members of the public. 82% described this violence as racially-motivated verbal abuse, such as making animal sounds, shouting racial slurs and giving the finger. One 29-year old Eritrean woman explained: "On the road they always make monkey chants whenever they pass me by." A 29-year old Eritrean man reported separately: "They shout monkey noises at me and give me the middle finger."

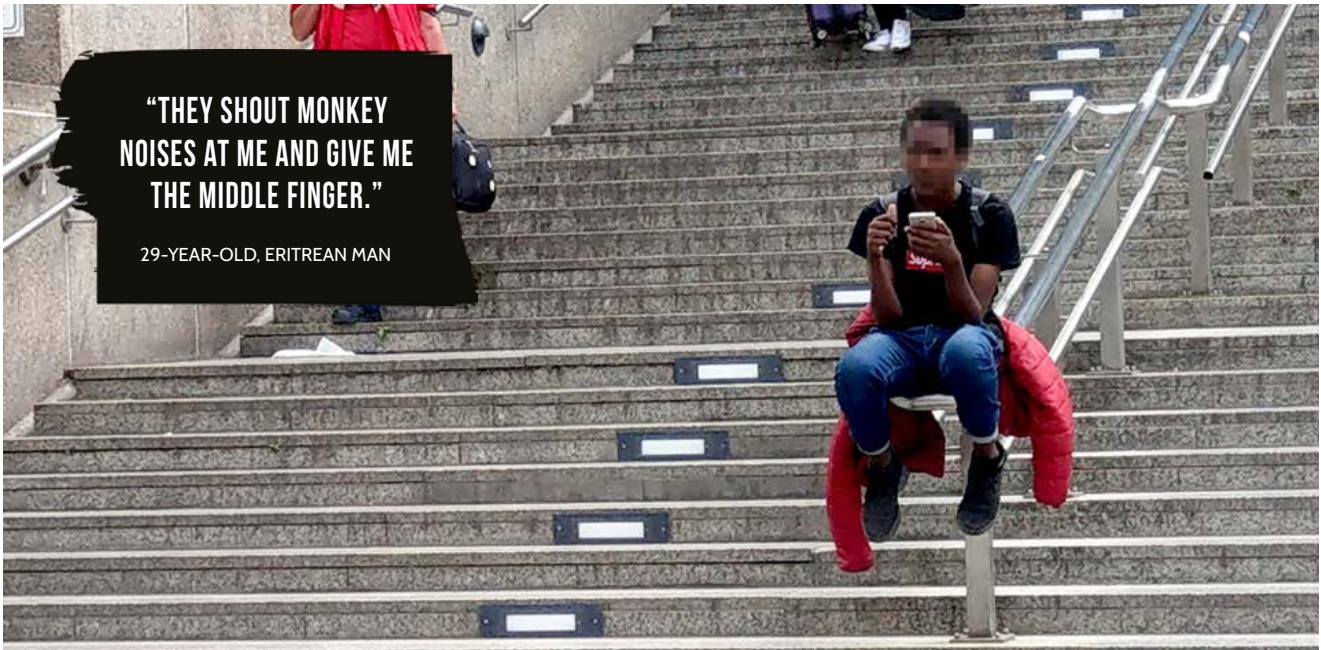
Meanwhile, 36% of respondents had experienced physical violence. Such incidents included throwing of glass bottles from moving vehicles, spitting and throwing things from houses. Alarming, several attempts to run into refugees with vehicles on the main road were also reported.

Meanwhile, 27% of respondents in Lesvos said they had experienced citizen violence, including an attack by a far-right group in the centre of Mytilene. Moreover, the extreme shortage of resources and severe overcrowding in camps on Lesvos heighten tensions among displaced persons. 47% of whom had experienced violence from other refugees.

A much smaller proportion of displaced individuals in Brussels, 13%, said they had experienced citizen violence; 86% of these incidents being described as verbal abuse, often in the form of racial slurs.

³ UNHCR, September 2018. See: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2018/9/5b8935964/mediterranean-crossings-deadlier-new-unhcr-report-shows.html>

⁴ UNHCR, November 2018. See: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/11/5be15cf34/2000-lives-counting-mediterranean-death-toll-2018.html>



“THEY SHOUT MONKEY NOISES AT ME AND GIVE ME THE MIDDLE FINGER.”

29-YEAR-OLD, ERITREAN MAN

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

RRE’s research throughout 2017-2018 has shed light on the unacceptable lack of specific safeguarding measures to protect displaced women and girls in Europe. In Lesvos an alarming 93% of women stated that they ‘do not feel very safe’ or that they ‘never feel safe’. Our research highlighted the acute vulnerability of pregnant women living on the island, including one woman’s deeply disturbing account of miscarrying during early pregnancy due to the effects of tear gas, which had been discharged into the camp by police during an altercation. RRE found a lack of specific security measures and gender-sensitive camp designs in both Lesvos and Ventimiglia, a concern repeatedly voiced by leading human rights groups and humanitarian organisations.⁵

IN LESVOS AN ALARMING
93%
OF WOMEN STATED THAT THEY
‘DO NOT FEEL VERY SAFE’ OR THAT
THEY ‘NEVER FEEL SAFE’

In Ventimiglia for example, in the over-crowded Red Cross camp located some 4 kilometers from Ventimiglia’s town centre, residents explained that women’s toilets and washrooms were unprotected and unsupervised, allowing male camp residents to enter at any time. Camp residents and NGO staff in Ventimiglia told RRE’s researchers that women and girls were at constant risk of abuse within the camp.



⁵ Human Rights Watch, December 2017. See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/15/greece-dire-risks-women-asylum-seekers>; UNHCR, February 2018. See: http://www.unhcr.org/5a7d67c4b?utm_source=PR_COMMS&utm_medium=email&utm_content=UNHCR%20Communication%20Service&utm_campaign=HQ_EN_BriefingNotes_171027

ARTICLE FIVE

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

POLICE VIOLENCE

Reports of police violence were widespread in almost all locations visited by RRE. Over a third of respondents in Ventimiglia said they had experienced violence by Italian police and had been exposed to tear gas, while 53% said they had experienced violence by French police at the border. 24% of those respondents said they had experienced other physical violence. One 18-year-old Sudanese man told RRE that his right shoulder had been broken and his neck was injured by French police, and that his nose was broken by Italian police.

In Calais, a staggering 92% said that they had experienced police violence. This is an even higher percentage than during the time of the Calais "Jungle" camp (76%), and during RRE's research in April 2017 (89%). Of these respondents, 51% said that the violence had been physical, while 23% described it as verbal abuse. 90% had experienced tear gas or pepper spray. While many of the incidences of police violence appear to have taken place in the context of a presumed attempt at an irregular border crossing, occurring within the port area or in various lorry parking lots, there was also an alarming number of reports of seemingly unprovoked violence. For instance, 84% of respondents had been woken up by police whilst sleeping and forced to leave their sleeping spot. 85% of them described the incident as 'violent', while 3% said it had been 'peaceful'. A number of accounts appear to suggest that police

violence in the area is sometimes disproportionate and life-threatening.

IN PARIS
86%

OF THE RESPONDENTS WHO SAID THEY HAD EXPERIENCED POLICE VIOLENCE SAID IT HAD TAKEN THE SHAPE OF TEAR GAS AND 20% PHYSICAL ABUSE

In Lesvos, close to half of individuals interviewed said they had experienced police violence, with 85% thereof allegedly having been exposed to tear gas – accounts that were corroborated anecdotally by local aid organisations. In Paris, 86% of the respondents who said they had experienced police

violence said it had taken the shape of tear gas and 20% physical abuse. 63% of respondents reported that they had been told by police to move from where they were sleeping, with the majority not being told where they could go to sleep instead.

A slightly smaller proportion of individuals, 45%, said they had experienced violence by Belgian police in Brussels. 67% of them described this violence as physical and 53% as verbal abuse. However, our researchers were also told of unconventional forms of violence, such as police allegedly injecting refugees with sedatives, without issuing medical records or conducting health and allergy checks. It was unclear whether the respondents had experienced this themselves, or had merely heard of this being done to somebody else. The claims have not been possible to verify through official sources. Some respondents also told researchers that refugees, including underage girls, had allegedly been 'taken underground' by police, and in some cases having to remove their clothes. A further source of insecurity reported by over half of respondents in Brussels was the loss of vital personal belongings, including mobile phones. 68% of these individuals stated that their belongings had been taken by police. The confiscation of phones is particularly worrying as it is often the only way for displaced people to contact their family, stay informed and reach safety.



ARTICLE NINE

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile



NEARLY A QUARTER OF RESPONDENTS IN LESVOS SAID THEY HAD BEEN DETAINED BY POLICE

Seeking international protection is an entitlement protected by international law.⁶ However, RRE has found that displaced people in Europe are frequently exposed to what appears to be regular unjust arrests and deprivation of liberty. In Ventimiglia, as many as 74% of respondents said they had been arrested since arriving in Europe and our research findings suggest a correlation between arrests, detention and police violence.

IN CALAIS
72%
OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY HAD BEEN ARRESTED OR DETAINED WHILE IN FRANCE

In Calais, 72% of respondents said they had been arrested or

detained during their time in France. According to respondents, displaced people in Calais are detained for a period of time ranging from a few hours to up to 45 days. A number of respondents claimed to have been physically abused in the detention centre in Calais, whilst having access to very little water and food. A number of respondents alleged in separate interviews that they had been held in a cell without a toilet. They had had to relieve themselves on the floor next to their sleeping spot and said they felt humiliated.

IN BRUSSELS
54%
OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY HAD BEEN ARRESTED OR DETAINED WHILE IN BELGIUM

In Brussels, 54% of respondents said they had been arrested or detained while in Belgium, with some respondents being under the impression that police can arrest and detain "without reason". One Sudanese minor told researchers that his brother

had been detained in Belgium for four months and he did not know his location or how to contact him. There were further reports of people being released from detention in the night in unfamiliar locations far away from the centre of Brussels, exposing them to considerable risk.

IN PARIS
21%
OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN FRANCE

In Paris, 21% of respondents said they had been arrested while in France. Meanwhile, immigration detention in Greece has continuously been criticised by leading human rights organisations⁷ as 'arbitrary' and 'prolonged'.⁸ According to RRE's research, almost a quarter of respondents in Lesvos said they had been detained by police at some stage, including through prolonged detention in Moria camp and imprisonment on grounds of 'illegal entry', which arguably constitutes a violation of international refugee law.⁹

⁶ As provided in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (also see below).

⁷ Amnesty International, 2017. See: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR2556642017ENGLISH.PDF>

⁸ Human Rights Watch, August 2017. See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/02/greece-huge-rise-detention-migrant-children>

⁹ Article 31 of the 1951 Refugee Convention holds that refugees should not be penalised for entering a country illegally.

ARTICLE TWENTY-FIVE (1)

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care.

Homelessness, destitution and living conditions well below reasonable standards appears to be ubiquitous across research locations and urgent action is required to end the unnecessary suffering of displaced people exposed to such conditions.



ACCESS TO DRINKING WATER AND FOOD



IN VENTIMIGLIA
82%
OF RESPONDENTS
REPORTED THAT THEY
DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH
DRINKING WATER AND
58% DID NOT HAVE DAILY
ACCESS TO FOOD

Across Europe, despite the availability of resources, the most basic forms of subsistence, water and food, were not available in adequate quantity to a large portion of our respondents.

In Paris, a whole 48% of individuals reported not having access to food every day, the majority relying on handouts from NGOs and civil society. In Ventimiglia, the situation was even more acute, with 82% of respondents reporting that they did not have enough drinking water and 58% not having daily access to food.

Close to 73% of individuals interviewed in Brussels stated that they did not have access to sufficient food every day and that they relied on handouts by civil society and non-governmental organisations.

In Lesvos, individuals reported extremely low quality of food, while availability and access to drinking water was sorely lacking, despite extremely high summer temperatures, which caused heightened tension among camp residents.



IN VENTIMIGLIA
58%
OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY DID NOT HAVE DAILY ACCESS TO FOOD

SHELTER

In Paris, local NGOs informed RRE that asylum accommodation centres were at maximum capacity at the time of the study, with hundreds of individuals sleeping on the streets. Within RRE's survey sample, 86% of respondents were living on the streets. Homelessness among displaced people remains an ongoing and unsolved problem in Paris,¹⁰ including for a concerning number of individuals with accepted or active asylum claims in France.

IN PARIS
86%

OF RESPONDENTS WERE LIVING ON THE STREETS

In Ventimiglia, 200 to 300 individuals who were not living in the Red Cross camp were destitute, with 82% of RRE's respondents sleeping rough under bridges and along the riverbank. In Lesvos, the containment policy has led to severe overcrowding, with people living in tents,

makeshift structures, and shipping containers, lacking privacy and experiencing security risks and hazards such as theft and reportedly snake bites or scorpion stings.

IN BRUSSELS
94%

OF RESPONDENTS WERE LIVING IN MAXIMILIAN PARK, OR IN THE STREET AND SURROUNDING AREAS

94% of respondents in Brussels were living in Maximilian Park (a large square in the centre of the city), or in the street and surrounding areas, with little access to sanitation facilities and depending on limited food distributions provided by local charities and aid organisations. More than 10% of respondents were sleeping rough despite already having applied for asylum in Belgium, which contravenes the provisions of the EU Reception Conditions Directive.

Alarming, among asylum seeking women in Birmingham, UK, half of the interviewed women reported that they had slept rough since arriving in the UK, highlighting gaps in the accessible provision of accommodation for asylum seeking women in all stages of the process.



¹⁰ New York Times, January 2018. See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/21/world/europe/paris-migrants-homeless.html>; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, July 2018. See: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/migration-overviews-july-2018>

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

The living environment for refugees in Ventimiglia was characterised by an acute lack of access to sanitation facilities. In the Red Cross camp, there were reportedly only four toilets for an estimated 400-500 residents. Moreover, 85% of respondents used river water to wash themselves, while some also used the river to go to the toilet and even to drink when desperate, raising serious health concerns. While 81% of Red Cross camp residents said they had enough water to drink, 82% of all respondents, including those living outside the camp, said they did not, and many reported having been abused in the town centre when trying to ask for water to drink. Local health care professionals also reported seeing numerous dermatological conditions, such as scabies.

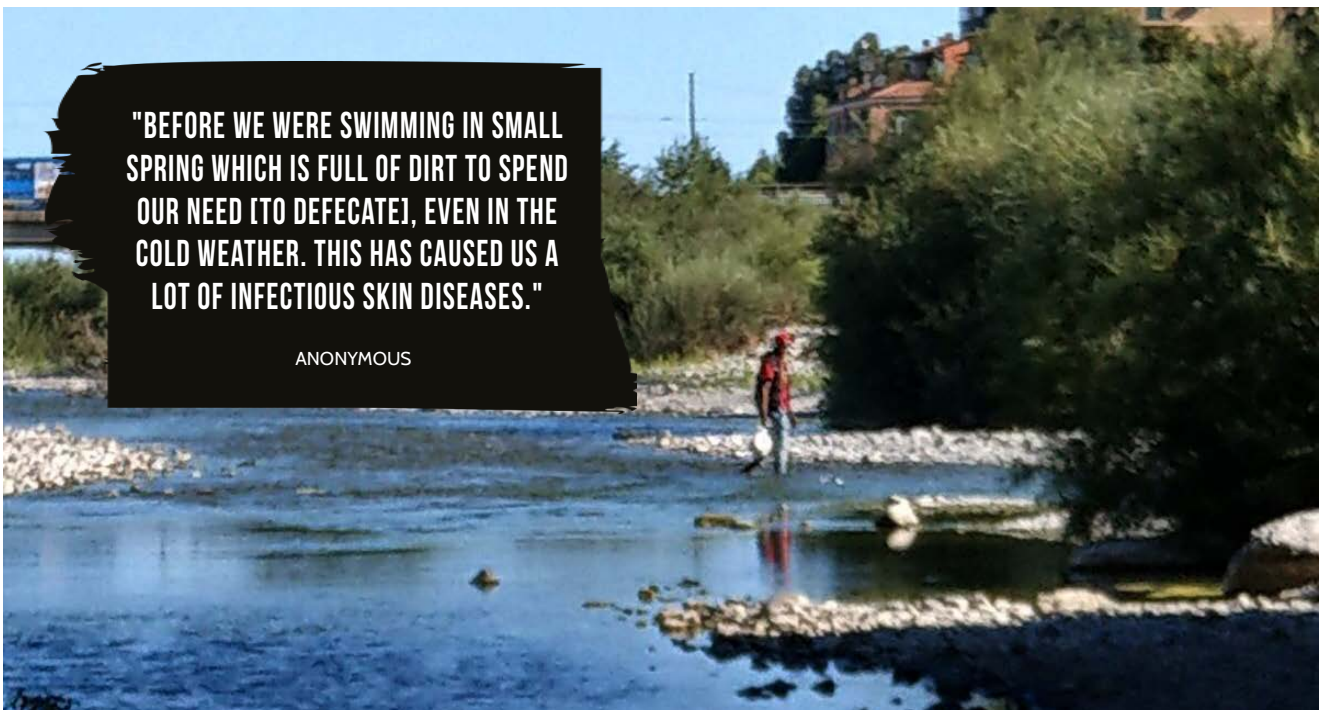
MANY REPORTED HAVING BEEN ABUSED IN THE TOWN CENTRE WHEN TRYING TO ASK FOR WATER TO DRINK.

Conditions in Lesvos had similar inadequate sanitation facilities, with respondents reporting limited water for showering and toilet water being cut off during the night and in the afternoons, heightening the risk of disease. The unsanitary conditions in the camps on Lesvos are a risk factor for the spread of water-borne diseases, as well as scabies and other skin infections. One Moria camp resident said: *"Before we were swimming in small spring which is full of dirt to spend our need [to defecate], even in the cold weather. This has caused us a lot of infectious skin diseases."*



"BEFORE WE WERE SWIMMING IN SMALL SPRING WHICH IS FULL OF DIRT TO SPEND OUR NEED (TO DEFECATE), EVEN IN THE COLD WEATHER. THIS HAS CAUSED US A LOT OF INFECTIOUS SKIN DISEASES."

ANONYMOUS





Poor sanitation and substandard living conditions were also a problem in asylum accommodation investigated in the UK, the current state of which has been described as 'appalling' and 'disgraceful' by UK government officials.¹¹ For instance, 73% of residents in an accommodation centre in London described it as 'dirty', which was corroborated in photos shared with our researchers. Mould and humidity allegedly caused residents allergies and other health problems while vermin were a major problem, with 82% of individuals saying that there were mice in their rooms. Approximately 200 residents shared two working washing machines and reported prolonged periods without hot water in the winter, as well as broken taps and stoves.

IN LONDON
82%
OF INDIVIDUALS SAID THAT THERE WERE MICE IN THEIR ROOMS

Similarly, among asylum seeking women interviewed in Birmingham, 50% of respondents said they found their accommodation either 'dirty' or 'very dirty' when they moved in. 22% found it to be 'OK', while 28% found it 'clean' or 'very clean'. Several of the respondents reported that unresolved issues in their accommodation tended to affect not only their physical health (e.g. itchiness, allergies) but also their mental health due to stress and/or sleep deprivation brought on by the same. Of particular concern were the apparently widespread problems with vermin in the accommodation, with 66% of respondents reporting that they had seen vermin. Of these, 26% had seen rats, 18% mice, 41% cockroaches, and 26% had experienced bed bugs.



¹¹ The Guardian, January 2017. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jan/31/uk-asylum-seekers-housing-branded-disgraceful-by-mps-yvette-cooper>

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Poor living conditions were found to have been detrimental to the health of displaced persons at all of our research sites across Europe. 60% of respondents in Ventimiglia, 44% in Paris and 45% in Brussels had experienced health problems since arriving in Italy, France and Belgium respectively. In each location, the majority of these individuals attributed the problems primarily to poor living conditions. Likewise, most of the 86% of respondents in Lesvos who had experienced health problems since arriving in Greece attributed these to the unhealthy camp environment.

IN VENTIMIGLIA

60%

OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED THAT
POOR LIVING CONDITIONS HAD BEEN
DETRIMENTAL TO THEIR HEALTH

Our research found that respondent's poor health is exacerbated by the lack of access to medical care. A staggering 86% of individuals with health problems in Ventimiglia said they were unable to access medical care and close to 60% of interviewees in Paris had reportedly not received any medical care in France. Language barriers, unaffordable medication and transport to hospitals, and, worryingly, allegedly discriminatory practices in hospitals were cited as obstacles to adequate medical care in France and Italy.



IN LESVOS

86%

OF RESPONDENTS HAD
EXPERIENCED HEALTH PROBLEMS
SINCE ARRIVING IN GREECE



IN CALAIS

52%

REPORTED HAVING
EXPERIENCED HEALTH
PROBLEMS IN FRANCE

In Calais, 52% reported having experienced health problems in France. 56% of them believed that their health concern was a result of the unhealthy living environment, while 36% said it had been brought on by tear gas or other forms of police violence. 61% of respondents with a health problem (or 67% of minors) had received medical care in France.

MENTAL HEALTH

Though less visible, mental health issues constitute a serious concern as they frequently have long-term effects on individuals and their ability to rebuild a life in host communities.¹² Largely neglected, the mental health of refugees in Europe has been described as a 'silent crisis'¹³ – one that has been overlooked across Europe.

IN CALAIS
21%
OF THOSE WITH 'HEALTH ISSUES' SELF-DECLARED THAT THESE WERE RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH

In Calais, a whole 21% of those with 'health issues' self-declared that these were related to mental health rather than a physical ailment. This is a higher figure than in April 2017 (16%). Many

respondents cited a lack of sleep as the main factor making them feel mentally unwell, and others identified more generally the seemingly hopeless situation in which they found themselves. A number of respondents said they were using sleeping pills to relax and try to get some sleep at night. However, ongoing police harassment was reported to make it difficult for people to get more than a few hours' sleep per night, if any at all. In Paris, 15% of individuals referred to having mental health problems.

IN BRUSSELS
30%
OF RESPONDENTS WHO REPORTED A HEALTH CONCERN REFERRED TO IT AS A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

Almost 30% of respondents in Brussels who reported a health concern referred to it as a mental health issue, and some respondents expressed suicidal thoughts. 17% of respondents in Ventimiglia described their health problem as a mental health issue. The vast majority of respondents in Ventimiglia had travelled through Libya and many recounted deeply traumatic experiences including witnessing death and killings, and having been tortured.

Most concerning, close to half of our respondents in Lesbos stated that they had a mental health problem and expressed feelings of hopelessness, desolation and suicidal thoughts. Local aid organisations in Lesbos informed researchers that even those identified as 'vulnerable' – and therefore entitled to immediate transfer to the Greek mainland – faced significant waiting times while the accommodation for vulnerable persons in Mytilene was 'full', leaving many vulnerable people in unsafe conditions in Moria.

In all of RRE's research locations, the length of time spent trapped in displacement coupled with precarious living conditions were cited among primary causes which brought on mental health issues, or exacerbated existing ones from the country of origin or the journey to and through Europe.

The state of the mental health of displaced persons appeared similarly acute within asylum accommodation in the UK. In Birmingham, qualitative data from RRE's survey and additional interviews with both support workers and women themselves, suggest worrying degrees of poor mental health among women in asylum accommodation.



¹² Migration Policy Institute, January 2018. See: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/life-after-trauma-mental-health-needs-asylum-seekers-europe>

¹³ Human Rights Watch, July 2017. See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/07/12/eu/greece-asylum-seekers-silent-mental-health-crisis>

ARTICLE TWENTY-FIVE (2)

Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children... shall enjoy the same social protection.

Children are an especially vulnerable group who face a myriad of risks during displacement. Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires states to take appropriate measures to ensure that children seeking or holding refugee status, whether accompanied or not, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance. However, such measures were largely lacking across research locations, leaving children in extremely dangerous environments.

In both Paris and Ventimiglia, the overwhelming majority of minors interviewed were unaccompanied and lacked any form of guardianship. In Paris the living conditions fell well short of international child protection standards with 78% of minors sleeping on the streets, at increased risk of exploitation and trafficking, and 45% of minors telling RRE that they do not feel safe. This contravenes Article 20 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which holds that children temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environment are entitled to special protection, assistance and alternative care provided by the state they are in.

IN VENTIMIGLIA

92%

OF CHILDREN INTERVIEWED
STATED THAT THEY SLEPT ROUGH
AND THE SAME PERCENTAGE
REPORTED FEELING UNSAFE

In Ventimiglia, the situation was worse yet, with 92% of interviewed children stating that they slept rough and the same percentage reported feeling unsafe due to risks of injury, death at the border, insufficient food and water or lack of access to medical care. 12% of children perceived sexual violence as a major risk. Close to half of minors knew of a refugee who had died in Ventimiglia or at the border, a traumatic experience that no child should have to endure. In Calais, our study found that 95% of minors said they 'didn't feel safe' or 'didn't feel safe at all'. Meanwhile, in our second study on displaced persons living on the streets of Paris in January 2018, 42% of respondents stated they 'don't feel safe', allegedly due to the precarious living situation and endemic police violence, including tear gas. 75% of respondents stated that they had experienced verbal abuse by French citizens, with a shocking 5% of them saying they had experienced sexual violence from French citizens.



IN LESVOS

44%

OF MINORS WERE REPORTEDLY
TRAVELLING ALONE

Children trapped on Lesbos similarly spend a significant part of their psychologically formative years in precarious and violent conditions. 44% of minors we interviewed were reportedly travelling alone and thus highly vulnerable, and 78% informed us that they 'never feel safe'.

IN LESVOS

78%

INFORMED US THAT THEY
'NEVER FEEL SAFE'

In the London accommodation centre, a 17-year-old youth suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder stated 'It's very, very bad here for me - not just very bad.'

IN CALAIS

75%

OF RESPONDENTS STATED THAT THEY HAD
EXPERIENCED ABUSE BY FRENCH CITIZENS

HEALTH CARE FOR CHILDREN

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that states must recognise children's right to the 'enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health' and must ensure that no child is deprived of their right to access appropriate health care services. However, a large proportion of children interviewed by RRE in Europe were experiencing health problems, which often went untreated. 48% of minors in Ventimiglia said they had experienced health problems since arriving in Italy, 83% of whom reportedly had no access to medical care. Only 4% said they had enough water to drink and a whole 68% of minors said they did not have daily access to food. In Paris, 41% of minors stated that they did not have enough food every day and a similar percentage reported suffering

IN LESVOS
74%
OF CHILDREN HAD SUFFERED
FROM A HEALTH PROBLEM

from a health problem. 74% of children had suffered from a health problem whilst in Lesvos, the majority attributing this to the unhealthy living conditions. 24% of children in Lesvos described their problem as a mental health issue yet 41% had reportedly not received medical treatment.

AGE ASSESSMENT

In Lesvos there is growing concern that not all children are given a full asylum interview and appropriate age assessment as minors, despite Greek law demanding a full assessment procedure upon interception on Greek territory.¹⁴ Instead, children are reportedly assessed within five minutes based on their size and 'how old they look'.

DUE TO A LACK OF ACCOMMODATION,
SOME MINORS ASSESSED AS
UNDERAGE ARE STILL FORCED TO
SLEEP ON THE STREET

Moreover, due to a lack of accommodation, some minors assessed as underage are still forced to sleep on the street. This contravenes United Nations Guidelines, which prescribe that children found to be underage must promptly be referred to childcare facilities, accommodation centres for minors and other appropriate services.¹⁵



¹⁴ Council of Europe, September 2017. See: <https://rm.coe.int/age-assessment-council-of-europe-member-states-policies-procedures-and/168074b723>

¹⁵ UNICEF, January 2013. See: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5130659f2.html>

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Violence against children is unacceptable in all circumstances, yet was prevalent in most of RRE's research locations. 52% of minors in Ventimiglia had experienced violence from Italian police; 52% had also experienced violence from French police. In Paris, 31% of minors reportedly experienced police violence with a staggering 83% describing this violence as tear gas. 22% of minors had experienced physical abuse by police, and 80% of those who had been told to move from their sleeping area had not been given information about where they could go instead. In Calais, 41% of minors said that they had experienced citizen violence, while an even higher percentage had experienced police violence. A 16-year old Eritrean boy told the research team about an incident he had witnessed: *"This didn't happen to me, but I witnessed an Eritrean kid get beaten up with*

a police baton. He was injured on his head. I didn't think he would survive to be honest, the kid didn't look physically strong."

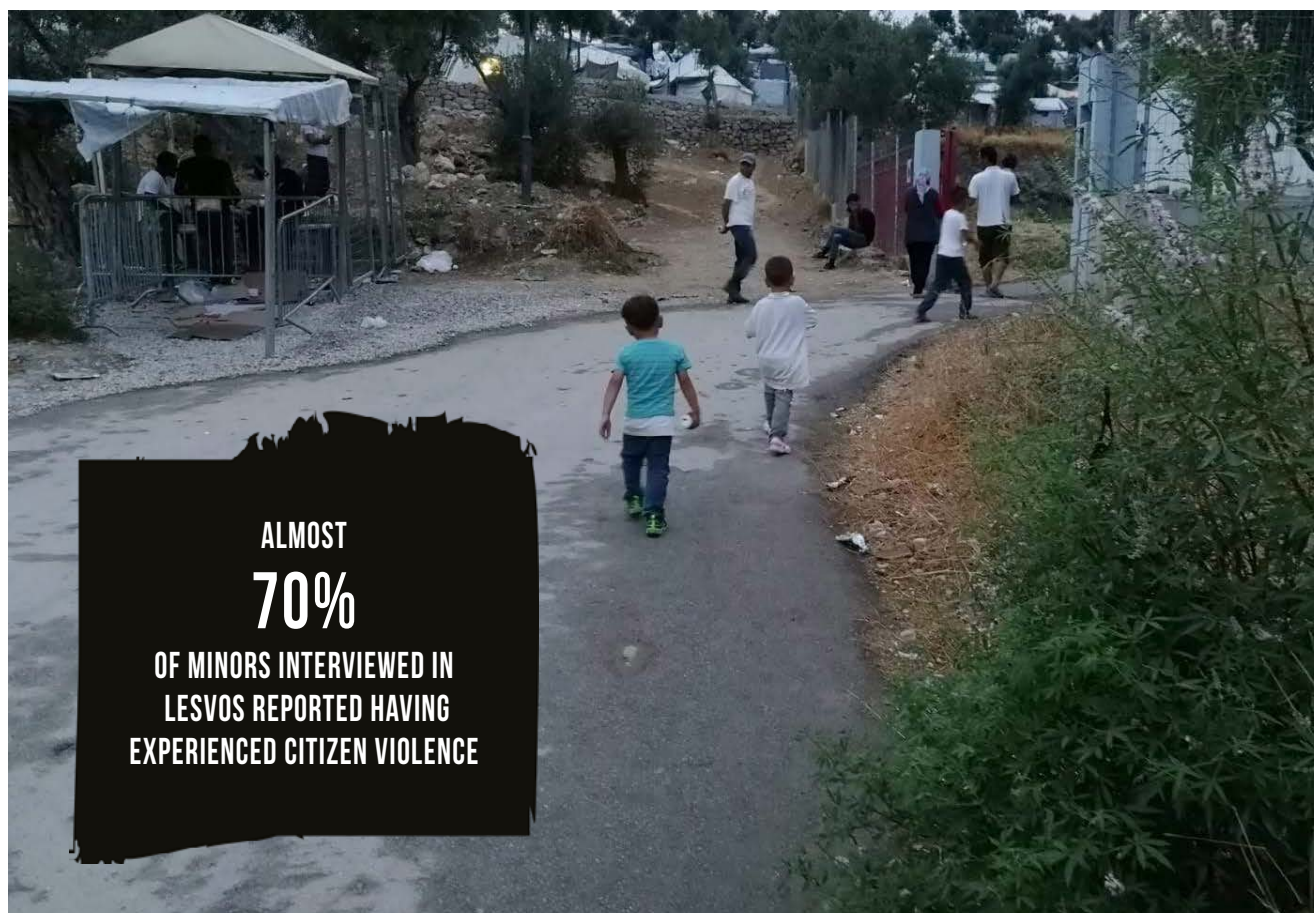
A further deeply concerning finding was that 100% of minors in Ventimiglia had experienced illegal pushbacks by authorities in France, who forced children on to trains back to Ventimiglia. According to the Dublin III Regulation, automatic Dublin returns to the first country of entry are not applicable for unaccompanied minors, and the best interests of the child need to be considered. Hence, minors reaching French territory are the French authorities' responsibility. Meanwhile, almost 70% of minors interviewed in Lesvos reported having experienced citizen violence, 44% of whom reported this was physical abuse. Close to 40% of minors stated that they had experienced police violence, and 86% had experienced tear gas.

As many as 80% of children interviewed in Ventimiglia had been detained in Italy or France, while trying to cross the border. In Paris, 24% of minors interviewed told us that they had experienced arrest or detention in France. In Calais, 72% of minors said that they had been arrested or detained during their time in France.

"THIS DIDN'T HAPPEN TO ME, BUT I WITNESSED AN ERITREAN KID GET BEATEN UP WITH A POLICE BATON. HE WAS INJURED ON HIS HEAD. I DIDN'T THINK HE WOULD SURVIVE TO BE HONEST, THE KID DIDN'T LOOK PHYSICALLY STRONG."

16-YEAR-OLD, ERITREAN BOY

26% of minors in Lesvos said that they had been arrested or detained in Greece. These high figures suggest European authorities' disregard of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 37(b), which prohibits the detention of children except as a 'measure of last resort'.



**ALMOST
70%
OF MINORS INTERVIEWED IN
LESVOS REPORTED HAVING
EXPERIENCED CITIZEN VIOLENCE**

CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The lack of information available to minors compounds the dangerous situations they face and prolongs the time they spend living on the street exposed to exploitation, trafficking and other dangers. 92% of children in Ventimiglia reported having no access to information about their rights and opportunities and 83% stated they had no access to information about European asylum law and immigration rules. Only 4% had access to legal representation. RRE additionally heard accounts of authorities providing minors with misleading information, which constitutes a violation of European Directives and places minors at further risk.



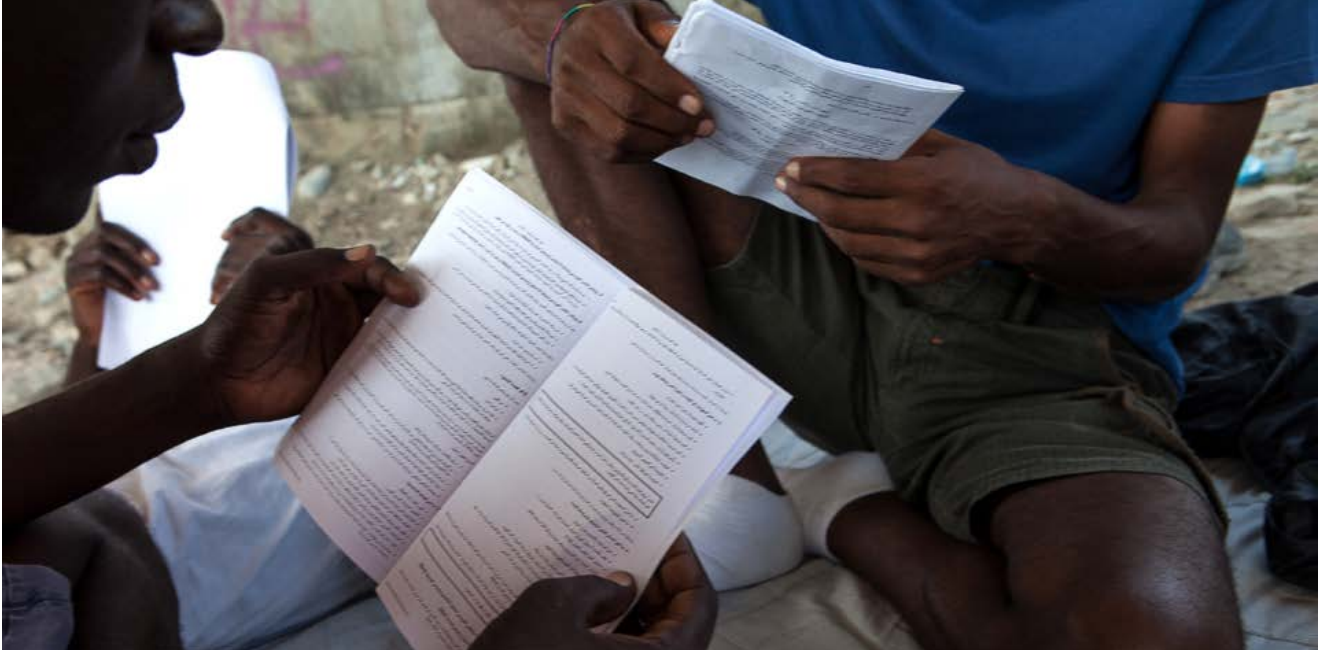
IN PARIS
71%
OF MINORS INTERVIEWED
DID NOT HAVE ACCESS
TO INFORMATION ABOUT
THEIR RIGHTS

In Paris, 71% of minors interviewed did not have access to information about their rights and a similar figure lacked access to information about European asylum rules. This is particularly alarming given the number of minors who reportedly had family in Europe, and therefore may be eligible for family reunification.

ARTICLE TWENTY-EIGHT

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION



Lack of access to information about their rights, opportunities, and available services proved a pervasive problem for refugees and displaced persons across research locations, exacerbating their precarious living situations and any physical and mental health problems

Only 8% of respondents in Ventimiglia cited having access to information about their rights and opportunities, while 87% stated they did not have access to information about European asylum law and immigration rules.

In Calais, a whole 85% of respondents said they were lacking access to information about their rights and opportunities to change their current situation. 89% said they were unable to access information about European immigration and asylum rules. Many respondents had spent extended periods of

time in displacement, with 64% having been in Europe for six months to more than two years.

In Lesvos 76% of respondents stated that they had no information on their legal rights and a slightly higher number reported having no information concerning immigration rules and European asylum law.

In Paris the situation was similar, with 66% of respondents stating that they lacked access to information about their rights and opportunities and a similar proportion reporting that they had no information on European immigration and asylum rules. 80% of those with family in Europe had not applied for family reunification, which they are entitled to under the Dublin III Regulation.

IN BRUSSELS
80%
OF RESPONDENTS DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Almost 80% of respondents in Brussels did not have access to information about their rights and opportunities whilst 75% had no access to information on European immigration and asylum rules, including about family reunification. The strategic use of misinformation to deter asylum seekers appears to be a potentially pervasive issue in Brussels, where the Belgian government has admitted to distributing letters targeting Iraqi and Afghan nationals to discourage them from applying for asylum.¹⁶

In London, respondents appeared to be unaware of their rights and opportunities to change their situation, on matters ranging from housing arrangements to legal support and medical care. As far as their accommodation arrangements were concerned, 82% of residents specifically recalled signing a contract upon moving in to the accommodation centre, yet less than half of them understood the document's content. Close to half of respondents said they did not feel comfortable speaking to anyone due to language barriers or for fear of losing their accommodation, while others stated that their complaints were ignored or refused.

¹⁶ Asylum Information Database, 2017. See: <https://prod.emnbelgium.be/sites/default/files/publications/ECRE%20-%20Belgium%20Report%202017.pdf>

ARTICLE FOURTEEN (1)

Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution

Across research locations, respondents reported a range of issues inhibiting their ability to seek and enjoy asylum in Europe in safety and in dignity with full respect for their human rights. In particular, our research highlights many cases where individuals are stuck in limbo, often due to border closures and containment policies, and other times because of slow and inefficient asylum systems.

IN VENTIMIGLIA

54%

OF RESPONDENTS CITED THE UK AS THEIR PREFERRED DESTINATION

Due to its geographical location as an entry-point country, Italy has long been struggling with the volume of asylum applications, meaning that decisions can often take upwards of a year¹⁷. During this time, asylum applicants struggle to access work¹⁸, and many are left to sleep rough despite having entered the

asylum system. Such highly precarious living situations and uncertain immigration statuses, as well as the long waits faced for an asylum decision, and sometimes simply a desire to be reunited quickly with family in other EU states, have all been contributing factors leading many refugees and displaced people to attempt to leave Italy via the French border. In Ventimiglia, 54% of respondents cited the UK as their preferred destination. 60% of individuals cited their primary motivation as their belief in a better chance of being granted asylum or humanitarian protection there.

IN BRUSSELS

90%

OF RESPONDENTS CITED THE UK AS THEIR PRIORITY DESTINATION

In Brussels, which has seen an increase in displaced people in transit hoping to reach the UK since the Calais “Jungle” camp was demolished in 2016, more than 90% of respondents cited the UK as their priority destination based on the belief that they would have higher chances of obtaining asylum there than elsewhere. Many respondents in Brussels appeared afraid that they would be refused and deported if they presented themselves to the asylum office in Belgium, unsurprising given the public stances of Immigration Minister Theo Francken, which includes the approval of forced

repatriation of individuals to war-torn Sudan. However, they have no safe and legal pathway to seek asylum in Britain.

IN LESVOS

63%

STATED THAT THEY HAD FAMILY IN EUROPE

In Lesvos, over a quarter of respondents indicated Germany as their destination, yet the majority aimed to reach any safe country. Most respondents hoped to be reunited with family, friends and support networks, with 63% stating that they had family in Europe. An even higher proportion, 72%, of women and 60.9% of children, stated that they had family in Europe. However, as part of the EU-Turkey Statement from March 2016, the Greek government introduced what has become known as the ‘containment policy’. This is a geographical restriction whereby new arrivals are banned from travelling to mainland Greece until their asylum claims have been processed. The length of time spent on the islands as a result of the containment policy and slow processing of applications, means that individuals are forced to remain in potentially harmful conditions. The process by which vulnerability assessments are carried out does not appear to be streamlined or transparent, and centres remain understaffed.



IN LESVOS
60.9%
OF CHILDREN STATED
THAT THEY HAD
FAMILY IN EUROPE

¹⁷ <https://www.dw.com/en/italy-unveils-measures-to-fast-track-legal-decisions-on-asylum-seekers/a-37506370>

¹⁸ <https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy/reception-conditions/employment-education/access-labour-market>

¹⁹ Politico, September 2018. See: <https://www.politico.eu/article/theo-francken-belgian-government-pulls-back-from-brink-in-sudanese-migrant-crisis/>; News Deeply, January 2018.

See: <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/community/2018/01/17/what-belgiums-migrant-torture-crisis-tells-us-about-europe>

²⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/rights-groups-urge-greece-containment-policy-171122204019045.html>

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In sum, RRE's research has documented a harrowing human rights situation experienced by displaced people throughout Europe. Displaced individuals across seven research locations in five EU countries report facing endemic police and citizen violence, wholly inadequate living conditions and a startling lack of information on how to claim their rights. Further serious concerns are the lack of gender-sensitive camp design and security provisions, and entirely insufficient protection systems for displaced children.

The research conducted by RRE during 2017-2018 shows that effective and sustainable policies and practice are urgently needed to secure the human rights of displaced people on European territory. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child must be at the centre of European policy initiatives, to ensure that displaced people are given the protection and opportunity demanded by international standards.



BASED ON OUR FINDINGS, REFUGEE RIGHTS EUROPE PUTS FORWARD THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS THE ALARMING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION FACING DISPLACED PERSONS ACROSS EUROPE.

In addition, we have previously published a set of specific recommendations in relation to the reforms of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), and the need for the strengthening of safe, legal routes to safety, including an EU wide resettlement programme and expedited family reunification procedures. These are available online.²¹



LIVING CONDITIONS

- Member States, with financial support from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), must ensure an acceptable standard of living for all displaced people on their territory, regardless of immigration status.²²
- Member States must ensure that all individuals seeking asylum within their jurisdiction –whether in southern European camps, at transit points such as Ventimiglia and Calais, or in major cities such as Paris and London – are provided with adequate accommodation.²³
- All Member States must ensure that displaced people are provided with safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities, regardless of immigration status.²⁴
- Member States must fulfil the right to food whenever an individual or group is unable, for reasons beyond their control, to enjoy the right to adequate food by the means at their disposal.²⁵
- All states must ensure full compliance with the principles of the best interests of the child and of family unity and ensure no children or families are left in destitution, regardless of immigration status.²⁶
- Regarding the catastrophic conditions currently unfolding on the Greek islands, the Greek government should put an end to the containment policy currently in effect on the islands, with living conditions on the Islands and mainland Greece vastly improved through the provision of sufficient services and dignified living conditions with meet European directives standards.

²¹ <http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/CEAS-Policy-Recommendations.pdf>

²² In line with the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25, which states that the realisation of the right to an adequate standard of living requires as a minimum the enjoyment of subsistence rights i.e. adequate food and nutrition, clothing, housing and care as required and in accordance with the 2013/33/EU Reception Conditions Directive.

²³ In line with the 2013/33/EU Reception Conditions Directive.

²⁴ In accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/64/2923 - which recognises the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right essential to the full enjoyment of life and all human rights -

²⁵ In line with Article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

²⁶ In accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as reaffirmed in Article 9 of the 2013/33/EU Reception Conditions Directive.



HEALTH AND ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE

- Member States must ensure that displaced people are able to access healthcare without discrimination and regardless of their immigration status.²⁷
- All states must ensure that health care, including care for mental health and special needs, is provided to all asylum applicants within their jurisdiction, as required.²⁸
- National governments, the UNHCR and the WHO, as well as the European Commission, through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and other relevant funding mechanisms, should provide sufficient funding and resources to front-line organisations providing emergency and general health care, sexual and reproductive health services, and mental health support to displaced people.
- Member States, with financial support from the European Commission and through appropriate civil society organisations, should deploy additional social workers, interpreters, therapists, medics and child safeguarding specialists, with specific provisions for women and girls and victims of torture, to critical areas within the EU.
- Member States must make available resources to support the identification of and support for victims of trafficking, including deploying specialist support workers and put in place robust safeguarding and referral mechanisms during the asylum process.



ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

- Member States, with support from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), must provide clear guidance on European asylum rules and procedures, in language and formats that are accessible to displaced people, in addition to further information on organisations that provide specific legal assistance.²⁹ Such information should be made accessible at recognised reception centres and through community outreach to ensure that all displaced people are able to access their rights.
- The European Commission, through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and other relevant funding mechanisms, should provide sufficient resources to civil society organisations working to disseminate essential information quickly and effectively through translators and interpreters, including female-only interpreters where required.



POLICE AND CITIZEN VIOLENCE

- Member States, through their Interior Ministries, should unequivocally instruct local police forces to refrain from disproportionate use of force, tear gas and pepper spray, in particular against displaced people who are posing no threat. Authorities must immediately refrain from repeated dispersals and deportations.
- Member States must provide training for border control officials and police forces to ensure awareness of, and compliance with, international human rights obligations.³⁰ This includes putting an immediate end to illegal pushbacks, which violate the international principle of *non refoulement*³¹, as well as specific training on safeguarding and protection mechanisms for vulnerable displaced people, including children and women at risk of trafficking.
- Member States, through local and national law enforcement officials, should implement monitoring and accountability processes, including a transparent complaints procedure, to ensure that allegations of police violence can be independently investigated and followed up on, to secure displaced people's access to justice and redress for violent crimes committed against them.
- Across Europe, reports of human rights abuses in detention centres must be urgently investigated to ensure that the rights of refugees and displaced people are upheld in line with international, EU and national law.
- Member States should provide instructions to national police forces to put an end to the intimidation and disruption of Non-governmental aid groups operating on the ground such that they are authorised to operate freely to deliver their services.

²⁷ In accordance with the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25.

²⁸ In line with Article 19, paras. 1 & 2 of the EU Reception Conditions Directive.

²⁹ In line with Article five, paragraphs one and two of the 2013/33/EU Directive

³⁰ See Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 4 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

³¹ See Article 33, 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and Article 3, 1984 Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.



CHILDREN IN DISPLACEMENT

- Member States must acknowledge and uphold the rights of the child enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe 2017-2019.
- Member States, with the support of the European Commission, through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and other relevant funding mechanisms, should provide sufficient resources for child protection shelters with trained staff, social workers and therapists to prevent children sleeping rough in European cities. All children must be ensured separate and secure accommodation while their age is assessed, their application is processed and while challenging the outcomes of their applications.
- Resources must be provided to ensure swift and dignified age-assessments.
- The detention of children, which has been deemed 'never in the best interest of a child'³², must end under all circumstances.
- Local and national authorities should ensure that all unaccompanied children are identified and supported. Children must be immediately informed of their right to seek asylum and given adequate legal support, in languages they understand and can communicate in.
- Member States must ensure that children have safe, legal routes to protection, inter alia by accelerating family reunification claims under the Dublin regulation. Numerous children living on Paris' streets may, for example, be eligible for protection in the UK under the 'Dubs' scheme or for family reunification.
- All children must be able to access education, regardless of immigration status.³³



WOMEN IN DISPLACEMENT

- Member States must work to end violence against displaced women and immediately provide support for survivors of such violence.³⁴
- Member States, in consultation with refugee women and non-governmental organisations working on the ground, and with the financial support of the European Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), must take steps to address failings in camp design which leave women and girls at heightened risk of sexual abuse. This includes the installation of appropriate lighting, single sex sanitation facilities and the relocation of such facilities so as to prevent sexual violence from occurring.³⁵
- Member States, with financial support from the European Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and with appropriate civil society organisations, must make available specialist social workers and therapists to address the consequences of gender-based violence occurring against women and girls in displacement.
- The European Commission, through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and other relevant funding mechanisms, must provide sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH) services in all camps, transit points and urban settings, in line with the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Reproductive Health³⁵. This includes providing SGBV experts, training for sexual and reproductive health service providers and strong SRH coordination under a lead organisation. Discrete access to contraception, culturally appropriate educational materials regarding pregnancy and sexual health, as well as private and swift access to pregnancy tests and referral pathways are required.



³² OHCHR, February 2018. See: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?LangID=E&NewsID=22681>

³³ In line with Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 28 on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

³⁴ In accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, and with the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020

³⁵ In line with Article 21 of the 2013/33/EU Reception Conditions Directive.

³⁶ <http://iaawg.net/areas-of-focus/misp>

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